Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos

A Study on the Book of Ezekiel

S. Tamar Kamionkowski

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PREFACE

When I was a little girl, I would chase my youngest brother around the house with a bottle of perfume because he was afraid that if the perfume touched him he would turn into a girl. Already, at that young age, he was encoded with a complex system of socially determined gender identities. For my little brother, perfume could turn him into a girl and he expressed this fear through tears. For the biblical prophet Ezekiel, the traumas of military defeat and exile had a similar gender-bending effect, but Ezekiel used the more subtle art of metaphor through literary expression to express his anxieties. Broadly stated, this study explores Ezekiel's gender crisis.

This monograph represents, with significant revision, a doctoral thesis submitted to Brandeis University in May 2000.

Writing a book can be a daunting task on many levels. I have been blessed by a number of individuals without whom I would not have been able to complete this project. In 1987, I walked onto the campus of Brandeis University with passion, but without direction. I am deeply indebted to Professor Tzvi Abusch, my mentor, who both sustained my love for texts and provided me with the tools and skills necessary to focus and shape my thinking. I am also grateful for his friendship, patience and warmth.

Professor Marc Z. Brettler provided me with a solid training in philology and methodology, taught me how to do research and urged me to demand excellence of myself. His feedback on this project, throughout all of its stages, was invaluable. I consider myself fortunate to have had Professor Brettler as a teacher and advisor. Even now, years removed from his classroom, I feel his influence upon my research and my teaching.

I thank Professor Gale Yee and Rabbi Sarra Lev for taking the time to read through early manuscripts and for providing me with important feedback regarding methodology and bibliography.

As I transformed this material from a dissertation to a publication, I received helpful advice from Professors Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines. I thank both of them for their assistance in getting my work

published through the Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series at Sheffield Academic Press.

I received financial support in completing this project from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Studies (1993–94), a series of Hornstein Fellowships (1987–92) and most recently a faculty grant from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (2001). This grant provided me with two outstanding research assistants, Seth Goldstein and Rena Blumenthal.

The fruits of my labor appear on the pages that follow and I am deeply indebted to so many people who provided me with the rich soil for my produce. I am grateful to many outstanding teachers at Brandeis University, Harvard Divinity School, Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University, all of whom helped to form my questions and shape my thinking. Shalom Paul, Frank Moore Cross, James Kugel, David Wright and Michael Fishbane introduced me to biblical studies in general, while Bernadette Brooten introduced me to gender studies in antiquity. Stephen Geller taught me how to appreciate biblical poetry and inspired me with his encyclopedic knowledge. John Huehnergard, Avi Hurvitz and the late Moshe Goshen-Gottstein instructed me on the importance of words and language. And, of course, there are too many teachers whom I have never met, but whose words in print have had a profound influence on me.

My colleagues at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College have supported me with words of encouragement and a healthy exchange of ideas, while my students have challenged me and taught me.

Finally, I dedicate this book to four generations of women in my life: Matilde (may her memory be a blessing), Lelia, Yael and Meital.

Some of the material of Chapter 4 has previously been published in abbreviated form in Athalya Brenner's *A Feminist Companion to the Bible: Prophets and Daniel* (FCB 2/8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 170-85, under the title 'Gender Reversal in Ezekiel 16'.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ABR	*Australian Biblical Review*
AfK	*Archiv für Keilschriftforschung*
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AfOB	Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft
AHw	Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1959–81)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ASORDiss	American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
ASV	American Standard Version
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BARev	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDB	Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907)
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BHS	*Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia*
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches*
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
CAD	Ignace I. Gelb *et al.* (eds.), *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1964–)
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary

CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CH	Code of Hammurabi
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament
CRRAI	Comptes rendus de Recontre Assyriologique Internationale
FCB	A Feminist Companion to the Bible
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (ed. Emil Friedrich Kautzsch, revised and trans. A.E. Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910)
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (trans. and ed. under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson; 4 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–99)
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HR	*History of Religions*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IBHS	Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990).
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962)
Int	*Interpretation*
ISBE	Geoffrey Bromiley (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. edn, 1979–88)
ITC	International Theological Commentary
J-M	Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (trans. and rev. T. Muraoka; Subsudia biblica, 14; 2 vols.; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1991)
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBQ	*Jewish Bible Quarterly*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JHNES	Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KAI	H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962–64)
KJV	King James Version
LBH	Late Biblical Hebrew
MAL	Middle Assyrian Laws
MANE	Monographs from the Ancient Near East
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	*New American Standard Bible*
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NJKV	New King James Version
NJPS	Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New Jewish Publication Society Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text
OB	Old Babylonian
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RlA	Erich Ebeling *et al.*, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1928–)
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SANE	Sources and Monographs from the Ancient Near East
SB	Standard Babylonian
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SO	Symbolae osloenses
SSN	Studia semitica neerlandica
StPBSup	Studia postbiblica Supplement Series
STT	O.R. Gurney and J.J. Finkelstein, *The Sultantepe Tablets* (2 vols.; London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1957–64)
SubBi	Subsidia biblica
TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources

TDOT	G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (trans. John T. Willis, Geoffrey William Bromiley and David E. Green; 8 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–)
THAT	Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (eds.), *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (2 vols.; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971–76)
TLOT	Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (eds.), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (trans. Mark E. Biddle; 3 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997)
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
UBL	Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum*, Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This book is about both the expression and fear of gender reversal. Gender reversal has been the focus of much interest in contemporary gender and cultural studies.[1] However, the phenomenon has yet to make a significant impact upon biblical studies. The present work examines a particular configuration of gender reversal as expressed through the prophet Ezekiel's prophecies.

Gender reversal implies a binary gender system, for reversal assumes opposites: one can drive forward or backward (in reverse), a tablet or a coin contains an obverse and a reverse. Thus gender reversal can only exist within a binary structure in which one must be either male or female. To be one is to be not-the-other. Binary gender constructions use gender polarization, that is, the attribution of rigid sets of gender roles and characteristics for males and females in order to maintain and regulate the binary. Deviations from any of these scripts render an individual either abnormal or immoral. Various attempts are made to 'normalize' these individuals by placing them into one of the two established categories.[2] Thus, infants with ambiguous genitalia at birth are 'surgically corrected' and transsexuals end up choosing one gender and undergoing a process of 'passing' as male or female during their transition into one of the categories. The potential multiplicity of expressions for any individual is forced into a choice between two options.

The dualism of gender identities extends to a dualism of behaviors, roles and status. Masculinity is defined in contrast to femininity; furthermore,

1. See, for example, Sabrina Petra Ramet (ed.), *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1996), and Gilbert H. Herdt (ed.), *Third Sex Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History* (New York: Zone Books, 1996).

2. On this topic, see Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Routledge, 1992). Cf. also Herdt, *Third Sex Third Gender*.

masculinity is placed at a higher value than femininity in most societies. Male status is set above female. Thus gender dichotomies almost always lead to gender inequality. Gender is a socially constructed institution that is part of a larger system of stratification. The same overarching principle that sets up king over subject or priest over laity makes for male over female. Gender ranks men above women; gender contributes to differentiation on emotional, familial, professional and state levels. Gender systems associate males with power and aggression and females with powerlessness and passivity. 'Boys will be boys' and men who fail to express aggression are called 'wimps' or 'sissies', that is, girlie. Gender distributes power to some and takes away power from others. Gender positions itself as so normative, as so 'natural', that it, in effect, masks itself.

The strong association between penetrator/receptor with sex identity has wider implications (and is further strengthened) for other cultural constructions. Penetrator/receptor thus extends to ideas regarding power/powerlessness, aggressor/victim, honor/shame. Thus, outside of the realm of sexual activity, there are underlying assumptions: male = male genitalia = penetrator = power = aggressor and vice versa. This creates the possibility that an individual or community with male genitalia who is/are in a position of powerlessness may be construed as not-male, and in a binary system the conclusion must be that the individual is female, but not really female, and therefore a threat to social order. Gender reversal is not inherently a threat to social order; it is only a problem in polarized, binary gender systems. In other words, the system creates the potential problem because reality does not conform to a strict two-gendered world.

The postmodern period has produced a spate of studies decrying and challenging the construction of binary gender assumptions. In the 1980s and 1990s, a plethora of studies on gender and sex has emerged in contemporary discourse. The most fundamental insight that has developed within these debates is that gender, and even sex, are culturally constructed.[3] There is nothing essential or natural about gender differentiation; it is socially constructed in conjunction with other social constructs, all of which function to maintain the status quo in society.

3. Before feminist scholarship, gender, that is, masculine and feminine, was also assumed to be biologically determined and stable. For the first significant work on gender as a cultural construction, see Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (Cambridge:

Serena Nanda writes that: 'The binary opposites of sex are so ingrained that it seems to be common sense and is assumed in all the sciences.' However, the Hindu cultural system in India recognizes more than two genders and believes that both sex and gender can be changed within an individual's lifetime.[4] Similarly, the *xanith* of Oman have been described as 'neither man nor woman'. The *xanith* have male genitalia, male names and the right to testify in court (a privilege denied to women in that society); but they also engage in household work as women do, their appearance is judged by the standards of female beauty, and they are grouped with women in segregated social activities. The *xanith* are prohibited from wearing a mask and veil, their clothing styles blend men and women's styles, and they can go bareheaded unlike men and women. They may function as male passive prostitutes, but can become men if they prove that they are sexually potent as a penetrator.[5] Therefore they are neither man nor woman. Similar systems have been documented in other parts of the world.

Regardless of the existence of these alternate systems, biblical cultures rest firmly on a binary foundation.[6] Although contemporary culture, out of which most gender studies have emerged, is significantly different from that of the biblical writers, many of our contemporary gender constructs derive from the biblical legacy. The writers of the Hebrew Bible lived within a rigid binary culture; the priestly school in particular centralized binaries into the core of its theological program: holy versus

Cambridge University Press, 1981). Other important works which have influenced the present study include: Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism* (New York: Continuum, rev. and enl. edn, 1994); Toril Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990); and Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, I (trans. Robert Hurley; New York: Random House, 1978).

4. Serena Nanda, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1990), p. 129. 'Impotence is central to the definition of *hijra* as not man' (p. 14). Before entering a *hijra* community, a person would have to demonstrate his or her absolute impotence by undergoing a period of testing with a prostitute.

5. For more on this topic, cf. Unni Wikan, 'Man Becomes Woman: Transsexualism in Oman as a Key to Gender Roles', *Man* 12 (1977), pp. 304-319.

6. This is an assertion that has received relatively little attention by biblicists. A notable exception is the recent work of Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

profane, pure versus impure, community insiders versus outsiders, priests versus non-priests. This framework also played itself out in the arena of sex and gender. The priestly creation text tells us that the world began with differentiation. When God created humanity, זכר ונקבה ברא אתם, 'male and female, He created them' (Gen. 1.27).[7] Hierarchical gender patterns are introduced as the most basic institution of humanity:

> The basic social order is introduced...as a power structure which is hierarchic, heterosexual, patriarchal and procreation-oriented. In other words, the nuclear social order is introduced as a 'natural', in the sense of primeval and primary, order in as well as out of the human social sphere.[8]

Noah is instructed by God:

> And of all that lives, of all flesh, you shall take two of each into the ark to keep alive with you; they shall be male and female (Gen. 6.19).

Thus, the world begins with male and female—the two basic categories of life. In biblical thought, biological physical differences are gendered, so that sex and gender are meshed together. The world is not just differentiated by genitalia, but by a complex system of gendered rules, behaviors and expectations. This binary system is enforced in the areas of law and ritual. Men and women's dress is legislated differently (Deut. 22.5),[9] individuals whose biological sex is ambiguous are prohibited from entering the sanctuary (Lev. 21.20; Deut. 23.2) and men have privileged access to positions of power. Even the language of sexual activity polarizes men from women: active verbs are consistently used for men while passive verbs describe the woman's role, that is, the penetrator

7. See Ken Stone's 'The Garden of Eden and the Heterosexual Contract', in Robert E. Goss and Mona West (eds.), *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2000), pp. 57-70, in which he demonstrates how Gen. 1–2.4a supports not only binary sexual differentiation but also heterosexuality.

8. Athalya Brenner, *Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and 'Sexuality' in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), p. 132.

9. Brenner observes that the male wearing woman's clothing is the subject of the prohibition and that this signifies that the law addresses not only the prohibition against hybrids, but that the legislation addresses '*male* sexual and social identity' (*Intercourse of Knowledge*, pp. 144-45). Harry A. Hoffner believes this condemnation refers to a pagan fertility rite in which כלי גבר may have referred to symbols associated with this Canaanite practice ('Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity: Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals', *JBL* 85 [1966], pp. 326-34, esp. pp. 333-34).

versus the receptor. The Levitical prohibitions against bestiality use active verbs to describe the man's actions, but a woman is prohibited from making herself available to animals.[10] Thus, men who take a passive role in sex acts violate the prescribed gender norms.[11]

Biblical laws which legislate rigid boundaries between male and female, and narrative texts which espouse a world-view of categories, separations and limitations do not exhaust all the biblical texts that address a gender binary system. Just as the priestly creation text and many pentateuchal laws are predicated on the fact that gender binaries must be legislated and legitimized (because they are inherently unstable), so too a number of prophetic texts work to legitimize, bolster and sustain a system of gender binaries. Such prophetic passages can be found in the book of Ezekiel and, within that book, ch. 16 provides us with one of the most fascinating examples.

1. *Ezekiel and Gender Reversal*

אליעזר אומר אין מפטירין בהודע את ירושלים

'R. Eliezer says: We do not read the chapter, "Cause Jerusalem to know" as the concluding recitation following a Torah reading.'[12] This rabbinic

10. Lev. 18.22; 20.13.

11. Saul Olyan argues that in Lev. 18.22 and 20.13 only the insertive partner is addressed and that 'the receptive partner, very likely viewed as the legal equivalent of a woman, is not addressed directly by these laws' ('"And with a Male You Shall Not Lie the Lying Down of a Woman": On the Meaning and Significance of Leviticus 18.22 and 20.13', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 [1994–95], pp. 179-206 [204]). Cf. MAL, A 19 which deals with false accusations against a male involved in habitual receptive intercourse. MAL, A 20 legislates against an insertive partner between two men of equal status (*tappû*). (See G.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, *The Assyrian Laws* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935], pp. 66-68; G. Cardascia, *Les lois assyriennes* [Paris: Cerf, 1969], p. 68; and Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* [SBLWAW, 6; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995].) For other recent discussions on masculinity and passivity, see Daniel Boyarin, 'Are There Any Jews in the "History of Sexuality"?', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 (1994–95), pp. 333-55, and Michael L. Satlow, '"They Abused Him Like a Woman": Homoeroticism, Gender Blurring, and the Rabbis in Late Antiquity', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 (1994–95), pp. 1-25.

12. *m. Meg.* 4.10. I want to thank Rabbi David Sulomm Stein for bringing to my attention the fact that Maimonides, Abudraham and several contemporary Mizrachi communities have used Ezek. 16.1-13 or 14 as a *haftarah* for the Torah reading *Shemot* and that a student of R. Solomon ibn Adret added 16.60 and 16.62 as well.

statement prohibits the liturgical reading of Ezekiel 16 along with a handful of other texts, including the rape of Tamar and David's seduction of Bathsheba. The rabbis were troubled and embarrassed by these biblical accounts of sexual violence and indiscretion, and they attempted to hide these potentially dangerous texts. This discomfort is shared by critical commentators as well. As G.A. Cooke wrote in his 1936 commentary, 'There is much in this ch[apter] which is repulsive to our taste.'[13] The same sentiment has been expressed regarding the counterpart to ch. 16, Ezekiel 23.

Ezekiel 16 tells a story about an abandoned baby girl, rescued by a man who later marries her and provides her with clothing, food and riches. The bride repays her husband's generosity by seeking other lovers to whom she passes on her riches and gifts. Enraged, the husband punishes his wife through public shaming and physical abuse until she is near death. Seeing his wife humbled and put back in her place, he forgives her adultery and takes her back in love. Of course, in this extended metaphor, the husband is YHWH and the young woman is Jerusalem, that is, the people therein.

Ezekiel bothered the rabbis because of its inconsistencies with Levitical law,[14] because of the visions of the divine throne and, specifically in Ezekiel 16, because of its explicit sexual language and its implication that Israel's roots were heathen.[15] Only the most sophisticated reader could safely enter into the text of Ezekiel. In modern readings of this text, dangers also abound for the unsophisticated reader. An overly simplistic reading of the marital metaphor between God and Israel may lead to the conclusion that a proper husband–wife relationship is one of mastery and submission or that God condones rape as a suitable punishment for female adultery.[16]

This text is not only dangerous for the reasons the rabbis provide, nor is it profoundly disturbing simply because it sanctions domestic violence

13. G.A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2nd edn, 1967 [1936]), p. 160.

14. *b. Shab.* 13b credits Hananiah ben Hezekiah with the reconciliation of Ezekiel's legislation and the Torah, without which the book of Ezekiel would have been 'withdrawn' (נגנז).

15. *b. Meg.* 25a-b.

16. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, 'Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation', in Letty M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 96-107 (107); and Naomi Graetz, *Silence Is Deadly: Judaism Confronts Wifebeating* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Press, 1998), pp. 35-52.

and misogyny. Ezekiel 16 reflects a voice of desperation which can make its reader nervous and anxious. Ezekiel 16 demolishes a structure only to rebuild it with ever more reinforcement: the prophet's words put into question fundamental gender categories and provide a glimpse of a non-polarized gender system only to designate that system 'chaotic' and to reassert the dominant view with a greater vigor. In this book I argue that gender reversal is the backbone against which Ezekiel 16 can be understood. In this regard, Ezekiel 16 stands as a unique text among the marital metaphor texts, including Ezekiel 23. In Ezekiel 23, we do not find the gender reversals that are subtly at play in Ezekiel 16.

The starting point of Ezekiel's theology was his experience of exile. Ezekiel had to find a way to make sense of this calamity. He responded to this situation as a prophet and a priest (1.3). Ezekiel plays on the priestly notions of boundaries and the overstepping of those boundaries. As Ezekiel tells us, the role of the priest is to:

> Declare to my people what is sacred and what is profane, and inform them what is clean and what is unclean. In lawsuits, too, it is they who shall act as judges; they shall decide them in accordance with my rules. They shall preserve my teachings and my laws regarding all my fixed occasions; and they shall maintain the sanctity of my sabbaths (44.23-24).

In ch. 16, the boundary issue around which Ezekiel focuses is not holy/ profane or pure/impure, but rather male/female.

Ezekiel 16 is about an exploration of gender ambiguities and reversals. Read in this light, wife Jerusalem's wrongdoing does not just concern political and religious matters and it is not just about unfaithfulness. The abomination of 'wife Jerusalem' is that she is attempting to pass for a male (i.e. aggressive, independent), that she is crossing gender boundaries and upsetting the world order. In other words, Ezekiel constructs a metaphor whereby the Judean/exilic male community poses as a female (personified Jerusalem) who in turn passes for a male (independent and aggressive). The claim that Israel's sin is not just a matter of being unfaithful to her husband, but also of subverting the defined roles within that relationship, shifts our perspective of the chapter in a subtle but significant manner. This story is one of confused gender scripts, ensuing chaos and a reordering through the reinforcement of strictly defined gender scripts.

Ezekiel's marriage metaphor brings the polemic against Jerusalem to a new level. Idolatry, polluting the Temple and political alliances are more than covenant breaking, more than sins which play themselves out in the arena of history; Judah's transgressions upset the cosmic order and throw

it into disarray, turning male into female and female into male. However, Ezekiel does not invoke traditional mythological motifs or language like YHWH's cosmic battle with a chaos monster to express this cosmic disorder.[17] Rather, the prophet accomplishes this through a masterful aggregation of priestly thinking and covenant theology wrapped in the packaging of the marriage metaphor.

Almost every historical-critical reader of this text ascribes Jerusalem's sins to making foreign alliances that involve swearing oaths of loyalty to the superpowers, to defiling the Temple through syncretistic practices and to failing to acknowledge God as the sole overlord and provider.[18] However, I believe that Ezekiel's understanding of Israel's wrongdoing is far more complex and subtle. Ezekiel's writings suggest a state of chaos so severe that only a defiance of corresponding magnitude could account for the consequences.

In the following interpretation, I argue that Ezekiel, albeit unconsciously, uses metaphor as an arena in which to express gender anxiety. Let me be clear: I am *not* claiming that the metaphor does not function as a powerful rhetorical technique in which the prophet sends a radical message to his community, but, rather, that there is also a subtext embedded in the metaphor and that an awareness of that subtext deepens the power of the metaphor. I am also *not* suggesting that this gender anxiety has any connection to sex identity or to sexual orientation. In this analysis, I am dealing specifically with the ways in which a number of 'normative' gender scripts[19] are threatened by the traumas of the invasion

17. Contra the other exilic prophet, Deutero-Isaiah, cf. Isa. 27.1; 51.9-10. The book of Ezekiel is not without its mythic elements. Jon D. Levenson has pointed to the mythic allusions in chs. 40–48 regarding the cosmic mountain (*Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48* [HSM, 10; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1975]). Ezekiel's vision of Gog and Magog (chs. 38–39) certainly includes mythic elements. See also the reference to the 'great dragon' in 29.3 and 32.4-6. For the mythic character of the Tyre oracle, see A. Williams, 'The Mythological Background of Ezekiel 28.12-19', *BTB* 6 (1976), pp. 49-61. Steven S. Tuell, 'Ezekiel 47.1-12 and Gen 2.10-14', in William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr. (eds.), *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 171-89, argues that Ezekiel invokes the myth of Eden.

18. For example, see Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 1–24* (trans. R.E. Clements; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), esp. pp. 339-49; Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), esp. pp. 486-98.

19. Lorber (*Paradoxes of Gender*, pp. 30-31) breaks down gender into sixteen separate components. The particular components of gender with which I am interested are: gender statuses: 'the socially recognized genders in a society and the

of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile, and how Ezekiel not only expresses and explores the threat through metaphor but also how he restores order to the chaos of gender ambiguity.

Given this frame of reference, Ezekiel 16 is not simply an expression of covenant theology in the packaging of a marital metaphor. Rather, this text is about the collision between an image of God as the sustainer of order and the reality of chaos. Gender is used to express this crisis because gender was considered to be one of the most absolute expressions of God's ordering of the universe through distinctions and separations. A king may be overthrown by his subjects and a son may rebel against his father, but men must always be men and women must be women.

In Ezekiel 16, the character God represents an ideal world of clear definitions and boundaries, while wife Jerusalem represents a world without clear demarcations. She embodies both male and female qualities, showing herself to be both powerful and powerless. The writer wants us to side with God and his particular understanding of order, and to condemn the fluidity of the wife's behaviors. But, in fact, in the process of composing the text of Ezekiel 16, the writer reveals that the fluidity that the wife represents is in fact reality. Ezekiel, especially as a priest, cannot admit to a world in which chaos plays a valid role in the universe, but this text does highlight the constant tension between an ideal world in which everything is black and white and the shades of gray in real life experience.

2. *Preliminary Considerations*

In order to construct a compelling argument that gender reversal is at the heart of Ezekiel 16 and, more importantly, that Ezekiel understands

norms and expectations for their enactment behaviorally, gesturally, linguistically, emotionally, and physically'; gendered personalities: 'the combination of traits patterned by gender norms of how members of different gender statuses are supposed to feel and behave'; gender ideology: 'the justification of gender statuses, particularly, their differential evaluation. The dominant ideology tends to suppress criticism by making these evaluations seem natural'; gender identity: 'the individual's sense of gendered self as a worker and family member'; gendered processes: 'the social practices of learning...developing a gender identity, "doing gender" as a member of a gender status in relationship with gendered others, acting deferent or dominant'; gender display: 'presentation of self as a certain kind of gendered person through dress, cosmetics, adornments, and permanent and reversible body markers'.

gender roles within the framework of a broader theology of exile, several working assumptions must be articulated in reference to methodology, current and prior scholarship on Ezekiel 16 and the relationship of Ezekiel 16 to the book of Ezekiel as a whole.

a. *Composition and Dating*

My hypothesis rests on a few assumptions regarding the book of Ezekiel. First of all, I assume that the prophet Ezekiel or a similar person represented by the character Ezekiel lived and prophesied during the first part of the Babylonian Exile. Thus, the writings offer us a first-hand account of the tragedies and chaos of the late sixth century BCE. Secondly, I assume that the overwhelming majority of passages in the book are attributable to Ezekiel and that the book has an internal coherence and logic. These assumptions stand on solid ground, if not modern consensus, given the history of scholarship on the book of Ezekiel.

Modern critical analyses of Ezekiel can be divided into three periods: pre-1924, 1924–82 and 1983 to the present. Around the turn of the twentieth century, most biblicists postulated the integrity of Ezekiel based on its schematic arrangement and coherence of themes and idioms, such as balanced structure, uniformity of language and the consistency in the character of the prophet. Henry A. Redpath's statement is typical of the times: 'Scarcely any doubt has ever been cast even by the extremest critics upon the unity and authenticity of the book, though a few glosses and interpretative words or notes may have found their way into the text.'[20] And Rudolf Smend went so far as to say: 'The whole book is rather the logical development of a set of thoughts following a well-conceived and quite schematic plan; one could not remove a piece without destroying the whole ensemble.'[21] In other words, he claimed that the book is such a logical unity that to remove even one section would ruin its internal cohesion.[22]

20. Henry Redpath, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel with Introduction and Notes* (WC; New York: Gorham, 1907), p. xiv.

21. Rudolf Smend, *Der Prophet Ezechiel für die zweite Auflage erklärt* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 2nd edn, 1880), pp. xxi-xxii. 'Das ganze Buch ist vielmehr die logische Entwicklung einer Reihe von Gedanken nach einem wohlüberlegten und Z. Th. ganz schematischen Plane, man könnte kein Stück herausnehmen ohne das ganze Ensemble zu zerstören.'

22. See also George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 198: 'no other book of the

In 1924, 'there began to rise clouds on the critical horizon'.[23] With the publication of Gustav Hölscher's *Hesekiel: Der Dichter und das Buch*,[24] the tide turned and a new generation of scholars began questioning the unity of the book.[25] This new current of research deflected all interest in the literary aspects of the book of Ezekiel. Suspicions began with discrepancies in the dates and chronological inconsistencies and with apparent repetitions between and within chapters. Then Hölscher threw initial claims of unity into total disarray. Influenced by the current assumption of his day that biblical prophecies were delivered in poetical form, in addition to other criteria such as duplication or standard prophetic genres, Hölscher concluded that only a fraction (one eighth) of the book was authentically Ezekiel.[26] W.A. Irwin came to similar conclusions in 1943;[27] his was the last serious attempt to develop criteria by which to determine genuine Ezekielian oracles.

Old Testament is distinguished by such decisive marks of unity of authorship and integrity as this'. William Frederick Lofthouse (*Israel after the Exile, Sixth and Fifth Centuries, B.C.* [Clarendon Bible; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928], p. 64) describes the book of Ezekiel as the 'most symmetrical and the best arranged'.

23. H. Wheeler Robinson, *Two Hebrew Prophets: Studies in Hosea and Ezekiel* (London: Lutterworth, 1948), p. 71.

24. Gustav Hölscher, *Hesekiel: Der Dichter und das Buch* (BZAW, 39; Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1924).

25. William Irwin (*The Problem of Ezekiel: An Inductive Study* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943], p. 5) cites a 1798 study in the *Monthly Magazine and British Register* in which an anonymous author questions the integrity of the book in the context of a critique of Eichhorn. Additionally, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Richard Kraetzschmar published his commentary on Ezekiel, *Das Buch Ezechiel übersetzt und erklärt* (HKAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900), in which he suggested two recensions of the book, based primarily upon an analysis of duplicates. This was one of the earliest major commentaries to question the integrity of the book of Ezekiel.

26. Hölscher found an impressive following for his basic conclusions. For a comprehensive review of the literature, see Harold Henry Rowley, 'The Book of Ezekiel in Modern Study', *BJRL* 36 (1953–54), pp. 146-90 (reprinted in Harold Henry Rowley, *Men of God: Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy* [London: Thomas Nelson, 1963], pp. 169-210); Shalom Spiegel, 'Ezekiel or Pseudo-Ezekiel?', *HTR* 24 (1931), pp. 245-321. There remained an uninterrupted stream of objection to this breakdown of the general integrity of the book; see, e.g., Lofthouse, *Israel after the Exile*, p. 68, who says: 'to cut away most of the book, in the absence of direct evidence for its lateness, can hardly be called scientific criticism'. Cf. also Cooke, *Ezekiel*.

27. Irwin, *Problem of Ezekiel*.

The highly arbitrary nature of Hölscher's and his followers' enterprise, combined with the extreme conclusions to which they arrived, paved the road for the monumental work of Walther Zimmerli. In a two volume commentary, published in 1969, Zimmerli steered Ezekiel scholarship in a slightly different direction by approaching the book as the work of a school of Ezekiel disciples:[28] 'we cannot overlook the phenomenon of a "school of the prophet", which edited the prophecies of Ezekiel, commented upon them, and gave them a fuller theological exposition'.[29] He refined prior form-critical approaches seeking to analyze various speech forms.[30] In the end, Zimmerli attributes most of the book to the prophet Ezekiel with some later additions by his disciples.[31]

Concurrent to debates regarding the authenticity of the prophecies, a number of scholars began exploring complications regarding the dating of the book. These scholars, for the most part, believed that the book was essentially a unity, but that it was not produced during the Babylonian Exile.[32] The research of Scottish scholar James Smith[33] led him to suggest that the author was a seventh-century northern prophet who was carried off into exile in 693, in the 'thirteenth year' after 722, and that later redactors modified the material to represent Judean concerns.[34] Charles Cutler Torrey brought this

28. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, pp. 68-74.

29. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, p. 70.

30. Ellen F. Davis criticizes Zimmerli for neglecting the *Sitz im Leben* for his reconstructed speech forms (*Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* [JSOTSup, 78; Bible and Literature, 21; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989], pp. 16-18).

31. Cf. Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (WBC, 28; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1994) and *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC, 29; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), who posits three distinct layers of editorial work within the exilic period.

32. As early as 1832, Leopold Zunz produced studies in which he collected what he believed to be anachronisms in the book that pointed to a post-exilic dating for the book in his *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge den Juden historisch entwickelt* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1832), pp. 157-62. Carl Friedrich Keil immediately rejected Zunz's theories stating, 'his arguments are entirely superficial, and can prove nothing' (*Manual of Historico-Critical Introduction to the Canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988 (1869)], p. 362).

33. James Smith, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: A New Interpretation* (London: SPCK; New York: Macmillan, 1931).

34. Smith's main points are that Ezekiel's oracles regarding Jerusalem do not fit post-Josianic practices, that a number of oracles presume a setting in Palestine, that references to the 'House of Israel' must refer to the Northern Kingdom, and that in this regard, the theophany of ch. 1 is a polemic against Judahites who believed that YHWH resided in Jerusalem alone.

discussion to the limelight in his study *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy*.[35] Inspired by his desire to discredit the historicity of the Babylonian Exile, Torrey claimed that the book of Ezekiel was a 'pseudepigraph' written after Alexander's conquest of the Levant as a polemic against Samaritan claims to Mt Gerizim. Torrey's work induced a host of studies positing various settings and dates for the book, including conjectures that Ezekiel's career was entirely in Palestine and theories dividing the prophet's career between Jerusalem and Babylonia.[36]

In the period after the Second World War, there were responses from a number of scholars reasserting a setting in the Babylonian Exile. Harry M. Orlinsky asserted: 'Reading the book of Ezekiel with no preconceived ideas, the initial call in Babylonia becomes perfectly clear and normal.'[37] Mullo Weir offered a convincing point-by-point refutation of Torrey's claims.[38] By 1953, after the publication of Weir's work, the majority of

35. Charles Cutler Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* (repr. with critical articles by Shalom Spiegel and Charles Cutler Torrey and a prolegomenon by Moshe Greenberg; New York: Ktav, 1970 [1930]).

36. Regarding a two-tiered career in Jerusalem and Babylon, cf. Volkmar Herntrich, *Ezechielprobleme* (BZAW, 61; Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1933); Alfred Bertholet and Kurt Galling, *Hesekiel* (HAT, 13; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1936), esp. pp. vii-xxi; cf. also Robinson, *Hebrew Prophets*, esp. pp. 75-79, and Robert Henry Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 3rd edn, 1941), pp. 534-43. George Ricker Berry ('Was Ezekiel in the Exile?', *JBL* 49 [1930], pp. 83-93), among others, argued for Ezekiel's career situated wholly in Judah. He bases his argument on three reasons: (1) messages of doom would be unnecessary in exile; (2) Ezekiel addresses the prophecies to the 'House of Israel', a title inappropriate for an exilic community, let alone Judah; and (3) Berry claims no evidence of influence from the Babylonian environment. For a fuller review of the literature, cf. Rowley, 'Book of Ezekiel in Modern Study'. For a more recent review, see Joachim Becker, 'Ez 8–11 als enheitliche Komposition in einem pseudepigraphische Ezechielbuch', in J. Lust (ed.), *Ezekiel and his Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and their Interrelation* (BETL, 74; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), pp. 136-50.

37. Harry M. Orlinsky, 'Where did Ezekiel Receive the Call to Prophesy?', *BASOR* 122 (1951), pp. 34-36 (35).

38. Mullo Weir, 'Aspects of the Book of Ezekiel', *VT* 2 (1952), pp. 97-112. Cf. also Spiegel, 'Ezekiel or Pseudo-Ezekiel?'; Carl Gordon Howie, *The Date and Composition of Ezekiel* (SBLMS, 4; Philadelphia: SBL Press, 1950); Georg Fohrer, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel* (BZAW, 72; Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1952); John Battersby Harford, *Studies in the Book of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), esp. pp. 30-53. For a brief, but more recent refutation, cf. Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (JSOTSup, 51; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), pp. 21-31.

scholars rejected the initial claims of Torrey and his followers, and a general consensus began to return the book of Ezekiel to Ezekiel.

The newest trend in Ezekiel studies, and the one that has most powerfully informed the present work, was introduced in 1983 with the publication of Moshe Greenberg's first volume of the new Anchor Bible Ezekiel commentary. Influenced by the burgeoning interest in literary approaches to biblical literature, Greenberg challenged the dominant approaches to Ezekiel studies vis-à-vis composition. Greenberg is more interested in the book as a unity than an amalgam of editorial hands. He concerns himself with stylistic conventions and how the form communicates meaning. What makes his work one of the great contributions of this era is that he does not wholly disregard historical questions nor original contexts. The synchronic and diachronic weave together in a beautiful tapestry of commentary.

Greenberg's arguments for unity and for greater attention to the literary techniques of the ancient writer, along with growing attention to the literary aspects of the Bible, have given rise to a new direction of studies on the book of Ezekiel.[39] As Lawrence Boadt has recently written:

> Our efforts at this time need to be concentrated on working with the finished text of Ezekiel as it is, first to investigate whether there really is artistic and compositional unity in individual passages that can offer an alternative to the chopped up text proposed by form criticism.[40]

A number of scholars of the past decade have written on the literary characteristics of the book of Ezekiel, including focused studies on Ezekiel's

39. The holistic approach does not have a monopoly on the direction of Ezekiel research in contemporary scholarship. Joachim Becker is a current advocate of Torrey's approach ('Erwägungen zur ezechielischen Frage', in Lothar Ruppert, P. Weimar and E. Zenger [eds.], *Künder des Wortes: Beiträge zur Theologie der Propheten* [Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1982], pp. 137-49, and 'Ez 8–11'. Karl-Friedrich Pohlman, *Ezechielstudien: Zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Buches und zur Frage nach den älttesten Texten* (BZAW, 202; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1992), and Jörg Garscha, *Studien zum Ezechielbuch: Eine redactionskeitische Untersuching von Ez 1–39* (Europäische Hochschulschriften, 23; Bern: Peter Lang, 1974), follow in the tradition of Hölscher, arguing that only minute sections of the book are authentic. Compare Ian Duguid's observation that Ezekiel studies defy trends (*Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel* [VTSup, 56; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994], pp. 3-9) with Joyce's description of current research as a 'polarization' in 'two divergent directions' (*Divine Initiative*, pp. 28-31).

40. Lawrence Boadt, 'Rhetorical Strategies in Ezekiel's Oracles of Judgement', in Lust (ed.), *Ezekiel and his Book*, p. 185.

use of metaphor. Ian Duguid's work on leadership communities in Ezekiel leads him to the conclusion that Ezekiel is a basic unity and substantially a product of the exile.[41] Lawrence Boadt's work is based on the premise that the book of Ezekiel is a unity and merits holistic literary approaches.[42] Shemaryahu Talmon and Michael Fishbane have jointly and independently revealed an interest in synchronic readings of the book.[43]

Other significant studies that point to new directions in Ezekiel research include the work of Ellen Davis[44] who argues, utilizing a 'functional approach', that Ezekiel was the first prophet to compose his prophecies in writing and not in oral presentation. Davis asserts that the text does not have its origins in oral tradition; rather, it exhibits elements of an 'archival' nature witnessed through features such as the frequency of dates and dependence on tradition. She sees in Ezekiel the transformation of prophecy into a written, fixed record; moreover, she evaluates this transformation as a creative process, not simply an act of preservation in the face of crisis. Most relevant for this study is Davis's acknowledgment that many of the less understood features of Ezekiel, like the extreme sign-actions and elaborate metaphors, can be understood as effective *literary devices*.

Julie Galambush's study, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife*,[45] incorporates both literary and historical-critical approaches in its analysis of the book of Ezekiel. Clearly indebted to the work of Moshe Greenberg, Galambush opts for a mostly holistic reading of her central texts, attempting to find meaning through the rhetorical and metaphorical aspects of the texts.

My approach to the book of Ezekiel in this study follows Greenberg's line. I precede from the hypothesis that, whether every passage is truly Ezekielian or the product of his disciples' redactional activities, the contradictions within the text are not significant enough to be of concern

41. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, pp. 142-43.

42. Boadt, 'Rhetorical Strategies', pp. 182-200.

43. Shemaryahu Talmon, 'Literary Structuring in the Book of Ezekiel', *Bet Mikra* 68 (1975), pp. 315-27 (Hebrew); Shemaryahu Talmon and Michael Fishbane, 'The Structuring of Biblical Books: Studies in the Book of Ezekiel', *ASTI* 10 (1975–76), pp. 129-53; Michael Fishbane, 'Sin and Judgment in the Prophecies of Ezekiel', *Int* 38 (1984), pp. 131-50.

44. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*.

45. Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (SBLDS, 130; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992).

here.[46] Most of the texts, and chs. 16 and 23 in particular, whether authored by the prophet Ezekiel or one of his students, or by a redactor, are cohesive texts with their own internal logic whose literary settings are the book as a whole and whose historical settings are the condition of Exile in Babylonia.

b. *Approaches to Ezekiel 16 and 23*

While I contend that Ezekiel 16 and 23 are radically different in their construction of gender, these two chapters have usually been paired together because on the surface they both use the marital metaphor. Therefore this section will consider methodological and ideological approaches to both chapters. Interpretations of Ezekiel 16 and 23 differ vastly in methodology and content depending on one's entry point into the text. Three primary scholarly positions have determined the course of study of these texts: traditional Ezekiel commentators, feminist readers and covenant theologians.

I believe that the best way to investigate why and how the marital metaphor is used in the book of Ezekiel is by combining the questions of traditional Ezekiel scholars, feminists and covenant theologians. Like the commentators, I am interested in Ezekiel's theological world-view, but I understand that world-view to include culture (including gender) and not just politics and religion. It is generally accepted that Ezekiel lived in a time of enormous political, social and religious upheaval. What has not received its due attention is the cultural trauma and its consequences for gender identity which must have ensued as a result of the massive changes of his generation. That cultural trauma, voiced in Ezekiel's marriage metaphor, is far deeper and more complex than what has been depicted in scholarship. Like covenant theologians, I believe that we must consider the biblical and extra-biblical sources from which Ezekiel developed his own metaphors. As a feminist, I take gender as a category of analysis seriously and set it at center stage. This means that I am questioning the use of 'male' and 'female' to describe the relationship between God and Israel. That the

46. 'While significant diachronic change in the text is at many points probable, a strong reading should render the text synchronically intelligible at every stage of development. That is, while a passage may have been elaborated in such a way as to enhance or to alter its earlier meaning thereby perhaps introducing ambiguities and tensions, nonetheless it is assumed that the general intention and effect of these changes was to produce a meaningful text' (Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p. 26).

specific configuration of this gender expression is marriage is very important, yet secondary to the more fundamental fact of gender.

1. *Traditional Commentators.* The predominant approach to Ezekiel 16 and 23 is guided by the question: how does the prophet Ezekiel understand his people's wrongdoings and how does he view God in relationship to the people of Israel? This question is essentially theological and is posed by traditional historical-critical commentators. These writers emphasize Ezekiel's portrayal of the forgiving nature of God, even in those cases where the sins are extreme.[47] Zimmerli's position is representative of commentators:

> When a person takes possession of God's gift and no longer thinks of the Giver, then the very beauty of the chosen ones, which itself comes from the hand of God, becomes a means of disgrace... The announcement of judgment stands over such degenerate behavior on the part of God's people, who prostitute themselves to the religious (vv16ff) or political (vv26ff) ruler of the world in order to gain their own ends...the prophet affirms that the attack of the powers of 'the world' upon the people of God is not a blind act of fate and a failure on the side of God, but must be regarded as a judgment...[48]

In addition to the theological question is a concern to identify the historical referents in the passages.[49] Thus for scholars such as A.B. Davidson, D.M.G. Stalker and J.B. Taylor, ch. 16 provides a history of the city of Jerusalem from the time of David's conquest, and Jerusalem's Canaanite origins refer to the fact that Jerusalem had been a Jebusite fortress prior to David's arrival.[50] By contrast, Greenberg, following the

47. See, for example, Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (IBC; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990); M.G. Swanepoel, 'Ezekiel 16: Abandoned Child, Bride Adorned or Unfaithful Wife?', in Philip R. Davies and David J.A. Clines (eds.), *Among the Prophets: Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings* (JSOTSup, 144; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 84-104.

48. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, p. 349.

49. See, for example, A.B. Davidson, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1892); D.M.G. Stalker, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary* (TBC; London: SCM Press, 1968); John Bernard Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; London: Tyndale Press, 1969).

50. Davidson, *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 104; Stalker, *Ezekiel*, pp. 137-38; Taylor, *Ezekiel*, p. 133; so too Ronald E. Clements, *Ezekiel* (WBC; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), p. 73; Redpath, *Ezekiel*, p. 69. Taylor, e.g., asserts that the betrothal and covenant promise refer to the age of David and Solomon.

Targum, asserts that the historical review begins with the patriarchs and that the covenant promise refers to the Wilderness period and the event at Mt Sinai.[51]

2. *Feminist Readers.* A second entry point into Ezekiel 16 is via feminist critiques that condemn the 'pornographic' and sexist aspects of the text.[52] For these scholars, Ezekiel 16 is not examined within the context of the book of Ezekiel, but within the context of Hosea 1–3, Jeremiah 2–3, Ezekiel 23 and other prophetic passages that personify a city as an adulterous woman or prostitute. In 1985, Drorah Setel published 'Prophets and Pornography'[53] in one of the first collections of feminist approaches to biblical interpretation. Her starting point is 1970's feminist critique of pornography. Relying mainly on the analyses of Andrea Dworkin, she defines pornographic texts as those which: (1) describe female sexuality negatively in relationship to a neutral male standard; (2) involve the public humiliation of women; (3) portray female sexuality as an object of male possession and control. She points out that pornography essentially asserts male dominance by 'misnaming' female sexual experience and objectifying it through male lenses. This article established a new paradigm for feminist studies of prophetic texts and, in particular, the

51. Blenkinsopp suggests that the 'time of love' refers to the covenant promise given to the patriarchs, specifically as presented in Gen. 17 (*Ezekiel*, p. 78), while John William Wevers (*Ezekiel* [NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969]) maintains that there is no mention of any history prior to David's capture of Jerusalem. Walther Eichrodt does not assign each element of the metaphor to a specific historical event, but he does take v. 3 literally, 'Jerusalem actually did possess a heathen past'. He continues by amassing evidence regarding Israel's roots among the Canaanites and the presence of Hittite and Amorite peoples in the land at the time (*Ezekiel: A Commentary* [trans. C. Quinn; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970], p. 204). Davidson states: 'The passage is an allegorical description of the early history of the family of Israel, their struggles for existence in Canaan, their descent into Egypt, the oppressions suffered there, and the Lord's care and protection of them' (*Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 103).

52. See especially the collection of essays found in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). See also T. Drorah Setel, 'Prophets and Pornography: Female Sexual Imagery in Hosea', in Letty M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 86-95; Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (OBT; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg-Fortress Press, 1995).

53. Setel, 'Prophets and Pornography', pp. 86-95.

marital metaphor. With regard to biblical literature, Setel argues that the prophets 'seem to be the first to use objectified female sexuality as a symbol of evil'.[54] She further notes that the marriage metaphor in Hosea serves both theological and social functions. Theologically, God has authority and possession of Israel as a husband does over a wife. Socially, Hosea 1–3 present the female as dependent upon male support, especially for food and clothing. 'The underlying implication is that males nurture females, a reversal of (at least certain aspects of) social reality.'[55] Setel's work marks a turning point in a number of ways. Prior to her work, the primary question was: what are the mythological and theological antecedents from within and outside of Israel that gave rise to Hosea's metaphor? Setel adds the questions: what is the social and cultural background of the metaphor and how does the metaphor serve a patriarchal world-view?

Athalya Brenner's *Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* devotes a section of articles to the 'pornographic' representation of women through the marital metaphor in Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.[56] Each study uses as its basis Setel's definition of pornography (even when unacknowledged). Each scholar attempts to analyze a biblical text through the lens of modern definitions of pornography. Thus Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes and Brenner conclude that the texts reflect and further male pornographic sexual fantasies which are ultimately harmful for women.[57]

J. Cheryl Exum also points to the bind in which female readers find themselves:

> On the one hand we are asked to sympathize with God and identify with his point of view. To the extent we do so, we read these texts against our own interests. On the other hand, by definition we are identified with the object that elicits scorn and abuse.[58]

54. Setel, 'Prophets and Pornography', p. 86.

55. Setel, 'Prophets and Pornography', p. 92.

56. See also the more recent reflection of Athalya Brenner in her 'Pornoprophetics Revisited: Some Additional Reflections', in Brenner, *Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Desire and 'Sexuality' in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 153-74.

57. Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, 'The Metaphorization of Woman in Prophetic Speech: An Analysis of Ezekiel 23', *VT* 43 (1993), pp. 162-70 (reprinted in Brenner [ed.], *Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets*, pp. 244-55); Athalya Brenner, 'On Prophetic Propaganda and the Politics of "Love": The Case of Jeremiah', in Brenner (ed.), *Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets*, pp. 256-74.

58. J. Cheryl Exum, 'Prophetic Pornography', in J. Cheryl Exum, *Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women* (JSOTSup, 215; Gender,

Exum's entry point into the texts is via the ethical question. She asks at the outset: 'How should we respond to these offensive prophetic texts, and what is our responsibility as readers and consumers of these violent images?'[59] Exum draws parallels between prophetic texts of biblical violence against women and patterns of domestic violence. Unsatisfied with simply critiquing the text and its interpreters, Exum stays true to her convictions that biblicists must be held responsible for their interpretations, and she seeks to develop strategies by which these texts can be confronted. She calls for a continued 'attention to the differing claims these texts make upon their male and female readers'.[60] She demands that we expose 'prophetic pornography for what it is' and own the fact that God is a sexual abuser in these texts.[61]

3. *Covenant Theologians.* Finally, Ezekiel 16 is of interest to scholars who study the origins and nature of the marital metaphor as it relates to covenant theology. The marriage metaphor has commanded attention from contemporary theologians, feminists, students of the prophetic books and researchers on biblical covenant theology. For many, the metaphor is deeply compelling for it 'expresses the intense emotionality of the divine–human relationship' and it 'aptly conveys a sense of the mutuality, intimacy, and turbulence in the relationship between human and divine'.[62] Opinions regarding the origins of the marital metaphor are as varied as the visceral responses to this image. The metaphor appears first in the initial chapters of the book of Hosea. Given the first attestation of the marriage metaphor there, it is no surprise that scholars center their discussion of origins on the text of Hosea 1–3.[63] There are three primary

Culture, Theory, 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 101-128 (103) (repr. from 'The Ethics of Biblical Violence against Women', in John W. Rogerson, Margaret Davies and M. Daniel Carroll [eds.], *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium* [JSOTSup, 207; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], pp. 248-71).

59. Exum, 'Prophetic Pornography', p. 102.

60. Exum, 'Prophetic Pornography', p. 122.

61. Exum, 'Prophetic Pornography', p. 124. In the same year, Julie Galambush's study on the role of Jerusalem in the book of Ezekiel (*Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*) was published and Kathryn Pfisterer Darr ('Ezekiel's Justifications of God: Teaching Troubling Texts', *JSOT* 55 [1992], pp. 97-117) wrote on the challenges of addressing problematic texts such as the marital metaphor in the classroom.

62. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddess* (New York: Free Press, 1992), p. 144.

63. The literature on Hos. 1–3 is vast. See, e.g., Robert Gordis, 'Hosea's Marriage

theories of origins: sacred marriage, city as female and biblical covenant theology.

A number of scholars suggest that the source for Hosea's marriage metaphor may derive from Canaanite religion. In the 1970s Hans Walter Wolff brought this position to the foreground. In his commentary,[64] he claims that Hosea developed his idea of a marriage between a god and people from his Canaanite neighbors who engaged in sexual initiation rites, that is, the *hieros gamos*. Hosea is commanded to take a 'wife of harlotry' (אשׁת זנונים) as his wife (Hos. 1.2). Wolff argues that this plural abstract designation denotes the status of an Israelite woman engaged in sacred prostitution. Similarly, F.C. Fensham writes that Hosea's wife Gomer 'had partaken in cultic prostitution before her marriage'.[65] Helmer Ringgren also assumes a hidden polemic against the Canaanite *hieros gamos*: 'it seems probable that it has developed in competition with and in polemic against a form of religion in which there was a goddess who was the object of *hieros gamos* ceremonies'.[66]

However, the notion of sacred prostitutes in the ancient Near East has come under considerable fire in the last couple of decades. The work of Rivkah Harris has shown that the *nadītu* were religious functionaries and were not engaged in prostitution for the temples with which they were

Marriage and Message: A New Approach', *HUCA* 25 (1954), pp. 9-35; Leroy Waterman, 'Hosea, Chapters 1–3, in Retrospect and Prospect', *JNES* 14 (1955), pp. 100-109; James Luther Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969); Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Jorg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea übersetzt und erklärt* (ATD, 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, rev. edn, 1983); Gale A. Yee, 'Hosea', in Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 195-202; Brigitte Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden von Gott im Hoseabuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Yvonne Sherwood, *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Hosea's Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective* (JSOTSup, 212; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996).

64. Wolff, *Hosea*, pp. 12-15.

65. F.C. Fensham, 'The Marriage Metaphor in Hosea for the Covenant Relationship between the Lord and his People', *JNSL* 12 (1984), pp. 71-78 (71).

66. Helmer Ringgren, 'The Marriage Metaphor in Israelite Religion', in Patrick D. Miller, Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride (eds.), *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 421-28 (427). See Helgard Balz-Cochois, *Gomer: Der Hohenkult-Israels im Selbstverständnis der Volksfrommigkeit* (Europäische Hochschulschriften, 23; Bern: Peter Lang, 1982), for a more comprehensive exploration of this theory.

affiliated.[67] Similarly, it has been demonstrated that the *ḫarīmtu* and probably the *kezertu* were common prostitutes and not associated with any cult practices.[68] Astour[69] argues that the *qadištu* was a temple prostitute, but Mayer Gruber, after a comprehensive examination of relevant sources, concludes regarding the *qadištu* and the Hebrew קדשה that 'there is no evidence either that the Akkadian *qadištu* was a prostitute or that Hebrew קדשה was a cultic functionary'.[70] Similar challenges have emerged questioning the existence of the *hieros gamos* in Ugaritic mythology.[71]

Other scholars have sought the origins of the marital metaphor through the motif of the 'city as a female'.[72] This metaphor, in all of its permutations, has been studied primarily in light of ancient Near Eastern city mythology. In 1972, A. Fitzgerald argued that the West Semitic evidence demonstrates that capital cities were viewed as goddesses who were

67. Rivkah Harris, 'The Case of Three Babylonian Marriage Contracts', *JNES* 33 (1974), pp. 363-67; 'The Naditu Woman', in Robert D. Biggs and J.A. Brinkman (eds.), *Studies from the Workshop of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim* (University of Chicago Oriental Society; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 106-34; see also Bernard F. Batto's *Studies on Women at Mari* (JHNES; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

68. Cf. Johannes Renger, 'Untersuchungen zum Priestertum in der altbabylonischen Zeit', *ZA* 58 (1967), pp. 110-88; Edwin Yamauchi, 'Cultic Prostitution: A Case Study in Cultural Diffusion', in Harry A. Hoffner (ed.), *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon* (AOAT, 22; Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker, 1973), pp. 213-22.

69. Michael C. Astour, 'Tamar the Hierodule: An Essay in the Method of Vestigal Motifs', *JBL* 85 (1966), pp. 185-96.

70. Mayer Gruber, 'Hebrew *qᵉdēšāh* and her Canaanite and Akkadian Cognates', *UF* 18 (1986), pp. 133-48 (133) (repr. in Mayer Gruber, *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies* [South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, 57; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992], pp. 17-47); cf. also Karel van der Toorn, 'Female Prostitution in Payment of Vows in Ancient Israel', *JBL* 108 (1989), pp. 193-205, and Karel van der Toorn, 'Prostitution (Cultic)', in *ABD*, V, pp. 510-13; Joan Goodnick Westenholz, 'Tamar, *Qedesha*, *Qadishtu* and Sacred Prostitution in Mesopotamia', *HTR* 82 (1989), pp. 245-65; Elaine June (Goodfriend) Adler, 'The Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage in the Hebrew Bible' (PhD dissertation; University of California, 1989), pp. 168-85. Paul E. Dion assumes that cult prostitution did exist in ancient Israel, but that by the time of the Chronicler, the קדשה texts were suppressed so that the LXX did not understand the word anymore; cf. 'Did Cultic Prostitution Fall into Oblivion during the Postexilic Era? Some Evidence from Chronicles and the Septuagint', *CBQ* 43 (1981), pp. 41-48.

71. Adler, 'Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage', pp. 131-44.

72. Much of the scholarship has centered on the syntax of בתולת בת ציון and

married to the patron god of that city and that the biblical motif of the city as a woman was based on this West Semitic concept. The biblical writers appropriated and demythologized the imagery, so that the capital city was personified as a queen married to YHWH and any betrayal of YHWH was considered adultery.[73] Elaine Follis examined daughter imagery in light of Hellenistic divine daughter concepts.[74] More recently, Mark E. Biddle has argued that a similar construct holds in Mesopotamia where a city god's consort is the city itself.[75] Among all these scholars, there is an almost unstated assumption that the source of all prophetic gender-specific metaphors is rooted in the larger mythology of the city as goddess. Fitzgerald claims that: 'the personification of capital cities and the prophets' use of the adultery image are...closely related', and Biddle, criticizing the work of feminist scholars who focus on the oppressive status of Jerusalem as a woman, claims that:

> Central to all such depictions of Jerusalem, however, is the personification of the city as woman; evaluative characterization is secondary. The basic issue with respect to this imagery is then, not its various manifestations, but its source.[76]

on the extent to which biblical writers drew upon West Semitic capital city mythologies. For an examination of foreign cities as women within biblical literature, see Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*; Majella Franzmann, 'The City as Woman: The Case of Babylon in Isaiah 47', *ABR* 43 (1995), pp. 1-19; F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (BibOr, 44; Rome: Biblical Pontifical Institute, 1993); Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

73. Aloysius Fitzgerald, 'The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the Old Testament', *CBQ* 34 (1972), pp. 403-16, and his 'BTWLT and BT as Titles for Capital Cities', *CBQ* 37 (1975), pp. 167-83.

74. Elaine R. Follis, 'The Holy City as Daughter', in Elaine R. Follis (ed.), *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (JSOTSup, 40; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), pp. 173-84.

75. Mark E. Biddle, 'The Figure of Lady Jerusalem: Identification, Deification and Personification of Cities in the Ancient Near East', in K. Lawson Younger Jr., William W. Hallo and Bernard F. Batto (eds.), *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective* (Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies, 11; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), pp. 173-94. See also Odil Hannes Steck, 'Zion als Gelände und Gestalt: Überlegungen zur Wahrnehmung Jerusalems als Stadt und Frau im Alten Testament', *ZTK* 86 (1989), pp. 261-81, who argues for two distinct traditions: the marriage imagery of Hosea and Jeremiah, which is focused on the relationship between the deity and the people, and those texts which are city focused, such as Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah.

76. Biddle, 'Figure of Lady Jerusalem', p. 173.

In other words, Biddle is arguing that Hosea's adultery theme is a sub-set of a grander, generally more positive portrayal of Jerusalem as a mother or queen.

Biddle and Fitzgerald combine the adulterous wife motif with the city as female motif, subsuming the former under the broader category of the latter. When Wolff writes that Hosea's use of the adultery theme to describe Israel's activities can also be found in Isaiah 2, he too is confusing the city as wife motif with the adulterous wife motif. When Fitzgerald titles an article: 'The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT', he is entangling two different metaphor traditions.[77] However, as O.H. Steck has adroitly noted, it is more accurate to speak of two distinct traditions.[78] In other words, the city as woman metaphor has independent origins from the marital metaphor in the development of Israel's traditions.[79] The adulterous wife motif as applied to personified cities does not appear in the Mesopotamian literature, and seems to be unique to biblical literature. Additionally, Hosea's adulterous wife is not explicitly a city and may refer to the general population. Certainly in Ezekiel 16 and 23 the adulterous wives are cities, but this is the result of the combination of two motifs: the adulterous wife and the city as female and not simply a variation of the city as female motif. Although I do not concur with his conclusions, I believe that Steck is right in demanding more clarity on this issue.

The third approach to the marital metaphor seeks its origins in Pentateuchal covenant theology. Elaine June Adler is the most recent scholar to devote a full-length study to the background of the marriage metaphor.[80] Adler reviews previous monographs on the marriage

77. Similarly, he writes in n. 7 that Hos. 1.2 'remains fairly close to the pattern. There the land (*'rṣ* fem.), the northern kingdom, is a lady who has given herself to harlotry. What has changed is simply the political perspective.' See the thorough critique of Fitzgerald's thesis by Peggy L. Day, 'The Personification of Cities as Female in the Hebrew Bible: The Thesis of Aloysius Fitzgerald, F.S.C.', in Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (eds.), *Reading from This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* (2 vols.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), II, pp. 283-302.

78. Steck, 'Zion als Gelände und Gestalt', pp. 261-81.

79. Similarly, John Schmitt has rightly noted that there is an apparent confusion in scholarship between Israel (male) and the cities (female) in his essay 'The Gender of Ancient Israel', *JSOT* 26 (1983), pp. 115-25.

80. Adler, 'Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage'.

metaphor, summarizing three primary areas of interest in past scholarship: the influence of Canaanite religion on Hosea's marital metaphor (primarily through assumptions of a Canaanite *hieros gamos* and sacred prostitution); Hosea's own personal marital woes as giving rise to his metaphor; and biblical religion and covenant theology.[81] Adler's thesis concerning the marital metaphor is that the influence of non-Israelite factors has been overplayed and that one should 'place greater emphasis on the inner-Israelite forces which made the emergence of marriage imagery an inevitability'.[82]

In this regard, she follows the work of Moshe Weinfeld and Gerson Cohen. Weinfeld asserts that the origins of the marital metaphor may be found in Pentateuchal theology; he is one of the foremost proponents of the notion that 'although the idea of marital love between God and Israel is not explicitly mentioned in the Pentateuch, it seems to exist there in latent form'.[83] He, like Gerson Cohen,[84] cites Exod. 20.5, 'For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous god' in conjunction with Num. 5.14, where the root קנא (jealous/zealous) is used technically for a husband who is

81. These three components, although individually suggested by others, were first articulated in combination by Gary Hall in his unpublished dissertation 'The Marriage Imagery of Jeremiah 2 & 3: A Study of Antecedents and Innovations in Prophetic Metaphor' (PhD dissertation; Union Theological Seminary of Virginia, 1980). In a succinct article on this topic ('Origin of the Marriage Metaphor', *Hebrew Studies* 23 [1982], pp. 169-71 [170]), he summarizes the questions of origins as follows: 'The Canaanite myth and cult provided the terminological bridge to the popular religion against which Hosea wished to polemicize. The covenant traditions of ancient Israel provided the history and theology which enabled Hosea to demythologize the language and myth, and bring it into service of the covenant... Hosea's marriage enabled him to understand the imagery in a personal way, to experience the heartbreak of infidelity and the love that hopes for reconciliation.'

82. Adler, 'Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage', p. 15.

83. Moshe Weinfeld, 'ברית', *TDOT*, II, pp. 253-79 (278).

84. Gerson Cohen, 'The Song of Songs and the Jewish Religious Mentality', in L. Finkelstein *et al.* (eds.), *The Samuel Friedland Lectures: 1960–1966* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1966), pp. 1-21 (6). Cohen offers another theory supporting the rootedness of the marital metaphor in the Pentateuch: 'Absolute fidelity on the part of Israel to one God, come what may, is the sum and substance of the message of the Bible...there was only one situation reflecting that kind of absolute relationship, and that was the vow of fidelity of a woman to her husband'. Yet, the Pentateuchal narratives do not support Cohen's assumptions. The marriages in the narratives do not present a model of absolute reverence and fear on the part of the wives, and on a commanding presence on the part of the husband. Cohen's

jealous of his wife. Furthermore, Weinfeld refers to the זנה terminology frequently employed to describe the nation's disloyalty to God as the foundation for Hosea's metaphor.[85] However, Adler goes beyond the work of Weinfeld and Cohen in asserting that 'marriage provided the most apt analogy of YHWH's covenant with Israel'[86] because of the unique Israelite notion of an exclusive relationship between a deity and a people. Like marriage, Adler asserts, biblical covenant entails an intimate, passionate and exclusive relationship between two partners.[87] She continues: 'The motifs of marriage and adultery, therefore, *most*

description of the relationship between God and Israel is echoed in William L. Moran's description of the love of God in Deuteronomy. 'Love in Deuteronomy is a love that can be commanded. It is also a love intimately related to fear and reverence. Above all, it is a love which must be expressed in loyalty, in service, and in unqualified obedience to the Law' ('The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy', *CBQ* 25 [1963], pp. 77-87 [78]; cf. also J.A. Thompson, 'Israel's Lovers', *VT* 27 [1977], pp. 475-81). However, Moran's conclusions about the model for this type of love are very different from Cohen's. Moran begins his study with the observation that for all the affinities between Deuteronomy and Hosea, there is a great discrepancy in their visions of divine–human love. Whereas Deuteronomy often speaks of Israel's love for God as a predicate to loyalty, Hosea refers only to God's love for the people and never Israel's love for God. In addition, Deuteronomy never uses husband–wife imagery, even with its constant concern for love. He goes on to show that Deuteronomy models its concept of love on other Near Eastern models of loyalty and friendship between king and vassal. For example, the Amarna letters use the term 'love' to describe a vassal's absolute allegiance to an overlord. In 1 Kgs 5.15, we get a glimpse of this idea: 'For Hiram always loved (אהב) David'. In other words, Hiram was totally devoted to his superior, David.

85. The literature on the term זנה is extensive; good starting points include J. Kuhlewein, 'זנה', *THAT*, I, pp. 518-20; Christina Bucher, 'The Origin and Meaning of "ZNH" Terminology in the Book of Hosea' (PhD dissertation; Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate School, 1988); Adler, 'Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage', pp. 317-49; and Phyllis A. Bird, '"To Play the Harlot": An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor', in Peggy L. Day (ed.), *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 75-94 (repr. in Phyllis A. Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* [OBT; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997], pp. 219-38).

86. Adler, 'Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage', p. 17. Ruud Abma agrees with Adler's position (*Bonds of Love: Methodic Studies of Prophetic Texts with Marriage Imagery: Isaiah 50.1-3 and 54.1-10, Hosea 1–3, Jeremiah 2–3* [SSN, 40; Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1999], esp. pp. 13-25).

87. At least the partner in the subordinate position is required to maintain absolute fidelity.

effectively evoke the phasic nature of Israel's history.'[88] In other words, Adler identifies the literary tradition of Sinai, wilderness and corruption on the land with marriage, honeymoon and adultery. The problem with this assertion is that the phasic nature of Israel's history, first of all, is an artificial textual construction—there is nothing inherently natural about a wilderness period let alone a honeymoon period.[89] Even if we assume the reality of a phasic history, why must marriage be the most inevitable image?

Sallie McFague has written that our only way of talking about God is through metaphor and that it makes sense to use the most personal and familiar images to describe God.[90] Adler uses McFague's observation that 'Anthropomorphisms, that is personal metaphors, therefore, are essential for the description of a God who has a real and intimate relationship with mankind...'[91] But, Adler, as well as her predecessors, fails to recognize the main problem—that if all we can 'know' about God is through personal metaphors drawn from life experience, then our understanding of God becomes, in large part, a projection of our own experiences and values. The covenant between God and Israel is no more 'real' than the metaphor of marriage which comes to represent it. Part of the pitfall into which Adler and others fall is the age-old chicken versus egg problem. Adler assumes that covenant is a literal, concrete, 'real' tenor and that marriage is the vehicle. However, the concept of covenant is metaphorical and no more 'real' than a notion of a marriage between God and a community. *The marriage metaphor is not used to express covenant because it is the most apt analogy; the marriage metaphor contributes to the definition and organization of covenant theology.*

Thus we have seen that the marital metaphor cannot be explained as a polemic against Canaanite fertility rites because there is no evidence for the *hieros gamos* in Canaan or in Israel. Secondly, the ancient Near Eastern tendency to personify cities as women only partially explains

88. Adler, 'Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage', p. 31 (italics mine).

89. In fact, Shemaryahu Talmon has convincingly argued that the wilderness was a place of chaos and fear ('The "Desert Motif" in the Bible and in Qumran Literature', in Alexander Altmann [ed.], *Biblical Motifs* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966], pp. 31-63).

90. Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

91. Adler, 'Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage', p. 21.

the marital metaphor; in other words, that Jerusalem may be described with feminine imagery does not explain her status as an adulterous wife or prostitute. Finally, asserting that marriage is the most appropriate vehicle by which to describe biblical covenant theology is fraught with assumptions regarding the 'unmetaphorical', literal language of covenant.

3. *Where Do We Go from Here?*

The remainder of this study is comprised of five sections, moving gradually from issues of methodology, that is, *how* to approach the texts, to historical, cultural and literary background, that is, *where* to situate our primary texts. Finally, chapters 4 and 5 progress to a detailed textual analysis of our primary passages.

Chapter 2 reviews metaphor theories and presents those approaches which I believe are ultimately most helpful for understanding Ezekiel's use of metaphor. In this chapter, cognitive metaphor theory and metaphor as a form of persuasion are presented as the most valuable approaches for our purposes. A brief review of the application of metaphor theory to biblical studies is then presented as a backdrop to the present work.

In the first part of Chapter 3, I examine the historical and socio-cultural conditions under which men may experience a real sense of gender chaos, arguing that Ezekiel's own historical period (Babylonian Exile) was such a time. Incorporating gender theory, I argue that responses to gender reversal or emasculation can be expressed either through hypervirility or through a full identification with the female.

In the second half of Chapter 3, I investigate the phenomenon of gender reversal as expressed through a literary motif in the ancient Near East. In both Mesopotamia and ancient Israel we find the literary motif of 'men turning into women' appearing in a variety of literary contexts, but most prominently as a curse. The curse is aimed primarily at defeated soldiers in war, who alongside losing a battle and losing one's family lose their masculinity and turn into women. Behind this literary motif, I argue, lies the metaphor A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN.

Chapter 4 is the heart of the study. Using the socio-historical evidence and the existence of the A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN metaphor as a framework, I argue that Ezekiel 16 reflects the gender chaos which arises as an aftermath of social and theological crises. In this section, I offer a detailed philological analysis and commentary of Ezekiel 16 and I argue that gender confusion is the pivot point for the entire chapter. The sin of

wife Jerusalem is that she has usurped the role of the male and has subsequently emasculated the male.

In Chapter 5, I compare Ezekiel's construction of gender in ch. 16 with its related text, ch. 23. I demonstrate how ch. 23 expresses the more common response to emasculation—hypervirility. A comparison of the two chapters serves to highlight the ways in which ch. 16 is unique among the marital metaphor texts.

Chapter 2

METAPHOR

Biblical literature, particularly prophetic material, is replete with metaphors. However, to date, examinations of the nature and function of metaphor, particularly in prophetic literature, are still relatively scarce. Since the inception of modern biblical criticism, scholars have noted the poetic nature of biblical prophecies and have identified metaphor as one feature of poetry.[1] However, historically, attention has rested primarily around questions of meter and parallelism.[2] Since metaphors ultimately frame the prophets' messages, interpreting the message without fully understanding the packaging is akin to a study of Psalms without considering the poetic dimensions of the texts, or a study of the Covenant Code without analyzing it within the context of law. In order to fully grasp the richness of prophetic messages, one must carefully consider the phenomenon of metaphor.

For the most part, the prophets were not literalists; their messages are embedded within the layers of their poetry and allusions. Amos asks:

1. For the seminal study, see Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (trans. G. Gregory; Boston: Joseph T. Buckingham, 1815).

2. See Frank Moore Cross Jr. and David Noel Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Livonia, MI: Dove Booksellers, 1975; rev. edn, 1997); Stephen A. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (HSM, 20; Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1979); James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Elaine R. Follis (ed.), *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (JSOTSup, 40; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987); Luis Alonso-Schökel, *Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (SubBi, 11; Rome: Biblical Pontifical Institute, 1988); Wilfred G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (JSOTSup, 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984) and *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (JSOTSup, 170; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

> Can two walk together without having first met?
> Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?
> Does a young lion let out a cry from its den
> without having made a capture?[3]

Micah cries out:

> Alas, I am become like leavings of a fig harvest,
> like gleanings when the vintage is over,
> there is not a single cluster to eat, not a ripe fig I could desire![4]

It is impossible to understand what these prophets are conveying without understanding not only the historical background but also the metaphorical background behind their statements. In this chapter, I will delineate the various theories regarding metaphor that have emerged from literary and cognitive studies, drawing attention to those that I believe to be most helpful for biblical prophetic literature.

1. *Metaphor Theories*

As far back as the age of the Greek philosophers, metaphor has been the subject of discussion and complex analysis.[5] As Marc Brettler notes: '"Metaphor" is notoriously difficult to define.'[6] Throughout the centuries of debate, metaphor has been acknowledged as a paradox because on some level a metaphor means what it does not really mean. Or, as Monroe Beardsley has explained, one of the problems of metaphor is that what may be construed as a nonsensical expression appears to make sense.[7]

3. Amos 3.3-4.
4. Mic. 7.1.
5. For comprehensive reviews of metaphor theories, especially in the last couple of decades, cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello; University of Toronto Romance Series, 37; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); Carl R. Hausman, *Metaphor and Art: Interaction and Reference in the Verbal and Nonverbal Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Earl R. MacCormac, *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985); Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).
6. Marc Zvi Brettler, *God Is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor* (JSOTSup, 76; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), p. 19.
7. Monroe Beardsley, 'Metaphorical Senses', *Nous* 12 (1978), pp. 3-16. Cf. also Max Black's assertion that 'taken as literal, a metaphorical statement appears to

Given this paradox, one might summarize studies of metaphor around the basic questions: how is meaning through metaphor different from meaning through non-metaphor, and its corollary, how do metaphors communicate meaning?

For a great part of history, the classic view of metaphor was that of the substitution theory.[8] Aristotle's definition in his *Poetics* is that 'a metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else'.[9] He continues, 'The strange word, the metaphor, the ornamental equivalent, and so forth will save the language from seeming mean and prosaic, while the ordinary words in it will secure the requisite clearness'.[10] Here metaphor functions as a decorative device replaceable by a series of literal sentences. This understanding of metaphor denies metaphor any production of meaning; no new knowledge is produced. The substitution view, as this definition has come to be known, gave rise to a similar, yet more specified theory: the comparison theory, which defines all metaphors as condensed or elliptic similes. This theory essentially denies the novelty of metaphor in that each metaphor can be replaced by a literal statement without losing any sense of meaning. Taken to its logical conclusion, metaphor is no more than a fancy font in place of standard typeset.[11] As we will see in this study, the majority of Ezekiel commentators evaluate Ezekiel 16 with this understanding of metaphor, by attempting to find clear correlations between Ezekiel's extended metaphor and Israelite history.[12]

One of the first important moves toward more contemporary metaphor theory was made in 1936 by I.A. Richards, who suggested that metaphor

be perversely asserting something to be what it is plainly known not to be', in 'More About Metaphor', in Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn, 1993), pp. 19-41 (21).

8. For a refutation of the Greek origin of the substitution theory, cf. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, pp. 8-14. Here, Soskice suggests that the substitution theory may be traced back to the philosophers of the seventeenth century. Cf. also Hausman, *Metaphor and Art*, pp. 22-23.

9. Aristotle, *Poetics* 21.1457b.

10. Aristotle, *Poetics* 21.1458a.

11. In fact, a font also communicates meaning about the mood of a text.

12. This approach can be traced back to the Targum's treatment of Ezek. 16. According to the Targumists, Ezek. 16 hearkens back to the promise of Abraham, the period of Egyptian slavery and God's redemption of the Israelites through the agency of Moses and the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness period. Israel's origins

comprises 'two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase'.[13] The two units of the metaphor he described as the 'tenor', that is, the principle subject, and the 'vehicle', or the language used to describe the tenor.[14] For example, in the metaphorical statement LOVE IS MAGIC love is the tenor, the principle subject, while magic is the vehicle by which love is described. The most vital insight in Richards's work is his attention to the differences between the two components of a metaphor and the tensions produced by juxtaposing the two elements. It is this tension—the disparities between two elements in relation to one another—that produces meaning that cannot be reduplicated in literal rephrasing.[15]

Picking up on the insights of Richards, Max Black introduced his interaction theory which focuses on the particular *relationship* between the tenor and the vehicle or, as he says, between the primary and secondary elements.[16] Black points out that the secondary element 'reorganizes' our understanding of the primary element by 'projecting upon' the primary element a set of 'associated implications'. The secondary subject both highlights and suppresses various qualities of the primary subject. Likewise, the primary subject may modify our understanding of the

among the Hittites and Amorites is interpreted as a reference to the Patriarchal period, in which Abraham settled *among* these other peoples. The abandoned infant represents Israel in bondage in Egypt without nurturance from its overlord Pharaoh. The description of God's first encounter with Israel is understood as God's commandments regarding the blood of circumcision and of the Paschal sacrifice. This connection is elaborated in a number of rabbinic texts; cf. *T. d. Eliyy.* 27; *Pes. K.* 7; *Pes. R.* 17; *Shem. R.* 17.3; *Mek. Piska* 5.16. (See Gerhard Bodendorfer, *Das Drama des Bundes: Ezechiel 16 in rabbinischer Perspektive* [Freiburg: Herder, 1997], p. 117, for a complete list of rabbinic citations on this text.) The clothing of Israel refers to the establishment of the priesthood, Torah and the Tabernacle. The Targum then continues to follow the MT a bit more closely, although it clarifies that Israel's adultery is a reference to idol worship. In essence, the Targumists attempt to literalize the metaphor, to assign one particular meaning to the figurative language, in order to control its interpretation.

13. I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 51.

14. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 52-53.

15. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 52-53.

16. Earlier designated as 'principal' and 'subsidiary', cf. Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962).

secondary subject. The principal idea of the interaction theory is that in the most interesting cases metaphors *create* similarity, rather than state some pre-existing similarity. They consequently produce new knowledge by projecting the knowledge associated with the secondary subject onto the primary subject: the maker of a metaphorical statement 'selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject's implicative complex'.[17] This is a far cry from the substitution theory, for in this case metaphor implies a process of implication and not of one-to-one corresponding identity.

The most significant of Black's contributions, for the purposes of this study, is the recognition that because two *independent systems* are brought together through metaphor, the interaction between the two may produce a variety of perceptions. In Black's words, 'since we must necessarily read "behind the words", we cannot set firm bounds to the admissible interpretations: Ambiguity is a necessary by-product of the metaphor's suggestiveness.'[18]

Black's notion of metaphor as a process of interaction and implication has laid the groundwork for subsequent theoretic growth, particularly in the epistemological and cognitive schools of metaphor study.[19] Any discussion of a literary device that involves the reader in a 'process of implication' moves the framework from pure semantics to cognitive processes. Even Black dips into this area by acknowledging the difference between a metaphor and metaphorical thought.

> Why stretch and twist, press and expand, concepts in this way—Why try to see A as metaphorically B, when it literally is not B? Well, because we can do so, conceptual boundaries not being rigid, but elastic and permeable; and because we often need to do so, the available literal resources of the language being insufficient to express our sense of the rich correspondences, interrelations, and analogies of domains conventionally separated; and because metaphorical thought and utterance sometimes embody insight expressible in no other fashion.[20]

17. Black, 'More about Metaphor', p. 28.
18. Black, 'More about Metaphor', p. 29.
19. Black's work has also had a significant influence upon biblicists in recent years.
20. Black, 'More about Metaphor', p. 33.

2. *Cognitive Metaphor Theory*

The theories we have examined to this point are nonconstructivist;[21] that is, they assume a distinction between literal and figurative language.[22] The substitution theory is the most obvious representative of this fundamental assumption because it predicates itself on the proposition that metaphor is essentially a figurative substitute for a literal expression and that any metaphor may be translated back into a literal statement.[23] The more recent work of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson and Mark Turner and their students represents a constructivist approach to metaphor. For these theoreticians, there is *practically* no distinction between the literal and the figurative.[24] All writing and, more importantly, all thought is based upon metaphorical conceptualization;[25] that is, metaphor is an attempt to understand reality rather than being a reflection of some truth. In this context, 'Figurative language might be best viewed as a means of under-

21. Cf. also the work of MacCormac, *Cognitive Theory of Metaphor*; Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (The Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); and Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor.*

22. For a recent challenge to this binary approach which deems everything as either figurative or literal, see David H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics and Divine Imagery* (The Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism, 4; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001). Aaron presents a model for gradient judgments, arguing that the early authors of the Hebrew Bible had a gradient world-view and that binary thinking was only introduced to biblical thought in the last stages of redaction.

23. Black straddles the line in this respect. Hausman points to the paradox of Black's position: 'if the idea of creativity is taken to mean more than that creating is discovering something already determinate and potential, then one should not construct a view for which what is said to be new is (or was) "implicit"... If creating is making explicit what is implicit, creating is not generating but, rather, is discovering what is made explicit and identified as an isomorphism. Unrecognized similarities may be discovered and play a role in interpreting metaphors, but more than these will be involved if the metaphor creates. If this were not so, then we would have once more a kind of the comparison view and an implied determinism by which metaphorical insight is predictable in principle...' (*Metaphor and Art*, p. 40).

24. For a recent critique of Lakoff, Johnson and Turner, see Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities.*

25. For a similar understanding from the perspective of a metaphysicist, see Douglas Berggren, 'The Use and Abuse of Metaphor', *Review of Metaphysics* 16 (1962–63), pp. 237-58, 450-72: 'metaphor constitutes the indispensable principle for integrating diverse phenomenon...' (p. 237).

standing conceptual knowledge, rather than a linguistic problem dealing with recovering or expressing reality.'[26]

To better understand these assertions, we now turn to the work of Michael J. Reddy, whom Lakoff credits with laying out the framework for constructivist metaphor research. Lakoff attributes to Reddy the teaching 'that the locus of metaphor is thought' and 'that our everyday behaviour reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience'.[27] In his article, 'The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in our Language about Language', Reddy asserts that people use the framework of 'language as conduit' to conceptualize communication and that this constructed framework biases our thought processes. The conduit metaphor, by framing an abstract concept such as language, prompts us to consider language as 'a conduit, transferring thoughts bodily from one person to another'.[28] This view of language requires that 'in writing and speaking, people insert their thoughts or feelings in the words',[29] and then receivers extract them once again from the words. For example, 'Try to *get* your thoughts *across* better', '*Insert* those ideas elsewhere *in* the paragraph', 'The sentence *was filled* with emotion', or 'Mary *poured out* all the sorrow she had been *holding in* for so long'.

Lakoff extends Reddy's insights concerning conceptual metaphors by elaborating a *map* of conceptual metaphors, explicitly considered 'not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason'.[30] I quote from this theorist in depth:

> The generalizations governing poetic metaphorical expressions are not in language, but in thought: they are general mappings across conceptual domains. Moreover, these general principles which take the form of conceptual mappings, apply not just to novel poetic expressions, but to much of ordinary everyday language. In short, the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in

26. Jeffrey Scott Mio and Albert N. Katz (eds.), *Metaphor: Implications and Applications* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1996), p. x.

27. George Lakoff, 'The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor', in Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn, 1993), pp. 202-51 (204).

28. Michael J. Reddy, 'The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in our Language about Language', in Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn, 1993), pp. 164-201 (170).

29. Reddy, 'Conduit Metaphor', p. 170.

30. Lakoff, 'Contemporary Theory of Metaphor', p. 208.

> terms of another. The general theory of metaphor is given by characterizing such cross-domain mappings. And in the process, everyday abstract concepts like time, states, change, causation, and purpose also turn out to be metaphorical. The result is that metaphor (that is, cross-domain mapping) is absolutely central to ordinary natural language semantics, and that the study of literary metaphor is an extension of the study of everyday metaphor.[31]

In other words, the cognitive approach to metaphor emphasizes that we conceptualize the world and our experiences of it through metaphors, and that which linguists or pragmaticians term 'metaphor' is only poetic metaphor. The observation that most conventional language and the thought patterns behind it are largely metaphorical will be crucial to my analysis of Ezekiel 16, for so much of the language in that text has not been recognized by biblicists as metaphorical, and has instead been read as the literal basis for the broader marital metaphor. The Lakoffian theory of metaphor enables us to look deeper into the text, to move beyond identifying the elements of a marital metaphor and instead to look at the deeper symbolic assumptions behind the marital metaphor.

Furthermore, if metaphor is one of our fundamental tools of expression, it becomes an extraordinarily powerful instrument. In *More Than Cool Reason*, Lakoff and Turner do not simply discuss the power of metaphor as a specific form of figurative language in which the secondary element 'reorganizes' our understanding of the primary element by 'projecting upon' the primary element a set of 'associated implications'. Rather they discuss metaphor as a *power to structure* our experiences and thoughts, as a *power of reason* which allows us to borrow patterns of inference from the vehicle in reasoning about a tenor, as a *power of evaluation* in that we carry over the way we evaluate the entities in the vehicle.[32] The metaphor thus *creates* reality.

This aspect of metaphor cannot be overstated, for one of the greatest dangers in a metaphor is that the tenor may be lost in the vehicle, particularly over time as the vehicle stands out more and more and the tenor becomes increasingly remote. I would argue that the marital metaphor of

31. Lakoff, 'Contemporary Theory of Metaphor', p. 203.

32. George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 64-65. This position is contra G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), p. 183, who claims that an interpretation of a metaphor is right only if the author intended it.

Ezekiel 16 and 23 has, in a sense, been too successful with the result that the metaphor has been confused with reality: 'The thing signified becomes the signification itself.'[33] I would argue that most traditional critical commentators have lost sight of the metaphoric quality of the motif.

Interpretations of Ezekiel 16 have centered broadly around an *empathetic* approach. By empathetic, I refer to readings of a text in which the reader becomes the narratee[34] and loses a self-consciousness about her or his reading position. Traditional commentators tend to empathize with YHWH and focus on the deity's forgiving nature, even in the face of Israel's horrific wrongdoing. They not only participate in Ezekiel's rhetoric but also further develop the text's claims. For Joseph Blenkinsopp, for example, the story is 'the history of a faithless partner and broken marriage'.[35] Furthermore, many commentators take YHWH's side, as it were, providing an excuse for YHWH's violence. Note Blenkinsopp's description:

33. Weems, *Battered Love*, p. 100. This phenomenon should be distinguished from dead metaphors, which Roger Brown explains as follows: at some point, someone recognized that a person's foot bears the same resemblance to one's body as the base of a mountain to the whole mountain; thus, the metaphor 'the foot of the mountain' came into being. This metaphor, for Brown, is now a dead metaphor. 'This is because with repetition of the phrase foot of the mountain the word foot loses its exclusive connection with anatomy. The word may be used of mountain as often as of man. When that is true there is nothing in the phrase foot of the mountain to suggest a man's foot and so the phrase is experienced as a conventional name for the lower part of a mountain... A metaphor lives in language so long as it causes a word to appear in improbable contexts, the word suggesting one reference, the context another. When the word becomes as familiar in its new context as it was in the old the metaphor dies' (*Words and Things: An Introduction to Language* [New York: The Free Press, 1958], pp. 140-41). In contrast, what I am suggesting here is that the marriage metaphor is not a conventional term for the divine–human relationship, but that the metaphoric quality of the image has been forgotten and that the marital metaphor is taken literally.

34. This phenomenon is not surprising; cf. Weems's observation: 'Only an audience that could relate to and identify with the metaphorical husband's outrage and horror could possibly perceive his reactions as plausible and legitimate... Only those who had a certain relationship to power could appreciate some of the assumptions embedded in the metaphor. That is, the metaphor expected its audience to sympathize with the rights and responsibilities that came with power and to understand the threat that women could pose to male honor' (*Battered Love*, p. 41).

35. Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, p. 76.

> Ezekiel describes the corruption of the human will in even darker colors than his older contemporary. The story of the *nymphomaniac bride* expresses this conviction in violent language, at the risk of sickening the reader, in order to set over against it *the saving will of God* and the possibility of renewal.[36]

In other words, Blenkinsopp provides an apology for God's violence by transforming domestic violence into 'saving will'. He does this in part by exaggerating the depiction of YHWH as all good and Jerusalem as pure evil. Similarly, Millard C. Lind reminds the reader that the shocking nature of the story should be tempered by the even more shocking fact of Israel's disregard for the covenant: 'If one shares his urgency and values, a little language shock may be tolerated'.[37] The husband's violence is nothing compared to the wife's infidelity. R.E. Clements describes the content of Ezekiel 16 as 'a message of the enduring power of *divine love*'.[38] Furthermore, 'the form has been clearly chosen in order to show up Jerusalem's conduct in terms that every *normal person* would feel to be utterly repulsive and inexcusable'.[39] Note that just like Ezekiel, these commentators must exaggerate the claims of Jerusalem's wrongdoings enough to justify the fall of the city. Put in Lakoffian terms, interpreters, as they read metaphors, create reality.

Perhaps one of the most telling scholarly analyses is contained in M.G. Swanepoel's recent article, 'Ezekiel 16: Abandoned Child, Bride Adorned or Unfaithful Wife?' Throughout the essay, Swanepoel presents a picture of an all-merciful, caring and loving God. Discussing the I–you format of the narrative, in which the 'I', the speaker, is YHWH and the 'you' is Jerusalem, the wife, he writes, 'The alternation of first-person verbs with second-person verbs shows the caring activities and personal relationship which develop between Yahweh and the abandoned child'.[40] First, Swanepoel seems to be suggesting that an interaction in which one individual takes all the action and does all the speaking denotes a caring relationship between two individuals. Secondly, it is precisely this I–you format that is used to convey the husband's rage at his wife. Swanepoel

36. Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, p. 78 (italics mine).

37. Millard C. Lind, *Ezekiel* (Believers Church Bible Commentary; Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1996), p. 129. I would question whether the shock can be regarded only as an issue of language!

38. Clements, *Ezekiel*, p. 70 (italics mine).

39. Clements, *Ezekiel*, p. 72 (italics mine).

40. Swanepoel, 'Ezekiel 16', p. 87.

further writes: 'Ezekiel 16 is a mirror of life for life. Here opposites meet each other: the greatest mercy and the most horrible contempt.'[41] And further: 'the mercy is so overwhelmingly great. The great mercy of Yahweh overshadows every single act that Jerusalem can commit.'[42]

Swanepoel overlooks the heart of the story in which God acts with fury and vengeance. Additionally, he uncritically accepts the writer's judgments concerning Israel's actions without questioning the purpose and ramifications of this characterization. This kind of analysis simply builds on the prophet's perspective; it does not critically engage with it.[43] Yvonne Sherwood's observations regarding commentators on Hosea are apt here:

> A comparison between commentary and text suggests that commentators are, like henchmen, carrying out the threats of the text... 'Objectivity' is an illusion created by ideological mimicry: the androcentric commentator is the 'faithful son' of the father text in the sense that he carries out and extends the father's wishes.[44]

Or, consider the observations of Carol Fontaine in a self-reflective article on Hosea:

> Many of the commentators displayed an almost prurient interest in Hosea's marital partner, and their outrage at her alleged behavior echoed Hosea's. To be sure, the text is unclear about the real meaning of Gomer's 'harlotry' as well as the identity of the woman in chapter 3, but that did not stop

41. Swanepoel, 'Ezekiel 16', p. 96.

42. Swanepoel, 'Ezekiel 16', p. 101. Swanepoel argues that the theme of God's mercy frames the chapter, which is organized chiastically: vv. 3-14 mercy; vv. 15-34 sin; vv. 35-43 judgment; vv. 44-58 sin; vv. 59-63 mercy. Swanepoel's arrangement of the material is arguable; but even if we accept this chiastic arrangement, in chiasm, the center of the structure is the central, emphasized point. Thus, according to his layout, God's judgments/punishments are primary.

43. One of the most fanciful retellings of Ezek. 16 is found in the comments of Charles Lee Feinberg (*The Prophecy of Ezekiel* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1969], p. 85) who describes the story as 'a beautiful illustration of what God does in grace for any believing sinner... The prophet saw that repentance was produced not by the thunderings and terrors of Mount Sinai with its law, but by the tenderness of the gracious God with His love.' Even more fantastic is his claim, 'Just as it is heartbreaking for a parent to point out the failings of a beloved child, so much more was it distressing for God through His prophet to denounce the flagrant and blatant sins of His people' (p. 136).

44. Sherwood, *Prostitute and the Prophet*, p. 261.

> comments on her actions which ranged from erotic fantasy to moral condemnation. Scholars...never stepped outside the text's construction of the meaning of those events and characters. All sympathy was, naturally enough, on the side of the reportedly deserted husband and the affronted deity.[45]

Put differently, the metaphor gets confused with the reality. Commentators are drawn into the reality which has been constructed by the metaphor.

In the last 15 years at the time of writing, feminist readers have grappled with the marital metaphor texts: Hosea 1–3; Jeremiah 2–3; and Ezekiel 16 and 23, and have produced a spate of new studies. Although each scholarly work is unique, in a broad sense they share one concern in common: feminist scholars have switched the reading orientation from God-centered to woman-centered. On the whole, these interpreters empathize with wife Israel and the abuse to which she is subjected by God. By empathizing with the abused woman in the texts, however, feminist readers have simply turned over the same coin, rather than create a wholly new model of analysis that attempts to stand back and look at *both* sides of the coin. In the final analysis, feminist analysis confines itself by participating in the traditional construct of analysis; it is reactive rather than proactive.

Both conservative and feminist interpreters share a common outlook on the structure and dynamics of the narrative. The points of difference reside in the reader's entry point into the text. On the one hand, most conservative modern commentators take as their starting point the *theological* assumption that God is good and just and that the prophet faithfully represents the divine. Therefore, the text is read in light of this assumption of divine goodness and justice. On the other hand, feminist interpreters begin with the *social* critique that violence against women is unacceptable and highly problematic. Consequently, any reading of the text is based upon this assumption. Is Israel's powerlessness a positive sign of submission to YHWH? Or, is the powerlessness a reflection and reinforcement of women's powerlessness? Are YHWH's actions justified as a fit punishment motivated by an ultimately forgiving nature? Or, are these actions abusive and derived from jealousy and uncontrolled rage?

45. Carol F. Fontaine, 'A Response to "Hosea"', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 60-69 (61-62).

While both of these approaches yield valuable insights, neither method captures the full complexity of the text.

I would argue that any reading that treats YHWH and Israel as two distinct, independent characters, representing male and female experience respectively, is at risk of a fundamental flaw. This text, as a product of male writers and readers, does not express female experience, nor can the female point of view be inferred or read into the text. The text does not tell us anything about real women, even if a woman is a central character; it tells us about men's *ideological constructions* of gender, and especially masculinity, set within a theological framework.

Ezekiel 16 is a witness to a problem: something is wrong in Ezekiel's world. If we try to find fault with either God or Jerusalem, with the husband or wife, we remain trapped within the narrative and we are compelled either to defend the dominant (God-centered) position, elevate it, dislike it, condemn it or reject it.

3. *Schemas and Slots*

Since all language is embedded in a great 'web of implication', it is important to lay out a framework for the tapestry. Using an excerpt from Dante, 'In the middle of life's road, I found myself in a dark wood',[46] Lakoff and Turner point out that the conceptual metaphor which lies behind this particular poetic metaphor is LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The poetic metaphor does not work in isolation; life can be a road and the speaker can find himself lost in the woods only if we assume a broader conceptual metaphor. A speaker or writer can use the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in a number of ways. For example, 'I've hit a dead end' may mark a person's experience of being stuck. In this conceptual metaphor, life marks the beginning of a journey and death marks the end. An individual becomes a traveler.

The knowledge that we have about all the aspects of a journey is called a 'schema'. 'Slots' are the individual elements within that schema, so, for example, a traveler is a slot within the JOURNEY schema. 'The metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is thus a mapping of the structure of the JOURNEY schema onto the domain of LIFE...'[47] The JOURNEY element is the source-domain (equivalent to vehicle) and LIFE is the target-domain (tenor). The

46. Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, p. 9. Quotation taken from Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

47. Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, p. 62.

full structure of metaphors, as laid out by Lakoff and his colleagues, is as follows:[48]

1. *Slots* in the source domain get mapped onto slots of the target domain.
2. *Relations* in the source domain get mapped onto relations in the target domain.
3. *Properties* in the source domain get mapped onto properties in the target domain.
4. *Knowledge* in the source domain gets mapped onto knowledge in the target domain.

A fascinating application of this model can be found in Tim Rohrer's 'The Metaphorical Logic of (Political) Rape Revisited: The New Wor(l)d Order',[49] in which Rohrer investigates the metaphors used by former US President George Bush to conceptualize the political situation in the Persian Gulf during the pre-war period. Rohrer argues that the 'analogical reasoning behind the "new world order" rests on a complex system of metaphors and on Bush's assertion that the expression "the rape of Kuwait" is literal (non-metaphorical) language'. More importantly, Rohrer shows how Bush's rhetoric regarding the rape of Kuwait is a single expression of a broader root metaphor: NATION IS A PERSON. By refusing to confine his analysis only to the rape metaphor and the particulars of the Persian Gulf War, Rohrer is able to show that *the rape metaphor derives from a broader, more pervasive metaphorical construction*. Using the conceptual metaphor NATION IS A PERSON, he maps out the following:

PERSON (source domain)	NATION (target domain)
body	landmass, territory
skin (physical boundaries)	geographic boundaries
fist, muscle	military power
throat (lifeline)	oil pipeline
breathing, circulation	economic activity
health	economic health
home	territory

48. Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, pp. 63-64.

49. Tim Rohrer, 'The Metaphorical Logic of (Political) Rape Revisited: The New Wor(l)d Order', *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 10 (1995), pp. 115-37.

eating, growth	territorial expansion
neighborhood	other geographically nearby allies
nations	
friends	

Mapping out conceptual metaphors enables us to understand better the metaphorical nature or the social construction of many statements that we take for granted as conventional language. Rohrer's analysis leads him to conclude that 'Politics is quite naturally the extension of our bodily selves into an imagined political space'.[50] In other words, our ways of understanding politics and relations between nations is not 'literal', nor is it objectively logical.

So, too, Ezekiel 16 is a reflection of a metaphorical thought process which orders or 'maps out' an abstract system of emotions and concepts. An initial application of mapping out the biblical marital metaphor: THE GOD-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP IS A MARRIAGE, where this metaphor is the root metaphor,[51] might include particular slots such as: courtship, wedding, love, disloyalty, anniversary, procreation, divorce and so on.[52] However, the marital metaphor also derives from a broader metaphorical construction, GOD IS A MALE AND ISRAEL IS A FEMALE.

4. *Metaphor and Contextual Knowledge*

Understanding any poem requires knowledge. Only through a familiarity with the 'source domain' does the 'target domain' make sense. Lakoff and Turner use a Sanskrit poem to illustrate this point:

> There where the reeds are tall
> is the best place to cross the river
> she told the traveler
> with her eye on him.

50. Rohrer, 'Metaphorical Logic of (Political) Rape', p. 136.

51. A root metaphor is the broad metaphor that underlies other more specific metaphors. For example, IDEAS ARE FOOD is the root metaphor from which come such expressions as: 'What he said *left a bad taste in my mouth*.' Or, 'I just can't *swallow* that claim.' Cf. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 46.

52. Some examples of particular slots are: GOOD FORTUNE IS A COURTSHIP (Hos. 2.16-17, 21-25; Jer. 2.2; Ezek. 16.1-14; Isa. 49.18b-21; 54.1-10; 60.4-5; Zeph. 3.14-20) and MISFORTUNE IS ABANDONMENT OR DIVORCE (Hos. 2.5-9; Jer. 15.5-7; Isa. 49.21; 50.1-3; 54.7-8).

Understanding this poem takes for granted the knowledge that in India when this poem was composed, illicit sexual liaisons commonly took place in the tall, thick reeds along river banks.[53] Additionally, culturally differentiated knowledge can create new meanings for metaphors. For example, Lakoff and Johnson describe the case of an Iranian student studying in Berkeley. The student became enamored of an English expression: 'the solution of my problems'. He understood it to be 'a large volume of liquid, bubbling and smoking, containing all of your problems, either dissolved or in the form of precipitates, with catalysts constantly dissolving some problems (for the time being) and precipitating out others'.[54] Although there is no logical or linguistic reason for this interpretation to be accepted, our cultural context demands that this phrase connote 'resolution' for the word 'solution'.

Returning to the biblical marital metaphor, we understand this metaphor to the extent that we have knowledge regarding husband–wife relationships in ancient Israel. A culture with no familiarity with the institution of marriage, or even of monogamous relationships, would not be able to understand this metaphor. But two caveats must be raised here: our knowledge of the past is limited, particularly with regard to ancient Israel, and we must be wary of imposing modern constructions of marriage upon the past, or of making the same error as did the foreign student in Berkeley. Furthermore, it is imperative to bear in mind that our reconstruction of marriage in the biblical period is, to some extent, based upon and enforced by the biblical marital metaphor which has the *power to structure* our conceptual view of the marriage institution.

In his 'The Metaphorical Mapping of God in the Hebrew Bible', Marc Brettler sets out the two primary rubrics under which God metaphors fall: 'socio-political' and 'familial'. Brettler suggests that a metaphorical mapping should include considerations such as: which biblical corpora prefer particular metaphors? And how do historical circumstances impact the choice and use of these metaphors? In other words, Brettler raises the importance of our knowledge regarding context.[55] I believe that these questions are highly relevant to this study on Ezekiel 16, for I will argue

53. Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, p. 60.

54. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*, p. 143.

55. Marc Brettler, 'The Metaphorical Mapping for God in the Hebrew Bible', in Ralph Bisschops and James Francis (eds.), *Metaphor, Canon and Community: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Approaches* (Religion and Discourse, 1; Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 219-32.

that Ezekiel's particular use of the GOD IS HUSBAND metaphor is influenced by the socio-historical circumstances in which Ezekiel lived.[56]

5. *Metaphor and Persuasion*

It is no surprise that Aristotle includes a discussion of metaphor in his *On Rhetoric*. If, as we have seen, metaphors have the power to shape our realities and to draw us into their web of implications, metaphors become a powerful tool of persuasion.[57] Moshe Greenberg, in his commentary on the book of Ezekiel, seems to understand this point in regard to the biblical marital metaphor when he states, 'The imminent destruction of the "last remnant of Israel" was a catastrophe that demanded a correspondingly enormous sin to justify it.'[58] In other words, Ezekiel had the enormous task of persuading his audience that the destruction of Jerusalem was warranted. This sentiment is echoed in the words of John Barton in a broader scope:

> The genius of the classical prophets was to take the highly recalcitrant facts of history, whose religious and moral implications were in fact extremely ambiguous and to give an account of these facts which would convince people not only that the hand of God could be seen in them, but that the operations of the divine hand were entirely comprehensible in human moral categories—indeed, that given the right ethical framework one could see that history could not but have unfolded in the way that it did. Prophetic rhetoric is designed, that is to say, to make the contingencies of human history look like divine necessities.[59]

56. Contra Brettler: 'each of these four metaphors involves a different degree of hierarchy between YHWH and Israel, since king > master > parent > husband' ('Metaphorical Mapping', p. 25). Brettler's evaluation of hierarchy here is informed by a model of public > private, in which the degree of hierarchy is more prominent in a king over subjects, than the hierarchy of a husband to wife. If we use a gender-informed model for our analysis, I would argue that the husband–wife metaphor is the most strongly polarized and absolute metaphor because it is the only one which is rooted in a cosmic ordering of the world: male vs. female.

57. Cf. J. David Sapir and J. Christopher Crocker (eds.), *The Social Use of Metaphor: Essays on the Anthropology of Rhetoric* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

58. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), p. 299.

59. John Barton, 'History and Rhetoric in the Prophets', in Martin Warner (ed.), *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 51-64 (52).

In regard to Hosea, Renita Weems demonstrates how the marriage metaphor incorporates a range of intense human emotions which would have attracted the attention of an audience. Weems argues that the marriage metaphor serves to function as a 'poetic device to demonstrate how the punishment fits the crime'. Weems's central interest is in the power of metaphor. She writes:

> [Metaphors] are explicitly what all human language is implicitly, analogical and therefore limited...'religious language represents human beings' desperate attempts to comprehend and articulate what is in fact beyond human comprehension and articulation, the Divine and our experience of it...[60]

Fokkelien Van Dijk-Hemmes's observations regarding the role of metaphor in Ezekiel 23 is pertinent here. She points out that a metaphor can convey a message that is otherwise illogical or impossible: 'Israel's sin in Egypt actually consisted of its being oppressed. Such a statement's lack of logic can apparently be made acceptable by the transformation of a people into a metaphorical woman.'[61] What is implied in the work of Weems, van Dijk-Hemmes and others is that metaphors not only create knowledge and persuade but also have the ability to cope with ambiguities in a unique way. The destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the leadership entailed such a complex series of events and responses that a special form of expression was necessitated in order to encapsulate the complexities.

Metaphors provide a comfortable space for this type of ambiguity and complexity: 'Metaphors do more than simplify complexity... They clothe the intangible, giving life to abstractions.'[62] William Empson discusses ambiguity in his classic study, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. He defines ambiguity as 'any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language'.[63] Continuing, he states: 'Thus a word may have several distinct meanings;

60. Renita J. Weems, 'Gomer: Victim of Violence or Victim of Metaphor?', *Semeia* 47 (1989), pp. 87-104 (101).

61. Dijk-Hemmes, 'Metaphorization of Woman in Prophetic Speech', p. 251.

62. Seth Thompson, 'Politics without Metaphors is Like a Fish without Water', in Jeffrey Scott Mio and Albert N. Katz (eds.), *Metaphor: Implications and Applications* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1996), pp. 185-201 (188).

63. William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York: New Directions, 2nd edn, 1966), p. 1.

several meanings connected with one another; several meanings which need one another to complete their meaning...'[64] Metaphors not only thrive on ambiguity, but also promote ambiguity as a positive cognitive tool. Zdravko Radman, in a convincing argument, shows how metaphors can actually specify meaning through their 'indeterminacy'. The flexibility of metaphors which deal with abstract, often conflicting subjects, actually increase our range of options for making meaning: 'Paradoxical as it may seem, *multiplicity of speculative options increases the potential to make meaning more precise.*'[65] Ezekiel's use of the marital metaphor allows for ambiguity and flexibility in a positive, meaning-making fashion. One of the tasks of this study will be to illustrate not only how Ezekiel persuades his audience in Ezekiel 16, but also how his use of the marital metaphor allows for ambiguity and flexibility in a positive, meaning-making fashion.[66]

6. *Metaphor and Biblical Studies*

The critical study of metaphor, as it plays out in biblical literature, is a relatively new area of research among biblicists.[67] One of the first thoughtful considerations of metaphor in the Bible, and of the use of language in general, was attempted by G.B. Caird in 1980.[68] He begins

64. Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 5.

65. Zdravko Radman, 'How to Make our Ideas Clear with Metaphors', in Zdravko Radman (ed.), *From a Metaphorical Point of View: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Cognitive Content of Metaphor* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1995), pp. 225-56 (238) (italics mine).

66. For additional studies on metaphor and persuasion, cf. C.I. Houland, I.L. Janis and H.H. Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of One on One* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1953); K.H. Jamieson, *Communication and Persuasion* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); and Mio and Katz (eds.), *Metaphor*.

67. Cf. Kirsten Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah* (JSOTSup, 65; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), esp. pp. 25-33, for a thorough review of pre-1980 understandings of metaphor in prophetic materials, particularly in German scholarship. Nielsen traces the roots of research to parable studies in New Testament scholarship. She points out Johannes Lindblom's reliance on the work of Adolf Jülicher, for whom metaphor was defined in the classic Aristotelian substitution manner. She also marks the work of Anders Jørgen Bjørndalen as the first scholar to express hints of the creative potential of metaphor.

68. Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible*.

his study by presenting five general categories for which words are used: informative, cognitive, performative, expressive and cohesive. The last category he connects to Malinowski's 'phatic communication', or communication used to establish rapport. For our purposes, we can disregard this category. The first category, 'informative', is that aspect of language that 'imposes a shape on the chaos of the world' and serves as a 'linguistic screen' from the overwhelming range of possibilities.[69] The 'cognitive' category describes the process of distinguishing, classifying and comparing basic elements of information.[70] At a more sophisticated level, the 'performative'[71] use of words refers to the power of the word to get things done: the divine utterance 'Let there be light' is a classic example of the performative use of language. The 'expressive' or 'evocative' use of language is that aspect of communication that both displays and elicits emotions. Given the insights of contemporary metaphor theory, Caird's 'informative' and 'cognitive' categories should be merged together, for they both serve the same function: meaning making. Although Caird does not emphasize this point, it is crucial to note that, in most cases, a single text functions across categories, rather than within an individual one; that is, Ezekiel 16, for example, is informative, cognitive, expressive and performative.[72] The text 'imposes a shape on the chaos' of the destruction of Jerusalem by delineating characters and events, and putting them into a narrative plot. Further, the text elicits specific responses from its audience. To this point, biblicists have focused on the latter functions of Ezekiel 16, taking for granted the informative and cognitive elements of the text.

The first full-length book treatment of contemporary metaphor theory and its implications for religious language appeared in 1985, written by Janet Martin Soskice. Soskice's study is divided into two parts: how metaphors work and the specific complexities of religious language. Soskice's careful treatment of the history of metaphor study and her lucid

69. Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 9.

70. Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible*, pp. 12-20.

71. Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible*, pp. 20-25. The performative aspects of language and the Arts have received an enormous amount of attention in recent years. Cf. John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) who argues that every utterance is a speech act.

72. For a similar sentiment, cf. Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree*, pp. 56-60.

presentation of various pivotal theories has made the complex topic of metaphor accessible to the biblicist and theologian. Her focus on the interaction theory and the contributions of Max Black set the groundwork for the centrality of Black's theories in biblical studies.

Shortly after Soskice's work was published, a number of studies emerged in critical biblical scholarship that were engaged with the question of metaphor. Carol Newsom's article on Ezekiel's oracles against Tyre gives a central place to the dynamics of metaphor. Newsom points out, rightly so, that metaphors draw an audience 'to participate in the construction of metaphorical meaning'.[73] This dynamic has the danger of tricking the audience into believing that the metaphor is literally true. She quotes Nelson Goodman: 'What was novel becomes commonplace, its past is forgotten, and metaphor fades to mere truth.'[74] However, Newsom notes, since metaphors have the power to create knowledge, they can be dangerous; therefore, 'the critique of metaphors is a business of equal importance to the making of them'.[75] Additionally, Newsom stresses the power of metaphor as a rhetorical device. Julie Galambush summarizes Newsom's contributions as follows:

> Newsom provides a helpful reading of Ezekiel's oracles against Tyre within the conventions of literary criticism and demonstrates that Ezekiel's metaphor is more than a mere stylistic ornament. Rather, in chaps 26–28 Ezekiel uses the inherent ambiguity and polyvalence of metaphor to draw out the historical, theological, cultic and political aspects of God's judgment against Tyre. Newsom elucidates both the mechanics of these four of Ezekiel's narrative metaphors, and the role of metaphor in Ezekiel's rhetoric.[76]

In the same year that Newsom's article was published, Bernd Willmes published a study on the metaphor of the shepherd in Ezekiel 34.[77] In this work, he devotes a section to the definition and function of metaphor

73. Carol A. Newsom, 'A Maker of Metaphors: Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre', *Int* 38 (1984), pp. 151-64 reprinted in James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtmeier (eds.), *Interpreting the Prophets* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 188-200.

74. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), p. 80, as quoted in Newsom, 'Maker of Metaphors', p. 190.

75. Newsom, 'Maker of Metaphors', p. 190.

76. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 18.

77. Bernd Willmes, *Die sogenannte Hirtenallegorie Ez 34: Studien zum Bild des Hirten im alten Testament* (BBET, 19; Bern: Peter Lang, 1984).

from the perspectives of rhetoric, linguistic theory and psychology.[78] The studies of James Durlesser[79] and of Barbara Green[80] also include considerations of metaphor, but do not incorporate contemporary theories of metaphor. Durlesser focuses primarily on the rhetorical aspect of metaphor[81] and Green's work seems to be based on the interaction theory, although she never cites Max Black.

Marc Brettler's work marks the first book-length, systematic study of a biblical metaphor: GOD IS KING.[82] Brettler's theoretical framework is informed by the works of Max Black and Janet Soskice. Taking a synchronic approach, he shows how God is not really a king, because God does not share all of the 'associated commonplaces' with human kings. He then proceeds to investigate which aspects of human kingship are projected onto God and which are left to the realm of the human. In a later study, Brettler argues for a more systematic study of metaphors for God in the Bible which would include an outline of root metaphors for God and a catalogue of where these metaphors appear, how they develop in various contexts and how they are blended together.[83]

Kirsten Nielsen's book, a revision of her 1985 doctoral thesis, contains a serious and thoughtful consideration of the dynamics of metaphor (or as she puts it, 'imagery')[84] in light of recent metaphor theory. Basing her

78. For the most part, his notions of metaphor are taken from the work of H. Meier, *Metapher: Versuch einer zusammenfassenden Betrachtung ihrer linguistischen Merkmale* (Winterthur: P.G. Keller, 1963). Unfortunately, the majority of recent German studies on metaphor and biblical literature fail to take into account American cognitive metaphor theories. Bodendorfer's work, in this regard, is an exception to the norm.

79. James A. Durlesser, 'The Rhetoric of Allegory in the Book of Ezekiel' (PhD dissertation; University of Pittsburgh, 1988). Durlesser works with the old model of metaphor as figurative, decorative language.

80. Barbara Green, *Like a Tree Planted: An Exploration of Psalms and Parables through Metaphor* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997).

81. Cf. also the study by Marjo Christina Annette Korpel, 'Metaphors in Isaiah LV', *VT* 46 (1996), pp. 43-55, in which metaphor is assumed to be simply a rhetorical device, contra Adele Berlin, 'On Reading Biblical Poetry: The Role of Metaphor', in J. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Cambridge 1995* (VTSup, 66; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 25-36.

82. Brettler, *God Is King*. For an intelligent assessment of Brettler's contribution to metaphor and Bible study, see Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities*, pp. 33-41.

83. Brettler, 'Metaphorical Mapping'.

84. Note Luis Alonso-Schökel's critique that Nielsen does not adequately distinguish between imagery and metaphor, and that most of her case studies do not deal

work, in large part, on the work of Max Black and Anders Jørgen Bjørndalen's *Untersuchungen zur allegorischen Rede der Propheten Amos und Jesaja*,[85] Nielsen lays out her working theory on metaphor. First, she accepts Black's interaction theory as her starting point and also takes from his work the notion that new meaning can be extracted from imagery. Then she points out the performative aspect of imagery, particularly as it involves 'the hearers in such a way that by entering into the interpretation they take it over as their own perception of reality'.[86] Finally, and this is Nielsen's most important point for her text study, 'imagery can be reused in another context, with possibilities of new interpretation'.[87]

Brigitte Seifert's recent study on Hosea also considers metaphor seriously. The first half of her study is devoted to a review of metaphor theory, exemplified by the work of Max Black and Paul Ricouer.[88] However, like Caird, Seifert believes that there are right and wrong interpretations of metaphor, particularly when it comes to talking about God:

> Due to its ability to open the human language for new meanings metaphor is suitable in a special way for talking about God. In the context of the relation of God to the world all words gain a new meaning, so that the language of faith is metaphorical *eo ipso*... Under this prerequisite, theological metaphors can also stress the ability to say the truth... The history of God coming to the world (itself revealing) is the criterion, which permits verifying theological metaphors in the view of their truth content.[89]

with metaphor at all: '...no distingue bastante entre métafora, concepto específico, e imagen, concepto genérico; la mayoría de los textos estudiados no son metáforas, sino imágenes' ('She does not distinguish enough between metaphor, a specific concept, and imagery, a general concept; the majority of examined texts are not metaphors, but rather images') (review of *There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah* [JSOTSup, 65; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989], by Kirsten Nielsen, in *Biblica* 71 [1990], pp. 262-64 [263]).

85. Anders Jørgen Bjørndalen, *Untersuchungen zur allegorischen Rede der Propheten Amos und Jesaja* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986).

86. Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree*, p. 67.

87. Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree*, p. 67.

88. Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden*, esp. pp. 11-86.

89. Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden*, p. 281: 'Aufgrund ihrer Fähigkeit, die menschliche Sprache für neue Bedeutung zu öffnen, eignet sich die Metapher in besonderer Weise für das Reden von Gott. Im Kontext des Verhältnisses Gottes zu Welt gewinnen alle Worte eine neue Bedeutung, so daß die Sprache des Glaubens eo ipso metaphorisch ist... Unter dieser Voraussetzung können theologische Metaphern mit Recht beanspruchen, die Wahrheit zu sagen... Die Geschichte des zur Welt

Unfortunately, Seifert does not consider the insights of Lakoff and his colleagues, nor the claim that metaphors have a multiplicity of possible meanings, nor the point that metaphors create truth as much as reveal it.[90]

The recent work of German scholar Gerhard Bodendorfer[91] also merits attention. In his discussion of rabbinic interpretations of Ezekiel 16, he includes a discussion of the Hebrew *mashal* with reference to allegory and metaphor. Influenced by the recent work of Daniel Boyarin, Bodendorfer explores the power of a metaphor to structure our knowledge and to frame our realities:

> *Mashal* does not just refer to history as a snapshot which can be interpreted. No, *mashal* creates this history first. History does not exist without it. *Mashal* is the matrix or the code from which history develops.[92]

This theoretical perspective most clearly approximates my own.

The first collective attempt to *apply* metaphor theory to Bible studies can be found in the collection of studies that appeared in *Semeia* in 1993. In this volume, Claudia Camp offers an introduction to the use of metaphor theory in feminist biblical interpretation. Camp attempts to demonstrate how the study of metaphor

> may provide one locus for bringing together...literary and social-historical concerns. Because metaphor creates a particular relationship between two normally distant concepts, it can reveal structures that motivate (even if they do not fully determine) social structures and relationships.[93]

Stated differently, Camp moves the discussion of metaphor from a general one to a specific exploration of the ways in which new metaphor theories may be helpful for biblicists. She advocates an approach to

kommenden (sich offenbarenden) Gottes ist das Kriterium, das theologische Metaphern im Blick auf ihren Wahrheitsgehalt zu prüfen erlaubt.'

90. Seifert also seems unaware of recent American studies on Bible and metaphor, such as the work of Soskice and Brettler.

91. Bodendorfer, *Drama des Bundes*.

92. Bodendorfer, *Drama des Bundes*, p. 73: 'Maschal weist somit nicht einfach nur auf die Geschichte hin, sozusagen als ihr Bildteil, der einfach durch einen Deutungsteil aufgelöst würde. Nein, er schafft diesen Deutungsteil erst. Die Geschichte existierte nicht ohne ihn. Der Maschal ist die Matrix oder der Code, aus dem heraus sich die Geschichte entwikkelt.'

93. Claudia V. Camp, 'Metaphor in Feminist Biblical Interpretation: Theoretical Perspectives', in Claudia V. Camp and Carole R. Fontaine (eds.), *Women, War and Metaphor: Language and Society in the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia, 61; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 3-36 (5).

biblical interpretation that takes seriously the question of how meaning is produced in language or, how 'language [is] not merely an "expression" of reality, but the very condition through which what we appropriate as "reality" comes to exist at all'.[94] Her approach to metaphor is informed, in large part, by the work of Lakoff and Turner and their theory of embodiment, but she also reviews the work of Ricoeur, Derrida, De Man and Jakobsen to provide a convincing argument that 'metaphors create us and not the other way around'.[95] The awareness of how language can *create* reality is essential for those who reconstruct history based on the language of ancient texts. Camp's position on metaphor and its application to biblical studies is very similar to my own.

In response to the *Semeia* volume, Francis Landy claims that most of the articles in the volume do not really discuss metaphor, but rather, as Landy points out, their 'emphasis is overwhelmingly metonymic'.[96] Landy encourages a study of biblical metaphors that understands metaphor as that which 'diffuses, multiplies, splits selves into fragile alliances between genders, substitutes one word for another, replenishes a world frozen in its difference with the possibility of reintegration and restoration...'[97] For example, he cites the often noted analysis of Williams Carlos Williams's 'To a Solitary Disciple' in which Lakoff and Turner demonstrate how the poet utilizes the FORM IS MOTION root metaphor, how 'this metaphor transforms a static schema into a dynamic one: a static form is understood as a dynamic motion'.[98] But Landy points out that 'the effect of transcendence depends on an implicit canceling of the basic metaphor. The lines escape into nowhere, become non-lines'.[99]In other words, Landy criticizes the predominant assumption in the essays that we should distinguish between metaphor and non-metaphor, and instead promotes metaphor as 'a process of discovery'.[100]

94. Camp, 'Metaphor in Feminist Biblical Interpretation', p. 4.

95. Camp, 'Metaphor in Feminist Biblical Interpretation', p. 34.

96. Francis Landy, 'On Metaphor, Play and Nonsense', in Claudia V. Camp and Carole R. Fontaine (eds.), *Women, War and Metaphor: Language and Society in the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia, 61; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 219-37 (219).

97. Landy, 'On Metaphor, Play and Nonsense', p. 221.

98. Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, p. 142.

99. Landy, 'On Metaphor, Play and Nonsense', p. 226.

100. Landy, 'On Metaphor, Play and Nonsense', p. 220. The belief in a distinction between metaphor and non-metaphor, or literal versus figurative, still predominates

Mieke Bal echoes this sentiment in her critical article 'Metaphors He Lives By'. She advocates a theory of metaphor that is based on the concept of political sublimation so that metaphor subverts that which it describes. 'Metaphor is, rather, a key to an understanding of language—including itself—as a form of struggle. The expressions resulting from that struggle—the metaphors perceived as "normal" expressions—carry the traces of what they have repressed.'[101] Metaphor speaks the unspeakable.

7. *'A Metaphor is Just a Metaphor'*

Is a metaphor just a metaphor? As we have seen, Brettler has demonstrated that the metaphor GOD IS KING does not mean that God is literally a king,[102] nor does the metaphor GOD IS HUSBAND TO ISRAEL suggest that God is really married to Israel. However, does this suggest that we need not take metaphors too seriously? One response to this question is presented in Robert P. Carroll's 'Desire under the Terebinths':

> Feminists may regard the representation of women by men (any and all such representations) as being invariably a pejorative activity and one not performed in the interests of women... From my point of view the use of metaphors of women for the community, nation, city and land in the prophets may have little to do with the representation of women as such, just as the metaphorization of men for the community and the nation in the prophets may have little bearing on the representation of men as such... *because such representation are inevitably metaphoric their referential force is symbolic*...[103]

among biblicists. Lakoff, Johnson and Turner's theories have convinced biblicists that metaphoric thought pervades cognitive processes, but the majority of biblical scholars who engage in literary criticism still do not accept the notion that all language and thought is metaphorical, cf. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, and Peter Mackey, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, 19; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), esp. pp. 31-46.

101. Mieke Bal, 'Metaphors He Lives By', in Claudia V. Camp and Carole R. Fontaine (eds.), *Women, War and Metaphor: Language and Society in the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia, 61; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 185-207 (205).

102. Brettler, *God Is King*.

103. Robert P. Carroll, 'Desire under the Terebinths: On Pornographic Representation in the Prophets—A Response', in A. Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist*

Carroll further asserts that, even in cases where the metaphors are female, real men are being condemned, not real women. Carroll's attitude is not unique. First of all, his portrayal of feminist positions regarding the representation of women by men is obviously over-generalized and applies only to certain feminist circles. Regardless of this particular shortcoming, Carroll's comment raises the common claim: a metaphor is just a metaphor. What Carroll fails to ask is: why condemn real men by describing them as women? What is gained? What attributes of women do the metaphors describe and who has claimed these attributes as female in the first place? Or stated more broadly, why when we try to imagine or conceptualize God do we inevitably picture a king, or a father, or a warrior?[104] The insights of theoreticians such as Lakoff reinforce the weakness of the 'metaphor is just a metaphor' claim. Metaphors create realities and shape our knowledge about the tenor; therefore we might argue that metaphors are just metaphors, if the corollary is that all knowledge is metaphorical.

8. *Conclusions*

The prophet Ezekiel was condemned by his contemporaries as the 'maker of parables' (ממשׁל משׁלים).[105] The present study takes this title seriously. As we have seen in this brief survey, the phenomenon of metaphor functions in a variety of ways. Metaphors construct meaning, order reality, serve to persuade, reveal cultural assumptions and reveal what cannot be said more directly. This study asks: what are the metaphors behind the more transparent marital metaphor of Ezekiel 16? What are the cultural assumptions or contextual knowledge behind the metaphor? How does the metaphor function on the performative level? What are the hidden messages embedded in the metaphor? What does the metaphor reinforce? How is the metaphor innovative?

Companion to the Latter Prophets (FCB, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), pp. 275-307 (278-79) (italics mine).

104. This point is confirmed by the current reluctance in contemporary Western religious traditions to invoke God through the use of feminine imagery in liturgical worship. Were metaphors such as GOD IS KING or HUSBAND *just* metaphors, we would just as easily refer to God as a queen or wife.

105. Ezek. 21.5. The piel of משׁל occurs only here. Moshe Greenberg translates the phrase as: 'a master of figurative speech', correctly noting that Ezekiel may have been viewed as 'an artist' (*Ezekiel 21–37* [AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1997], p. 419).

These questions will be grouped into three sets of more specific categories: first, metaphor as a rhetorical technique in which Ezekiel couches his troubling message by means of another more familiar concept. This first function is best analyzed through the interaction theory of Black and focuses its attention on metaphor as language. Secondly, the study of metaphor within the field of cognitive studies compels us to seek the conceptual mapping for marital metaphor as presented in Ezekiel 16. In this sense, Ezekiel 16 is a reflection of a metaphorical thought process which orders or 'maps out' an abstract system of emotions and concepts. The second approach is informed by the contributions of Lakoff, Johnson and Turner and their formulation of metaphorical mapping as a cognitive process. Additionally, this study takes seriously new theories of metaphor as fluid, paradoxical and ambiguous. As Caird says (although admittedly in a different context), ambiguity may be 'exploratory', that is, 'the speaker has not made up his mind between the two senses, but is discovering a new truth by investigating the interconnection between them'.[106] In this sense, metaphor may function as a subversive technique by which to express experiences which are 'forbidden', or considered taboo, by the culture. The third function of Ezekiel's use of metaphor is understood broadly through the insights of deconstructive readings and recent trends in literary theory and feminist cultural criticism.

106. Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 105.

Chapter 3

GENDER REVERSAL: A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN

1. *Metaphor in Socio-Cultural and Historical Context*

The book of Ezekiel is replete with metaphors that the author uses to convey theological and political messages. As we have seen in the previous chapter, however, metaphors can operate on several levels and can produce knowledge in profoundly subtle ways. Therefore, we can reach a deeper understanding of Ezekiel's theology by properly dissecting his metaphors. In the following section, I shall argue that the root metaphor that lies behind the marital metaphor of Ezekiel 16 is what I call the WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN metaphor. Using the insights of metaphor theory, I shall begin with an inquiry into the cultural assumptions and contextual knowledge that inform the use of the metaphor. This section will focus on the sociological and psychological factors that *provide the starting point* for the literary motif of the WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN metaphor.

It is generally accepted that Ezekiel lived in a time of enormous political, social and religious upheaval.[1] It is only recently that scholars

1. For basic surveys of the period, see Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), esp. pp. 17-38; Bustenay Oded, 'Judah and the Exile', in John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (eds.), *Israelite and Judaean History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 435-88; Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (trans. J. Bowden; OTL; 2 vols.; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), pp. 369-436; J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), pp. 416-36. For life in the Diaspora, for which we have little historical evidence, see Michael D. Coogan, 'Life in the Diaspora: Jews at Nippur in the Fifth Century BC', *BA* 37 (1974), pp. 6-12; Elias J. Bickerman, 'The Babylonian Captivity', in W.D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (eds.), *Cambridge History of Judaism* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), I, pp. 345-48.

have begun to look into the cultural trauma which must have ensued as a result of the massive changes of his generation. In 597 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar exiled the recently enthroned King Jechoiachin, members of the royal court and other leaders of the community (including the prophet Ezekiel) (2 Kgs 24). In 588 BCE, less than a decade later, the puppet king Zedekiah's revolt against Babylonian hegemony ushered in the Babylonian army and a two-year siege (2 Kgs 25). The city deteriorated and the people starved (2 Kgs 25.3, 18-21; Jer. 37.21; 52.6, 24-27; Lam. 1–5). In 586 BCE, the city was invaded, the Temple and much of Jerusalem was burned to the ground and there was a second deportation. The invading army appointed pro-Babylonian Gedaliah to govern over the survivors from Mizpah[2] (2 Kgs 25.22-26; Jer. 40–41); after only a short time, Gedaliah was assassinated by Ishmael, son of Netaniah, and a fear of reprisal precipitated a third wave of exiles to Egypt in 582 BCE (including the prophet Jeremiah, cf. Jer. 42–43).

The conditions for the population that remained in the land of Judah are uncertain. Politically, the nation of Judah was at an end and the future of the Davidic line was precarious at best. Socio-economically, information is scant; the biblical record would have us believe that Jerusalem (2 Kgs 2.9-10; Jer. 52.13-14, 17-23) and other Judean towns (Jer. 34.7; 44.2; Ezek. 33.24; Lam. 2.2-5) were razed to the ground.[3] An apt description for those who went into forced exile may be Ralph Klein's assertion: 'There had been abundant pain and death, and it is hard to imagine that the economy was not completely topsy-turvy. Exile meant a host of physical and socio-economic problems.'[4]

The greatest sense of crisis may have been experienced by that minority of the population that was deported to Babylonia. Those who were displaced may be represented by the voices in Lamentations and the Prophets. One of the most poignant descriptions of these tragedies is found in Lam. 2.20-22:

> See, YHWH, and behold, to whom you have done this! Women eat their own offspring, their new-born babes! Priest and prophet are killed in the sanctuary of YHWH! Prostrate in the streets lie both young and old. My

2. Just north of Jerusalem.

3. Recent studies suggest that the biblical texts may have exaggerated the extent to which life in Judah was affected, cf. Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land* (SO, 28; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996).

4. Ralph W. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 3.

> maidens and youths have fallen by the sword; you killed them on your day of fury, you slaughtered, you had no mercy. You convened, as on a festival, my neighbors from all around. On the day of the fury of YHWH, none survived or escaped; those whom I bore and reared my enemy has consumed.

Ezekiel's voice should certainly be included with those who experienced forced deportation and relocations.

a. *Exile, Shame and Gender Crisis*

Ezekiel and his world were unmade. The traumas of the sixth century BCE affected not only the theological beliefs and socio-political institutions of that world but must have also affected the psychology of individuals and the community as a whole. In other words, devastation affects not just political and socio-economic institutions; the experiences of Ezekiel's generation had an impact upon interpersonal dynamics, self-identity and a host of other aspects of culture. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher has argued persuasively for the position that we take the evidence for trauma in the Hebrew Bible seriously. He counters the prevailing view that life for the community in exile was relatively unoppressive by examining the 'lexicography of trauma' in the Bible and by comparing the conditions of the exilic Jewish community to modern dispossessed peoples.[5]

The fall of Jerusalem and the trauma of exile affected not only the institutions of government, kingship, cult, family, agriculture and commerce, but also gender, which, as a social institution, was greatly challenged. In other words, to return to the terminology of Judith Lorber,[6] gender identities, statuses and displays were challenged by the upheavals in society. As great as was the trauma of the destruction of the Temple, as shocking as was the exile of David's heirs, as traumatic as was the loss of life was the breakdown of gender norms.

Gender scripts are upset during times of social upheaval. Defeat in war, decimation of homes and towns and new governing bodies displaced men from their jobs, divided men from their families and gave rise to a host of

5. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone, 1989) and, more recently, 'Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587–539 BCE)', in James M. Scott (ed.), *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions* (StPBSup, 56; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 7-36.

6. Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender*, pp. 30-31.

new behavioral challenges. Numerous sociological studies on male victims of war have shown the ways in which men experience a sense of emasculation through victimization. In societies where honor and shame[7] play a significant role, the impact of defeat is felt even more strongly. The equation of honor belonging to masculinity and shame to femininity has been widely recognized by anthropologists.[8] John K. Chance sums up the basic understanding of shame which biblicists use most often:

> (1) Honor and shame form a value system rooted in gender distinctions in Mediterranean culture. Preservation of male honor requires a vigorous defense of the shame (modesty, virginity, seclusion) of women of the family or lineage.
>
> (2) Honor, most closely associated with males, refers to one's claimed social status and also to public recognition of it. Shame, most closely linked with females, refers to sensitivity towards one's reputation, or in the negative sense to the loss of honor.[9]

7. The primary vocabulary of shame is: בוֹשׁ, כלם, קלה, חפר, חרף. See Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor and Power in the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 234; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Victor H. Matthews, 'Honor and Shame in Gender-Related Legal Situations in the Hebrew Bible', in Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson and Tikva Frymer-Kensky (eds.), *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (JSOTSup, 262; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 97-112; Saul Olyan, 'Honor, Shame and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and its Environment', *JBL* 115 (1996), pp. 201-218; and Johanna Stiebert, 'Shame and Prophecy: Approaches Past and Present', *BibInt* 8 (2000), pp. 255-75, for recent studies on the intersections between honor, shame and gender in the Hebrew Bible. See Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 'Shame and Self Knowledge: The Positive Role of Shame in Ezekiel's View of the Moral Self', in Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (eds.), *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000), pp. 143-73, esp. pp. 145-54, for a discussion of this vocabulary in the context of the book of Ezekiel.

8. 'Most virtues—honesty, honor, sophrosyne—assume their full, their widest, meaning only when they refer to masculine actions. When applied to women, their immediate reference is usually limited to a qualification of their modesty... The very opposite is true of men' (J.G. Peristiany, 'The Sophron—a Secular Saint? Wisdom and the Wise in a Cypriot Community', in J.G. Peristiany and Julian Pitt-Rivers [eds.], *Honor and Grace in Anthropology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], pp. 103-127 [115]). See also Peristiany's earlier collection, *Honour and Shame: The Values of a Mediterranean Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

9. John K. Chance, 'The Anthropology of Honor and Shame: Culture, Values and Practice', *Semeia* 68 (1994), pp. 139-51 (142).

Jeremiah 48.1 suggests that shame was experienced simply through the experience of military defeat:

> Concerning Moab: Thus said YHWH of Hosts, the God of Israel: Alas, that Nebo should be ravaged, Kiriathaim captured and shamed, the stronghold shamed and dismayed!

The same sentiment is expressed by Jeremiah regarding Egypt:[10]

> Nations have heard your shame; the earth resounds with your screams. For warrior stumbles upon warrior; the two fall down together (Jer. 46.12).

In the ancient Near East, shaming practices were used on defeated soldiers as a form of psychological warfare.[11] Assyrian reliefs show men being made to grovel in the dirt. Beards would be shaven and/or bodily extremities cut off. In 2 Sam. 10.4-5, David's spies are publicly shamed by the cutting of their beards and exposure of their genitalia by cutting their garments at their hips.[12] Ashur-Nasir-Apli II records cutting off the arms of captured soldiers.[13] And in one particularly brutal description in his annals we read: 'I captured many troops alive: I cut off of some their arms (and) hands; I cut off of others their noses, ears, (and) extremities. I gouged out the eyes of many troops...'[14] Sennacherib boasts as follows: '(Their) testicles I cut off, and tore out their privates like the seeds of cucumbers.'[15] The mutilation, shaving and stripping techniques directly

10. Cf. also 2 Sam. 19.4; Jer. 9.19; 14.2-4; 51.51; Hos. 4.7; Amos 2.16; Lam. 1.8.

11. See Israel Eph'al, 'Warfare and Military Control in the Ancient Near Eastern Empires: A Research Outline', in Hayim Tadmor and Moshe Weinfeld (eds.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), pp. 88-106, for a review of forms of warfare and the challenges created by minorities ruling over large populations. For a particularly violent weapon of war, see Mordecai Cogan, 'Ripping Open Pregnant Women in Light of an Assyrian Analogue (VAT 13833; 2 Kings 15.16)', *JAOS* 103 (1983), pp. 755-57.

12. Cf. Olyan, 'Honor, Shame and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and its Environment'.

13. Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (2 vols.; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976), II, pp. 135, 161. For general information on Assyrian practices of war, see, H.W.F. Saggs, 'Assyrian Warfare in the Sargonid Period', *Iraq* 25 (1963), pp. 145-54.

14. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, II, p. 126.

15. Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1926–27), p. 2, sec. 254. See also Erika Bleibtreu, 'Grisly Assyrian Record of Torture and Death', *BARev* 17 (1991), pp. 52-61, 75.

threatened symbols of masculinity.[16] The mutilation of toes and thumbs probably represented symbolic castration as might the shaving of pubic hair.[17] Certainly shaving the beard renders a man like a woman with a clean face. Additionally, victims of war were routinely stripped naked[18] and their genitalia were exposed, as Mic. 1.11 suggests: 'Pass on, inhabitants of Shaphir! Did not the inhabitants of Zaanan have to go forth naked in shame? There is lamentation in Beth-ezel; it will withdraw its support from you.'

Similarly, Isaiah is commanded to wander around naked and barefoot for three years as a sign of the conditions of shame under which the Egyptians would have to live:

> And now YHWH said, 'It is a sign and a portent for Egypt and Nubia. Just as my servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot for three years, so shall the king of Assyria drive off the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Nubia, young and old, naked and barefoot and with bared buttocks—to the shame of Egypt! And they shall be dismayed and chagrined because of Nubia their hope and Egypt their boast' (Isa. 20.3-5).

The exposure of genitalia does not simply shame, but exposes a man's weakness, his vulnerability. Marianna E. Vogelzang and Wout Jae van Bekkum assert that in Mesopotamia: 'Nudity meant socially the absolute low in a person's relative status, whether due to lack of finances or to negligence of the person to whom one was subordinated, or upon whom one depended.'[19] They cite an inscription of Esarhaddon in which the

16. William Gaylin, as quoted by Michael S. Kimmel, writes: 'Men become depressed because of loss of status and power in the world of men. It is not the loss of money...which produces the despair that leads to self-destruction. It is the "shame", the "humiliation", the sense of personal "failure"... A man despairs when he has ceased being a man among men' ('Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity', in Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman [eds.], *Theorizing Masculinities* [Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994], pp. 119-41 [133]).

17. Kyle McCarter suggests that the practice of cutting the garments at the hip in 2 Sam. 10 was symbolic of castration (*II Samuel* [AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984], p. 270 n. 4). Nahum M. Waldman has pointed out that the 'bow', קֶשֶׁת, is a symbol of sexual vigor and that the destruction of the bow in battle communicates a loss of virility ('The Breaking of the Bow', *JQR* 69 [1978], pp. 82-88).

18. Terms for nakedness appear 10 times in Ezek. 16: ערוה (4 times); עריה (3 times); עירם (3 times).

19. Marianna E. Vogelzang and Wout Jae van Bekkum, 'Meaning and Symbolism of Clothing in Ancient Near Eastern Texts', in H.L.J. Vanstiphout *et al.*

king boasts of having clothed the naked prisoners of war, returning their dignity, and making them citizens of Babylonia.[20] Thus, shaming provided a way to systematically emasculate defeated soldiers.

Although the rape of defeated soldiers is not explicitly attested in biblical or ancient Near Eastern texts, the metaphoric language of military assault as rape may hint at this practice.[21] Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington have pointed out that the language for rape and military assault overlap in the word ענה[22] in passages such as Num. 24.24 and 2 Sam. 7.10. Through other terminology as well, rape and military language intersect. In Jer. 13.24-27, the attack upon Jerusalem is described as rape:

> So I will scatter you like stubble that flies before the desert wind. This shall be your lot, your measured portion from me declares YHWH, because you forgot me and trusted in falsehood. Therefore I will lift your skirts over your face (חשפתי שוליך על פניך) and your shame shall be seen. I have seen your adulteries (נאפיך), your neighing (ומצהלותיך), your unbridled promiscuity (זמת זנותך), your vile acts on the hills of the countryside. Woe to you, Jerusalem, who is not clean! How much longer shall it be?

Similarly, sexual degradation is overt in Nah. 3.5-6:[23]

> I am going to deal with you declares YHWH of Hosts. I will lift up your skirts over your face (וגליתי שוליך על פניך) and display your

(eds.), *Scripta Signa Vocis: Studies about Scripts, Scriptures, Scribes and Languages in the Near East Presented to J.H. Hospers* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1986), pp. 265-84 (267). I.J. Gelb, citing from E.C. Welskopf's work ('Einige Probleme der Sklaverei in der griechisch-römischen Welt', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 12 [1964], pp. 311-58 [326]) quotes the *Odyssey* 17.322-323: 'A man is bereft of half of his virility on the day he becomes a slave' ('Prisoners of War in Early Mesopotamia', *JNES* 32 [1973], pp. 70-98 [91]).

20. Vogelzang and van Bekkum, 'Meaning and Symbolism of Clothing', p. 267.

21. Cf. Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1975), esp. pp. 31-113, for the classic discussion of the role which rape plays in war. See also Claudia Card, 'Rape as a Weapon of War', *Hypatia* 11 (1996), pp. 5-17, who argues that martial mass rape serves to establish and communicate dominance by removing control from the defeated.

22. The piel of ענה II is a technical term for rape; cf. *HALOT*, pp. 807-808, contra BDB, p. 776.

23. Cf. also Isa. 47.1-4; Jer. 6; and Mic. 4.11. See Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington, 'Rape as a Military Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB, 8; Sheffield:

> nakedness to the nations and your shame to kingdoms. I will throw detestable things over you and disfigure you and make a spectacle of you.

The semantic overlap is not coincidental; rather gender ideology is at work—just as men control their women, they control society as embodied in the city.[24]

Thus gender identity and the inversion of normative scripts were expected dimensions of warfare. That Ezekiel was at least familiar with these practices, or even experienced them first hand, is suggested not only by his experience of the first exile, but also by his re-enactment of the siege of Jerusalem.

b. *Ezekiel and Exile*

Through a series of symbolic actions, Ezekiel communicates the experience of enemy invasion, siege and exile.[25] Ezekiel's sign-acts both reflect the recent past experience of the exiled community in Babylonia and predict the impending second exile. The prophet begins by setting out a brick as a model of Jerusalem under siege, with a siege wall, ramp, army

Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 308-25; Harold C. Washington, 'Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach', *BibInt* 5 (1997), pp. 324-63; F. Rachel Magdalene, 'Ancient Near Eastern Treaty-Curses and the Ultimate Texts of Terror: A Study of the Language of Divine Sexual Abuse in the Prophetic Corpus', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 326-52; Alice A. Keefe, 'Rapes of Women/Wars of Men', in Claudia V. Camp and Carole R. Fontaine (eds.), *Women, War and Metaphor: Language and Society in the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia, 61; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 79-97; and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, '"You May Enjoy the Spoil of your Enemies": Rape as a Biblical Metaphor for War', in Claudia V. Camp and Carole R. Fontaine (eds.), *Women, War and Metaphor: Language and Society in the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Semeia, 61; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 59-75.

24. Cf. Gordon and Washington, 'Rape as a Military Metaphor', pp. 317-18; Magdalene, 'Ancient Near Eastern Treaty-Curses', p. 335. Magdalene also suggests that the opening of the gates and entering a city evokes the opening of the vagina (pp. 332-33). See also Harold C. Washington, '"Lest he Die in the Battle and Another Man Take Her": Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Laws of Deuteronomy 20–22', in Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson and Tikva Frymer-Kensky (eds.), *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (JSOTSup, 262; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 185-213.

25. The prophet Isaiah also uses sign-acts to express the exilic experience (Isa. 20.1-6).

camps and battering rams (4.1-3). Then Ezekiel is commanded to lie on his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days, all the while tied down with cords (4.4-8). The cords recall the binding of captives[26] and the helpless conditions of the exile.[27] Ezekiel eats rationed food and water (4.9-12), again reliving the conditions under siege. Finally, God tells him to shave his hair with a sword (חרב) and to divide the hair into thirds. One third is burnt, one third falls to the sword and the final third is scattered in the wind (5.1-4). As we have noted, shaving can function as symbolic castration, and the fact that a sword is used as the instrument of humiliation is significant. A sword symbolizes military force wherein the victim becomes an object of shame (חרפה)[28] (5.15). In ch. 12, the prophet simulates the deportation experience; he leaves his house 'like one going away into exile', with a bag on his shoulders and with his eyes closed,[29] and re-enacts the exile. The emotions which accompany this act are anxiety (דאג) and fear (רגז), the same emotions which we have already established convey emasculation and its attendant shame (12.17-20).

Corrine L. Patton, who also asserts that Ezekiel had direct knowledge of male mutilation and shaming of victims of war points to the use of the word 'flesh' (בשׂר) in the book of Ezekiel. She posits that the oracle of ch. 11, which describes the city as a pot full of flesh that has been cut by the sword, reflects male mutilation. Similarly, ch. 24 expresses the boiling of 'flesh', that is, 'genitals', as a sign of military defeat.[30]

It is also noteworthy that apart from his symbolic action in ch. 12, the only times that Ezekiel leaves his home are when the spirit of God whisks him away to experience a prophetic vision. In other words, Ezekiel

26. 2 Kgs 25.7 and Jer. 39.7 describe the binding of Zedekiah as he is taken into exile by the Babylonians. Cf. also Jer. 40.1.

27. So too Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, pp. 125-26, contra Kevin G. Friebel (*Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts: Rhetorical Nonverbal Communication* [JSOTSup, 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], p. 223), who argues that the cords function as an aid for the prophet to remain still.

28. Cf. E. Kutsch, 'חרף II', *TDOT*, V, pp. 209-15, esp. pp. 213-14.

29. Bruce Vawter and Leslie J. Hoppe (*A New Heart: A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* [ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], p. 79) suggest that this is a veiled reference to Zedekiah being blinded. More likely, lowered eyes are an expression of grief.

30. Corrine L. Patton, '"Should our Sister Be Treated like a Whore?": A Response to Feminist Critiques of Ezekiel 23', in Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (eds.), *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2000), pp. 221-38 (236-37).

conveys his messages to the elders of his community in his own home; he generally does not venture out (e.g. 8.1). While Isaiah, Jeremiah and the minor prophets deliver their messages either in the royal court or in some public arena, Ezekiel is home-bound. In the Akkadian *Epic of Erra*, the 'seven' call to Erra: 'Why have you been sitting in the city like a feeble old man, Why sitting at home like a helpless child? Shall we eat woman food, like non-combatants? Have we turned timorous and trembling, as if we can't fight?'[31] Ezekiel's home-centered career may have reflected his sense of powerlessness and shame.[32]

Despite his generation's crisis of emasculation, Ezekiel never explicitly discusses gender confusion or gender crisis. He rarely mentions women; in fact, apart from condemning women's participation in a cult of Tammuz in Jerusalem (8.14-15) and the mention of his wife's death (24.15-18), 'real' women are never mentioned. Chapters 16 and 23 are the only two places within the book where gender roles are explored and critiqued, and these two chapters will be the focus of this study; however, Ezekiel's preoccupation with gender identity, and in particular with shame-centered emasculation, is found embedded in the text in more subtle ways.

For example, in Jer. 15.16, part of a lament passage, Jeremiah describes his acceptance of the divine word metaphorically as eating:[33]

נִמְצְאוּ דבריך וָאֹכְלֵם ויהי דברך לי לשׂשׂון ולשׂמחת לבבי

> Your words were found, and I did eat them; your words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart.

31. Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* (SANE, 1.3; Los Angeles: Undena Publications, 1977), col. I, lines 47-50.

32. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher also relates Ezekiel's home-bound experience and a number of his symbolic actions through the lens of post-traumatic stress disorder. See his article, 'Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile', pp. 32-33. See also Meindert Dijkstra, 'The Valley of Dry Bones: Coping with the Reality of Exile in the Book of Ezekiel', in Bob Becking and Marjo Christina Annette Korpel (eds.), *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (OtSt, 42; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 114-33, for a study of a theology of captivity in the book of Ezekiel.

33. William L. Holladay points to the Deuteronomistic connection between דבר and the verb מצא in 1 Kgs 14.13; 2 Kgs 22.13; and 2 Kgs 23.2; he concludes that Jeremiah may be referring to the discovery of the Deuteronomic Scroll in 622 BCE (*Jeremiah 1* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986], p. 458). See also Kathleen M. O'Connor, *The Confession of Jeremiah: Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1–25* (SBLDS, 94; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988).

Ezekiel's famous ingestion of a scroll is similar to the Jeremian passage; yet the differences are highly significant:

ואפתח את-פי וַיַּאֲכִלֵנִי את המגלה הזאת

I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat the scroll (Ezek. 3.2).

Ezekiel does not only concretize Jeremiah's metaphor, he suggests a radically different understanding of his prophetic role. First, while the Jeremian passage uses the qal active verb form to express eating the words, the Ezekiel text employs a hiphil causative verbal stem to describe being fed by God; in other words, Ezekiel is a passive recipient and not an agent in his own destiny. Presumably, once he has consumed the scroll, the words that he recites are no longer under his own control. This mentality of powerlessness is consistent with the victimization which Ezekiel and his community had experienced. Although gender anxiety is not explicitly expressed here, passivity and powerlessness in a male, as I have argued, can be equated with emasculation.

Ezekiel's loss of self-control is also expressed through the terminology that he uses to describe his prophetic experience. The spirit of YHWH physically enters into him and stands him up on his feet (2.2); similarly, a spirit lifts him up in 3.12.[34] The phrase ותהי עליו שׁם יד-יהוה describing the hand of YHWH upon him, appears seven times in the book of Ezekiel.[35]

The 'hand' of YHWH represents the power of YHWH, which overpowers the prophet. In all of these cases, Ezekiel is a passive male whose physical body is controlled by another. By contrast, the use of the phrase by First Isaiah always refers to God's wrath upon an enemy of Judah.[36] Second Isaiah uses the term to describe God's past punishments on fallen Jerusalem.[37] It is only Ezekiel who uses the phrase to describe the power of YHWH directly upon the prophet.

The most striking manifestation of Ezekiel's passivity is the divine imposition of muteness (3.26). This passage and its counterpart in 33.22, where the prophet's mouth is opened following the destruction of Jerusalem, have been the object of much attention in scholarship. The

34. Also Ezek. 3.14, 24; 11.1.

35. Ezek. 1.3; 3.14, 22; 8.1; 33.22; 37.1; 40.1. See Keith W. Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets: A Study of Ezekiel's Place in Prophetic Traditions* (SBT, 31; London: SCM Press, 1975), pp. 13-37, for a discussion of this phrase.

36. Isa. 19.16; 25.10.

37. Isa. 40.2; 41.20; 51.17; 59.1.

problem lies in the seeming contradiction between Ezekiel's speechlessness and his prophetic role as a *communicator* of God's messages. Briefly stated, the questions that these texts raise are: is the speechlessness literal or metaphorical? If the speechlessness is literal, is it voluntary and symbolic or is it physiological?

Detailed reviews of the scholarship on this topic have been prepared by a number of scholars in the recent past.[38] Suffice it to say that Lang is the most recent biblicist to suggest that Ezekiel's muteness is physiological and that the text is describing aphasia due to the emotional trauma of exile, the loss of his job as a priest and the rejection by his community.[39] Others read the speechlessness as intermittent and voluntary. Kevin G. Friebel takes the muteness as a literal sign-act in which the prophet serves as a model, indicating that the people should not speak or pray to God.[40] Moshe Greenberg suggests that the muteness is a metaphor for Ezekiel's inability to speak oracles of hope;[41] Daniel Block holds to the position that Ezekiel's speechlessness is symbolic of God's refusal to intercede on behalf of the people.[42]

Robert Wilson sees in the muteness passage a curtailment of the prophetic office. He asserts that the metaphor of speechlessness indicates that the prophet could no longer function as an איש מוכיח, a mediator.[43] Following upon Wilson's insights, Ellen Davis believes that 'Ezekiel's dumbness is a metaphor for the move toward textualization of Israel's sacred traditions...'[44] She connects 3.26 with the ingestion of the scroll and with Ezekiel's confinement to his home. For Davis, all of these texts are indicators of the textual nature of the messages. Davis picks up on

38. See especially, Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*; Robert R. Wilson, 'An Interpretation of Ezekiel's Dumbness', *VT* 22 (1972), pp. 91-104; Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*; Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, esp. pp. 150-62.

39. Bernhard Lang, *Ezechiel: Der Prophet und das Buch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), pp. 66-74. This was first suggested by August Klostermann, 'Ezechiel: Ein Beitrag zu besserer Würdigung seiner Person und seiner Schrift', *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 50 (1877), pp. 391-439.

40. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, pp. 185-88.

41. Moshe Greenberg, 'On Ezekiel's Dumbness', *JBL* 77 (1958), pp. 101-105.

42. Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, pp. 155-61.

43. Wilson, 'Interpretation of Ezekiel's Dumbness'. So too Ralph W. Klein, *Ezekiel: The Prophet and his Message* (Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament; Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 9, and Wevers, *Ezekiel*, p. 53.

44. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p. 50.

Ezekiel's powerlessness, but connects it to the ascendancy of the written word over the prophet's individual role.

Each interpreter, whether his or her orientation is psychological, textual or theological, recognizes that Ezekiel's speechlessness fits into a broader picture of a powerless prophet. In Isa. 53.7, the suffering servant is described as one whose mouth cannot open, who is powerless in the face of oppression and pain. Similarly, in Ps. 39.3, the sufferer is struck dumb in the face of pain. Given the association between speechlessness (אלם) and suffering, Ezekiel's socio-historical circumstances and other passages that express his powerlessness, the speechlessness motif fits logically into a general prophetic expression of emotional impotence. The prophet is unable to find his own voice just as he is unable to control his own body. God controls his movement, his lack of movement and his words. While Jeremiah could still find a voice to argue with God and to lament his situation, Ezekiel is past the point of protest;[45] he is a thoroughly passive male.

Any understanding of Ezekiel 16 which fails to take the socio-historical background seriously is fundamentally flawed. As Patton has written:

> The excessive violence does not arise from the pen of a male author sitting safely in his office and affected only intellectually by the fall of his city. It is told from the perspective of a once elite member of society who has been dragged off in chains to an unclean land, who sits powerless, 'dumb,' as his nation is destroyed and his world turned upside down.[46]

This insight leads Patton to argue that the male audience of Ezekiel 23 would fully identify with the shamed and mutilated woman of the text. I argue, by contrast, that this experience of emasculation did not lead to a sympathetic identification with women, but to a horror and dread of being equated with women. The breakdown of gender roles, identities, behaviors and displays required a rethinking of gender ideology. Ezekiel had either to rework the ideology to fit with his new reality, or to find a way to reaffirm the existing ideology of a strongly binary system with clear differentiations between male and female. As we will see in the following chapter, Ezekiel chose the latter option.

c. *Responses to Gender Confusion: Hypervirility*

Michael Kaufman, a contemporary writer on gender studies, points out that a disparity between gender expectations and reality is common:

45. Except for the one intervention in chs. 8–11.

46. Patton, 'Should our Sister be Treated like a Whore?', p. 229.

'Although gender ideals exist in the form of hegemonic masculinities[47] and femininities and although gender power is a social reality, when we live in heterogeneous societies, we each grapple with often conflicting pressures, demands, and possibilities.'[48] Men live in fear of being emasculated or exposed. They experience shame in feeling fear. And unfortunately, feelings of fear or loss of power are not easily acknowledged; the more a man feels fear, the more he needs to compensate by way of hypervirility or machismo. The belief in an inaccessible image of virility leads to inevitable disappointments. In order to fight a permanent feeling of insecurity, some men believe the answer is to encourage a hypervirility. In fact, they find themselves trapped into an obsessional and compulsive masculinity. Men whose masculinity is challenged are likely to devalue women, to be abusive to women to whom they have access.[49] More specifically:

> [Men who] cannot control their lovers as they would wish...cannot control other men's access to these women, and therefore they cannot control the definition of their own masculinity because they cannot control the definition of or the social practices surrounding the femininity of their lovers...[50]

This hypervirility is eminently apparent in Ezekiel's writings, particularly in chs. 16 and 23 in which Ezekiel describes the punishments that YHWH will inflict upon woman Jerusalem:

> I will assemble all the lovers with whom you commingled, along with everybody you accepted and everybody you rejected. I will assemble them against you from all around, and I will expose your nakedness to them, and they shall see all your nakedness. I will inflict upon you the punishment of women who commit adultery and shed blood, and I will bring upon you the blood of fury and jealousy against you. I will give you into their hands, and

47. Hegemonic masculinity is the idealized notion of manhood as a man with power, success and control.

48. Michael Kaufman, 'Men, Feminism, and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power', in Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (eds.), *Theorizing Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 142-63 (147).

49. Cf. L.E. Walker, *The Battered Women's Syndrome* (New York: Springer, 1984); Kersti Yllö and Michele Bograd (eds.), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988).

50. Henrietta Moore, 'The Problem of Explaining Violence in the Social Sciences', in P. Harvey (ed.), *Sex and Violence: Issues in Representation and Expression* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 138-55.

> they shall tear down your enclosure and level your booths; and they shall strip you of your clothing and take away your glorious jewels, leaving you naked and bare. Then they shall assemble a mob against you to stone you with stones and thrust you with their swords. They shall put your houses to the flames and execute punishment upon you in the sight of many women; thus I will put a stop to your promiscuity, and you shall pay no more fees. When I have satisfied my fury upon you and my rage has departed from you, then I will be tranquil; I will no longer be angry (Ezek. 16.37-42).

A similar sentiment is expressed in Ezek. 23.25-29:

> I will set my jealousy against you, and they shall deal with you in fury: they shall cut off your nose and ears. The last of you shall fall by the sword; they shall take away your sons and daughters, and your remnant shall be devoured by fire. They shall strip you of your clothing and take away your glorious jewels. I will put an end to your wantonness and to your promiscuity in the land of Egypt, and you shall not long for them or remember Egypt any more. For thus said YHWH God: I am going to deliver you into the hands of those you hate, into the hands of those from whom you turned in disgust. They shall treat you with hate, and they shall take away all you have labored for, and leave you naked and bare; your naked promiscuity, wantonness and lewdness will be exposed.

Although these words are placed into the mouth of God, they are, in reality, an expression of the writer's experience. In other words, the rage is as much an expression of Ezekiel's state of mind as it is that of God. Thus, Anna Freud's point that a victim comes to identify with an oppressor in order to save oneself is relevant here.[51] In these passages, Ezekiel provides us with a classic example of the phenomenon of shame turning to violent rage: 'Humiliation becomes rage when a person senses that the way to resolve the problem...is to turn the structure of his humiliation on its head.'[52] It is also no coincidence that sexuality becomes a weapon of violence. Men often express their sense of powerlessness and humiliation by projecting their fantasies and anxieties of women's

51. Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (New York: International Universities Press, 1942).

52. J. Katz, *Seductions of Crime* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), p. 29, as quoted by Donald G. Dutton, *The Batterer: A Psychological Profile* (New York:Basic Books, 1995), pp. 91-92. Dutton also points out that shame is the greatest single factor leading to abusive husbands.

sexuality.[53] In the case of these Ezekiel texts, Ezekiel attributes to God the rage that he feels; the prophet makes God the agent for his fantasies.

d. *Responses to Gender Confusion: Emasculation*

In contrast to hypervirility, a man who feels 'emasculated' may submit to his feelings of powerlessness. This phenomenon has received little attention in comparison with studies on hypervirility and machismo. The dearth of literature on this phenomenon may be due to the fact that submission is traditionally associated with females and that powerlessness is antithetical to masculinity. Thus, this response to threatened masculinity has been considered primarily in the context of clinical studies on male identity crisis and/or sexual 'perversion'. As Warren Steinberg notes:

> To submit means to yield oneself to the authority or will of another, to put oneself in a subordinate or secondary position. While such behavior is evident and somewhat acceptable in females in our culture, going under the name of feminine passivity, or, in its unacceptable form, female masochism, it is definitely antithetical to the masculine gender role. In our culture, men consider submissive behavior inferior and reject it as an aspect of their own psychology; it arouses humiliation if experienced. The masculine gender role is characterized by power, dominance, control of oneself, and, even more masculine, control of others.[54]

A male who gives in to his fears of emasculation may drown in self-hatred and/or self-destructive, addictive behavior; or he may own his disempowerment and may fully identify with women.

Sigmund Freud's classic case study of Dr Schreber provides an excellent example of this phenomenon. Dr Schreber believed that it was

53. 'The portrayal of women as essentially "nymphomaniacal" is also double-edged for men. One of the great fears about women is that they all have voracious and unlimited sexual appetites and that men will not be able to perform well enough and with sufficient regularity to hold on to them. Pornography attempts to assuage this fear by showing that men can satisfy women and graphically explaining how to do so. But all this actually has the effect of making men feel more inadequate, unequal to the challenge, and merely serves to push them further into the apparently safer, unreal world of pornographic fantasies' (Peter Baker, 'Maintaining Male Power: Why Heterosexual Men Use Pornography', in Catherine Itzin [ed.], *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], pp. 124-44 [136]).

54. Warren Steinberg, *Masculinity: Identity Conflict and Transformation* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), p. 161.

his mission to bring redemption to the world, that he was God's chosen; but he could only usher in the age of redemption through his transformation into a woman. For him, emasculation became the means to the ends of a new age. Freud quotes from Schreber's writing, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, as follows:

> Now, however... I became aware that the order of things imperatively demanded my emasculation, whether I personally like it or no, and that no reasonable course lay open to me but to reconcile myself to the thought of being transformed into a woman.[55]

Schreber believed that he was God's wife. Initially, he felt that a transformation into womanhood was a disgrace and that his body would become an object of sexual abuse. At a later stage, he began to accept his feelings of femaleness and then finally attributed his experiences and feelings to God, believing that God actually demanded his emasculation.

In a remarkably similar fashion, Ezekiel could express his emasculation through the marital metaphor, imagining himself and his community as the wife of God. Freud observes that 'a sexual delusion of persecution was later on converted, in the patient's mind, into a religious delusion of grandeur'.[56] In Ezekiel's case, persecution was not delusional, but real. Persecution was not only individual, but communal, not only personal, but social. And this persecution had a profound impact on gender—both individually and communally. Dr Schreber may have admitted to feeling like a woman and eventually even owning that identity with pride; but, as we shall see with Ezekiel 16, the prophet could only hint at his generation's gender confusion through the mask of metaphor.

e. *Excursus: Psychologizing Ezekiel*

The connections between Dr Schreber and Ezekiel were hinted at in a 1946 article written by Edwin C. Broome, Jr.[57] Dissatisfied with his colleagues' characterizations of Ezekiel as an eccentric or mystic, or prophet prone to seizures, Broome asserts that Ezekiel was a paranoid schizophrenic, whose abnormal personality closely parallels that of Freud's Dr Schreber and other documented schizophrenics. Broome

55. Sigmund Freud, *Three Case Histories* (intro. Philip Rieff; New York: Simon & Schuster/Touchstone, 1963), p. 96.

56. Freud, *Three Case Histories*, p. 94.

57. Edwin C. Broome Jr., 'Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality', *JBL* 65 (1946), pp. 277-92.

interprets Ezekiel's symbolic actions as indicative of catatonia and periods of hallucinations. Regarding the chariot vision, Broome suggests that the varied faces of a human, lion, ox and eagle—animals that symbolize ferociousness, goring and tearing—reveal Ezekiel's acute anxiety: 'This looks for all the world like inherent masochism.'[58] He further suggests that the creatures (חיות) in Ezekiel's chariot vision were probably naked female creatures,[59] covering themselves with only a single wing, flying about to and fro, betraying Ezekiel's 'paranoid exhibitionism'.[60] Furthermore, Ezekiel's ingestion of the scroll (3.1-3) represents the performance of fellatio upon the divine; likewise, the sword in 5.1-4 represents Ezekiel's castration wish, as does his shaving.[61] Not surprisingly, Broome has found little if any support for his position, neither among biblicists nor psychologists.

However, 50 years later, David J. Halperin offered a study in defense of Broome's general approach with correctives and a more detailed textual analysis of Ezekiel. His readings are informed by a few general hypotheses: first, he begins from the basic premises of Freudian psychoanalytic research, informed by readings of Freud, discussions with Freudian psychiatrists, and his own personal experiences as a patient of analysis.[62] Second, Halperin presupposes 'that Ezekiel's account of his own behavior...is truthful and accurate' and that the text of Ezekiel 'conveys the author's unconscious processes as authentically (and as cryptically) as our dreams convey ours'.[63] And finally, he claims that the book of Ezekiel is fully attributable to the prophet Ezekiel and that contradictions within and among texts simply mirror Ezekiel's inner

58. Broome, 'Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality', p. 284.

59. Broome assumes that the feminine plural marker on this noun makes these creatures female.

60. Broome, 'Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality', p. 284.

61. Cf. Saul Olyan, 'What Do Shaving Rites Accomplish?', *JBL* 117 (1998), pp. 611-22, in which he shows how transcultural meanings for shaving cannot be demonstrated. If anything, in the Bible, shaving may be connected to rites of transition, marking a change in status.

62. David J. Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel: Text and Psychology* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), p. xi. Klostermann's 'Ezechiel' represents an earlier, pre-Freudian attempt to understand Ezekiel's actions via a diagnosis of illness.

63. Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel*, p. 217.

conflicts.[64] In other words, he assumes that Freudian psychoanalytic theory and method are completely reliable; that text is equivalent to personally communicated dream recollection and direct one-to-one communication; and that the book of Ezekiel is not only attributable to a real person named Ezekiel, but that the writing is also a direct, unedited outpouring of his unconscious mind.

Based on this methodology, Halperin concludes that Ezekiel's writing is pervaded by a fear and loathing of female sexuality and an obsession with images of dominant males. He believes that Ezekiel's Oedipal conflict was exaggerated by the trauma of being abandoned by his mother and abused by his mother's lovers as a child. These childhood experiences, coupled with the trauma of exile, are reflected in Ezekiel's writings. Regarding chs. 16 and 23, Halperin suggests that:

> He could and did project his feelings onto their object. No longer was the furious child aware of wanting to kill his faithless mother. Rather it was *she* who wanted to kill *him*. He combined this perception with the awareness of the physiological reality that his mother monthly spilled blood, and of the probable historical reality that she had sacrificed his welfare to the convenience of her husband or lover. Thus the child Ezekiel created his image of a bloodshedding, child-murdering female... In this version, his rage could retain its original object, the female. But its subject was not the adult male, whether seen as 'lover,' 'righteous man,' or Yahweh (= both husband and father). Identified with the aggressor, Ezekiel could safely indulge his rage at his mother—while convincing himself that his rage was not his own but that of the father-god who spoke through him.[65]

In some small measure, Halperin and I agree; there are a number of striking parallels between Halperin's conclusions and my own. Like Halperin, I will argue that Ezekiel underwent a process of projection centered around the evils of the female; however, it should be noted that the significantly different paths we take lead to nuanced conclusions. In place of social psychology, Halperin chooses to read Ezekiel 16 (and the entirety of the book of Ezekiel) as raw material for a psychoanalytic case

64. Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel*, p. 222: 'Even the divergencies between the Masoretic and the Septuagintal forms of the text leave this assertion unshaken. We have seen that it is possible to treat both as Ezekiel's own work, the differences between them reflecting the degree to which the man was able to distance himself from his unconscious process.'

65. Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel*, p. 166.

study of the individual named Ezekiel; in other words, for Halperin, the text replaces the couch.

In the following analysis, I do not assume that we can responsibly analyze a long-dead person. In the words of Carl Gordon Howie: 'the claim of an ability to psychoanalyze a man about whose life we have only the vaguest and most general hints is completely out of the question'.[66] In addition, we should assess Ezekiel's activities and words according to the norms and symbol systems of Ezekiel's own culture. For example, Halperin takes Ezekiel's descriptions of child sacrifice as reflective of Ezekiel's inner psychosis and not as a standard polemical formula. This study takes seriously the cultural, historical and literary framework against which Ezekiel composed his prophecies. This study attempts to address the cultural context in which normality/abnormality is constructed. Assuming that 'normality' is universally similar, as Halperin does, fails to acknowledge the 'Western psychiatric gaze'.[67] Human nature is variable, norms are not absolute and what seems strange in one culture appears perfectly normal in another. In the areas of anthropology, sociology, cultural criticism, ethnopsychiatry and literary criticism, just to name a few, these assertions undergird all contemporary research.[68]

66. Howie, *Date and Composition of Ezekiel*, p. 74.

67. Hope Landrine ('Cultural Diversity, Contextualism, and Feminist Psychology', in B.M. Clinchy and J.K. Norem [eds.], *The Gender and Psychology Reader* [New York: New York University Press, 1998], pp. 78-103 [80]) discusses the differences between mechanistic behavior theory and contextual behavior theory. Proponents of the mechanistic behavior theory (B.F. Skinner's 1938 *Behavior of Organisms*) analyze behavior through the framework of superficial, mechanical behavior, so that any person, regardless of culture, 'who engages in the specific set of movements is by definition engaging in the "same behavior" regardless of its different sociocultural contexts'. However, Landrine points out, for an Asian-American woman, an African-American woman and a European-American woman to look at someone in the eye, the significance of that similar mechanical behavior is quite different. By contrast, contextual behavior theory recognizes that behavior is meaningful only in context. Reading a newspaper on the subway is different from reading a newspaper in the middle of a conversation with a significant other. Cf. also Richard A. Shweder and E.J. Bourne, 'Does the Concept of the "Person" Vary Cross-Culturally?', in Anthony J. Marsella and Geoffrey M. White (eds.), *Cultural Conceptions of Mental Health and Therapy* (London: Reidel, 1982), pp. 97-137, and Richard H. Dana, *Multicultural Assessment Perspectives for Professional Psychology* (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1993).

68. In 1956, Georges Devereux asked how we can apply the term 'normality' in

Given the potential pitfalls and weaknesses of a classic Freudian analysis via a text by an author who may or may not have existed or who may or may not have written all that is attributed to him, it is more methodologically sound to approach the texts as reflective of cultural and social dynamics, rather than the product of a lone individual. In other words, I am interested in the psychology of a generation of trauma victims and not in the individual psychology of the writer. The writer simply represents the world around him. As a representative of the world around him, Ezekiel expresses feelings of emasculation, societal breakdown and chaos. As Carl G. Jung has beautifully expressed it: 'The personal psychology of the artist may explain many aspects of his work, but not the work itself. And if it ever did explain his work successfully, the artist's creativity would be revealed as a mere symptom.'[69] A work of art, no matter how unusual or troubling its visions and symbols, reflects something real, or at least as real as any other expression or experience of emotion.

To sum up, we cannot psychoanalyze the individual 'Ezekiel' in a vacuum, but we can view the writer as a product of his age. We will see that masculinity, gender crisis and projection are at the core of his experience and intersect with his theology; but we view this at a social and cultural level, and not as an individual psychosis.

divergent cultural settings ('Normal and Abnormal', in Joseph B. Casagrande and T. Gladwin [eds.], *Some Uses of Anthropology, Theoretical and Applied* [Anthropological Society of Washington; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956], pp. 23-48). Bronislaw Malinowski argued, as early as 1929, that Freud's Oedipal complex was not universal (*The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia* [London: Routledge, 1929]). (Malinowski's argument was rejected by Melford Spiro in his *Oedipus in the Trobriands* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982]). To this day, this issue is still being debated, particularly as regards the analysis of rituals in varying cultures. For a concise discussion of the 'pathological' versus 'transformative' psychological approaches to ritual and anthropological studies in general, cf. Marcel Suárez-Orozco, 'Psychological Anthropology', in Thomas Barfield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 381-83. The transformative approach is used by Dorothy Zelig (*Psychoanalysis and the Bible: A Study in Depth of Seven Leaders* [New York: Bloch Pub. Co., 1974]). Basing her study on Freud's Oedipal complex, she reads biblical stories of fathers and sons not as pathology, but as healthy ways of working through conflicts and emerging at a new level of morality and insight.

69. Carl G. Jung, 'Psychology and Literature', in *idem*, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* (trans. R.F.C. Hull; Bollingen Series, 20; New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), pp. 84-105 (86).

2. *Metaphor in Literary Context*

a. *The Mesopotamian Evidence*

The sociological/psychological phenomenon of emasculation during times of persecution or crisis is expressed in a specific literary motif in the ancient Near East: the A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN metaphor. In the ancient Near East, this motif appears in a variety of literary genres and expresses the *transformation of men into women*. What lies behind this motif, as we have seen in the previous section, is a complex set of gender-based responses to crisis. The real sense of emasculation provides the impetus for the A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN literary metaphor. In the following section we shall explore this literary motif.

The theme of men becoming (like) women and vice versa arises in a number of literary contexts related to Ishtar. A neo-Sumerian royal hymn that describes a procession for the New Year's festival, dated to the reign of Iddin-Dagan (c. 1974–53 BCE), describes a category of people called the sag-ur-sag:

> [T]he spear, 'the arm of battle' they grasp in their hand.
> They walk before the holy Inanna,
> Their right side they dress with men's clothes,
> They walk before the holy Inanna,
> Their left side they cover with women's clothes.
> They walk before the holy Inanna,
> To the great Lady of Heaven, Inanna, I would say: 'Hail!'
> With jump ropes and coloured cords they compete before her.[70]

These individuals, dressed as both men and women, carry hoops, colored ribbons and swords embodying the many ostensibly contradictory aspects of Ishtar. As Gwendolyn Leick has rightly pointed out, the sag-ur-sag were probably hermaphrodites,[71] and the fact that they have a place in

70. Åke W. Sjöberg, 'in-nin-šà-gur$_4$-ra: A Hymn to the Goddess Inanna by the en-Priestess Enheduanna', *ZA* 65 (1976), pp. 161-253 (224); Gwendolyn Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 158; Daniel Reisman, 'Iddin-Dagan's Sacred Marriage Hymn', *JCS* 25 (1973), pp. 187-202 (187).

71. This position stands in contrast to Reisman's male prostitution ('Iddin-Dagan's Sacred Marriage', p. 187) or Sjöberg's changing roles of men and women in the cult ('in-nin-šà-gur$_4$-ra', p. 225). Nadav Naaman concludes: 'All of these passages might therefore refer to some popular legend or belief where Ishtar played the role of a castrating goddess' ('The Ishtar Temple at Alalakh', *JNES* 39 [1980], pp. 209-15).

the procession should be taken 'as an acceptance of asexuality or hermaphroditism as divinely decreed'.[72] It should come as no surprise that Ishtar, as the goddess of love and war and life and death, should represent the male and female as well. Within her are manifold, seemingly opposing qualities. She is the goddess of independent women, prostitutes and persons with ambiguous sexual identities. Tzvi Abusch writes that:

> under the figure of the goddess Inanna/Ishtar there originally existed a unitary power that encompassed an extensive range of continuous, if diverse, qualities and activities, and that later the goddess drew to herself different characteristics and roles that were then perceived as conflicting.[73]

She represents the polar ends and everything in between:

> she may change the right side [into] the left side,
> she may dress them in a...clothing of a woman,
> she may place the speech of a woman in their mouth and give them a spindle and a hairclasp.[74]

And,

> she (Ištar) [changes] the right side into the left side,
> she [changes] the left side into the right side,
> she [turns] a man into a woman,

72. Leick, *Sex and Eroticism*, p. 159. Cf. also G.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, 'The SAL-ZIKRUM "Woman-Man" in Old Babylonian Texts', *Iraq* 6 (1939), pp. 66-70. Leick relates the sag-ur-sag to the *hijras* of India, an apt comparison. The *hijra* are not considered homosexuals. *Zenana* are effeminate males who may play the passive role in homosexual relationships, but they identify with the male gender, get married and have children. *Hijras* call them fake *hijras*.

73. I. Tzvi Abusch, 'Ishtar', in Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2nd rev. and exp. edn, 1995), pp. 452-56 (453). See also B. von Groneberg, 'Die sumerisch-akkadische Inanna/Ishtar: Hermaphroditos?', *WO* 17 (1986), pp. 25-46; Rivkah Harris, 'Inanna-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites', *HR* 31 (1991), pp. 261-78; Claus Wilcke, 'Inanna/Ishtar', *RlA*, V (1976), pp. 74-87. Note also the line: *ilī u šarri igâš zikrūtušša* 'She whirls around gods and kings in her manliness', in the text of 'Agushaya', 1.2.1-2 (B. von Groneberg, 'Philologische Bearbeitung des Agušayahymnus', *RA* 75 [1981], pp. 107-34 [108], for the most recent edn; cf. Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* [2 vols.; Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1993], I, p. 79 for an English translation).

74. Sjöberg, 'in-nin-šà-gur$_4$-ra', p. 224.

she [turns] a woman into a man,
she ador[ns] a man as a woman,
she ador[ns] a woman as a man.[75]

Note the sharp contrast between this description of Ishtar and Deut. 22.5:

> A woman must not put on man's apparel, nor shall a man wear woman's clothing, for whoever does these things is abhorrent to YHWH your God.

Ishtar represents not only the spectrum of gender expressions, but also the fluidity of such gender roles. Today's woman may be tomorrow's man. A man in one setting may have a different gender assignment in another setting.[76] In the final section of the Erra Epic (col. IV, lines 52-56), we read:

> As to Uruk, the seat of Anum and Ishtar—a city of courtesans, of hierodules and (sacred) prostitutes, whom Ishtar deprived of husbands and whom she put under their own authority, (there) the Sutians men and women make yells echo. They rouse up (in) Eanna the cultic actors and singers whose manhood Ishtar turned into wom[anliness] in order to strike people with religious awe.[77]

The hymns and myths cited thus far mention the theme of men turning into women and vice versa within the context of Ishtar's cult. Gender

75. Sjöberg, 'in-nin-šà-gur$_4$-ra', p. 225. Contra Adam Falkenstein's (*Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete* [Stuttgart: Artemis, 1953], p. 231) translation of the passage, which he catalogues as Inanna-Lied #46: 'Der Mann [lasse ich] zur Frau [gehen],/die Frau [lasse ich] zum Manne [gehen],/den Mann [lasse ich] für die Frau sich schmü[cken]'.

Note also a parallel text, in a hymn to Ishtar, published by W.G. Lambert: '[Who can tu]rn man to woman and woman to man' (col. 3, line 70) and who is described as 'she is a woman, she is a man' (col. 3, line 78) ('The Hymn to the Queen of Nippur', in G. van Driel, *et al.* [eds.], *Zikir Sumim, Assyriological Studies Presented to F.R. Kraus on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982], pp. 173-218). Cf. S.H. Langdon, 'Hymn in Paragraphs to Ishtar as the Belit of Nippur', *AfK* 1 (1923), pp. 12-18.

76. For example, cf. Elliot R. Wolfson's work on the male becoming female in Lurianic Kabbalah, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 110-21.

77. Cagni, *Poem of Erra*, p. 52. The *CAD* entry for '*assinnu*' (A, p. 342) concludes: 'The Erra passage may mean simply that Ishtar turned his interest from the masculine to the feminine role.'

multiplicity and fluidity are given a divinely sanctioned place in the ordered universe.

Gwendolyn Leick notes that by the late second and first millennia in Mesopotamia, 'Only the topos "who changes men into women" remains. And in the context of a curse it no longer has anything to do with rituals, here it unequivocally means emasculation or castration.'[78] The 'men into women' theme appears not only in curse formulae (as we shall see below), but also in medical, political and legal texts as either an insult, curse or source of shame. Within the medical-magical realm, Robert Biggs's work on potency incantations is relevant. He discusses *STT* 280.1.22-25 which states that if a man is a victim of witchcraft, and he loses control over his penis, he is like a woman (GIM SAL).[79] The vast collection of *nīš libbi*, 'sexual potency', texts may attest to the anxiety produced as a result of the associations between sexual potency and masculinity. Additionally, the fact that the loss of potency is generally attributed to a third party such as a female witch who seizes or takes away potency—*sabātu, ekēmu* or *eṭēru*—signifies that gender/sexuality crises were perceived as induced by an Other.[80]

Within Mesopotamian wisdom literature, we also find an example of emasculation:

> Do not marry a prostitute (*ḫarimtu*) whose husbands are legion,
> A temple harlot (*ištarītu*), who is dedicated to a god,
> A courtesan (*kulmašītu*), whose favors are many.
> In your trouble she will not support you,
> In your dispute she will be a mocker;
> There is no reverence or submissiveness with her.
> Even if she dominate your house, get her out.
> For she has directed her attention elsewhere.

78. Leick, *Sex and Eroticism*, p. 225.

79. Robert D. Biggs, ŠÀ.ZI.GA: *Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations* (TCS; Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin, 1967), p. 3.

80. See I. Tzvi Abusch, 'The Demonic Image of the Witch in Standard Babylonian Literature: The Reworking of Popular Conceptions by Learned Exorcists', in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher (eds.), *Religion, Science and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 27-58, and 'Some Reflections on Mesopotamian Witchcraft', in A. Berlin (ed.), *Religion and Politics in the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 1996), pp. 21-33.

[Variant: She will disrupt the house she enters, and her partner will not assert himself.[81]]

Thus, a man may feel emasculated if the woman in his household dominates him. A woman with an independent position in society, the wise man counsels, will usurp a husband's superior position and will cause a confusion of gender roles in the household. Returning for a moment to the Ezekiel 16 text, we must wonder whether God's extreme response to his wife was his attempt to reassert his dominance.

In an obscure letter from Ninurta-nadin-šumati to Mutakkil-Nusku, the former reminds the latter that Mutakkil-Nusku had accused the king by saying:

ninurta tukul aššur ša taqbû umma kulu'u lā zikaru šu
Ninurta-tukul-aššur, of whom you said, 'He is a *kulu'u*, not a real man'.

Ernst Weidner translates this fragmentary line as 'Ein unmännlicher Buhlknabe ist er'.[82] And *CAD* renders this line as: 'He is effeminate; not a he-man.'[83] What precisely this means is difficult to ascertain given the fragmentary nature of the lines in question; but we do know that this line was perceived as an accusation or insult against the king. The *kulu'u* was a member of Ishtar's cult personnel.[84] In this text, the opposite of a *kulu'u* is *zikaru*, related to another nominal form, *zikrūktu*.[85] *zikrūktu* may refer to the manliness of a warrior:

Sin bēl agî dunni zikrūti malê irti išīm šīmātī [86]
Sin, lord of the crown, made my nature that of *manliness*, of robust force.

81. 'Counsels of Wisdom', lines 72-80 (W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960], pp. 102-103). Line 80 reads in Akkadian: *ša-niš a-na bīt i-ru-bu isappuḫ* (*BIR-uḫ*) *ul i-bar a-ḫi-is-s*[*a*]. *bâru* means 'to be unstable' although this instability may be financial, physical, social: cf. *CAD* B, pp. 130-31.

82. Ernst F. Weidner, 'Aus den Tagen eines assyrischen Schattenkönigs (mit einem Beitrag von Dietrich Opitz, die Siegel Ninurta-tukul-as[h]s[h]urs und seiner Frau Rimeni, mit 8 Abb.)', *AfO* 10 (1935–36), pp. 1-52 (5).

83. *CAD*, Z, p. 111a.

84. *CAD*, K, p. 529. *AHw*, p. 505, translates the term as 'Kultprostituierter'.

85. The same cuneiform sign is used to designate *zikrūtu* = NITA and *išaru/*(*m*)*ušaru* = GÌS.

86. Riekele Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (AfOB, 9; Graz: E. Weidner, 1956), p. 46. Cf. also *CAD*, Z, p. 116b.

> *ilāni dunni zikrūti emūqī ṣīrāti ušat<li>m̄uinni*[87]
> The gods have bestowed upon me *manliness* and surpassing physical power.

Alternatively *zikrūtu* may refer to sexual potency, as we saw with the *STT* 280 example. Thus, Ninurta-tukul-Assur may have been accused of an inability to copulate with his wife and produce an heir, of social behavior which did not fit the norms or simply of being a physically feeble man.

In a bilingual magical text originally published by S. Lackenberger, betrothal is used as a metaphor for demonic possession of a man:

> 'I am the son of a prince,' he said to her,
> 'I will fill your lap with silver and gold,
> You will be my wife,
> I will be your husband,' he said to her.
> He made himself as alluring to her as the fruit of an orchard.[88]

In this text, the demon speaks to the young man who assumes the role of bride victim.

The transformation of men into women motif appears most clearly in late second millennium–first millennium treaty texts within the context of the curse section. A treaty of Esarhaddon's reads, in part, 'May Ishtar, mistress of battle and conflict, turn his masculinity into femininity and set him bound at the feet of his enemy.'[89] A Hittite prayer to Ishtar describes her as both one who confuses sex identities and delivers soldiers into the hand of their enemy: 'grind[s] away from the men manliness, potency (?) (and) health; take away their swords, bows, arrows, daggers and bring them into the Hatti-land; then put into their hand the distaff and the mirror (??) of a woman and clothe them as women'.[90]

In these texts, Ishtar, the goddess of battle, has the ability to decree defeat for warriors, rendering them as women. The loss of *zikrūtu*[91] (heroic power) translates into the loss of *zikrūtu* (masculinity/male potency). To lose one's weapons is, metaphorically, to lose one's balls.

87. *CAD*, Z, p. 116b. See there for additional examples.

88. S. Lackenberger, 'Note sur l'ardat-lîlî', *RA* 65 (1971), pp. 119-54, esp. text #1, col. II, lines 11-15. Translated into English by Foster, *Before the Muses*, II, p. 870.

89. Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (BibOr, 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), p. 67.

90. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, p. 66, who in turn cites this text from the work of F. Sommer, 'Ein hethitisches Gebet', *ZA* 32 (1921), p. 98, lines 25-29.

91. Cognate to Heb. זכר.

The fullest rendition of this motif appears in a treaty between Assur-nerari V and Mati'-ilu, King of Arpad. Within a typical curse section of treaties, included among famine; loss of property, name and progeny; cannibalism; disease; death of wives and lack of justice appears the following:

> If Mati'-ilu sins against this treaty with Assur-nerari, king of Assyria, may Mati'-ilu become a prostitute (MÍ.*ḫarimtu*), his soldiers women (MÍ.MEŠ), may they receive [*a gift*] in the square of their cities like any prostitute, may one country *push* them to the next; may Mati'ilu's (sex) life be that of a mule, his wives extremely old; may Ishtar, the goddess of men, the lady of women, take away their bow,[92] bring them to shame and make them bitterly weep...[93]

In this text, the distinction between the *ḫarimtu* and the other women should be taken as a distinction between classes of prostitutes and not between prostitutes and non-prostitutes. This description of warriors turned into emasculated men, possibly raped, and expressing emotions of shame and fear is here compared to the experience of women.

b. *The Biblical Evidence*

The prophets employ a few distinct, but related metaphors and similes to express the feminization of defeated warriors. The most common expression is the comparison of a defeated warrior to a woman in labor. Isaiah 13 contains an oracle of doom directed against Babylon. God is described as a warrior going to battle against the great enemy. As the Day of YHWH[94] approaches, the men of Babylon experience the following (vv. 7-8):

> Therefore all 'hands' will grow limp (כל-ידים תרפינה) and every man's heart will grow faint; they will be terrified, pangs and cramps will seize

92. See Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, p. 66.

93. This translation is taken from the most recent edition of this text produced by Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA, 2; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), pp. xxvii-xxviii, 8-13, plates II-IV. As Parpola and Watanabe note, this text has remarkable affinities with Aramaic treaties of Sefire, specifically, *KAI* 222 and 224; however, the gender transformation curse is absent in those treaties.

94. For Day of YHWH literature, cf. Gerhard von Rad, 'The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh', *JSS* 4 (1959), pp. 97-108, and M. Weiss, 'The Origin of the "Day of the Lord"—Reconsidered', *HUCA* 37 (1966), pp. 29-60.

> them,[95] they will writhe like a woman in travail (כיולדה יחילון). They will gaze at each other in horror, their faces ashen with fright.[96]

Concurrent with the male response to the invasion, their children are killed, their homes are invaded and their wives raped. God's ability to effect desolation is so complete that even the sun gives no light. As the patterns of order and creation give way, so do the expected gender scripts. The phraseology of this passage contains a number of idioms that appear in similar contexts. 'All hands go limp' is a figurative expression for a loss of energy. The warrior is not just incapacitated from holding a sword and fighting, but, more importantly, he becomes emotionally flaccid, he 'loses his balls', to put it crudely.[97] The parallel clause is also a figurative expression for great fear and terror.[98] The pains expressed by the words צירים and חבלים are specific to contraction pains of a woman in labor. This is made explicit by the following simile which compares the expression of a warrior's agony to that of a woman giving birth. A. Bauman describes the physical sensations associated with חיל as 'involuntary and uncontrolled spasmodic movement, to which the body is surrendered, accompanied by a sense of weakness and heat...'[99] Peter

95. The substantives here may be either the subject or the object of the verb אחז; cf. Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Continental Commentaries; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg-Fortress Press, 1991), p. 7 n. 8b.

96. The Hebrew is unclear here. The context demands a physical expression of terror, but whether the idiom reflects a red face or a pale face is difficult to ascertain.

97. A man whose hands go limp is a man without strength, without vigor; cf. esp. 2 Sam. 4.1; 17.2; Jer. 6.24; 47.3; 50.43; Ezek. 7.17; 21.12; Zeph. 3.16; 2 Chron. 15.7. Note that all appearances of this idiom appear in military contexts. The same phrase appears in rabbinic literature, cf. *Lev. R.* 19 and other cases where the semantic range is expanded from a military context to a broader range of settings. Note the similar idiom קצר יד which is used to express divine and human 'impotence'; cf. Num. 11.12; 2 Kgs 19.26; Isa. 37.27; 50.2; 59.1. Contrast these phrases with the semantic opposites, יד חזקה and יד רמה which express the uplifted, strong hand as a symbol of military triumph; cf. Exod. 14.8; Num. 33.3; Deut. 32.27. The 'hand' is one of the body's seats of power; cf. Josh. 8.20; Ps. 76.6. For the possibility that יד may be a euphemism for a phallus, see Peter Ackroyd's discussion in 'יד', *TDOT*, V, pp. 418-23, in which he cites 1QS 7.13 and the much debated term יד חזית in Isa. 57.10.

98. Cf. Deut. 20.8; Josh. 2.11; 5.1; 7.5; 2 Sam. 17.10; Ezek. 21.12; Ps. 22.15; Nah. 2.11.

99. A. Bauman, 'חיל', *TDOT*, IV, pp. 344-47 (346).

Miscall emphasizes the physical pain associated with childbirth,[100] but the context demands that emotional anguish and terror are intended here.

The same kind of imagery appears in Psalm 48 in which the warrior YHWH is so powerful that the kings of the earth respond (vv. 6-7):

> At the mere sight of it they were stunned,
> they were terrified, they were panicked;
> they were seized there with trembling,
> like a woman in the throes of labor (חיל כיולדה).

And Jeremiah describes the reaction of the king of Babylon to the approach of the enemy from the North in similar terms (50.43):[101]

> His hands hang limp; anguish has seized him,
> pangs like a woman in childbirth (חיל כיולדה).

Another parallel text, addressed to Judah in this case, is Jer. 6.22-26. This prophecy, the final oracles in the 'Foe from the North' collection,[102] is constructed as a dialogue with an interweaving of voices representing God, the Judahites and Lady Zion. God announces the incursion of a great invading army from the north to Lady Zion, but before Lady Zion responds with a call for national mourning, the men of Judah interject cries of terror (v. 24):

> Our hands fail; pain seizes us,
> agony like a woman in childbirth (חיל כיולדה).

A fuller first person expression of terror at military defeat can be found in Isa. 21.3-4. There, the victim expresses his panic and terror as follows:

> על-כן מלאו מתני חלחלה צירים אחזוני כצירי יולדה
> נעויתי משמע[103] נבהלתי מראות
> תעה לבבי פלצות בעתתני

> Therefore my loins are seized with trembling; pangs have seized me like labor pains of a woman, too anguished to hear, too frightened to see, my mind is confused, I shudder in panic.

100. Peter D. Miscall, *Isaiah* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 48, 60.

101. See John Hill, *Friend or Foe? The Figure of Babylon in the Book of Jeremiah* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 160-80.

102. Cf. J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 86-87, for a discussion of the Foe from the North.

103. Privative מן, cf. Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2nd edn, 1976), §321. Wildberger prefers reading the

In each of the texts discussed so far, we have found examples of expressions of male terror and panic in the face of an overwhelming enemy. Among the figurative expressions that are employed to convey the experience of men in this situation is the comparison of a defeated warrior to a woman crying out in childbirth.[104]

Another set of texts takes the comparison one step further. No longer is the defeated male's cry of defeat compared to a woman's cry; in the following texts, the defeated male is compared to a woman in a broader fashion. In Jeremiah 30, God describes the men of Judah as in a panic, but assures them that he will come to their rescue. In this text of consolation, the prophet places a rhetorical question in the mouth of God to get his point across (vv. 5-6):

> Thus said YHWH: We have heard a cry of panic, terror and no peace. Ask and see: Can a male give birth? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor (כיולדה)[105]? Why have all faces turned pale?[106]

In this passage, God observes that the men seem to have become like women in their faintheartedness. But, he notes, this observation cannot be real because men cannot be women! The rhetorical question: can

preposition as a causative: 'Because of the hearing, I am agitated; because of the seeing, aghast' (Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27: A Commentary* [trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Continental Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1997], p. 304).

104. One such example of the conflation of warrior and birthing woman imagery can be found in Isa. 42.14-16, where these characteristics are attributed to God. In context, the cries of a woman symbolize great strength and will power; however, the use of a woman in labor as a symbol of strength is the exception, so much so that the reader is expected to find the juxtaposition of the two surprising. The element of surprise in Isa. 42 is rhetorically critical to the writer's intention: the theme of this prophecy is to make the twisted experiences straight, to enable the unexpected. For a discussion of this passage, see Mayer Gruber, 'The Motherhood of God in Second Isaiah', *RB* 90 (1983), pp. 351-59, esp. p. 355, and Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, 'Like Warrior, Like Woman: Destruction and Deliverance in Isaiah 42.10-17', *CBQ* 49 (1987), pp. 560-71. See also Marc Zvi Brettler, 'Incompatible Metaphors for YHWH in Isaiah 40–66', *JSOT* 78 (1998), pp. 97-120, for a broader discussion of contradictory metaphors for God.

105. This word is missing in LXX.

106. Compare with 'He cast terror(?) upon them, all enemies were frightened, fierce radiance covered their features' ('Hymn to Tiglath-Pileser I' [Foster, *Before the Muses*, I, p. 238]).

a male[107] give birth? Of course not! And yet the unexpected has happened—the men are acting like women! Regarding this passage, Robert P. Carroll writes:

> As a metaphor of the community suffering invasion the image is striking, but in the poem here it is used to convey something beyond that experience. The men of the community, i.e. members of the nation rather than a metaphor of it, are the ones seized by pains as if they were pregnant women. It is the transformation, even the transmogrification, of the normal patterns of life which characterizes this particular day...[108]

The texts move from the suggestive to the unambiguous with Jeremiah 48 and its parallel in Jeremiah 49. These two chapters contain oracles of doom against Moab and Ammon. As the prophet describes the certain destruction of these nations and the downfall of the haughty, the texts read:

> In that day, the heart of Moab's warriors shall be
> like the heart of a woman in distress (כלב אשה מצרה[109]) (Jer. 48.41).
>
> In that day, the heart of Ammon's warriors shall be
> like the heart of a woman in distress (כלב אשה מצרה) (Jer. 49.22).

A few points are worthy of remark here. The understanding of מצרה, which occurs only here, may be either another term for a woman in labor, or may be a more general term to describe distress.[110] More importantly, however, the simile comparing the heart of a warrior with the heart of a woman in distress is striking. With this text, we move from a description of the warrior's *behavior* to a comment on the warrior's *state of being*. The expressions of emasculation have shifted from outward expressions of screaming or trembling to an inner state.

Isaiah 19.16-25 contains five predictions, each one introduced by 'on that day', regarding the future state of Egypt. The text predicts a defeat of Egypt so devastating that the Egyptians are even fearful of Judah. The first of these five statements reads: 'On that day, the Egyptians shall be

107. Note the use of the word זכר to emphasize maleness. Can one with a penis give birth?

108. Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1986), p. 574.

109. Cf. *HALOT*, III, p. 1058b. Denominative from צרה I; hapax legomenon.

110. BDB, p. 865, influenced by Jer. 49.24—which picks up with the woman in travail theme—associates מצרה with a woman in labor.

like women (כנשים), trembling and terrified.'[111] The equation of Egyptians becoming like women is explained in the next phrase: they will feel like women because fear and trembling are feminine emotions. To experience defeat, shame and the corresponding emotional responses is to lose one's masculinity, to become like a woman. In fact, this belief was held so strongly that in a few texts, the simile disappears and the language becomes even stronger.[112] In Nahum's description of Nineveh's fall, the prophet insults the great nations by calling the men women: עמך נשים בקרבך ('Your people are women in your midst').[113] No doubt the following clause, describing the wide open, vulnerable and exposed gates is intended to suggest the metaphorical rape of Nineveh.

In an oracle against the Chaldeans (ch. 50), Jeremiah uses a similar insult. The prophecy is based on the repetition of the key word, 'sword', representing either YHWH or the Persians. Each line indicates the consequences of the sword. Verses 36-37 are most relevant for the present discussion:

> A sword against the boasters, that they become fools!
> A sword against her warriors, that they panic!
> A sword against all the mercenaries in its midst, that they become women (והיו לנשים)!
> A sword against its treasuries, that they be looted!

111. Or, assuming a hendiadys, 'they will tremble with dread'. Regarding this verse, Wildberger comments: 'Comparing the Egyptians with women is surprising, since in no other place does the OT refer to women as being particularly frightened, though one finds frequent comparisons with the fears that come on a woman giving birth to a child, since that experience had made a very deep impression...' (Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, p. 266).

112. Metaphor is typically believed to be stronger than simile. I note the well-stated observation of Robert Scholes and his colleagues: 'The form of metaphor most common in argument is *analogy*. Basic strategy in the use of analogy is to claim that situation X, which is under disputation, is like or analogous to situation Y, about which there is no dispute. In extreme forms, such arguments go beyond the assertion of likeness and assert sameness. One says not "Abortion is *like* murder", but "Abortion *is* murder". In arguing for such analogies, the writer tends to suppress what Lakoff and Johnson call the "unused' parts of metaphorical concepts. Therefore counterargument will often consist of using these unused elements, thus calling into question the whole analogy' (Robert Scholes, Nancy R. Comley and Gregory L. Ulmer, *Text Book: An Introduction to Literary Language* [New York: St Martin's Press, 1988], p. 104).

113. Nah. 3.13.

3. *Conclusions*

The prophetic oracles of doom are replete with threats of emasculation as part and parcel of military defeat. The prophets tell men that they will become women. They predict the breakdown of normative gender categories. Ezekiel, as we shall see, takes this motif a step further. He addresses not the 'threat' of gender breakdown, but actually imagines a world in which the breakdown is in process. In a sense, the prophetic oracles of doom have been fulfilled. The warriors are no longer going to scream in terror like women. The men have already become women (having experienced military defeat and forced exile), and now are metaphorically represented as a woman, a collective wife to God. The emasculated warrior becomes a metaphorical wife. As a woman, his or her shame has a place in the ordered universe. The shaming of the woman is 'genderly' appropriate.

Chapter 4

EZEKIEL 16 AND THE EMASCULATED MAN

Ezekiel 16 presents a story of the fulfillment of the A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN metaphor. Ezekiel attempts to explain why men have become like women, trembling and afraid. And, perhaps more importantly, he explores how God repairs the fractures of the gender order and restores men and women to their proper place. Thus, political and religious sins and punishments are subsumed under the more foundational gender issue. As Ezekiel provides a history or a 'biography' for woman Jerusalem, we find constant shifts in power between male and female, power and powerlessness, aggression and passivity.

In the following chapter, we shall trace this story of gender reversal, cosmic chaos and the re-establishment of order. The first 14 verses present the ideal state. The male figure has total control of the situation while the female character is utterly dependent upon the male. From Ezekiel's perspective, there is no problem with this picture; in fact, this is the way things ought to be. Verses 15-34 present the breakdown of the ideal state, where female becomes male and male becomes female. The marriage metaphor is presented so successfully that all we see on the surface is a wayward wife and a victimized husband, but a careful examination of the specific language and imagery of the metaphor reveals that the A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN metaphor is at play here as well as the converse metaphor: A STRONG WOMAN IS A MAN. The curses that the earlier prophets delivered upon sinful Jerusalem/Israel have been fulfilled. The metaphor speaks the unspeakable: men feel like women. On one level, vv. 34-43[1] may be about the punishments that the husband inflicts upon his

1. The assumption in this text analysis is that 16.1-43 stand as a literary unity and that vv. 44-58 and vv. 59-63 have been connected to the primary unit at a secondary stage, but the units share the same theological outlook and for all practical

wife for promiscuity; however, if we read this text not exclusively as a marriage metaphor, but also as A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN and A STRONG WOMAN IS A MAN metaphors, then this section is about restoring masculinity to its proper domain: masculinity belongs to biological men. Because reversals of the norm are always more interesting than idealized forms, our discussion of vv. 15-34 will dominate this chapter.

1. *The Passive Girl*

a. *Translation and Commentary*

> 1) The word of YHWH came to me: 2) O human, proclaim[2] Jerusalem's abominations to her 3) and say: Thus said YHWH God to Jerusalem: Your

purposes can be taken as a whole. For the most part, scholars divide ch. 16 into several sub-sections: vv. 1-14, vv. 15-34, vv. 35-43, vv. 44-58, and vv. 59-63. Stalker takes the original kernel of the chapter to be vv. 15, 22-25, 35, 39-41a. He further suggests that vv. 16-21 mark the first expansion, followed by vv. 26-29 and, lastly, vv. 30-34. He argues that beginning in v. 43b 'A fresh subject now follows', which was probably written by a disciple of Ezekiel (Stalker, *Ezekiel*, p. 146). Eichrodt describes the compositional history of ch. 16 as quite complicated and posits that vv. 30-34, vv. 44-58 and vv. 59-63 are late secondary additions (Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p. 203). Zimmerli offers a more detailed description of the composition of the chapter. He suggests that vv. 44-58 and vv. 59-63 should be 'isolated' as independent sayings (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 334). Greenberg argues for the unity of the chapter with three sections: A. vv. 3-43: the metaphor of the 'nymphomaniacal adulteress'; B. vv. 44-58: 'invidious comparison of Jerusalem to her sisters Sodom and Samaria'; C. vv. 59-63: 'coda foretelling the mortification of restored Jerusalem before covenant-true YHWH' (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 292). Whether v. 44 introduces a new theme altogether (note the strong words of Wevers: 'Not only is the figure of the original story completely abandoned in verses 44ff., but the concept of a restoration to the former estate is completely at odds with the judgment on the adulteress in verses 40-41a' [*Ezekiel*, p. 94]) or simply a variation on a theme (cf. Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, p. 472), there is some kind of shift after v. 43 and the metaphor of the young woman's relationship with her benefactor shifts to other themes. Although this study will make reference to the blocks of material presented after v. 43, it is Ezek. 16.1-43 which constitute the focus of this research, and this reading will presume that these verses constitute a unity.

2. הודע ... תועבתיה: Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 336) rightly asserts that this phrase reflects the vocabulary of the priestly office in its charge to make known to Israel what is pure and impure. Cf. Ezek. 22.26; 44.23.

origin[3] and your place of birth were from the land of the Canaanites; your father was Amorite[4] and your mother Hittite. 4) As for your birth,[5] when you were born your umbilical cord[6] was not cut and you were not bathed in water to cleanse[7] you;[8] you were not rubbed with salt, nor were you swaddled.[9] 5) No one pitied you enough to do any one of these things for you out of compassion for you; [instead] you were cast out[10] into the open field in contempt for your life, on the day you were born.[11] 6) When I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood,[12] I said to you: 'In your blood, live'.[13] I said to you: 'In your blood, live'. 7) I made you grow like the plants of the field; and you continued to grow up until you started

3. מכור: in all three biblical attestations (Ezek. 16.3; 21.35; 29.14), this term appears with ארץ, thus associating this term with geography; by contrast, כנעני implies racial stock, and not just geography (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 337, so too Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, p. 475).

4. האמרי: perhaps emend to אמרי with the LXX and Ezek. 16.45. Cf. *IBHS*, §13.5.1f for the definite article before gentilics. (The definite article commonly appears in references to entire groups, i.e., הכנעני.)

5. מולדותיך is a *casus pendens* to focus attention, cf. *IBHS*, §4.7. Eichrodt (*Ezekiel*, p. 199) suggests dittography from v. 3, but this is not necessary.

6. שׁרך: cf. Prov. 3.8, in which the LXX reads: σώματί = לשׁארך.

7. למשעי: this unknown form is often disregarded as a 'dubious MT addition'.

8. The 'politics' of translation is an issue to which I shall return in subsequent chapters of this study. To this end, I include other translation possibilities as provided in the major English translations and commentaries. NJPS: 'to smooth you'; KJV: 'to supple thee'.

9. החתל: the pairing of an infinitive absolute hophal with a pual (or qal passive) finite verb is unusual; cf. GKC, §113w and J-M, §123p for other examples of a mixing of conjugations, the most common being מות יומת.

10. NJPS: 'left lying'.

11. ביום הולדת אתך: for את before a nominative, cf. Ezek. 17.21; 20.16. See Mark F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel* (JSOTSup, 90; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 88-90, for a discussion of the syntax in the context of LBH.

12. דמים: the plural form usually refers to bloodshed. Cf. B. Kedar-Kopfstein, 'דם', *TDOT*, III, pp. 234-50. It can also refer to the language of sacral law for blood-guilt, cf. Ezek. 18.13; 22.2; a context of cultic sexual ordinances is suggested by Isa. 1.15; Exod. 4.26; Lev. 20.18 (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 323) and cf. Lev. 12.4-5; 15.19 (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 276).

13. NJPS: 'Live in spite of your blood'; ASV: '[Though thou art] in thy blood, live'; KJV/NASB: 'when thou wast in thy blood, Live'; RSV: 'I said to you in your blood, "Live"'.

menstruating,[14] until your breasts became firm and your hair sprouted. But you were still naked and bare. 8) When I passed by you again and saw that your time, the time for love had arrived, I spread my garment over you and covered your nakedness, and I entered into a covenant with you by oath, declares YHWH God; thus you became mine. 9) I bathed you in water, and washed the blood off you, and rubbed you with oil. 10) I clothed you in embroidered garments, and gave you sandals of *taḥaš*[15] to wear, and wound fine linen[16] about your head, and dressed you in *mešî*[17] fabrics. 11) I decked you out in finery[18] and put bracelets on your arms and a chain around your neck. 12) I put a ring in your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a splendid diadem[19] on your head. 13) You adorned yourself with gold and silver, and your apparel was of fine linen, *mešî*, and embroidery. You ate[20] choice flour, honey, and oil. You grew more and more beautiful, and became fit for

14. ASV/KJV: 'thou attainedst to excellent ornament'; NASB: 'reached the age for fine ornaments'; RSV: 'arrived at full maidenhood'.

15. תחש: Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 340) relates this word to Egyptian *ṯḥś* 'leather', and Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 278) posits a cognate in the Akkadian word *dušu*, 'leather' (so too Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, p. 479). In Arabic *daḫs* means 'dolphin' and may be related to the idea of leather, or skin. Regardless of the exact etymology of this word, this material was used for the outer tabernacle covering and may thus reflect its luxuriousness; cf. Exod. 25.5; 26.14; 35.7, 23; 36.19; 39.34; Num. 4.6, 8, 10, 14, 25.

16. שש: this material was worn by the high priest, cf. Exod. 28.39. See Avi Hurvitz, 'The Usage of *šeš* and *bûṣ* in the Bible and its Implications for the Date of P', *HTR* 60 (1967), pp. 117-21. Cf. also Rooker (*Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, pp. 159-61) who argues that בוץ is common in Akkadian and Aramaic and is limited to LBH.

17. This item cannot be silk as the Rabbis and most English translations suggest because silk was introduced into the Mediterranean region via China in the Hellenistic period. For a possible Hittite derivation of this word, see Chaim Rabin, 'Hittite massiya "veil, shawl"', in J.M. Grintz and Jacob Liver (eds.), *Studies in the Bible presented to M.H. Segal* (Israel Society of Bible Research; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1964), pp. 151-79 (172) (Hebrew).

18. This terminology can be understood specifically as bridal jewelry, cf. Gen. 24.20, 22, 47; for the bracelet, cf. Num. 31.50 and the nose-ring appears only in Gen. 24.47; 41.42.

19. עטרה: cf. Song 3.11, where the crown is a bridal ornament; cf. Isa. 62.3; Ezek. 23.42.

20. אכלתי: note the old feminine ending for 2fs which also occurs in vv. 18, 22, 31, 43, 47, 51; cf. GKC, §44h for this archaic form.

royalty.[21] 14) Your beauty won you fame among the nations, for it was perfect through the splendor which I set upon you, declares YHWH God.

b. *Vulnerability* ad absurdum

Ezekiel 16 presents an extended metaphor[22] about the relationship between God and Israel/Jerusalem. The prophet Ezekiel depicts Jerusalem as a foundling abandoned by her Amorite and Hittite parents at birth.[23] The Bible makes many references to these two peoples: Amorites are mentioned 105 times in a variety of contexts; Hittites are mentioned 57 times reflecting various interactions between Israelites and Hittites.[24] The two peoples usually appear together within longer listings of populations who inhabited the land of Israel prior to Israel's settlement on the

21. For ל with צלח, cf. Jer. 13.7, 10; Ezek. 15.4, 'to be good for'. KJV: 'thou didst prosper into a kingdom'; NASB: 'advanced to royalty'; NJKV: 'succeeded to royalty'.

22. My choice of the term 'metaphor' and not 'analogy' is influenced in large part by Carl R. Hausman who argues for a fundamental distinction between the two. He assumes that analogies are complex similes and that they are not creative to the degree of metaphor. 'An analogy depends for its significance wholly on similarities common to antecedent significances. The point of an analogy is to make a comparison... If analogies attain their significance through their dependence of relations among common features, then they do not introduce new significance into the world' (*Metaphor and Art*, p. 17). This approach stands in contradiction to the more common tendency to conflate metaphor and analogy, cf. Clements, *Ezekiel*, p. 70: 'Allegories and parables are basically extended forms of metaphor that can appear in many guises... Their purpose is to highlight the features of a thing, or a situation, which may not otherwise be apparent, or even properly understood. The main characteristic of an allegory is that the central actors in the story represent characters in the real world.'

23. The Talmud understands Jerusalem's parentage as a source of shame: 'At the time that the Holy One, Blessed is He, said to Ezekiel, "Go tell the Israelites: Your father is the Amorite and your mother a Hittite", an angel said before the Holy One, Blessed is He, "Master of the Universe, if Abraham and Sarah were to come and stand before You, would You shame them by telling them [this]?"' (*b. Sanh.* 44b).

24. Cf. Alfred Haldar, *Who Were the Amorites?* (MANE, 1; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971); Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Amorites and Canaanites* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Michael C. Astour, *Hittite History and Absolute Chronology of the Bronze Age* (Portille: Aströms Förlage, 1989); Hubert Concik, *Grundzüge der hethitischen Geschitchtsscheribung* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976); Harry A. Hoffner, 'Some Contributions of Hittitology to Old Testament Study', *TynBul* 20 (1969), pp. 27-55.

land.[25] They appear together only in our text and its related text, Ezek. 16.45. Unlike Jeremiah, who envisions Israel's youth as a time of purity of heart (2.2), Ezekiel describes the origins of Jerusalem as mired in tragedy. Ezekiel chooses to describe 'the pagan antecedents of Jerusalem, thus providing a motive for the cruel abandonment of the infant (necessary to highlight God's kindness) and a hereditary ground for her future dissolute conduct'.[26]

Unlike other foundling stories,[27] we are not told *why* the infant is abandoned, thereby focusing our attention not on the baby's character or

25. Cf. Exod. 3.8, 17; 13.5; 23.23; 33.2; 34.11; Num. 13.29; Deut. 7.1; 20.17; Josh. 9.1; 11.3; 12.8; 24.11; Judg. 3.5; 1 Kgs 9.20; Neh. 9.8; 2 Chron. 8.7.

26. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 300. Cf. also Deut. 26.5, 'My father was a fugitive Aramean'. Gerhard von Rad described this unit as an early creed summary of salvation history (*Deuteronomy* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966], pp. 157-59). The attribution of Israel's origins from Arameans is not necessarily derogatory; it may simply express claims of Israel's origins from the East. Cf. Neville Krausz, '*Arami oved avi*: Deuteronomy 26.5', *JBQ* 25 (1997), pp. 31-34; Stig Norin, 'Ein Aramäer, dem unkommen nahe—ein Kerntext der Forschung und Tradition', *SJOT* 8 (1994), pp. 87-104; J. Gerald Janzen, 'The "Wandering Aramean" Reconsidered', *VT* 44 (1994), pp. 359-75.

27. Some commentators (e.g. Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p. 159) follow the suggestion of Hermann Gunkel (*The Folktale in the Old Testament* [trans. M.D. Rutter; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987], pp. 128-31) that Ezek. 16 is based on the popular motif of a foundling who rises to greatness. For information on the foundling motif, see Donald B. Redford, 'Literary Motif of the Exposed Child: Ex 2.1-10', *Numen* 14 (1967), pp. 209-228, and Brian Lewis's comprehensive study, *The Sargon Legend: A Study of the Akkadian Text and the Tale of the Hero Who Was Exposed at Birth* (ASORDiss, 4; Cambridge, MA: ASOR, 1980). However, Ezek. 16 lacks an explanation of abandonment, information regarding noble birth and, in fact, suggests the opposite, that Jerusalem's roots are base. The foundling does not grow up to be a hero with impressive accomplishments. Moreover, I have already argued that YHWH does not adopt the girl, but does marry her. Jerusalem is not abandoned by her parents out of shame or necessity; the story does not care what led Israel to her present circumstances. She does not demonstrate her own greatness as she grows up; she survives and thrives because of God's intervention. There is no prophecy regarding the birth of Jerusalem which introduces the story and subsequently no fulfillment of prophecy. Furthermore, Jerusalem is not saved by farmers or an animal; rather, she is saved by the 'king' himself. Therefore, tracing the folk or literary origins of this chapter to the foundling motif tale is erroneous; nevertheless the prophet was undoubtedly familiar with the practice of exposure of infants and this provides the initial setting for the tale.

short-lived history, but on her utter helplessness.[28] The fact that her birth blood is still on her testifies to the immediacy by which she had been cast out. What a contrast to Moses, who is carefully set in a basket and sent down the river where someone would surely find him. On the day she is born, her umbilical cord is not clamped and cut, she is not washed, nor salted, nor swaddled.

This description of post-natal care is unique in biblical literature. The text states that the infant's umbilical cord was not severed from the placenta. This is unlikely because symbolically an intact navel cord would connote the continued nourishment of the child by the placenta. G.R. Driver echoes the same observation when he argues that the umbilical cord must have been cut because bleeding does not take place until the cord is cut; instead, he suggests that we read כרת as a qal passive of כרר, 'to tie' with an archaic feminine singular ending.[29] This renders the translation: 'your navel cord was not tied'. More likely, we should retain the verb כרת and understand the verse to indicate that the cord was not cut closely or properly.

In many cultures, the umbilical cord plays an apotropaic function; it is saved and carefully dried out by the mother or midwife to avert evil from approaching the child. Among Malays in Pulau Langkawi, an infant does not 'come into existence' as a member of the community until the umbilical cord is cut, and specific rituals accompany the cutting.[30] In Southern China, the cutter of the umbilical cord, by fact of this act, establishes a special relationship to the child for life. More specifically, the snip of the cord formalizes bonds between families.[31] This phenomenon

28. The child's abandonment at the beginning of the story puts her in a position of complete 'otherness' through her exclusion from family, ritual purity and proper status. 'She is entirely outside the boundaries of the ordered world and on the brink of the ultimate "exclusion", death' (Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 92).

29. G.R. Driver, 'Ancient Lore and Modern Knowledge', in André Caquot and M. Philonenko (eds.), *Hommages á André Dupont-Sommer* (Paris: Libraire Adrien Maisonneuve, 1971), pp. 277-86.

30. Janet Carsten, 'The Process of Childbirth and Becoming Related among Malays in Pulau Langkawi', in Goran Aijmer (ed.), *Coming into Existence: Birth and Metaphors of Birth* (Göteberg, Sweden: Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology, 1992), pp. 19-46 (29).

31. Goran Aijmer, 'Introduction: Coming into Existence', in *idem* (ed.), *Coming into Existence: Birth and Metaphors of Birth* (Göteberg, Sweden: Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology, 1992), pp. 1-18 (7).

may lie behind the fragmentary Akkadian text of Atrahasis I.260. This detailed description of the birth of humanity mentions a number of birthing techniques and rituals, among them the cutting of the umbilical cord: *batāqu abunnate*.[32] The fragmentary nature of the texts makes it difficult to ascertain exactly what is going on; however, it is clear that a specific individual is designated for this honor. Returning to our text, the mention of the umbilical cord in Ezekiel 16 signifies not only post-natal neglect, but may also refer to social ostracism, lack of family ties and exposure to evil spirits.

The salting practice very likely had apotropaic functions as well. Salt functions as a healing agent in Ezek. 47.11 and it is used by Elisha to make a spring in Jericho wholesome.[33] Exodus 30.35 refers to incense with salt as 'pure and holy'. In Haitian birth customs, the placenta is buried in a hole lined with salt to protect it from the evil eye.[34] A Bang Chan story describes the washing and salting of a child to remove the greasy fat from the child's body.[35] Julian Morgenstern cites a number of birth rites among Semites, noting the common practice of salting infants to toughen their skin against the wind.[36] He also documents the modern Bedouin custom of salting children on certain auspicious days to protect them from danger. A number of Semitic birth rituals include sprinkling salt around the baby or the home to avert the evil eye. Thus, the post-natal care that was denied the infant girl in Ezekiel 16 may have had both pragmatic and apotropaic functions.[37] The child is not just rejected by its

32. Preserved in a highly fragmentary state by K7816 + K13863 (W.G. Lambert and A.R. Millard, *Atra-hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969], p. 60). Cf. also the OB Pennsylvania Tablet version of Epic of Gilgamesh 2.72: *ina bi-ti-iq a-bu-un-na-ti-šu*.

33. 2 Kgs 2.20-22. Salt is also attested in rites of healing; cf. Bruno Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1920–25), II, pp. 228-29: 'to entreat salt in prayer to deliver him from a spell, after the success of which the petitioner vows to venerate it as his creator-god'.

34. David Meltzer, *Birth: An Anthology of Ancient Texts, Songs, Prayers and Stories* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981), p. 111.

35. Meltzer, *Birth*, p. 120.

36. Julian Morgenstern, *Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death and Kindred Occasions among the Semites* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1966). Cf. also Ernest W. Gurney Masterman, 'Hygiene and Disease in Palestine in Modern and in Biblical Times', *PEQ* 50 (1918), pp. 118-19; Hilma Natalia Granqvist, *Birth and Childhood among the Arabs: Studies in a Muhammadan Village in Palestine* (Helsingfors: Söderström, 1947), pp. 93-101.

37. Davidson picks up on this point, *Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 102. A.M. Honeyman, 'The Salting of Shechem', *VT* 3 (1953), pp. 192-95, also suggests an

parents and subjected to dangers of physical exposure, but also exposed to evil spirits and left without divine protection.[38] The child is not even swaddled to protect it from the cold and the elements.[39] The neglect of the infant by her parents is echoed in the world's indifference to her. The phrase חסה עין, showing pity, reinforces the pathetic condition of the child. Apart from this occurrence of the phrase, Ezekiel places it in the mouth of God seven times in his book, six of which occur in announcements of destruction.[40] In three cases,[41] the consequence of God's refusal to show pity or mercy is the destruction of Jerusalem. When God refuses to show mercy, God is essentially withdrawing God's protection, rendering Jerusalem vulnerable to the inevitable dangers that surround it. This notion is also expressed in Ezekiel's vision of God's כבוד exiting the Temple before the Babylonians invade it (chs. 10–11). The absence of

apotropaic function for salt. He argues that Abimelech (Judg. 9.45) throws salt over Shechem after slaughtering the population and destroying the city because he was superstitious and hoped to 'neutralise the shades of the slaughtered Shechemites and to avert their vengeance' (p. 195). He cites additional examples of the apotropaic use of salt in other cultures and claims that in 2 Kgs 2.19-22 Elisha uses salt apotropaically. Brownlee suggests that the salt would prevent the swaddling clothes from developing bacteria (William H. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–19* [WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986], p. 223). Note also the Sumerian 'Incantation against Gall' which mentions the use of salt in conjunction with an incantation to counter an illness: 'When you take a lump of salt in your hand, When you cast the spell, When you place (the salt) in his mouth, then…' (Piotr Michalowski, 'Carminative Magic: Towards an Understanding of Sumerian Poetics', *ZA* 71 [1981], pp. 1-18 [4]).

38. See Hermann Vorländer, *Mein Gott: Die Vorstellungen vom persönlichen Gott im alten Orient und im alten Testament* (AOAT, 23; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1975), for a discussion of protection by personal gods. Cf. *b. Baba Qamma* 92b in which salt is mentioned as a substance which can be used to ward off sickness and harm; see Aaron L. Katchen, 'The Covenantal Salt of Friendship', in Barry Walfish (ed.), *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* (Haifa, Israel: Haifa University Press; Hanover, NH: University Press of New England in association with Brandeis University Press, 1993), I, pp. 167-80) for a review of post-biblical references to salt in the context of covenant, Torah and community making.

39. For this practice, cf. Morgenstern, *Rites of Birth*, and Raphael Patai, *Family, Love and the Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 168-70.

40. Ezek. 5.11; 7.4, 9; 8.18; 9.5, 10.

41. Ezek. 8.18; 9.5, 10.

God's presence exposes the Temple and its surroundings. Withholding pity is thus the equivalent of withholding protection.[42]

That the child was exposed and left to die out on the steppe[43] has been convincingly argued by Mordecai Cogan[44] and apparently was a common practice in the ancient Near East, especially with girls. Meir Malul builds on Cogan, arguing that השׁליך designates not only exposure of children but, more broadly, the removal of someone or something to an outside domain by which the owner relinquishes responsibility and ownership.[45] Thus, the act of exposure, Malul claims, is also embedded in a legal background of abrogation of ownership. This infant, from the moment of her birth, is a showpiece of vulnerability. 'She is entirely outside the boundaries of the ordered world and on the brink of the ultimate "exclusion",

42. Mordecai Cogan explores the motif of divine abandonment in Mesopotamian literature. The motif of divine abandonment goes back to Sumerian literature in the well-known 'Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur' (*Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries* BCE [SBLMS, 19; Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1974]).

43. The steppe, the edge of civilization, is a place fraught with danger and terrors; cf. Exod. 22.30 and Deut. 21.1. In Mesopotamian cosmology, the steppe, or most commonly, *sēru*, was associated with the netherworld—the world of ghosts, demons and monsters—a place unfit for human habitation. In Lev. 16 we find a ritual in which impurities are sent to Azazel, possibly a goat demon who resided outside of the ordered camp of Israel; cf. H. Tawil, 'Azazel the Prince of the Steppe: A Comparative Study', *ZAW* 92 (1980), pp. 43-59, and F.A.M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (Cuneiform Monographs, 1; Groningen: Styx, 1992), for a discussion of the Mesopotamian goat demon *mašḫultuppû*. Cf. also Talmon, 'Desert Motif', pp. 31-63. For the most recent treatment of this topic, cf. F.A.M. Wiggermann, 'Scenes from the Shadow Side', in Marianna E. Vogelzang and H.L.J. Vanstiphout (eds.), *Mesopotamian Poetic Language: Sumerian and Akkadian* (Cuneiform Monographs, 6; Proceedings of the Groningen Group for the Study of Mesopotamian Literature, 2; Groningen: Styx, 1996), pp. 207-30, and J. Bottéro, 'La mythologie de la mort en Mésopotamie ancienne', in B. Alster (ed.), *Death in Mesopotamia: XXVIe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (CRRAI, 26; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1980), pp. 25-52.

44. Mordecai Cogan, 'A Technical Term for Exposure', *JNES* 27 (1968), pp. 133-35. Cf. L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1910), II, pp. 257-58.

45. Meir Malul, 'Adoption of Foundlings in the Bible and Mesopotamian Documents: A Study of Some Legal Metaphors in Ezekiel 16.1-7', *JSOT* 46 (1990), pp. 97-126 (100-101); so too Carol J. Dempsey, 'The "Whore" of Ezekiel 16: The

death.'[46] Ritually, legally, physically and socially, she stands on her own.[47]

Before leaving the first scene of this story, an additional observation should be made. This sub-section has a consistent grammatical style that mirrors the content of the story line. Within three verses, there are seven passive verb constructions. This preponderance of passive verbs highlights the passivity of the young girl. After the opening prophetic formula, vv. 3b-5 provide the setting, the state of affairs prior to the relationship between the two characters. Jerusalem does not choose her origins nor can she do anything about it. Verse 3b is presented statively as a verbless nominal clause describing the fact of Jerusalem's origins. Verses 4-5 are marked off by the inclusio ביום הולדת אותך, moving us from origins to the beginning of life—birth. The power of this image is reinforced by the syntax of the language. The description is presented with passive verbs,[48] with one exception. The use of the passive, in place of the generic third person, serves to emphasize the absolute isolation and helplessness of the infant girl. She is of so little value that it does not even matter who has cast her out. The point is that she has been discarded.

Commentators have remarked upon the pitiful state of Jerusalem's /Israel's origins in this text. Galambush remarks that 'Ezekiel's deletion of Yahweh and Jerusalem's happy past is consistent with his depiction of Jerusalem as inherently other, unclean and unworthy, and of the marriage as an exceptional kindness by Yahweh.'[49] However, it is crucial to note that the text itself views this 'pathetic' period as an ideal time from the perspective of YHWH. YHWH condemns Jerusalem for having forgotten this time of her youth (16.43) and YHWH returns Jerusalem to this initial state before seeking reconciliation with her. In other words, these first

Impact and Ramifications of Gender-Specific Metaphors in Light of Biblical Law and Divine Judgment', in Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson and Tikva Frymer-Kensky (eds.), *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (JSOTSup, 262; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 57-78 (61). Note also that Block (*Book of Ezekiel*, p. 476) suggests that בגעל נפשך marks a legal renunciation of parental obligation. For additional literature on exposure in the ancient world, cf. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 275.

46. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 92.

47. Note the inclusio ביום הולדת אותך which marks the end of this sub-unit.

48. כרת and רחצת are best taken as qal passives, cf. GKC, §52e.

49. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 82.

verses set up a female character to whom the male character is drawn. The helplessness of the female is idealized at the start of Ezekiel 16.

c. *He Gives her Life*

One day, the man (YHWH) passes by and notices the girl wallowing in a pool of blood.[50] Whether this is an intentional visit on his part or an accidental encounter is not clear. Upon taking note of the infant, YHWH makes a pronouncement: ואמר לך בדמיך חיי. Meir Malul suggests that we understand the reference to blood within a particular legal framework.[51] Malul builds on the work of Claus Wilcke's 'Noch einmal: *šilip rēmim* und die Adoption *ina mêšu*: Neue und alte einschlägige Texte',[52] who had already noted that the Akkadian phrase *ina mêšu*, meaning 'in amniotic fluid', appears in legal adoption texts. Malul then demonstrates how the Akkadian semantic equivalent to חיה, *bulluṭu*, meaning 'to keep alive' or 'save' occurs in adoption texts which take place under emergency situations. Equating בדמיך with *ina mêšu u damēšu* and חיי with *bulliṭ*, he concludes that 'the declaration בדמיך חיי reflects a formal adoption formula used specifically in the case of foundlings, who were saved from an emergency situation and then adopted'.[53]

Elsewhere I have argued in detail that Malul's arguments, while well-crafted, do not hold up under scrutiny and that YHWH is not adopting Jerusalem in this passage.[54] Rather, we should read this phrase in line with Walther Zimmerli's suggestion that the utterance offers blessings for 'good fortune, fulfillment, the presence of God'.[55] In the words of Lamar

50. Presumably, the placental and birth blood.

51. Malul, 'Adoption of Foundlings', pp. 106-13; cf. also Janet L.R. Melnyk, 'When Israel Was a Child: Ancient Near Eastern Adoption Formulas and the Relationship between God and Israel', in M. Patrick Graham, William P. Brown and Jeffrey K. Kuan (eds.), *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes* (JSOTSup, 173; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 245-59.

52. Claus Wilcke, 'Noch einmal: *šilip rēmim* und die Adoption *ina mêšu*. Neue und alte einschlägige Texte', *ZA* 71 (1981), pp. 87-94, esp. pp. 93-94.

53. Malul, 'Adoption of Foundlings', p. 112. Malul's argument has been accepted by most commentators in recent years, the most recent being Ka Leung Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel* (VTSup, 88; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), p. 37.

54. S. Tamar Kamionkowski, 'Gender Ambiguity and Subversive Metaphor in Ezekiel 16' (PhD dissertation; Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, 2000).

55. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 339.

Cooper, he 'rescued her and decreed her life by the word of his power'.[56] Galambush contrasts בדמיך חיי with dying with one's blood on one,[57] meaning dying a deserved death. Thus, 'while not an exact verbal parallel, [the phrase] is a conceptual reversal of the death sentence'.[58] At this point, YHWH's intervention addresses one issue: offering a protective blessing to compensate for the neglect of proper rituals of protection. In place of salting and tying/cutting rituals for her umbilical cord, this man pronounces an incantation to compensate for the child's neglect. Hermann Gunkel may have hit upon something when he suggested that this man may have been a magician whose word gave life (protection) to the baby.[59]

d. *He Gives her Sexual Experience*

Ezekiel 16.8-13 describes, in quick succession, a series of actions with which YHWH engages upon his second encounter with young Jerusalem. Verse 8 is particularly pregnant with meaning, for in one verse YHWH moves from noticing the young woman to marrying her. The steps that lead from the first sighting to marriage are as follows: YHWH passes by; he notices that the girl is sexually ripe, so he spreads out his robe (an issue to which we will return), covers her nakedness, swears an oath to her, and enters into a covenant with her, so that she becomes his.

There is a general consensus that by the end of v. 8, the metaphor places the two characters, YHWH and Jerusalem, in some kind of covenantal or marital relationship. It is this relationship that provides the backdrop for the rest of the chapter. The more interesting question, and the one that is more hotly debated, is whether or not this verse also describes sexual activity between the two.[60] Before considering the relative merits of the prominent positions in this debate, we should clarify what is at stake in this discussion.

56. Lamar Cooper, *Ezekiel* (NAC; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), p. 169. Halperin calls this 'an eerie incantation-like pronouncement...' which reflects Ezekiel's 'mingled desire and loathing'. The child is both beautiful and 'a creature of blood' (*Seeking Ezekiel*, p. 163).

57. Cf. Ezek. 18.3; 33.4.

58. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 92.

59. '[S]ince the man bestows life on the baby girl through his word, he will originally have been a sorcerer' (Gunkel, *Folktale in the Old Testament*, p. 130).

60. For a sophisticated and thorough discussion of God's sexuality in the Bible, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

Ezekiel 16 is a metaphor and, as such, it does not tell us anything literal about the nature of God. Because the writer of this text, as with his counterparts Hosea and Jeremiah, employs the marriage metaphor, it does not mean that the writer believed God to be a literal husband to Jerusalem. In the same vein, if we determine that the text of v. 8 does imply sexual union, this does not necessarily suggest that YHWH literally has a phallus and engages in sexual intercourse anymore than the text implies that YHWH literally rinses off the blood from Jerusalem's naked body. The issue is not ultimately whether we imagine YHWH spreading a garment protectively over his bride or whether we picture a sexual scene; rather, the issue at stake is one of internal coherence and logic. The willingness to acknowledge a metaphor of a divine husband who is jealous of his wife's infidelity, but not of a divine husband who has sex, reflects more the discomforts of modern readers than any theological truth claims. J. Cheryl Exum's caution is especially relevant: 'it is important to recognize that God is a character in the biblical narrative (as much a male construct as the women in biblical literature) and thus not to be confused with any one's notion of a "real" god'.[61] A writer's use of the marital metaphor *may* entail all facets of marriage, especially one as central and significant as sexuality. To whitewash certain aspects is to lose the full impact of the metaphor.[62]

To a great extent, the question of the nature of v. 8 hinges upon a proper understanding of the phrase פרשׂ כנף על. Three possible interpretations have emerged in scholarship: the literal, the symbolic, and the euphemistic. The literal reading suggests that פרשׂ כנף is a parallel to the next phrase, כסה ערוה.[63] In this option, it is the physical covering of the naked young woman that is at issue. However, certain factors stand against this interpretation: first, the syntax of consecutive imperfects

61. Exum, 'Prophetic Pornography', p. 122.

62. An early assertion that God has no sexuality is made by Johannes Hempel in 'Die Grenzen des Anthropos Jahwes im alten Testament', *ZAW* 57 (1939), pp. 75-85 (82-84). In Marjo Christina Annette Korpel's work on the metaphoric nature of God-talk, she argues that God is nonsexual, with no consort, no sexual organs or behavior, and never naked (*A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* [Theologische Akademie Uitgaande van de Johannes Calvijnstichting te Kampen; UBL, 8; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990], pp. 125, 133-34, 217-25).

63. It is interesting to note in our text that 'spreading the garment' is followed by the phrase 'I covered your nakedness'. The two actions are presented sequentially as two distinct acts. Interestingly, this phrase is found in only three other biblical passages: Gen. 9.23; Exod. 28.42; and Hos. 2.11. By contrast, the opposite formulation, 'uncovering nakedness', is quite common.

suggests sequential, progressive action and not parallel phrases; more troubling, however, is the description in vv. 8-13 in which the girl is washed and clothed. That she is clothed, washed and reclothed is unlikely and leads us to consider other interpretations.[64]

'I spread my wing/mantle over you' is most commonly understood as a symbolic action that expresses marital obligations on the part of a husband. Åke Viberg suggests that this symbolic action is derived from the image of a bird spreading its protective wing.[65] Paul A. Kruger has argued that the background for this symbolic action lies in the Mesopotamian practice of 'cutting the hem' in divorce proceedings. If some kind of disrobing or tearing of clothing marks the cessation of a relationship, the clothing or covering of a person should indicate the establishment of a relationship.[66]

However, no evidence has been brought forward to suggest that spreading out a garment was a symbolic act of marriage or in any way symbolized the forging of any kind of new relationship. In Malul's comprehensive study of Mesopotamian legal symbolism, nearly half of the symbolic actions include the manipulation of a garment, whether in divorce claims, pledges, debt collection or other legal claims.[67] Although tying a garment, *ina sissiktim rakāsum*, appears in marriage contexts, the act refers to bundling money in the hem of a garment as a gift to a bride. The common phrase *sissiktam ṣabātum* expresses the formation of relationships, but it is always used by an inferior as an expression of loyalty to his superior, as in: *aṣbat qannakama ukīl sissiktaka*, 'I have seized your garment, I have held on to your hem'.[68] Similarly, a *ṣābit qanniki* is the

64. This observation also necessitates a reconsideration of the meaning of כסה ערוה.

65. Åke Viberg, *Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament* (ConBOT, 34; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992), pp. 143-44.

66. Cf. Paul A. Kruger, 'The Hem of the Garment in Marriage: The Meaning of the Symbolic Gesture in Ruth 3.9 and Ezek. 16.8', *JNSL* 12 (1984), pp. 79-86; Raphael Patai, *Sex and Family in the Bible and the Middle East* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 197-98, also argues that this is a method of acquiring a woman.

67. Meir Malul, *Studies in Mesopotamian Legal Symbolism* (AOAT, 221; Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercken; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchenen Verlag, 1988).

68. Werner Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen 'Gebetsbeschworungen'* (Studia Pohl, 5; Rome: Biblical Pontifical Institute, 1976), p. 528.

partner in the inferior position who grabs onto the garment of the superior. There are no examples of the extension of a garment by one person to another. Returning to Ezek. 16.8, one could argue that as YHWH extends his garment, Jerusalem, by implication, has seized it; but this misses the point. If the point of the text is to demonstrate the generosity of YHWH, the writer would not employ an idiom that typically stresses the loyalty of the inferior partner.

More likely, פרשׂ כנף is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. The strongest proponent of this theory is Marvin H. Pope who writes: 'Just what this meant is not difficult to divine, unless one comes to the story with the presupposition that the deity was wholly void of sexual urge or capability, which certainly was not the ancient idea of gods or goddesses.'[69] Athalya Brenner similarly notes in a footnote of her essay, 'On Incest', that 'the text, especially vv. 6 onwards, is strongly reminiscent of a birth as well as a defloration scene'.[70] William H. Brownlee also favors this interpretation, translating the phrase as: 'I spread my robe to you...'[71]

This position can be substantiated by a few observations. First of all, Ezekiel does not use the more common phrase here for covering an individual with a garment as he does in 18.7: ועירם יכסה-בגד. Secondly, the man's attention is drawn to the young woman because she has reached her 'time of love', עת דדים,[72] suggesting that sexual desire is the motivating factor for his interest. The previous verse spares no detail in describing the woman's developing physical, pubescent features:

> I made you grow like the plants of the field; and you continued to grow up until you started menstruating (בעדי עדיים),[73] until your breasts became firm and your hair sprouted. But you were still naked and bare.

69. Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), p. 393. So, too, Linda Day, 'Rhetoric and Domestic Violence in Ezekiel 16', *BibInt* 8 (2000), pp. 205-30 (208).

70. Athalya Brenner, 'On Incest', in *idem* (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 123-24 n. 22.

71. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–19*, p. 225.

72. עת דדים refers to sexual lovemaking (see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 277). Cf. Ezek. 23.17; Prov. 7.18; Song 4.10; 7.13.

73. The meaning of בעדי עדיים is disputed. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 324) cuts בעדי as dittography. LXX reads εἰσῆλθες εἰς πόλεις πόλεων reflecting the Hebrew בעיר ערים which in turn may reflect a misreading of בערי ערום 'completely nude', with an orthographic ד/ר mix-up. Some emend the phrase to בְּעֵת עִדִּים

The other text in which פרש כנף appears, Ruth 3.9, also intimates sexual overtones. In that story, Naomi instructs Ruth to sneak into Boaz's 'bed' after he has eaten and has had his fill of drink. Ruth secretly joins him and 'uncovers his feet', that is, exposes his genitals.[74] When he awakes in a drunken stupor, she requests that he 'spread his garment' over her.

Sexual activity may also be suggested by a later phrase in the verse: ואבוא בברית. The use of the sexually nuanced verb בוא[75] in place of Ezekiel's usual phraseology for covenant making (כרת) may be significant here.[76] And, YHWH presumably fathers children with his bride Jerusalem.[77] If the proper understanding of this phrase is sexual intercourse, then the blood that YHWH washes off of the woman in v. 9 may be the blood of first coitus.[78] This interpretation is more likely than menstrual[79] or birth blood.[80]

(Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p. 99; Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p. 163), understanding the meaning as 'menstruation'; cf. Isa. 64.5. Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1–20*, pp. 276-77) does not emend to menses because it does not 'suit the erotic context' and is not listed as a sign of puberty among Jews; instead he takes it as a reference to developing breasts and pubic hair. Greenberg cites a Sumerian poem published by Samuel Noah Kramer which mentions breast and pubic hair and *m. Nid.* 5.7-9 for the phrase הביאה סמנים 'she developed signs of puberty'.

74. The phrase ותגל מרגלתיו ותשכב may well indicate a sexual act if 'foot' is understood as a euphemism for male genitalia; cf. Calum M. Carmichael, '"Treading" in the Book of Ruth', *ZAW* 92 (1980), pp. 248-60 (257-59); Kruger, 'Hem of the Garment', p. 84; Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *The Book of Ruth* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 203-204; Viberg, *Symbols of Law*, p. 142.

75. Cf. Gen. 38.9, 15.

76. Cf. Ezek. 16.62; 17.13; 34.25; 37.26. Wong suggests that the phrase בוא בברית indicates an interpersonal covenant used elsewhere between human beings (*Idea of Retribution*, pp. 41-46).

77. Cf. v. 21 (MT version) and 23.4.

78. So Dempsey, '"Whore" of Ezekiel 16', p. 67. The verb for rinse (שטף) is quite rare in this context. It is usually associated with an overflowing abundance of water, most often from torrential floods or overflowing rivers. Cf. Isa. 10.22; 28.2, 15-18; 30.28; 43.2; 66.12; Jer. 47.2; Ezek. 13.11, 13; 38.22; Ps. 69.3, 16; 124.4; Job 14.19; Song 8.7; Dan. 11.40.

79. For a rejection of washing menstrual blood, cf. Irwin, *Problem of Ezekiel*, p. 161, who argues that menstrual blood was viewed with such disgust by men that it is inconceivable that YHWH would have made contact with it. In struggling with this passage, Galambush responds to Irwin by affirming the 'absurdity of the alternate possibility; that the girl has been left from infancy until adolescence in her birth

In addition to the arguments presented, more compelling evidence may be adduced. The proper Akkadian parallel to פרשׂ כנף may be *muṣṣû* / (*w*)*uṣṣû* + *ṣubātu*, *lubuštu* or the like. This phrase designates the spreading out of clothing: *ša ṣubāssu ina sūqim uwaṣṣû*, 'He spreads out his garment on the street'. Or *ṣubātē kitê ina muḫḫi tumassâ*,[81] 'You spread out a garment of linen before me'. In the SB recension of the Gilgamesh epic, Shamhat seduces Enkidu, the savage man, in the following way:

> *ur-tam-mi* MÍ.*šam-ḫat di-da-šá*
> *úr-šá ip-te-e-ma ku-zu-ub-šá il -qí*
> *ul iš-ḫu-uṭ il-ti-qí na-pis-su*
> *lu-bu-ši-šá ú-ma-ṣi-ma* UGU-*šá iṣ-lal*
> *i-pu-us-su-ma lul-la-a ši-pir sin-niš-te*
>
> Shamhat unclutched her bosom,
> exposed her sex, and he took in her voluptuousness.
> She was not restrained, but took his energy.
> She spread out her robe and he lay upon her,
> she performed for the primitive the task of womankind (1.171-75).[82]

In this case, Shamhat spreads out or opens her garment in invitation to Enkidu to engage in sexual activity. This unambiguous text offers a compelling parallel to our Ezekiel text[83] and suggests that YHWH

blood'. 'In either case the image is disturbing, the more so because it cast Yahweh simultaneously in the roles of father, husband and mother or female servant' (Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 94 n. 16). Galambush also rejects the option that YHWH washes his bride-to-be because there is no evidence that a husband prepared his future wife for a marriage ceremony in this way. Cf. Samuel Greengus, 'Old Babylonian Marriage Ceremonies and Rites', *JCS* 20 (1966), pp. 55-72.

80. This position is maintained by Greenberg: 'The blood rinsed away is, in the telescoped vision of the allegory, her birth blood that still clung to her' (*Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 278).

81. *AHw*, I, p. 498.

82. Simo Parpola, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh* (SAACT, 1; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, University of Helsinki, 1997), p. 73. The translation is taken from Maureen Gallery Kovacs, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 9.

83. For a further discussion of the parallels between Ezek. 16 and the Gilgamesh Epic, see S. Tamar Kamionkowski, 'The Savage Made Civilized: An Examination of Ezekiel 16.8', in Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak (eds.), '*Every City Shall Be Forsaken': Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East* (JSOTSup, 330; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 124-36.

seduces the young woman sexually as a prelude, or first step toward marriage or covenant.

In these opening verses, we are presented with stark contrasts between the female and male characters. The female is completely passive while the male has full control over every aspect of the female's life. He gives her life, introduces the young woman to her sexuality and provides her with material objects. She is utterly dependent upon him for life, love and material sustenance.

2. *The Assertive Woman*

a. *Translation and Commentary*

> 15) But confident in your beauty and fame, you became sexually promiscuous.[84] You poured out your promiscuity[85] on every passerby; to him you came...[86] 16) You took some of your clothes and made yourself tapestried platforms and you were promiscuous on them. 17) You took your beautiful things, made of my gold and silver that I had given you, and you made yourself phallic images and were promiscuous with them.[87] 18) You took

84. תזנות appears in both the singular and plural interchangeably throughout this chapter. For the plural formation of abstract nouns, see GKC, §91L, J-M, §94j. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 325) erroneously writes that Joüon regards this form as possibly euphonic, but in fact Joüon's comment refers to the prior example of Isa. 54.4 where אלמנותיך may be influenced by עלומיך. Cooke (*Ezekiel*, p. 172) argues that the plural suffix is added to the singular by 'false analogy'.

85. RSV: 'lavished your harlotries'; NJPS: 'lavished your favors'.

86. This segment is clearly incoherent and reflects corruption. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 325) opts for לויתי '(to every passerby) you clung'. The Targum reads לו as לא and offers: לא כשר לוך למעבד כן 'though it was not proper for you to do so'. Another possibility is to take the equally problematic text at the end of v. 16, לא באות ולא יהיה, and to transpose it to the end of v. 15 with a few emendations. Carl Heinrich Cornhill (*Das Buch des Propheten Ezechiel* [Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1886], p. 261) and G.R. Driver, 'Ezekiel: Linguistic and Textual Problems', *Bib* 35 (1954), pp. 145-59, 299-312 (151-52), change the 'no' to 'his' and the verb to a second person perfect, translating: 'to him you came so that it might become his', reflecting a reconstructed Hebrew: לו באת ולו היית. Some readers suggest that this reading goes much better at the end of v. 15 and that the current end of v. 15 may be a truncated form of the longer version. If we put 'to him you came' at the end of v. 15, the indirect object is the passer-by. The use of the verb בוא here, Allen (*Ezekiel 1–19*, p. 228) notes, would suggest the use of 'an expression normally used of a man...strikingly applied to a woman'. Cooke (*Ezekiel*, p. 172) rejects this reading because בוא 'is not used of the woman'. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 326) also does not accept this reading.

87. ASV/KJV/RSV: 'madest for thee images of men, and didst play the harlot with them'.

your embroidered cloths to cover them; and you set my oil and my incense before them. 19) The food that I had given you—the choice flour, the oil, and the honey, which I had provided for you to eat—you set it[88] before them for a fragrant offering.[89] And so it was, declares YHWH God. 20) You even took the sons and daughters that you bore me and sacrificed them to those images as food. Were your promiscuous ways not enough that 21) you slaughtered my children[90] and presented them as offerings to them.[91] 22) In[92] all your abominations and promiscuities, you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, and lay wallowing in your blood.[93] 23) After all your wickedness, woe, woe to you, declares YHWH God, 24) you built yourself an enclosure and made yourself a booth in every square.[94] 25) You built your booth at every crossroad; and you disgraced your beauty[95] and opened your legs to every passerby, and you multiplied your promiscuities. 26) You were promiscuous with your large membered[96] neighbors,[97] the Egyptians; you multiplied your promiscuities, provoking me to anger. 27) So, I stretched out my arm against you and withheld your maintenance[98] and I surrendered you to the will of your enemies, the Philistine women, who were shocked by your debauched behavior.[99] 28) In your insatiable lust you were also promiscuous with the

88. ונתתיהו: the converted perfect is unusual here.

89. For feeding the gods in Mesopotamia, see A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 187-93.

90. בני appears in the MT while בניך is in the LXX. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 326) suggests that the change in the LXX may be a reflection of dogma.

91. נתן בהעביר להם is a conflation of נתן מזרעו למולך and את העביר למולך באש בתו ואת בנו.

92. ואת: LXX reads the equivalent as זאת על כל = τοῦτο παρὰ πᾶσαν. Cornhill (*Ezechiel*, p. 263), Cooke (*Ezekiel*, p. 172), Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 326) and Brownlee (*Ezekiel*, p. 225) emend the particle to זאת and translate as 'This was worse than all your whoring', taking the preposition על as a comparative; cf. Lev. 15.25; Ps. 137.6; Job 23.2; and Dan. 3.19. Rooker (*Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, p. 89 n. 85) mentions three verses from Ezek. 48 where ואת might be זאת, but 'It is...difficult to believe that the same error occurred three consecutive times.'

93. KJV: 'polluted in thy blood'.

94. ASV: 'a vaulted place, and hast made thee a lofty place in every street'.

95. NASB: 'made your beauty abominable'.

96. בשׂר is a euphemism for penis; cf. Gen. 17.13; Exod. 28.42; Lev. 15.2-9; Ezek. 23.20; 44.7.

97. RSV/NASB: 'lustful neighbors'; NJPS: 'lustful Egyptians'; NKJV: 'very fleshly neighbors'.

98. Alloted ration of food; cf. Gen. 47.22.

99. מדרכך זמה: for the unusual construction in which 'an epexegetical

Assyrians; you were promiscuous with them,[100] but were still unsated. 29) You extended your promiscuities toward Chaldea, the land of traders;[101] yet even with this you were not satisfied. 30) How angry I became with you, declares YHWH God, when you did all those things, the acts of an independent prostitute,[102] 31) building[103] your enclosure at every crossroad and setting your booth in every square! Yet you were not like a prostitute, for you reject fees;[104] 32) you were like the adulterous wife who welcomes strangers[105] while under the authority of her husband.[106] 33) Gifts are made to all prostitutes, but you have given gifts to all your lovers and have bribed[107] them to come to you from every quarter with your promiscuous ways. 34) Through your promiscuous ways, you were the opposite of other women:[108] you solicited instead of being solicited; you paid fees instead of being paid fees. Thus you were just the opposite! 35) Now, O prostitute, hear the word of YHWH. 36) Thus said YHWH God: Because you poured out your juices,[109] offering your nakedness to your lovers for harlotry—just like the blood[110] of your children, which you gave to all your abominable fetishes—37) I will assuredly assemble all the lovers with whom you commingled,[111] along with everybody you accepted and

substantive is added to a substantive with a suffix', cf. GKC, §131r.

100. זנה with the accusative is found only here and in Isa. 23.17-18; Jer. 3.1.

101. LXX omits כנען, which in any case should be rendered as 'trade' and not a proper noun. ארץ כנען: 'land of merchants'.

102. ASV: 'impudent harlot'; KJV: 'imperious whorish woman'; NASB: 'bold-faced harlot'; RSV: 'brazen harlot'; NJPS: 'self-willed whore'.

103. בבנותיך: we would expect בבנתך, the infinitive form.

104. אתנן refers specifically to a prostitute's fee; cf. Deut. 32.19; Mic. 1.7; Hos. 9.1; Isa. 23.17-18.

105. Note the unusual use of את before the indeterminate זרים. Driver, 'Ezekiel: Linguistic and Textual Problems', p. 152, suggests זרים מאת and LXX reads μισθώματα = אתננים 'gifts from strangers'.

106. ASV: 'A wife that committeth adultery! that taketh strangers instead of her husband!' RSV: 'Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!'

107. ותשחדי: cf. GKC, §64c for the vocalization of this word.

108. ASV/NASB/RSV: 'thou art different from [other] women in thy whoredoms'; KJV: 'And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms'.

109. NJPS: 'brazen effrontery'; ASV/KJV: 'thy filthiness was poured out'; RSV: 'your shame was laid bare'.

110. כדמי, 'in accordance with the bloodguilt' is generally emended to the more common בדמי 'because of the bloodguilt': so Cooke (*Ezekiel*, p. 176). Greenberg retains the preposition כ because Ezekiel uses כ in relating offense to punishment (*Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 286).

111. ערבת is not used elsewhere in a sexual context and this has led many interpreters, including Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 330) and Cooke (*Ezekiel*, p. 176) to emend

> everybody you rejected. I will assemble them against you from every quarter, and I will expose your nakedness[112] to them, and they shall see all your nakedness. 38) I will inflict upon you the punishment of women who commit adultery and murder, and I will direct bloody and impassioned fury against you. 39) I will deliver you into their hands, and they shall tear down your enclosure and level your booths; and they shall strip you of your clothing and take away your dazzling jewels, leaving you naked and bare. 40) Then they shall assemble a mob against you to stone you with stones and thrust you with their swords. 41) They shall put your houses to the flames and execute punishment upon you in the sight of many women; thus I will put a stop to your promiscuity, and you shall pay no more fees. 42) When I have satisfied my fury upon you and my rage has departed from you, then I will be tranquil; I will be angry no more.

Once the woman has food, shelter, clothing and riches, she begins to pursue other lovers and to share her gifts with these lovers. She transforms her gifts into things that were not intended by her benefactor; in other words, she takes her allowance to start her own business! As Zimmerli says: 'For Jerusalem the newly found beauty and fame were intoxicating. In her inebriation she lost all sense of history, perspective, and propriety; the temporal and ephemeral replaced the eternal; the gift displaced the giver.'[113] Her initial crime is that she trusts (בטח) in her beauty instead of putting her trust in God alone, who gave her her beauty in the first place.[114] In fury, her husband condemns her, hurling accusations about her promiscuity and her forgetfulness regarding her helpless origins. In a fit of rage, he promises to amass all her lovers against her, to destroy her home and her business, to humiliate her. He understands this as just punishment for her crimes against him.

to עגבת 'you lusted'. However, עגב is found in such frequency in Ezek. 23 that it would be strange to find it occurring only one time in ch. 16. It makes more sense to hypothesize that this verb is not part of the vocabulary of ch. 16. G.R. Driver ('Linguistic and Textual Problems: Ezekiel', *Bib* 19 [1938], pp. 60-69, 175-87 [65]) connects the verb with Akkadian *erēbu* and says that it is 'used of a woman who enters the house of a man not her husband'. Cf. also Judg. 19.9; Isa. 24.11; Hos. 9.4.

112. ערותך: LXX reads κακίας = רעתך. Brownlee (*Ezekiel*, p. 219) prefers the LXX because of v. 57; but even in v. 57, some LXX manuscripts read ערותך.

113. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 488.

114. A major theme in biblical literature is the importance of placing one's trust only in God, cf. Isa. 26.4; 50.10; Jer. 17.7; 39.18; Ps. 9.11; 13.6; 21.8; 37.3; 40.4; 52.10; 62.9; Prov. 29.25; and 1 Chron. 5.20. The biblical writers warn against trusting wealth and treasure (Jer. 48.7), one's own way (Hos. 10.13) and friends (Mic. 7.5).

A matter that should give a reader of Ezekiel 16 pause is that the writer, discussing idolatry and foreign alliances, does not draw from the common stock of idioms available to him.[115] Certainly it has been noted that Ezekiel's biblical Hebrew reflects the beginning of LBH and that the text is highly corrupt; nonetheless, the text is filled with unique phrases and unusual words which cannot be wholly accounted for through current characterizations of textual corruption and LBH.

The key to unlocking the depth of Ezekiel 16, I believe, is through a *historically contextualized literary analysis*. By historically contextualized, I mean an analysis of the meanings of words and phrases within their original textual and cultural contexts. While the typical historical critic seeks to find a single meaning in a text, the literary critic relishes in multiple meanings and ambiguities. Of particular interest for this analysis of Ezekiel 16 is the theory of plurisignation, that type of 'ambiguity that results from the capacity of words to stimulate several different streams of thought'.[116] Ezekiel 16 presents a theological claim in the guise of an extended metaphor, and, as is inherent in all metaphor, various streams of thought or layers of meaning play themselves out, either side by side or intersecting, and mutually enriching one another.

Moisés Silva asserts that lexical ambiguity may occur 'if the hearer's train of thought conflicts with the speaker's—that is, if the two contexts differ'.[117] Silva implies that the hearers in this context are modern readers separated from the speaker by hundreds of years. Yet, I will argue that even a contemporary of Ezekiel's may have experienced this ambiguity. Returning to William Empson's discussion of ambiguity, mentioned in an earlier chapter, ambiguity is 'any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language'.[118] Continuing, he states: 'Thus a word may have several distinct meanings; several meanings connected with one another; several meanings which

115. פסל ומסכה or פסל ומצבה: Exod. 20.4; Lev. 26.1; Deut. 4.16, 23, 25; 5.8; 27.15; Judg. 17.3, 4; 18.14, 17, 30, 31; 2 Kgs 21.7; Isa. 40.19; 42.17; 44.9, 15, 17; 45.20; 48.5; Jer. 10.14; 51.17; Nah. 1.14; Hab. 2.18; Ps. 97.7; 2 Chron. 33.7. The two primary idioms which Ezekiel uses to describe idolatry are 'eating on the mountaintops' (as in Ezek. 18.11) and the term גלולים.

116. William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2nd edn, 1996), p. 394.

117. Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, rev. and exp. edn, 1994), p. 152.

118. Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 1.

need one another to complete their meaning...'[119] Furthermore, 'An ambiguity...occurs when two or more meanings of a statement do not agree among themselves, but combine to make clear a more complicated state of mind in the author.'[120] Malul writes:

> Among the recent approaches in biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies there is one which involves the study of terms, figurative expressions, and metaphors in an attempt to strip them of their common literal meaning and to disclose their technical meaning, long lost to the modern reader.[121]

William L. Moran's study of 'love of God' in Deuteronomy as a technical terms for obedience and loyalty to a sovereign in vassal treaties is one such example.[122] Although neither Moran nor Malul would describe their work as studies of ambiguity, this is in fact what they are doing. In other words, the Deuteronomist's use of 'love' is not only a technical term; it is a creative use of the term, combining both the technical and non-technical usage to create a new meaning. The uncovering of technical usages for certain terms and phrases is, however, but a branch of a larger inquiry: semantics. How can we know what words, phrases and idioms of antiquity mean? What are the ranges of meaning for any particular word or phrase in any given context? When is a word to be construed literally or figuratively? Silva discusses the centrality of context for determining meaning, particularly for those words that are polysemous. Context, Silva continues, operates on several levels: syntagmatic context is 'a linguistic potential that is actualized when words enter into combinations to form sentences'.[123] This would include a consideration of parts of speech, accompanying prepositions and the presence or absence of definite markers. Additionally, certain verbs and adjectives are generally associated with certain nouns; for example, we would not expect to hear 'He drives a strong car' or 'The tea is too powerful'.[124] Lexically, these statements make sense, but contextually, they are jarring. In addition to syntax, Silva discusses literary context and social-historical context.[125]

119. Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 5.
120. Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 133.
121. Malul, 'Adoption of Foundlings', p. 97.
122. Moran, 'Ancient Near Eastern Background', pp. 77-87.
123. Silva, *Biblical Words*, p. 141.
124. Silva, *Biblical Words*, p. 141.
125. See also James Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), esp. pp. 170-73, for a discussion of semantic fields.

In order for modern readers to know that 'He drives a strong car' would be jarring, we must be able to find a predominant number of examples of 'He drives a powerful car'. We must be able to determine what is the common usage. Returning to Ezekiel 16, I will argue that a number of unusual idioms would have been jarring to ancient audiences from the perspective of gender expectations. Consider the following:

> The lovely nurse looked demurely at Max and proceeded to flitter down the street. He hoped that Maxine, his sister's best friend, would dance with him at the party that night.

The masculine pronoun at the beginning of the second sentence surprises the reader who expects a feminine referent. The words 'lovely', 'nurse', 'demurely' and 'flitter' are *primarily* associated with the female, although the dictionary definitions do not restrict these terms to females. The adjective, 'lovely' is defined as: 1. Full of love; loving; 2. Inspiring love or affection; 3. Having beauty that appeals to the emotions as well as to the eye; 4. Enjoyable; delightful.[126] The adverb, 'demurely' is defined as: 1. Modest and reserved in manner or behavior; 2. Affectedly shy, modest, or reserved. Moreover, the reader experiences dissonance not only with the masculine pronoun, but also with the fact that this man is heterosexual. If we read: 'The lovely nurse Jim looked demurely at Max and proceeded to flitter down the street', we expect Jim to be a homosexual, or at least an effeminate male.[127]

A careful lexical and syntactical study of Ezekiel 16 reveals that many of the unusual idioms and ambiguities in this text are rooted in gender, and, once this becomes clear, we are in a better place to read the clues necessary for a deeper, more nuanced reading of the text.

Beginning with v. 15 the story takes a radical turn, again reflected in the language. From the first verse of this section, the woman is described with active verbs. We no longer hear about her state of being, or how she is acted upon; rather, she acts. Commentators take this observation for

126. *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 3rd edn, 1992), p. 1065.

127. Al Wolters ('Cross-Gender Imagery in the Bible', *BBR* 8 [1998], pp. 217-28) has recently collected examples of 'cross-gender' imagery in the Bible, concluding that cross-gender imagery does not affect gender designation. As a parallel example in English he cites the designation of a woman as 'one of the boys'. Although the woman is still clearly grammatically feminine, the phrase implies that in some sense she is not really 'a she'.

granted or do not notice this at all. Instead, they focus on the nature of the woman's actions, rather than on the fact of her acting at all. However, the extreme change of syntax is an indicator that the *fact* of her action is just as significant as the *content* of her actions. This is also supported in YHWH's woe in v. 22. YHWH laments that the woman does not remember and hold fast to her days of nakedness, vulnerability and helplessness.

The unit of vv. 15-22 is also marked by a number of key words or *Leitmotifen* that are absent in the first section of the chapter. The woman is the subject of two key verbs, לקח 'to take' and נתן 'to give'. In v. 16, the woman *takes* her clothing and *transforms* it into some kind of cultic site. The next verse adds a step: the woman *takes* the gold that YHWH had *given* her and *transforms* it into cult objects; the woman *takes* her tapestries and *transforms* them into robes; she *gives* YHWH's oil and incense to the cult objects. The food that he had *given* her, she in turn *gives* to the cult images. Finally, the woman *takes* her children and *transforms* them into food for the images. The interplay between taking, giving and transforming underscore the surface message of the text: YHWH has bestowed upon Israel many gifts, which she, in turn, has either given away or has used for purposes for which the giver did not intend.

The question of who gives and who takes has ramifications beyond the message suggested previously, particularly when considered in conjunction with the first part of the chapter, because this section moves us from one in which only YHWH gives and Israel receives. In the second section, the wife becomes active by taking and not simply receiving. She reaches out for a resource and she molds the material into that which she desires, not that which the giver desires.

b. *Women's Ejaculation*

In the early part of YHWH's tirade against his wife (v. 15) he accuses her of sexual promiscuity with the phrase ותשפכי את-תזנותיך, variously translated as 'you lavished your favors' or better, Greenberg's 'you poured out your harlotry'.[128] William Greenhill describes a common understanding of this phrase: 'The word pouring out sets forth the vehement and insatiable desire she had to sin...'[129] The verb שׁפך, in figurative usage is restricted primarily to three contexts in biblical

128. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, p. 270.

129. William Greenhill, *An Exposition of Ezekiel* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 3rd edn, 1846), p. 367.

literature:[130] murder (שפך דם),[131] erecting siege mounds (שפך סוללה),[132] and the expression of God's fury (שפך חמה).[133] The last two phrases always appear in the context of violence and destruction, whether the violence is initiated by men (in war) or by God (violent release of fury expressed through invasion or natural devastation). The phrase שפך דם usually signifies murder, that is, the killing of an innocent person. This phrase appears ten times in the book of Ezekiel. The writer uses this phrase most often to describe the actions of the leaders of Jerusalem, as in Ezek. 22.6: 'The princes of Israel in your midst, each one used his strength for the shedding of blood (למען שפך-דם)'. In 22.3, the grammatical feminine is used to describe the violent actions that take place in the midst of the city Jerusalem. In 16.38 and 23.45 the phrase appears as a parallel to נאף, adultery,[134] referring to the evils of personified Jerusalem. The verse in 23.45 reads:

> ואנשים צדיקם המה ישפטו אותהם משפט נאפות
> ומשפט שפכות דם כי נאפת הנה ודם בידיהן
>
> Righteous men shall punish them with the judgments for adultery and for bloodshed, for they are adulteresses and have blood on their hands.

130. שפך נפש expresses the pouring out of one's soul in grief, cf. 1 Sam. 1.15; Job 30.16; and Lam. 2.11.

131. Ten times in Ezekiel; cf. Gen. 9.6; 37.22; Lev. 17.4; Num. 35.33; Deut. 19.10; 1 Sam. 25.31; 1 Kgs 2.31; 18.28; 2 Kgs 21.16; 24.4; Isa. 59.7; Jer. 7.6; 22.3; 22.17; Joel 4.19; Zeph. 1.17; Ps. 79.3; 106.38; Prov. 1.16; 6.17; Lam. 4.13; 1 Chron. 22.8; and 23.3.

132. Four times in Ezekiel; cf. 2 Sam. 20.15; 2 Kgs 19.32; Isa. 37.33; Jer. 6.6; Dan. 11.15.

133. Ten times in Ezekiel; cf. Isa. 42.25; Jer. 6.11; 10.25; Ps. 79.6; Lam. 2.4; 4.11. Alternate forms include זמה and רוח.

134. Adultery leads to paternity concerns, violates a man's honor and challenges his masculinity. Adler notes that the root נאף is used as a metaphor for apostasy 'perhaps only ten times' (Adler, 'Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage', p. 309). She distinguishes נאף from זנה in four ways: (1) 'נאף is the more technical and legal term for extra-marital sex and describes the act objectively, while זנה seems to be more suggestive concerning the nature of the subject'; (2) זנה implies habitual activity and a multiplicity of partners; (3) the participial form of זנה 'suggests a treacherous and hardened woman'; (4) נאף is a sexually neutral term; for example, a man who engages in sexual intercourse with a married woman is a נאף (Lev. 20.10). By contrast, זנה refers primarily to illicit sexual activity on the part of women ('Background for the Metaphor of Covenant Marriage', pp. 311-13).

In 31 out of 33 total occurrences of this verb in the book of Ezekiel, it is used in one of these three manners. Our phrase, שפך תזנות, appears only in ch. 16 and once in 23.8. There, the text reads:

ואת-תזנותיה ממצרים לא עזבה כי אותה שכבו בנעוריה
והמה עשו דדי בתוליה וישפכו תזנותם עליה

> She did not give up the promiscuous behavior that she had undertaken with the Egyptians, for they had violated her in her youth; that is, they had touched her virgin nipples and had ejaculated [lit. poured out their lust] upon her.

Several important observations can be made about this verse. First of all, the sexual act described here is not consensual sex, it is rape.[135] The action is executed by men upon a woman; she is the object, the passive recipient. The men's violations culminate with their climax, their ejaculation, which is the ultimate act of aggression in this verse. Within this context, שפך תזנות is an aggressive act perpetrated by men. It is only in Ezek. 16.15 that a female is the subject of the verb, a verb that has strong connotations of aggression, power and violence. And if, in fact, the

135. The verb שכב can take one of two prepositions to indicate sexual intercourse: עם and את, or the verb can be followed immediately by the direct object marker. In those cases where את does not have an attached pronominal suffix, it is impossible to determine whether the preposition or the direct object marker is intended (cf. Gen. 26.10; 35.22; Lev. 18.22; 1 Sam. 2.22). (It should be noted that the distinction between preposition and direct object marker is only a matter of Masoretic vocalization and not orthography.) A study of those cases in which the suffix does distinguish between the two leads to no sharp distinctions with regard to semantic differences; nor can the differences be attributed to authorial preferences. The preposition עם appears in a variety of contexts (Gen. 19.32-35, where Lot's daughters seduce Lot into sexual intercourse; Gen. 30.5, which describes a sexual encounter between Jacob and his wife Leah; Gen. 39.7, 12, where Potiphar's wife accuses Joseph of seduction and rape; Exod. 22.15 and Deut. 22.25, 28, which include legislation regarding the seduction or rape of an unmarried, sexually inexperienced young woman). The priestly writer(s) use the direct object with שכב to indicate sexual intercourse in Lev. 15.18, 24 within the context of acts which induce a state of טמאה and in regard to the trial of the Sotah in Num. 5. The most interesting case is that of 2 Sam. 13 in which the two different forms of the verb phrase occur side by side within the same narrative. When Amnon attempts to seduce his sister Tamar, he says: שכבי עמי (2 Sam. 13.11); but when the narrative voice tells us that Amnon takes Tamar by force after she refuses him, the text reads: ויחזק ממנה

meaning of this phrase is connected to ejaculation in ch. 23, we can only wonder as to the nuance of the meaning(s) in ch. 16. In this case, the phrase refers to Jerusalem's participation in political alliances, to the metaphorical wife's unfaithfulness and to the female's assumption of male associated behavior.

c. *Usurping the Phallus*

As YHWH continues to condemn his wife, he accuses her of cultic crimes. In v. 17, we encounter the phrase צלמי זכר. The text reads:

> You took your beautiful things, made of the gold and silver that I had given you and you made yourself phallic images and fornicated with them
>
> ותעשי־לך צלמי זכר ותזני־בם.

On one level of the metaphor, the accuser is referring to the corruption of the cult in Jerusalem; on another level, husband God is condemning wife Israel for having taken gifts of their courtship and having transformed them into instruments of unfaithfulness. Yet the phrase צלמי זכר has additional significance here. This clause is not a stock phrase for idol worship; in fact, it appears only here and has given rise to a scholarly debate on its meaning. The debate centers around the question of the meaning of זכר in this context. Is the statue a phallic image or a human (male) image? Gustav Jahn rejects the phrase צלמי זכר as a phallic reference and Rudolf Smend echoes his opinion.[136] Block is the most recent voice in favor of a human image rather than a phallic symbol because in the following verses this image is fed and clothed.[137]

ויענה ושׁכב אֹתָהּ (2 Sam. 13.14). In this narrative, there seems to be a distinction between consensual and non-consensual sexual intercourse which is indicated not only by the verbs ענה and חזק but by the move from preposition to direct object. Cf. Harry M. Orlinsky, 'The Hebrew Root *škb*', *JBL* 63 (1944), pp. 19-44, and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, pp. 476-77. Meir Sternberg (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985], p. 446) maintains that שׁכב with the direct object is harsher. See also Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, 'Tipping the Balance: Sternberg's Reader and the Rape of Dinah', *JBL* 110 (1991), pp. 193-211.

136. Gustav Jahn, *Das Buch Ezechiel auf Grund der Septuaginta hergestellt* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1905), p. 100. So too Smend, *Prophet Ezechiel*, p. 94.

137. Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, p. 489. See also John F. Kutsko, 'Ezekiel's Anthropology and its Ethical Implications', in Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (eds.), *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (Atlanta,

The Hebrew word זכר generally means 'male or man'; and it occurs especially to indicate gender.[138] It is often paired with its antonym, נקבה, which literally means: 'one who is pierced'. Presumably, therefore, the male is the one who pierces. In cuneiform, the same sign is used to render 'penis', *GÌŠ* (= *išaru/mušaru/ušaru*) and 'male', *NITA* (= *zikaru*). In Isa. 57.8 we encounter a description of the worship of phalluses and this sets a precedent for taking our text as another example of the same phenomenon.

I would suggest that if we take the preposition ב in the word בם here in its use as a marker of instrumentality,[139] the translation of the second half of the verse reads: 'you made yourself phallic images and used them as instruments of fornication', that is, you gave yourself male genitalia, you usurped the power of the phallus![140]

The use of dildoes is scantily attested in antiquity. A text from third-century BCE Egypt contains a discussion between two women about a dildo. The two women discuss their fondness for the sex toy and for the manufacturer of the product. One woman, Koritto, describes the phallus: 'what workmanship. You'd think Athena's hands, not Kerdon's went into it. I [...] he came bringing two of them, Metro. When I saw them, my eyes swam at the sight—men don't have such firm pricks. Not only that, but its smoothness is sleek, and its straps are like wool, not leather.'[141]

GA: SBL Press, 2000), pp. 119-41 (133), who argues that Ezekiel intentionally substitutes זכר for אלהים as a polemic against idolatry. For a more detailed discussion of idolatry in the book of Ezekiel, see John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego, 7; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

138. It occurs 82 times in the Bible.

139. Cf., for example, Mic. 4.14; Eccl. 9.12 (*IBHS*, §11.2.5d). Cf. also Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, p. 44.

140. Halperin (*Seeking Ezekiel*, p. 146) takes this phrase to refer to phallic images with which women might masturbate. I am suggesting that the phallic images may not have been used simply for self pleasure, but as instruments by which to penetrate men (or perhaps other women).

141. As quoted by Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant in *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 108. Also cf. Bernadette Brooten, *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 108, for a discussion of this text.

Bernadette Brooten relates a Pseudo-Lucian dialogue on the relative merits of love of boys versus love of women. In a mocking tone, love between women is suggested: 'Let them strap to themselves cunningly contrived instruments of licentiousness, those mysterious monstrosities devoid of seed, and let women lie with women as does man'.[142] Brooten rightly notes that this text reflects more about male fantasies and assumptions than it does about actual practices between women; nonetheless, our concern is exactly with male projections of women's sexual activities. Additionally, Eva C. Keuls has collected visual representations (of the classical Greek period) of women engaged in sexual intercourse with each other with the use of dildoes. In most cases, the pictures show women engaged in masturbation.[143] At this time, the information from Mesopotamia is rather scant on this topic; however, Robert D. Biggs makes reference to the discovery, near the Ishtar Temple in Assur, of stone models of erect penises with a hole in them, possibly worn as amulets.[144]

d. *The Violent Woman*

As we continue our reading to v. 21, we come across Ezekiel's accusation that wife Israel is slaughtering her own children.[145] The claim that a woman is slaughtering her own children is a powerful and horrific image; yet again, there is another reading to this verse. The verb שׁחט is usually

142. Brooten, *Love between Women*, p. 54.

143. Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 82-86. See also John Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases: The Archaic Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pls. 71 and 99.1. See Brooten, *Love between Women*, pp. 152-54, for a discussion of dildoes in Greek and Roman society. Brooten knows of no vase painting 'that shows one woman penetrating another with a dildo' (p. 153). *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 44a mentions a female ruler who used a dildo every day.

144. Robert D. Biggs, *ŠÀ.ZI.GA*, p. 10 n. 57.

145. This reading follows manuscripts of the LXX which read בניך, 'your sons', rather than the MT's בני, 'my sons'. Regarding Molech, cf. John Day, *Molech: A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), who generally agrees with George C. Heider, *The Cult of Molech: A Reassessment* (JSOTSup, 43; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), esp. pp. 233-45. See Moshe Weinfeld's 'The Molech Cult in Israel and its Background', in Pinchas Peli (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress on Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1969), pp. 37-61 (Hebrew), who has made a strong argument against the theory of child sacrifice. Cf. also Morton Smith, 'A Note on Burning Babies', *JAOS* 95 (1975), pp. 477-79.

used in a ritual context for the slaughter of animals.[146] An interesting exception to the ritual context of animal slaughter appears in Gen. 37.31, where Joseph's brothers slaughter an animal to use its blood on Joseph's coat. Although the polemic against child sacrifice appears with some frequency in biblical texts, the verb שחט is used only in Gen. 22.10 and Isa. 57.5 as well as in Ezek. 16.21 and 23.39. A more common use of the verb, outside of ritual contexts, is within the domain of men, war and extreme violence. Tribal conflicts in the pre-monarchic period lead to acts of slaughter;[147] Elijah's supporters slaughter the priests of Baal;[148] a dynastic rivalry within the Northern Kingdom leads to Jehu's slaughter of Ahab's extended family and supporters;[149] the Babylonians slaughter Zedekiah's sons before him;[150] and Gedaliah's supporters are slaughtered by Ishmael, son of Netaniah.[151] In each case, a rivalry between men vying for power gives rise to the slaughter. Our text is the only one that attributes this activity to a female. The power of this image is not only of a mother killing her own children but also of a female slaughtering (שחט) at all.[152]

e. *Financial Independence*

Verse 30 offers another interesting twist. The second half of the verse reads: מעשה אשה זונה שלטת. The translation provided in the NJPS Tanakh is 'the acts of a self-willed whore'. The seventeenth-century commentator William Greenhill represents the most common interpretation of this phrase:

> a woman that hath a domineering spirit; from שלט to domineer and exercise lordliness over others, to usurp authority...when the mask of modesty and bridle of continency are laid aside, and a bold forwardness to filthiness is manifested, when a woman doth not only expect and wait for her lovers, but desires, invites, and constrains them to satisfy her lusts, and will have no nay.[153]

146. Thirty-seven times in the Pentateuch.
147. Judg. 12.6.
148. 1 Kgs 18.40.
149. 2 Kgs 10.7, 14.
150. 2 Kgs 25.7; Jer. 39.6; 52.10.
151. Jer. 41.7.
152. It is interesting to note that while some traditions extol Abraham for his willingness to slaughter his son as a demonstration of his loyalty to God, wife Israel's slaughter is presented in this text as a demonstration of her disloyalty.
153. Greenhill, *Exposition of Ezekiel*, p. 376.

Concerning the adjective שׁלט, Smend, based on Gen. 42.6, reads 'a woman who does not have a master, but is rather self-governed'.[154] He cites Kimchi's example of a princess whose lust knows no barriers to constrain her. Daniel Block understands the word to mean 'to gain mastery over, domineer', but then translates it in the body of the text as 'brazen woman'.[155] The scholarly discussion, I believe, is fueled by the fact that the adjective שׁלט is applied to a female only here. The root שׁלט is attested in Aramaic and Nabatean, rendered as 'to exercise power over'. Based on a study of the root in Elephantine documents, Jonas Greenfield has argued that a woman holding the title of שׁליטה is one who is financially independent. Placing this insight within the context of gift giving, Greenfield argues that only a שׁליטה could be in a position to give gifts to her lovers and to pay for sex.[156] In one Elephantine text, the term seems to have a broader meaning:

> -ל-ה-ן לא שליטה יה[ושמע ל]-ה-ב-ע-ל-ה בעל אחר-ן
>
> But Yehoishma shall not have the power to cohabitate [*sic*] with another man...[157]

That is, Yehoishma does not have the *legal right* to bring another man into her household and breaking this agreement presumably abrogates her sole control over her household.

Akkadian *šalāṭu* refers to having authority to manage property,[158] but it also signifies independence and often appears in treaty contexts. One who acts independently is always the overlord.[159] In the Ezekiel text Jerusalem

154. Smend, *Der Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 98.

155. Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, p. 492.

156. Jonas C. Greenfield, 'Two Biblical Passages in Light of their Near Eastern Background—Ezekiel 16.30 and Malachi 3.17', *Eretz Israel* 16 (1982), pp. 56-61, esp. pp. 56-57 (Hebrew). In addition to Greenfield's citations, cf. Emit G. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine* (Brooklyn Museum, Department of Ancient Art; New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1953), legal texts 2.11; 6.9, 10; 9.11-15; 10.8-14 (note alternate orthography: שׁליטא-שׁליטה) which promise Tamut (2.11) or the daughter Yehoishma (all other examples cited above) full control of the household upon the death of Anani (husband/father).

157. Kraeling, *Aramaic Papyri*, text 7.33; also cf. p. 218 for textual notes regarding the fragmentary nature of this line.

158. *CAD*, *Š*, p. 239, subsection 4.

159. *CAD*, *Š*, pp. 238-39.

is playing the dominant role; thus, מעשה אשה זונה שלטת refers to a woman who is not only a prostitute out of necessity, but by her own choice. Financially and socially she is not only independent, but in a position to oversee or even dominate others. The woman of Ezekiel 16 revels in her independence.

f. *Women's Ejaculation, Again*

In v. 36 we find the phrase השפך נחשתך. This phrase has been a crux that has been interpreted in a variety of ways. G.R. Driver relates נחשתך to Akkadian *nuḫšu*, 'luxury', thus referring to sexual extravagance.[160] Moshe Greenberg relates the word to the Akkadian *nuḫšātu*, 'hemorrhage'.[161] In Mesopotamian ritual and medical texts, this term seems to refer to a gynecological disorder characterized by a genital discharge. So, for example, one medical prescription concludes: *ina šērim la patan išatti naḫšātu ipparrasā*, 'Let her drink of it in the morning, not having eaten; the discharge will then stop'.[162] According to the citations provided in the *CAD*, the medical problems could include an unusual flow of blood during pregnancy: *ša naḫšātu marṣat sinništu ša ina mērešu damū ītanammarū*, 'a woman who suffers from *naḫšātu*: a woman during whose pregnancy blood keeps appearing'.[163] Given the Akkadian sense of discharge and the sexual context of Ezekiel 16, Greenberg concludes that השפך נחשתך is a reference to 'copious distillation'. Thus the pouring out of a discharge could refer to the fluids produced at sexual arousal.[164] Greenberg also cites *b. Sanh.* 92b, which says that the exilic men were so

160. Driver, 'Linguistic and Textual Problems: Ezekiel', p. 65.

161. Cf. Moshe Greenberg, '*Nhšk* (Ezek. 16.36): Another Hebrew Cognate of Akkadian *naḫāšu*', in Maria de Jong Ellis (ed.), *Essays on the Ancient Near East* (Festschrift J.J. Finkelstein; Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 19; Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1977), pp. 85-86, contra Peggy L. Day, 'Adulterous Jerusalem's Imagined Demise: Death of a Metaphor in Ezekiel XVI', *VT* 50 (2000), pp. 285-309 (286-87 footnote). Cf. also *CAD*, N/1, pp. 141-42. It should be noted that in Mesopotamian literature, this term, used in ritual and medical texts, refers to a symptom of illness.

162. *CAD*, N/1, p. 42.

163. *CAD*, N/1, p. 41.

164. A woman seduces her lover with the lines: 'As river moistened its banks, I make myself moist, I make my body moist. I have opened my seven doors for you, Erra-bani...' (Foster, *Before the Muses*, I, p. 145). (The original edition of this text was published by Claus Wilcke, 'Liebesbeschwörungen aus Isin', *ZA* 75 [1985], pp. 188-209.)

beautiful that the Chaldean women discharged copiously (שופכות זבות). Halperin picks up on Greenberg's reading and writes: 'Her juice positively drips from her'.[165] Or, if we want to push the envelope a bit further, this phrase may have echoes of female ejaculation,[166] similar to the phrase שפך תזנות.

g. *Inversion of Gender Order*

Most telling are vv. 30-34:

> How angry I became with you[167] declares YHWH God, when you did all those things, the acts of an independent prostitute, building your enclosure at every crossroad and setting your booth in every square! Yet you were not like a prostitute, for you reject fees; you were like the adulterous wife who welcomes strangers while under the authority[168] of her husband. Gifts are made to all prostitutes, but you have given gifts[169] to all your lovers and have bribed them to come to you from every quarter with your promiscuous ways. Through your promiscuous ways, *you were the opposite of other women: you solicited instead of being solicited; you paid fees instead of being paid fees. Thus you were just the opposite!*

165. Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel*, p. 146.

166. The Greek physician philosophers debated whether women's ejaculations contained sperm or not. Avicenna, an Arab physician, warns that men should please their wives lest 'she does not emit sperm (*sperma*) and when she does not emit sperm a child is not made' (as cited by Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990], pp. 50-51). In antiquity, lesbians, *tribades*, were considered to be women with too much hot sperm; cf. K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, rev. and exp. edn., 1989), pp. 182-84.

167. Interpretations of the phrase אמלה לבתך follow two basic lines: first, לבה as a feminine form for heart and the verb as a qal participle of a by-form of מ-ל-ל, connected to Arabic *malla*, 'to be shaken with fever', thus yielding 'How lovesick was your heart'. The other reading connects לבה to Aramaic ל-ב-ה, 'wrath' and Akkadian *libbatû*, 'wrath' (*CAD*, L, pp. 163-64), both of which appear with cognates of מ-ל-א. According to this line of thought, the verb should be pointed as a niphal, yielding, 'I am filled with wrath over you'.

168. תחת אישה: instead of reading 'instead/in place of her husband', we should read 'while under the authority of her husband'.

169. נדה may be related to the Akkadian *nudunnû* or *nidnu*, a gift presented by a husband to his wife at marriage. Cf. CH, 171-72 and MAL A, 27. For *nudunnû* as a dowry gift from a bride or her agent to the groom, see Martha T. Roth, *Babylonian Marriage Agreements: 7th–3rd Centuries B.C.* (AOAT, 222; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag; Kevelaer: Butzon-Bercker, 1989).

This passage speaks for itself: this female is aggressive, asserts power and independence. Interestingly, a recent comment on this passage points to the degree to which these verses are still powerful and threatening to men. M.G. Swanepoel writes: 'We are not even spared the greatest shock... That you pay your men instead of them paying you is surely the *summit of immorality*.'[170] And it is no accident that the word for opposite here is הפך,[171] an overturning. From its contexts, the verb connotes not only a physical overthrow but also an inversion of nature where basic categories are subverted.

> The sun shall turn (יהפך) into darkness and the moon into blood (Joel 3.4).
>
> Who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns (והפך) deep darkness into dawn and darkens day into night, who summons the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the earth, his name is YHWH (Amos 5.8).
>
> He turned (הפך) the sea into dry land; they crossed the river on foot; we therefore rejoice in him (Ps. 66.6).[172]

It is God who inverts darkness into light or who makes the sun become darkness. Zimmerli compares the word to the Greek phrase παρὰ πύσιν, found in Rom. 1.26 to describe homoerotic relationships, or an 'unnatural inversion of the human order'.[173] Given this context, if the woman is opposite, this implies that she is no longer female, but male, and that she is playing the role of God, inverting the 'natural order', or rather, the divine order, by exhibiting male gender characteristics.

3. *Conclusions*

At a subtle level within the text of Ezekiel 16, wife Israel's crime is that she is acting like a male. Like a male, she is associated with war and violence, she seeks multiple sexual partners,[174] she symbolically acquires

170. Swanepoel, 'Ezekiel 16', p. 89 (my italics). Unfortunately, he does not further explain what he understands by 'summit of immorality'.

171. As a noun, this word is a *hapax legomenon*, but it is well attested in verbal forms.

172. Cf. Deut. 23.6, where God is described as the one who can change a curse into a blessing; Jer. 13.23, where we find the well-known saying about a leopard changing his spots; Est. 9.22, in which the mourning of the community is changed into joy; and Ps. 114.8, where God turns a rock into a pool of water.

173. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 329.

174. Men could have multiple sexual partners, see Deut. 21.15-17 and Ezek. 23 for examples of polygyny; for evidence of concubines see, for example, Gen. 16.3;

male genitalia and ejaculates rather than receiving and containing fluids. Her תועבה, her abomination, is crossing gender boundaries. And it is no accident that the word תועבה is used here, appearing seven times in ch. 16.[175] תועבה indicates acts that violate God's nature, whether ethical (Prov. 17.15; 20.20) or cultic (Deut. 14.3; 17.1).[176] G.A. Cooke argues that the abomination is Baal worship and participation in the Molech rites.[177] Block points out that תועבה is usually cultic in Ezekiel, but that here there is a general shift in meaning: 'spiritual harlotry' is the sin.[178] Galambush disagrees with Block; she claims that the prophet is referring specifically to the abominations in the Temple.[179] But the offense against God lies in an even more profound place: Jerusalem has overstepped her limits vis-à-vis God. Where she should have been passive, dependent and connected only to YHWH, she became assertive, independent and non-monogamous. Her sins are against the 'natural' gender order, and her evils are so great, her actions so culturally male, that even her body is masculinized. Thomas Laqueur's observations are helpful here:

> [I]t became increasingly clear that it is very difficult to read ancient, medieval, and Renaissance texts about the body with the epistemological lens of the Enlightenment through which the physical world—the body—appears as 'real', while its cultural meanings are epiphenomenal. Bodies in these texts did strange, remarkable, and to modern readers impossible things... There are numerous accounts of men who were said to lactate and pictures of the boy Jesus with breasts. Girls could turn into boys, and men who associated too extensively with women could lose the hardness and definition of their more perfect bodies and regress into effeminacy. Culture,

25.6; 30.3-10; 36.12; Judg. 8.30; 2 Sam. 3.7; 5.13; for female captives of war, see Num. 31.9; Deut. 20.14; 21.10-14; Judg. 5.30.

175. This word appears 43 times in the book of Ezekiel, almost all in the plural. In general, it is used for idolatry, cf. Deut. 12.31; Isa. 44.19; Jer. 32.35 (particularly in the phrase תועבות הגוים, cf. Deut. 18.9; 1 Kgs 14.24; 2 Kgs 16.3; 21.2; 2 Chron. 33.2; 36.14); improper worship (Deut. 23.18-19; Isa. 1.13; 41.24); homosexuality (Lev. 18.22; 20.13); cross-dressing (Deut. 22.15); and remarriage after divorce and the remarriage of the woman to another man (Deut. 24.4).

176. Erhard Gerstenberger describes תועבה as that which is 'incompatible with Yahweh's nature' ('תעב', *TLOT*, III, pp. 1428-31 [1430]). For a detailed bibliography on חטא and its derivatives, see Klaus Koch, 'חטא', *TDOT*, IV, pp. 309-319 (309).

177. Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p. 160.

178. Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, p. 471.

179. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*.

> in short, suffused and changed the body that to the modern sensibility seems so closed, autarchic, and outside the realm of meaning.[180]

The woman in vv. 14-43 takes what should be kept inside and brings it out, so to speak.

This reading has enormous theological implications, for if the wife of God is playing the role of a man, where does that leave God? Mary Shields has written on the ways in which the I–you narrative format of the text 'masks' the violence perpetrated by YHWH. First, Shields points out that the 'I' figure, YHWH, is obscured by constant focus on the 'you'. Secondly, YHWH, as the deity, is automatically a privileged figure for both ancient and modern readers. And, thirdly, the male first person figure is never described, never embodied; he simply resides in the background, while the woman is exposed time and time again. One of the conclusions that Shields draws from these observations is that:

> Throughout this text, power resides in one person: Yahweh. It is he who sees the infant and pronounces that she should live, and who marries, washes, and adorns the young woman. It is he who allows the woman no speech in this text. It is his power that the woman challenges by her actions, causing shame, and it is his power that is reasserted through the punishment, its justification, and the partial reconciliation in the second half of the chapter. The extremity of the punishment reaffirms both his power and his honor: the purpose of reestablishing his covenant with a subdued and shamed Israel in verses 59-63 is that 'you shall know that I am Yahweh' (v. 62). His power, in the end, is absolute.[181]

Dissatisfied with the sole focus on the objectification of the woman in this text, however, Shields proposes to expose the characterization of YHWH in the text, a task that is fraught with difficulties because of the pains to which Ezekiel keeps the figure of YHWH masked, hidden. Shields asks: 'What is Ezekiel so afraid of? What happens if we turn the story on its head and look at the character of God in the text?'[182] Her answer is that an exposure of YHWH reveals a jealous, angry and abusive husband, a God whose character is morally repulsive.[183]

180. Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 7.

181. Mary Shields, 'Multiple Exposures: Body Rhetoric and Gender Characterization in Ezekiel 16', *JFSR* 14 (1998), pp. 5-18 (14).

182. Shields, 'Multiple Exposures', p. 16.

183. Tikva Frymer-Kensky writes, 'we make a profound statement when we acknowledge that the Bible is patriarchal. We are brought to the realization that the Bible contains a fundamental moral flaw: it does not treat all humans as equals... '

However, I must disagree with her assertion that 'Throughout this text, power resides in one person: Yahweh.' Power does not reside in only one character throughout the story—if this were the case, there would be no conflict, no tension, and certainly no story. What is actually so

She continues, 'This has enormous religious implications. The authority of the Bible must be tempered with the authority of our experiences as human beings and our principles of morality. It is true that many of our moral ideas ultimately come from the Bible, but it is also true that they have been inspired by our continued reflection on the Bible during the millennia since it was written' ('The Bible and Women's Studies', in Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum [eds.], *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994], pp. 16-39 [18]). From 1992 to the present has witnessed a veritable cascade of feminist publications on this topic. Naomi Graetz published an important article entitled, 'The Haftarah Tradition and the Metaphoric Battering of Hosea's Wife', *Conservative Judaism* 45 (1992), pp. 29-42. Since her article was not published in an academic journal, it received little attention until its revised reprint as 'God Is to Israel as Husband Is to Wife: The Metaphoric Battering of Hosea's Wife', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 126-45. (This essay also appears as a chapter of her book, *Silence Is Deadly*, pp. 35-52.) Nevertheless, it is an early work which offers a fresh critique of the marriage metaphor. Graetz's starting point is the fact that the Hosea text is a part of the public liturgical cycle of haftarah readings in Jewish worship. She points out the ways in which the biblical text has been interpreted by both modern and rabbinic commentators. Particularly telling is Graetz's citation of Rabbi Benjamin Scolnic: 'God, not Baal, is Israel's husband and lover... Since *a wife's loyalty to her husband must be absolute and unwavering*, it is a powerful analogy to the complete loyalty that God demands of the Israelites' (italics mine) ('God Is to Israel as Husband Is to Wife', p. 128). Scolnic continues to argue that the threats which God speaks in the text are 'about love, not wife-battering. They are about forgiveness, not punishment... [The perspective is] of a man who has the right to [*sic*]... strip her, humiliate her, etc., but doesn't and, instead, seeks reconciliation' (p. 132). Graetz also shows how the *midrashim* concerning the marriage metaphor hint at 'the emotional bond that has developed between God and his people which has resulted in Israel's being gradually taken prisoner by a pathological courtship' (p. 130), a courtship in which the beaten wife has no recourse for escape; she is eternally trapped. For Graetz, the text is problematic because it is 'morally flawed', it condones domestic violence; and it is particularly dangerous because it is held as a sacred text, especially in its context as a publicly recited biblical teaching. Similarly, Gale A. Yee points out that the metaphor may have an element of beauty and profundity, but that it also echoes classic patterns of domestic violence. She writes: 'When the metaphorical character of the biblical image is forgotten, a husband's physical abuse of his wife comes to be as justified as

remarkable about this text is that God does not have all the power![184] The story begins and ends in a fantasy or a myth of an all powerful God and a completely submissive wife. However, the material embedded in this frame reveals a different dynamic. The center of the story expresses a much more volatile, chaotic relationship—one in which the deity does not have full control and in which wife Jerusalem is not completely submissive.

This radical admission is made even more radical by the metaphor in which it is expressed. The use of the marriage metaphor beckons us to read this text on more than one level. As we explore the power relationships between male and female, we are, in fact, exploring the power relationships between God and Israel. Furthermore, the multiple-level approach not only makes us aware of parallel situations; but also beckons us to read various levels in intersection, infusing each one with additional meaning.[185] Jerusalem is both female and male—female in relation to God and male within the realm of human society. Jerusalem is at once powerful and utterly powerless. The male community, symbolically

God's retribution against Israel' ('Hosea', p. 200). See also Day, 'Rhetoric and Domestic Violence', esp. pp. 212-24, and Gail Corrington Streete, *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 76-100.

184. Galambush recognizes this, characterizing the unit as a power struggle. 'In vv 1-14, Yahweh is depicted as the one in control and the result for Jerusalem is growth and beautification. In vv 15-43, Jerusalem takes control, causing her own descent into shame and finally, destruction' (*Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 90). But it is crucial to keep in mind that Jerusalem does not destroy herself; YHWH brings on her destruction as a punishment.

185. This kind of reading supports the concept in metaphor of bi-directional linkages. Carl R. Hausman, for example, claims that bi- or multi-directional linkage is a defining feature of metaphoric statements. Using the statement 'the smooth, red sphere', he points out that in this literal statement, smooth and red narrow or specify the meaning of sphere. The meaning is relatively stable and testable. By contrast, 'In a metaphor, the so-called functional terms do not interact simply to delimit the subject. Instead, they interact to delimit themselves, to transform themselves and thus to deliver a specific significance to the subject that is not already given, ready to be formulated' (Hausman, *Metaphor and Art*, p. 54). Lakoff rejects this notion arguing that 'The source domain of a metaphor is characterized in terms of concepts...that are semantically autonomous'. Something is semantically autonomous if it is meaningful completely on its own terms (Lakoff, *More than Cool Reason*, p. 111).

portrayed as a female, betrays its own maleness in Ezekiel 16. The marriage metaphor is not simply a vehicle, or a vessel for conveying a theological message. Ezekiel's use of the marriage metaphor embodies an outbreak of chaos. This is a story about cultural upheavals, social disintegration and theological crises, all expressed through the breakdown of one of the most fundamental cultural and social institutions: marriage, and, at its root, gender roles. At its core, this is a text about gender ambiguity and all its repercussions. Everything else flows out from this source.

And it is no accident that this text of gender ambiguity is explored and resolved in the packaging of metaphor. Men with emotions and social responses attributed to women was threatening enough in the biblical world-view to relegate its expression to subversive metaphor.[186] What Ezekiel and his contemporaries could not express overtly could be concealed in the multivalent expression of a metaphor.

Ezekiel's use of the marital metaphor in ch. 16 may be explained as follows: Ezekiel witnessed an age of extreme chaos—the experience of exile, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and gender crisis. His generation of male Judeans directly experienced what earlier prophets had predicted—that men would become like women. Just as Second Isaiah empathizes with the suffering of the exilic generation and tries to lighten the burden of the sufferers (Isa. 40.1-2), Ezekiel brilliantly shifts the experience of emasculation so that men are not objects of God's wrath, but victims of women. Ezekiel began with A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN, but refocuses the experience to the converse, A STRONG WOMAN IS A MAN. This shift provides a rationalization for feelings of emasculation.

Scholars generally agree that on the historical level, Israel's crime is the forging of alliances with other nations and the desecration of the Temple cult. The punishment involves the divinely ordained invasion of the Babylonians into Jerusalem. The punishment having been carried out, Ezekiel is optimistic that order will return and that the people will return to the land of Israel and will be completely dependent on and loyal to God. The explicit metaphor of marriage is used to communicate the crimes of alliances and religious apostasy, but it does so by describing

186. Saul Olyan ('And with a Male You Shall Not Lie the Lying Down of a Woman') observes in his study of Lev. 18.22 that the insertive partner in a homosexual act is condemned because he has feminized his male partner. The same dynamic is at work in Ezek. 16; for Ezekiel, woman feminizes man by becoming the insertive partner.

the people's actions as specific acts of infidelity. In this metaphor, the community invites chaos into the world by defiling its marriage to God.

In this chapter, I have argued that at a deeper level, beyond the marital metaphor, lies a profound anxiety regarding gender ambiguity. Thus, in Ezekiel 16, chaos emerges not only as a result of cultic and social crimes but also as a result of the subversion of gender order. On some level, Ezekiel believed that chaos began when female Israel started playing the role of a male—by acting as a sexually independent individual. The severity of the exilic experience could not be justified simply by the metaphor of an unfaithful wife, as other prophets had done; for Ezekiel's generation, the crime of the people had to strike at a deeper level—at the core of divinely sanctioned gender identities.

Chapter 5

EZEKIEL 23 AND THE HYPERVIRILE MAN

A comparison of ch. 16 with its close counterpart ch. 23 serves to highlight the unique way in which Ezekiel uses gender in ch. 16. The parallels between 16 and 23 are manifold: chs. 16 and 23 provide detailed metaphors about the relationship between YHWH and Jerusalem; in fact, these two chapters are the longest in the book of Ezekiel. Structurally, the chapters are similar; as Greenberg notes, both chapters contain two sections (16.1-43, 44-58; and 23.1-35, 36-49) and in each case, the second section appears to be an extension of the first prophetic unit.[1] In terms of content, both chapters describe Jerusalem as the wayward wife of YHWH. In addition to the two main characters, each chapter includes lovers, the intrusive third player(s). Both chapters include a description of sins, the punishment, and reconciliation between YHWH and Jerusalem. The writer gives prominence to the term זנות and its derivatives, and both chapters contain highly graphic sexual language. As we shall see below, parallel phrases exist between the two texts which further establish a connection between the two chapters.

Although both chapters address not only the relationship between YHWH and Jerusalem but also violations against the divinely sanctioned gender roles, the nature of the gender crimes is different. While gender reversal and the female assumption of power are central to ch. 16, ch. 23 focuses more on male-to-male rivalry.[2] In ch. 23, the woman's crime is not usurping the male role but, rather, giving her loyalties to the wrong man and thereby threatening the masculinity of her primary male.

1. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, pp. 488-93.

2. Ken Stone has found this dynamic to underlie deuteronomic texts where women's sexuality is at center stage (*Sex, Honor and Power in the Deuteronomistic History*).

Despite the similarities between the two texts, the vast differences between them can disclose the most interesting insights. A comparison of the divergencies between the chapters offers a deeper understanding of Ezekiel's use of gender, further substantiates my reading of ch. 16, and may hint at the compositional history behind the two chapters.[3]

1. *Introducing Oholah and Oholibah*

Chapter 23 tells the story of two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah,[4] representing Samaria and Jerusalem. Although the chapter begins with the story of Oholah (Samaria) and she reappears in the final section of the chapter, the focus of the chapter is on Oholibah (Jerusalem).[5] The two sisters, we are told at the outset, had acted promiscuously in Egypt during

3. Most commentators assume that ch. 23 is loosely derived from ch. 16. Allen, for example, asserts that 'The message of vv 1-27 re-uses the sexual allegory of chap. 16' (*Ezekiel 20–48*, p. 48). This study will suggest that the compositional history is much more complex than previously acknowledged and that both texts seem to be working off of each other.

4. YHWH with two wives is reminiscient of the Elephantine cults of Anat Bethel and Asham Bethel. See also the Ugaritic myth of El with two wives, presented in J.C.L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), pp. 123-27.

5. The names Oholah and Oholibah have given rise to scholarly discussions regarding their significance and/or meaning. Oholah is the feminine for the masculine word אהל. The commonly acknowledged difficulty is that there is no *mappiq* marking a 3rd person feminine singular possessive suffix, as one would except. Similarly, the name Oholibah means either 'the tent in her', if we take the *ḥireq* as a connecting vowel or 'my tent (is) in her' if we read the *ḥireq* as a 1st person singular possessive suffix. Cooke believes that the names, both derived from the word אהל, refer to the high places of cultic prostitution (*Ezekiel*, p. 249); so too, Davidson (*Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 165). But, as Zimmerli correctly points out, high places are never called 'tents' in biblical literature. Galambush connects the concept of tents to sexual organs, based on architectural descriptions of women's sexual organs in rabbinic literature (*Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 111 n. 58). It has also been suggested that the 'tent' may refer to the sanctuary, but it is hard to believe that the sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom would have been acknowledged by Ezekiel. Other names in the Bible are based on the word for tent (Oholiab [Exod. 31.6]; Ohel [1 Chron. 3.20]; Oholibamah [Gen. 36.2]); and Zimmerli has suggested that the names Oholah and Oholibah may be archaizing sounding names which would have evoked the early history of the people (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 484; so too Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, p. 735). Given the relative common base of 'tent' in proper names, Zimmerli's theory is sound.

their youth.[6] Then, in a quick sequence, we learn their names, about their marriage to YHWH and the birth of their children.

> They acted promiscuously in Egypt; they acted promiscuously while in their youth. There their breasts were squeezed, and there their maiden nipples were handled. Their names were Oholah, the older one, and her sister, Oholibah. They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

The beginning of this chapter is striking in a number of ways. It provides a vast amount of information in the span of three verses. The same material that takes up an entire chapter in Hosea 1 is condensed here into a few verses. Mary Shields notes that: 'In the space of two and a half verses, five gendered identifications are given to the female characters of the chapter, all of them having to do with prescribed gender roles and sexuality: sister, daughter, whore, wife and mother.'[7] These verses also condense time: the girl's youth, her experiences in Egypt, the presumed courtship and marriage, and the birth of children are presented as a fleeting moment. Clearly, we have not yet reached the author's primary interest. By contrast, ch. 16 devotes a substantial percentage of its text to the 'early years'.

Verses 5-10 focus on Oholah's behavior and subsequent punishment. Oholah acted promiscuously while under YHWH's authority (ותזן אהלה תחתי),[8] by expressing desire for her lovers, the Assyrian officers. The word עגב, often translated as 'to lust', appears in this chapter seven times, making it a central *Leitwort* of the unit. The verb appears only in Ezekiel 23 and once in Jer. 4.30 as a substantive participle. In Arabic, the cognate word is *'ajiba*, meaning 'to be amazed; to desire'.[9] It appears paired with זנה throughout this chapter which has clearly influenced the common translation of 'lust'. However, there is no compelling reason to assume that the terms are synonymous. The Arabic cognate at least

6. On idolatry in Egypt, cf. Ezek. 16.26; 20.8. If this reference to Israel's youth in Egypt goes back to the Mosaic period, the idea of two sister states betrays an anachronism.

7. Mary Shields, 'Gender and Violence in Ezekiel 23', paper presented for the 'Theological Perspectives in the Book of Ezekiel' Seminar, SBL Orlando, FL, 1998; online: http://www.shemesh.scholar.emory.edu/scripts/SBL/ezekiel/shields.html, p. 2.

8. This phraseology is similar to Ezek. 16.32: אשה המנאפת תחת אישה תקח-את זרים. In Num. 5.19, 20, 29, where the subject is a wife, the phrase תחת אישה indicates ownership.

9. *HALOT*, II, p. 783b.

suggests that עגב denotes desire and yearning, that is, emotion, while זנה is oriented toward behavior. Since the evidence for this word is sparse, interpretations of the term must be evaluated on the basis of how well they work. As we shall discuss below, central to the women's crimes in this chapter is desire, an improper emotion for women to experience except toward their husbands.

The objects of her affections are the Assyrian officers (vv. 5-7),[10] the best of the best, through whom she becomes defiled. Whether the niphal נטמאה is to be taken passively or reflexively is important. The question is one of responsibility; does she defile herself through her desire or do the Assyrians defile her by their actions and treat her completely as an object? We shall return to this question below.

The writer recalls Oholah's behavior in Egypt before introducing her punishment of being turned over to her lovers who strip her,[11] take away her children, and slay her. As Shields notes, 'This punishment goes beyond a legal response to Oholah's actions; it is *revenge*.'[12]

With v. 11, the story moves to the primary focus, the sins of Jerusalem (Oholibah). The actions of Oholah simply provide a backdrop for the more serious infractions of Oholibah. Oholibah also sees and desires the Assyrian men and becomes defiled as her older sister had. However, she goes even farther than her sister by yearning for the Babylonian men upon whose carved images she gazes on the walls of Jerusalem.[13] She sends out messengers to beckon the Chaldean men who 'came to her for lovemaking and defiled her with their promiscuities; and she defiled herself with them until she turned from them in disgust' (v. 17).[14] As a result, YHWH is then alienated from her (v. 18).

10. Samaria's interest in the Assyrians is mocked by the prophet Hosea (7.11; 12.2); interactions with Assyria are mentioned in 2 Kgs 17.3-4 (Shalmaneser III vs. Hoshea) but according to the Assyrian records, Jehu paid Shalmaneser tribute as did Joash to Adad-Nirari II and Menachem to Tiglath-Pileser III; cf. Hayyim Tadmor, 'Assyria and the West in the Ninth Century and its Aftermath', in H. Goedicke and J.J.M. Roberts (eds.), *Unity and Diversity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp. 36-48.

11. See Saul M. Olyan, '"In the Sight of her Lovers": On the Interpretation of *nablūt* in Hos 2, 12', *BZ* 36 (1992), pp. 255-61, for a discussion of the motif of exposing the adulteress.

12. Shields, 'Gender and Violence in Ezekiel 23', p. 5.

13. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, p. 478, for a discussion of carved images in the ancient Near East.

14. This may refer to Hezekiah's interactions with Merodach-baladan in 714 BCE in alliance against Assyria (2 Kgs 20.12-21; Isa. 39.1-8) or to some time after the fall of Assyria to Babylon in 605 BCE.

In vv. 19-21, Oholibah turns her attention to the Egyptians, to whom she returns as in the days of her youth (vv. 3, 8). She desires the Egyptians 'of whom their member was that of asses and their ejaculation that of stallions'. The term פלגשיהם is probably connected to the word for 'concubine', although in this context, the meaning is not altogether clear.[15] The LXX simply reads 'Chaldeans' here.

Based on Oholibah's behavior toward the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Egyptians, YHWH announces a series of punishments in two units, vv. 22-27 and vv. 28-30 (introduced by לכן and כי כה אמר אדני יהוה respectively). In the first diatribe, the punishment entails the use of the lovers, the Chaldeans, from whom she had alienated herself, as the instruments of God's wrath. This description follows the historical reality of the Babylonian invasion of Judah. These verses alternate between reality and metaphor: punishments of war and punishments of adultery. Verse 24 describes the weapons to be used against the city Jerusalem, but v. 25 shifts to the mutilation of the woman's body,[16] the taking of her children combined with destruction by fire. Verse 26 continues with the stripping of the woman and the removal of her fineries. While the punishment is executed by the Chaldeans, interestingly the result is that she will no longer desire or even remember the Egyptians, her current lovers. Verses 28-30 introduce a new sub-unit in which the punishments previously given are reiterated in modified language.[17]

Ezekiel concludes his diatribe against Oholibah with the 'song of the cup' in which YHWH warns Oholibah that because she imitated the ways of her sister, she will drink from the same cup (vv. 32-34).[18] This poetic section, along with v. 35, serves as a bridge to the second oracle in ch. 23 where Oholah once again appears.[19]

15. See Chaim Rabin, 'The Origin of the Hebrew Word *Pilegeš*', *JJS* 25 (1974), pp. 353-64, who argues that this quadriliteral root has non-Semitic origins. Cf. also *HALOT*, III, p. 929b.

16. On disfiguring captives, see Chapter 3 of this book and cf. Ezek. 12.13; 16.40. MAL, A15 proscribes the cutting off of the nose of an adulteress.

17. The same formula, כי כה אמר, is used to indicate a new unit in Ezek. 16.59.

18. For the 'cup of destiny' cf. Jer. 25.15-16; 51.7; Hab. 2.15-16; Lam. 4.21; Ps. 16.5; 75.9. Jeremiah expresses the notion of 'drinking from the same cup' in a more direct manner in 7.12 where he warns Jerusalem to see what YHWH had done to Shiloh.

19. Verse 35 constitutes a brief יען-לכן clause in which the לכן has been abbreviated to גם. This structure parallels Ezek. 16.43 which also contains the יען-גם phraseology.

Verse 36 introduces a new unit with the opening formula:

התשפוט את-אהלה ואת-אהליבה והגד להן את תועבותיהן

> Should you not judge Oholah and Oholibah, and charge them with their abominations?

The divine charge to the prophet to act as a prosecutor parallels the opening verse to ch. 16.[20] This unit polemicizes against adultery and bloodshed, representing cultic infractions. YHWH accuses the woman of defiling the Temple, desecrating the Sabbath day and child sacrifice. At the very end of the chapter, the writer shifts out of the primary metaphor into a narrative commentary[21] that bears striking resemblance to Ezek. 16.37-38.

> But righteous men shall judge them with the punishments for adultery and for bloodshed, for they are adulteresses and have blood on their hands. For thus said YHWH God: Raise up an assembly against them, and make them an object of horror and plunder. Have the assembly stone them with stones and cut them down with their swords; let them kill their sons and daughters, and burn down their homes. I will put an end to wantonness in the land; and all the women shall take warning not to imitate your wantonness (Ezek. 23.45-48).[22]

2. *Differences between Ezekiel 16 and Ezekiel 23*

The most obvious differences between chs. 16 and 23 are that the metaphor in the latter involves two sisters, while 16 concerns itself with Jerusalem alone; ch. 23 addresses political alliances while the crimes of Jerusalem in ch. 16 are centered around the Temple and the Cult. However, there are more subtle differences as well. I would organize

20. Cf. also Ezek. 20.4; 22.2.

21. In her study of Ezek. 23, Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes argues that the perspective of the text is decidedly male: the 'frame of reference, that is dominated by the interests and perceptions of the "first sex"' effects, in this case, a 'disembodiment of the female subject' and a misnaming of female experience. She then asks how a female audience would read this text. Both male and female audiences are made to identify with the adulterous wife, but male readers have 'a way out'; they can also identify with the husband God as a victim of infidelity and with the righteous men who punish women (van Dijk-Hemmes, 'Metaphorization of Woman', p. 162 [in Brenner (ed.), *Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets*, p. 244]).

22. Isaiah also employs images of personified cities mocking one another and mourning each other's demise. See esp. Darr, *Isaiah's Vision and the Family of God*.

these variations as follows and I shall touch upon each of these points in what follows:

a. Roles of the characters and use of verbs
b. Reuse and reformulation of key phrases
c. Affinities with Hosean and Jeremian traditions.

a. *Roles of the Characters and Use of Verbs*

Chapter 23 goes to great lengths to describe the lovers. We are given elaborate descriptions of the Assyrian lovers: 'the Assyrians, warriors (קרובים)[23] clothed in blue, governors and prefects, horsemen mounted on steeds—all of them handsome young fellows (23.5b-6)'. We are told about their professional class, physical appearance and desirability. In the following verse, as if to drive the point home *ad absurdum*, we are again told that the Assyrians are the greatest catches (מבחר). Meanwhile, all that we know about Oholah is that she desired others (ותזן ... תחתי ותעגב).

The obsession with the lovers continues in Oholibah's case. Again, the details of the Assyrian lovers are spelled out (v. 12). Regarding Oholibah, we are told that she experienced desire (עגבה). Verse 14 carries Oholibah's story beyond that of her sister's. She continues her promiscuity by gazing (ותרא) upon carved figures of Babylonian men. Once more, the text goes to great lengths to describe the attire, rank and appearance of these future lovers. Again, she desires them and sends out messengers to invite the real men behind the pictures. In v. 20, she desires new lovers, and this time we are told about the size of their genitalia and the power of their ejaculations.[24] As the narrator moves to the punishment, the descriptions of the lovers are repeated in full. The narrative focus is clearly on the lovers—both their appearance and rank, and their actions vis-à-vis Jerusalem. Ezekiel goes to great lengths to show that these lovers bear all the standard markers of masculinity: sexual potency and virility, good looks, professional success and physical strength—everything that he and his community have lost.

23. I am taking קרובים with the majority of commentators to be an Aramaism from the root קרב, battle, thus denoting 'warriors' or 'officers'. Galambush follows the LXX τοὺς ἐγγίζοντας reflecting a Hebrew participle, 'who arrived' (*Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, p. 75).

24. זרמה appears only here; it is derived from זרם.

Meanwhile, the women are completely flat characters. Shields argues that although the text attempts to construe women solely as objects, 'They are not merely reducible to one side of the binary ordering principles of this text (e.g., subject/object, inside/outside, wife or mother/ whore, etc.).'[25] As proof of this claim, Shields points to the fact that YHWH cannot control these women even after he marries them. Furthermore, YHWH is actually dependent on their dependence. However, the first oracle of ch. 23 presents a very monochromatic woman, whose only action is lust after other men. In a rather bland, repetitive manner, the woman sees and desires. The same verbs are repeated over and over again. The following chart illustrates the variety of actions that the male characters initiate in contrast to the colorless, repetitive nature of the women's (in)activities.

	WOMEN	MEN
v. 5	ותזן ותעגב	
v. 7	ותתן תזנותיה	
v. 8	שׁכבו ... עשׂו ... וישׁפכו תזנותם ואת-תזנותיה ... לא עזבה אותה	
v. 10		גלו לקחו הרגו
v. 11	ותרא ותשׁחת עגבתה	
v. 12	עגבה	
v. 14	ותרא	
v. 16	ותעגב ותשׁלח	
v. 17	ותקע נפשׁה	ויבאו ויטמאום
v. 18	ותגל תזנותיה	
v. 19	ותרבה את-תזנותיה	
v. 20	ותעגבה	
v. 24		ובאו עליך ישׂימו עליך ... ושׁפטוך
v. 25		ועשׂו אותך ... יסירו ... יקחו
v. 26		והפשׁיטוך ולקחו

In fact, the only action that she takes is in v. 16, when she sends messengers out to the Babylonians. Otherwise, she sees and emotes, but does not explicitly take action.

In other words, in this text, there is no confusion of gender identities.[26] The men do what we might expect them to do. They initiate all sexual

25. Shields, 'Gender and Violence in Ezekiel 23', p. 9.

26. Oholah and Oholibah desire men other than their husbands and presumably

activity, they defile the woman, and then they inflict punishments by taking her children, her goods, exposing her body and raping and killing her. The woman feels and the men act. The woman is virtually invisible, while the men are at center stage. By contrast, in Ezekiel 16, the woman is not dull and passive; she develops from passivity (vv. 1-13), which is enforced by the predominance of passive verbs and stative language, to resolute self-assertion described in colorful language (esp. vv. 14-36) and then is forced back into a receptive state. The woman in Ezekiel 16 develops and transforms; her counterparts in Ezekiel 23 pale in comparison. The woman in Ezekiel 16 challenges gender definitions and attempts to usurp the prerogatives of a man; however, the women of Ezekiel 23 never cross the gender boundaries.

The woman's crime, in ch. 23, is twofold: she desires and she allows men to take her. Verses 3 and 8 are particularly instructive here:

בנעוריהן זנו שמה מעכו שדיהן ושם עשו[28] דדי[27]
בתוליהן ותזנינה במצרים

> They acted promiscuously in Egypt; they acted promiscuously while in their youth. There their breasts were squeezed, and there their maiden nipples were handled.

ואת-תזנותיה ממצרים לא עזבה כי אותה שכבו בנעוריה
והמה עשו דדי בתוליה וישפכו תזנותם עליה

> She did not give up the promiscuous behavior that she had undertaken with the Egyptians, for they had violated her in her youth; that is, they had touched her virgin nipples and had ejaculated [lit. poured out their lust] upon her.

In these verses, the narrator defines promiscuity: allowing oneself to be taken by men. When Block paraphrases these verses as 'they offered their breasts and nipples to the men of Egypt'[29] he misses the point altogether.

have adulterous relationships, but they are still women. They may be unfaithful women, but their infractions are not so severe as to undercut their gender identities.

27. Only here, in v. 21 and in Prov. 5.19.

28. Ugaritic '*sy* means 'press; squeeze', so *HALOT*, II, pp. 892b-93a. The root is also attested in Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic as עשׂי–עסי. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, p. 474, for occurrences of this root in Talmudic literature.

29. Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, p. 734. Greenberg's comment that 'the Egyptians introduced the girls to the pleasures of the flesh' (*Ezekiel 21–37*, p. 473) also misleadingly embellishes the text.

The woman offers nothing; she is taken, and this is her crime. Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes asks what specific insight is gained by Ezekiel's use of the marital metaphor in ch. 23. She concludes that:

> the people are guilty of their own past enslaving inasmuch as women are, by definition, guilty of their own sexual misfortunes...we can state that it is this specific (and illogical) M insight which the metaphor of Ezekiel 23 can give.[30]

In other words, it is the abused woman who is blamed for the abuse just as decimated Judea is blamed for its own ruin. Greenberg implies a similar reading when he writes: 'what rankles YHWH most is their reversion time and again to their "original sin", the affair with Egypt'.[31]

Toward the end of the chapter, YHWH again hurls accusations against the woman. In vv. 40-42, the women are more active, sending messengers for the lovers, prettying themselves up[32] and reclining on their beds. These women are similar to the strange woman of Proverbs who says to the unwitting youth:

> I have decked my couch with covers of dyed Egyptian linen; I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Let us drink our fill of love till morning; let us delight in amorous embrace. For the man of the house is away; he is off on a distant journey (Prov. 7.16-19).

30. van Dijk-Hemmes, 'The Metaphorization of Women', p. 251. 'M' and 'F' represent male and female voices of the text. This is a convention which van Dijk-Hemmes and Athalya Brenner employ in their joint work, *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993). In response to the work of van Dijk-Hemmes and Brenner, Robert Carroll ('Desire under the Terebinths') argues that metaphors and real women are different things. Metaphors don't have to say anything about actual women in the biblical world. 'Feminists may regard the representation of women by men (any and all such representations) as being invariably a pejorative activity and one not performed in the interests of women... From any point of view the use of metaphors of women for the community, nation, city and land in the prophets may have little to do with the representation of women as such, just as the metaphorization of men for the community and the notion in the prophets may have little bearing on the representation of men as such' (p. 278). '[B]ecause such representations are inevitably metaphoric their referential force is symbolic' (p. 279). But Carroll fails to take power dynamics into consideration; men, not women, wrote these metaphors.

31. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, p. 489.

32. For eye make-up, see 2 Kgs 9.30; Jer. 4.30; Job 42.14.

However, like women, even adulterous ones, they wait at home and then receive gifts. What a stark contrast with the highly active woman of 16.30-34, who chases her lovers and bestows gifts upon them.

b. *Reuse and Reformulation of Key Phrases*

We have already seen how the use of שפך תזנות in Ezek. 23.8 fits more into the expected usage of the verb שפך (as an aggressive, male-associated act) and how 16.15 uses the phrase with an unexpected twist, suggesting female ejaculation. A number of other interesting parallels are evident as well. In 23.14, Oholibah sees carved images of men on the walls, representations of Chaldean men. The initial description of the images includes a parallelism:

אנשי מחקה על-הקיר
צלמי כשדיים חקקים בששר

Men carved upon the walls
figures of Chaldeans inscribed in vermillion.

Although it is difficult to determine exactly where these reliefs may have been and whether Ezekiel imagined these reliefs or actually knew of their existence,[33] the technique of sketching with vermillion and carving reliefs is well known.[34] The image here is unambiguous, Jerusalem is attracted to the artistic representations of the Babylonians with their fine belts and flowing turbans.

Given the use of צלמי כשדיים in ch. 23, the use of צלמי זכר in ch. 16 stands in sharp contrast. צלמי כשדיים fits into a context in which reliefs are being described, but in ch. 16 the appearance of ותעשי-לך צלמי זכר is decontextualized; all that remains of the detailed image is the fixation with the fact that the images are male. Secondly, the images become an end in themselves. In ch. 23, these representations only hint at the real thing; while in ch. 16, the images themselves become the object of desire—they do not represent anything beyond themselves. Furthermore, in ch. 16 Jerusalem makes the images herself and directly fornicates with them. In ch. 23, she merely gazes upon them. While ch. 23

33. Zimmerli believes this refers to Josiah's contacts with Nabopolassar as described in 2 Kgs 23.29 (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 486).

34. Zimmerli cites A. Parrot's (*Babylon and the Old Testament* [trans. B.E. Hooks; New York: Philosophical Library, 1958], p. 145 n. 1) work on painted reliefs in Dur Kurigalzu (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 486). For vermillion, cf. Jer. 22.14.

seems rooted in some historical context, ch. 16 is removed from reality and rests upon highly metaphorical language. In ch. 23 the woman desires what she ought not to desire; in ch. 16, she is undercutting the very foundations of the gender order by acquiring and using a phallus.

Another significant difference can be found in a comparison of 16.30-34 with material from 23.36-49.[35] Both sections highlight the verb נאף, 'to commit adultery'.[36] In ch. 23, this subsection is introduced in the initial condemnation of the two sisters.

כי נאפו ודם בידיהן ואת-גלוליהן[37] נאפו

> For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands; with their idols they have committed adultery (Ezek. 23.37a).

35. In addition to the parallels which I am noting between the two Ezekiel chapters, Zimmerli finds a series of connections between Ezek. 23.36-49 and Ezek. 16. For example, 23.36 parallels 16.2 in its הודע terminology. 23.37 parallels 16.20-21 with reference to child sacrifice and 23.37 parallels 16.38 in mentioning adultery and bloodguilt. The women's fineries in 23.40-44 echo the early parts of ch. 16. In 23.48, women are warned to learn from the punishments inflicted upon Jerusalem, while in 16.41, other women are brought in as witnesses to the punishment. These parallels lead Zimmerli to suggest that 23.36-49 'shows a clearly recognizable mixture and in part a highly novel development of features from the (already expanded) context of Ezek 16 and 23' (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 492).

36. The secondary literature on adultery is vast: see Henry McKeating, 'Sanctions against Adultery in Ancient Israelite Society with Some Reflections on Methodology in the Study of Old Testament Ethics', *JSOT* 11 (1979), pp. 57-72, and the reply by Anthony Phillips, 'Another Look at Adultery', *JSOT* 20 (1981), pp. 3-25. Also see Jacob Milgrom, 'The Case of the Suspected Adulteress, Numbers 5.11-31: Redaction and Meaning', in Richard Friedman (ed.), *The Creation of Sacred Literature: Composition and Redaction of the Biblical Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 69-75; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, 'The Strange Case of the Suspected Sotah (Numbers 5.11-31)', *VT* 34 (1984), pp. 11-26; Michael Fishbane, 'Accusations of Adultery: A Study of Law and Scribal Practice in Numbers 5.11-31', *HUCA* 45 (1974), pp. 25-45; Alice Bach, 'Good to the Last Drop: Viewing the Sotah (Numbers 5.11-31) as the Glass Half Empty and Wondering How to View it Half Full', in J. Cheryl Exum (ed.), *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 143; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 26-54. These essays have been reprinted in Alice Bach (ed.), *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1999).

37. This word appears 39 times in Ezekiel and is believed by some scholars to be a term coined by the prophet himself; see H.D. Preuss, 'גלולים', *TDOT*, III, pp. 1-5.

The term נאף focuses the women's crime on infidelity and disloyalty.[38] In vv. 43-45, the term נאף comes up three times, stressing the women's adulterous behavior. As is common, the verb נאף is used interchangeably with זנה. In v. 44, the lovers come into the women as they would prostitutes, and thus righteous men, bearers of the social order,[39] punish these women according to משפט נאפות, the law for adulterers.[40] By contrast, the appearances of the terms נאף and זנה side by side in 16.30-34 are used to highlight exactly what the woman is not! This woman is not an adulteress or even a prostitute, she is the opposite (הפך).

The crimes of Oholibah are summed up in 23.35: 'Assuredly, thus said the YHWH God: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you in turn must suffer for your depravity and promiscuity.' She has forgotten YHWH and has looked to others for intimacy. She has put her trust in other men, depending upon the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Egyptians to satisfy her needs rather than relying solely on her one man, YHWH. As a result, she has been defiled, and like any wayward woman, must be punished accordingly. Her sin is not that she is acting like a man as in ch. 16, but in being the wrong kind of woman, allowing other men to come to her.

c. *Affinities with Hosean and Jeremian Traditions*

Insofar as Oholibah's crimes are adultery and reliance on others, Ezekiel 23 follows the traditions of Hosea and Jeremiah in ways which Ezekiel 16 does not.[41] In Hos. 1.2, YHWH commands the prophet Hosea to marry an אשת זנונים.[42] If God's relationship to Israel parallels Hosea's marriage to Gomer, it is safe to assume that when YHWH 'married' Israel, she was already a woman/nation of ill repute. Therefore in both Hosea 1 and Ezekiel 23, it should come as no surprise that the woman's character is not radically altered by her marriage to YHWH. In other words, the woman's actions come as no surprise given the premise laid out at the outset of each prophecy.

38. Both the qal and piel can indicate idolatrous worship, cf. Jer. 3.8-9; Isa. 57.3.

39. Cooke calls the righteous men symbols of the 'moral sense of the community' (*Ezekiel*, p. 258).

40. Cf. Deut. 21.21.

41. See Moshe Greenberg, 'Notes on the Influence of Tradition on Ezekiel', *JANES* 22 (1993), pp. 29-37, for Ezekiel's familiarity with and reuse of earlier biblical traditions.

42. See Chapter 1 of this book for a discussion of this phrase.

In Hosea 1 and Ezekiel 23, the women are clearly mothers, women who function in a reproductive capacity; Gomer gives birth to three children and Oholah and Oholibah birth children for YHWH, children who are mentioned six times in the chapter.[43] Of course in the Hosea text, the children are perceived to be illegitimate (as expressed through the names of the last two children: לא רחמה and לא עמי) while in Ezekiel 23 they explicitly belong to the husband. Nonetheless, this wayward wife is a mother—she has a distinct place in the social order.

In both texts, the woman tires of her lovers. In Hos. 2.9c, the woman attempts to return to her first lover,[44] just as Oholibah returns to the Egyptians after abandoning the Chaldeans. In all these maneuvers, she has forgotten God (Hos. 2.15c; Ezek. 23.35).

Ezekiel 23 also shares affinities with Jeremian passages, most closely with Jer. 3.6-11. In both passages, YHWH has two wives (Jeremiah's two women are משבה ישראל and בגדה יהודה) representing the two kingdoms of Israel. In each case, Judah imitates the evil ways of her sister Israel. Jeremiah 3.6 and Ezek. 23.36 both use the formula: ויאמר יהוה אלי ('YHWH said to me'), followed by a rhetorical question. Block goes so far as to suggest that 'Ezekiel hereby appears to offer an intentional exposition of the Jeremian text'.[45]

3. *Conclusions*

The innovation of Ezekiel 23 does not lie in its portrayal of the adulterous wife.[46] In this regard, Ezekiel follows the traditions with which he was familiar. Ezekiel 23's innovation is in its preoccupation with the lovers,

43. Ezek. 23.4, 10, 25, 37, 39, 47.

44. It is not explicit whether this is YHWH or a prior lover.

45. Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, p. 732.

46. Chapter 23 stands in line with the handful of other texts in the book of Ezekiel (chs. 5; 7; 22; and 24) which employ female imagery. Julie Galambush has rightly observed that each of these texts are building blocks leading to the full personification of Jerusalem in chs. 16 and 23. All the passages are connected through the prophet's condemnation of Jerusalem's blood pollution and impurity. In addition to Galambush's insight, in each passage, personified Jerusalem or the land exists solely as an object of YHWH's wrath. Her crimes are generally crimes of *being*, not *acting*. She is personified only so far as is necessary for YHWH to condemn her; but she has no personality. In other words, the early building blocks that lead to the full marital metaphor in the book of Ezekiel begin with Jerusalem as an object of punishment.

the other men, and with violence.[47] The text is filled with hypervirility, and is more concerned with symbols of masculinity than it is with the misconduct of the woman.[48] As was noted earlier, the woman is monochromatic; the text tells us just enough about her to provide a backdrop for a reaffirmation of masculinity. Under threat of emasculation, the author of this text reaffirms the importance of hegemonic masculinity. He may not feel powerful and successful, but he reaffirms that these qualities are desirable because they attract women and ultimately lead to power. While Ezekiel is locked up in his house in bondage, as it were, he presents a metaphor exploring and reaffirming everything that he currently does not have, but should. In Ezekiel 16, the writer responds to A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN by shifting the focus away from the emasculated man to the dominant woman. In Ezekiel 23, the writer identifies with YHWH, the jilted lover, and fantasizes that he and his fellow emasculated Judeans will eventually overcome and come to control the most manly of men, just like YHWH. Ezekiel's primary identification in this chapter is with YHWH, the male who overcomes.[49]
Galambush writes:

> Ezekiel 23.1-35 retells the story of Jerusalem, taking from chap 16 the themes of Jerusalem as the more debauched sister of Samaria, and of the city's history as a history of promiscuous adultery...
>
> Whereas the earlier passage focused on Jerusalem's *body*, and especially its bloodiness, as an object of pollution, in 23.1-35 the focus is on the similarly defiling perversity of Jerusalem's *actions*. In 16.1-43, Jerusalem is

47. When Clements asks: 'Why then does Ezekiel express his accusations in such crude and disturbing ways, so laboring the point of sexual misconduct as to render the material unsuitable and unusable for public reading in all but the most guarded of settings?' (*Ezekiel*, p. 106), he has simply confused what the text actually belabors—the attributes and violence of the lovers, not the urges of the woman.

48. Halperin notes the text's focus on the male characters of this text, but he argues that God and the lovers are representative of aspects of Ezekiel himself (*Seeking Ezekiel*, pp. 154-60).

49. There is a growing body of literature which addresses the dichotomization of the Jewish man, both in the culture of antiquity and the modern period. See Harry Brod (ed.), *A Mensch among Men: Explorations of Jewish Masculinity* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1988); Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*; Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Wolfson, *Circle in the Square*.

> portrayed as an outcast and bloody object, polluted but passive, from her birth; in 23.10-35, she is said to have spent her youth in willful prostitution.[50]

Given the findings of this study, Galambush's conclusions must be re-evaluated. It is certainly true that Ezekiel 16 focuses on the woman's body; but to a great extent, this body is reinscribed as a male, phallic body. Ezekiel 16 presents Jerusalem as passive *only* at the beginning of the story, and presumably, at the end after she has been abused. Chapter 16 takes us on a journey in which she moves from passivity to activity. By contrast, in ch. 23, it is not her actions, but oddly, her relative inaction for which she is blamed.[51]

50. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, pp. 116-17.

51. Galambush's assertion regarding the derivative nature of ch. 23, based on ch. 16, must also be challenged. Zimmerli suggests that both chapters 16 and 23 'reflect a successive supplementation of the kernel element' (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 334) and that these supplements betray a mutual, bilateral influence between the two chapters. This study confirms Zimmerli's position. In addition to the 'borrowings' which he lists from ch. 16 to ch. 23, the influence of the latter upon the former can be seen in 23.8's influence on 16.15; 23.14 upon 16.17; and 23.25, 28 and 45 upon 16.36-38.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

This research project began in the late 1980s, in my living room, as I read through the book of Ezekiel in Hebrew for the first time. As I came across Ezekiel 16, I was riveted by the intensity of its imagery, its depth of emotion and the peculiarity of its language. I found myself drawn into a text that both disturbed me by its violence and denigration of women and fascinated me in its intensity. I recognized almost immediately that what lay beneath this text was far more than a theological reflection on the causes of the Babylonian Exile through the reuse of the marital metaphor.

I chose to access what lay beneath the surface by exploring the dynamics of metaphor. Through my study of metaphor, I learned that root metaphors may lie hidden behind more explicit ones, that metaphors can be subversive insofar as they may express that which might not be permitted or 'safe' explicitly and that metaphors can be so persuasive that they create new realities. I have shown how many readers of Ezekiel 16 have confused metaphor and reality and have taken the text at face value.

In order to expose the root metaphor behind the more surface marital metaphor, I chose to explore the cultural, political and social world out of which this text was produced. An examination of the experience of Judean exiles led me to agree with other scholars, who have concluded that the male population had most likely experienced an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and shame. The loss of political and social control during and subsequent to the Babylonian incursions injured the men's sense of honor and, by extension, that of YHWH's. Ezekiel offers us a representative voice to that experience. In other words, in Ezekiel we find a once powerful man (representative of the typical male Judean exile) whose power has been taken by the enemy 'other'. Through the text, Ezekiel turns to the more accessible 'other' (woman), and blames her for his shame. By turning the shame from the man to the woman, he is able to restore both his and YHWH's honor. In Ezekiel 23, I have argued, Ezekiel

focuses on male hypervirility as a response to this sense of powerlessness.

However, Ezekiel (and perhaps others in his generation) experienced more than shame and powerlessness: he felt like a woman! I have suggested that beyond the marital metaphor lies the more masked metaphor: A WEAK MAN IS A WOMAN. Ezekiel does not only feel disempowered, he feels emasculated. He not only feels a loss of control and shame, he also feels that he has become a woman. The prophecies of doom that his early counterparts had uttered had come true in his generation. The Judean soldiers had experienced fear and trembling—characteristics of a woman. Ezekiel takes the marital metaphor of Hosea and Jeremiah in a new direction. As a priest, raised in an ideological world of strict binaries and as the prophet to have personally experienced exile, he concludes that if men have become like women, then women must have become men. Thus, the woman of Ezekiel 16 is an assertive, sexually active and financially independent individual, that is, a gendered, if not biological, male.

Cognitive dissonance best describes Ezekiel's experience;[1] in other words, Ezekiel and his community experienced a conflict between their expected and actual gender identity. His theology and society advocated a strictly polarized gender system, but his experience, alongside that of his contemporaries, suggested a different reality. Given the cultural association between male gender and power, the experiences of Ezekiel and his male community, their terror and their humiliation at the hands of the Babylonians, were emasculating. The men felt like women! Here we have a case of a collision between male sex and female gender identity; but in a rigid binary system, males are not permitted to live openly with the tension because it blurs the category boundaries, and according to biblical theology, particularly priestly theology (Ezekiel as priest), when categories mix, cosmic chaos ensues.

The irony in Ezekiel 16 is that the text takes an initial experience of emasculation and gender ambiguity, and transforms it into a positive experience in which God is actually eradicating gender ambiguity, reasserting male power and female powerlessness and restoring order from chaos. The fracture in the construction of gender, the breakdown, actually becomes the occasion for the construction's renewal. Ambiguity

1. Cognitive dissonance was first explored by Lionel Festinger in his book *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962).

is acknowledged through the disguise of metaphor: metaphor speaks the unspeakable. But no surer than a non-binary vision is revealed, it is hidden. Ezekiel 16 provides a fascinating, rare biblical case of an individual's attempt to repair the dissonance between the binary construct and his own experience. The marriage metaphor allows the male to transcend gender boundaries—to be both male and female simultaneously, to experience the fluidity of human gender identity. The metaphor allows the experience of emasculation to have a proper place in God's world.

On the surface of the text, we have a writer's attempt to make sense of the political and religious tragedies of his generation through a metaphorical theological explanation of God's workings in history. But the *subtext* takes as its starting point, not political critique nor theological speculation, but rather the cultural psychology of male victims. I would suggest that the writer of this text, as a witness to an age of chaos and utter disempowerment, betrays an anxiety about gender roles in his writing. This gender ambiguity is expressed through the marital metaphor which provides the writer with an arena to explore this ambiguity in a subtle, cloaked manner.[2] He does this, of course, by projecting the gender ambiguity to his ideological women. The initial 'real life' question is: Why do we feel like women? The answer is given on the metaphorical, or, better, symbolic level. According to the subtext, God re-establishes order out of gender chaos by putting wife Jerusalem, the social body[3] of the female, back in her place through public humiliation, gang-shame and stoning. God forces her into a position of complete powerlessness and passivity just as she had been at the beginning of our story—the helpless, naked, powerless woman wallowing in her own blood brings us back to the helpless abandoned infant, wallowing in her blood, utterly dependent upon God. In other words, the text suggests that there is a reason why men feel like women: it is all part of God's plan to set things back in order.

2. Halperin implies a notion of safe-space, albeit from a different perspective in his statement that 'Had Ezekiel not distanced himself in this way from his inner experience, it is unlikely that he could have brought himself to speak about it at all' (*Seeking Ezekiel*, p. 145).

3. For an interesting discussion on the juxtaposition of the 'female body' with the 'social body' see Alice A. Keefe, 'The Female Body, the Body Politic and the Land: A Sociopolitical Reading of Hosea 1–2', in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 70-100.

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