

# ○ IN THE NAME OF LOVE

## RESISTING READER AND ABUSIVE REDEEMER IN DEUTERO-ISAIAH

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This essay draws Isa. 40:1-2 into the debate about the prophetic marriage metaphor, arguing that the poet is announcing the fulfilment of the prophecy of restoration in Hos. 2:16-25, and is therefore both participating in the metaphor of sexual abuse that dominates Hos. 2:4-15 and assuming that the threatened abuse has been perpetrated. It further suggests that it is not just to explicitly pornographic texts in the Latter Prophets that a hermeneutic of suspicion should be applied, but to texts that announce and celebrate YHWH's imminent redemption of Israel, in which the prophetic marriage metaphor is implicit, and which insidiously seduce and manipulate readers into accepting the ideology reflected in that metaphor without question.

It wasn't fear of being rebuked or hit by him (that could be developed in her mind into a lovers quarrel ending in a beautiful reconciliation) that restrained her, but she knew if done in the presence of his friends (who tolerated more than accepted her, or used her as a means to get high when broke or for amusement when bored) his pride would force him to abjure her completely and then there would not only be no hope, but, perhaps no dream (Selby 1966: 16-17).

Somehow Joe, e hoa, dear friend, you've managed to make *him* ashamed of what *you've* done. Neat job (Hulme 1984: 182).

### INTRODUCTION

It is not difficult to be seduced by the lofty poetry and powerful rhetoric of Deutero-Isaiah into accepting the ideology these poems reflect more or less without question.<sup>1</sup> Such acceptance may be expedited not only by the collusion in this ideology of the traditions for which the Isaiah scroll is Scripture, but also by the collusion of translation and scholarly commentary. This article is rooted in the conviction that biblical scholars have an ethical responsibility not simply to accept, explain and expound upon the ideologies reflected in the biblical texts, but to engage critically with these ideologies and the ideologies of readers, translators and commentators, particularly where such ideologies involve problematic constructions of gender.<sup>2</sup> More particularly, it is rooted in a wrestling with the language of divine love in the Tanakh, which often masks contours to the characters whose love is referred to that are deeply problematic, even abusive.<sup>3</sup> It draws attention to the fact that readers can be, and on the evidence of current translations and scholarly commentary often are, seduced by the carefully constructed rhetoric of prophetic poetry into not recognising the abuse inherent within even the most beautiful prophecies of restoration. The manipulation wrought by such rhetoric is greatly aided by the fact that the androcentric and

patriarchal aspects of the worldview such texts reflect are normalised, and the dedicated application of a hermeneutic of suspicion is required if these aspects are to be fully exposed.

The particular example chosen for discussion is Isa. 40:1-2. This text will be scrutinised in the context of ongoing debates about the so-called prophetic marriage metaphor,<sup>4</sup> and in the context of scholarly research into the intertextual dimension of Deutero-Isaiah's poetry. It will be argued that the poet is announcing the fulfilment of the prophecy of restoration in Hos. 2:16-25, thereby participating in the metaphor of sexual abuse that dominates Hos. 2:4-15 and assuming that the threatened abuse has recently been perpetrated. Two additional lines of argument will be adduced in support of this reading. First, Isa. 40:1-2 is integrally related to the preceding prediction of Isa. 39:5-8, a point that has not generally been appreciated by those who assume that the gap between the two passages simply represents the break between material associated with the eighth-century Isaiah of Jerusalem, and material associated with the anonymous poet-prophet of the Exile. The gap plays an important role in the final form of the Isaiah scroll, representing a time between prophecy and fulfilment, a time when the covenant has been annulled and during which, out of sight of the reader, YHWH brings to fulfilment the foretold punishment of his erstwhile covenant partner Israel, threatened in Hos. 2:4-15 using the language of rape. Second, the use of the idiom *dabberu al lev*, 'speak to (the) heart' in Isa. 40:1-2 is to be set in the context of all the occurrences of this phrase in the Tanakh, so that the meaning of the phrase in Deutero-Isaiah can be grasped as fully as possible. This is important given that these occurrences are often cited without further discussion in scholarly commentary on Isa. 40:1-2. While the main thrust of this article is only partially affected by the second of these lines of argument, it is nevertheless important to fill the gap. It will be argued finally that it is not just to *explicitly* pornographic texts in the Latter Prophets that a hermeneutic of suspicion should be applied, but to texts that announce and celebrate YHWH's imminent redemption of Israel, in which the prophetic marriage metaphor is *implicit*, and which insidiously seduce and manipulate readers into accepting without question the ideology that metaphor reflects.<sup>5</sup>

## SPEAK TO THE HEART OF JERUSALEM

The phrase *dabber al lev*, 'speak to (the) heart' occurs in several biblical texts that relate to sexual violence, notably Hos. 2:16, whose influence on Isa. 40:2 has been noted by B. J. van der Merwe (1964-65: 94). In light of this, how are we to read the overtures of comfort that appear on the surface of Isa. 40:1-2? In an article originally published in 1989 and republished in 1996, Fokkeliën van Dijk-Hemmes discusses the way in which the love song of a female lover, comparable with Cant. 3:1-4, is distorted and deafened by YHWH's own love song in Hos. 2:16-25. She notes the inappropriateness of the RSV rendering of Hos. 2:16 ('I will ... speak tenderly to her'), given the appalling violence to which the speaker, YHWH, has recently subjected his wayward bride (van Dijk-Hemmes 1996: 287; Törnkvist 1998: 59, 157), and critiques commentaries that fail to question the ideology of such texts (1996: 286-287).<sup>6</sup> Might this critique be extended to translations of, and commentaries on, the equivalent phrase in Isa. 40:2?

The opening verses of Isaiah 40 present several critical problems. Who is addressed by the imperatives in v. 1?<sup>7</sup> Who is speaking? Not YHWH himself, though the text implies that his words are being transmitted to a group who stand apart from *ammi*, 'my people'<sup>8</sup> and are charged to comfort them. By situating YHWH and his people in the third person, the speaker is calling

on images of YHWH and his people with which the implied reader is meant to concur. YHWH is a male deity, as the gender of *yomar* makes clear, and has inflicted upon his people an unspecified punishment, making satisfaction for an unspecified sin. YHWH's people are associated with Jerusalem, as the parallelism between *ammi* and *yerushalaim* suggests. Jerusalem is personified as a woman, as the gender of the pronominal suffixes (and the verb *laqekhab*) in 40:2 implies.

Isa. 40:1-2 follows an account of Isaiah transmitting a prophetic oracle to Hezekiah (39:5-8). In both passages, a message is transmitted from YHWH concerning the fate of his people. In the first, both mediator (Isaiah) and recipient (Hezekiah) are named, while in the second they are anonymous. The verbal similarities between them, and their juxtaposition, suggest that 40:1-2 refers to the mediation of prophecy: *yomar elohekhem* in 40:1 picks up the thread from *amar yhwsh* (39:6), the imperfect *yomar* suggesting a future prospect to be fulfilled, reversing the calamitous finality of the perfect *amar*. In 39:6-7 the prophecy concerns the exile of the royal house to Babylon, suggesting the content of the punishment to which 40:2 alludes, though in the latter a prophecy focusing on the fate of the House of David is understood to have been fulfilled in the fate of the people as a whole. The command to 'speak' (*dabberu*) in 40:2 picks up on *devar yhwsh* in 39:5 (cf. v. 8), the *davar* that will not be left (39:6), and what Isaiah 'has spoken' (*dibbarta*) in 39:8. What Jerusalem 'has received' (*laqekhab*) from the hand of YHWH in 40:2 picks up from those who 'will be taken away' (*yiqqakhu*) in 39:7. The gap between 39:8 and 40:1 is pregnant with meaning.<sup>9</sup> In the haunting silence in the text dwell the 'days that are coming' (*yamim ba'im*) of 39:6, which are passed over in silence. 'My people' and 'your god' (40:1) echo language in Hosea and Deutero-Isaiah that refers to the abolition and re-establishment of the covenant.<sup>10</sup> I submit that the reason for the silence is because the 'days that are coming' represent a time when YHWH's people were 'not my people' (*lo ammi*) and YHWH was not theirs (Hos. 1:9; cf. Exod. 3:14). Thus the gap conceals the unspoken punishment of YHWH's people, predicted in 39:5-8 and already fulfilled by 40:1.

In Isa. 39:6-7, Isaiah speaks of the coming exile in concrete terms, but in 40:1-2 the exile is spoken of metaphorically: it is 'her servitude' (*tseva'ah*), 'the punishment for her sin' (*avonah*), 'double' (*kiflayim*) for all her sins. The third person *feminine* singular pronominal suffixes emphasise the gender of the one punished: YHWH's victim is a metaphorical woman, which is implied by the gender of the suffixes in 40:2 but is nowhere implied in 39:5-8, suggesting that while 40:1-2 is bound to 39:5-8, it also assumes an additional body of tradition in which Jerusalem is identified with a metaphorical woman, threatened with punishment for a certain wrongdoing. In 40:2, *tseva'ah*, *avonah*, and *kiflayim* are metaphors that invest the events of Jerusalem's recent history with meaning. The phrase *dabberu al lev* is bound to these metaphors. Hinting at an artificial distance between the concrete reality of exile and the interpreted meaning of exile,<sup>11</sup> the Hebrew poet participates in a world of metaphor that the reader must enter if she/he is to comprehend the text. The poet is attempting 'to render contemporaneous events intelligible to the audience within a religious frame of reference' (Blenkinsopp 2000: 220).<sup>12</sup> Translation into another language must seek to enter into this world of metaphor on its own terms, but also to render meaning in a metaphorical world that the target language can be made to represent. In the case of *dabberu al lev*, a translation that negotiates meaning in favour of dynamic or functional equivalence may obscure significant intertextual resonances, separating one reading of the text in the target language from the Hebrew poet's world of metaphor.

With notable exceptions, such as the *NJB* and the *New World Translation*, many modern language renderings match the Hebrew idiom with a comparable idiom in the target language, eg ‘speak tenderly’,<sup>13</sup> ‘*siaradwch yn dyner*’ (*Y Beibl Cymraeg Newydd*), or ‘*redet-freundlich*’ (*Luther*). Comparably pacific sentiments appear in scholarly commentaries. Blenkinsopp (2000) glosses ‘comfort *my* people, speak to the heart of Jerusalem, meaning, speak words of encouragement and reassurance ... since she can look forward to a better future’ (181), while Baltzer (2001) notes that ‘speaking to the heart’ is a phrase that belongs to ‘the language of love’ (51 n. 19). But this ‘language of love’ belongs here with the language of servitude, sin, and punishment: are love, punishment, and subservience compatible concepts? With Naomi Graetz (1995: 139), I suggest not.

## LISTENING FOR THE HEART OF DINAH

Both Blenkinsopp and Baltzer support their understanding of Isa. 40:2 by appealing to other texts in the Tanakh that use the phrase *dabber al lev*. It is important not simply to cite but to examine each of the extant usages in the Hebrew texts of the Tanakh so that we can be clear what is meant by Baltzer’s ‘language of love’. The sexual violence portrayed in several of these texts should in particular be foregrounded. Isaiah 40:2 is, like any other text, ‘a product of various cultural discourses on which it relies for its intelligibility’ (Culler 1982: 32), and it is important to be aware of what those cultural discourses entailed, even if this does not mean we can identify precise, diachronic, intertextual relationships between the texts that constitute our remaining evidence for those cultural discourses. In one case, Hos. 2:16, it is likely that there is a direct relationship with Isa. 40:2. The argument for this will be advanced more fully below.

Two other texts share the collocation of *dabber al lev* with *nkhm* Piel.<sup>14</sup> In Gen. 50:21, Joseph ‘comforted [his brothers] and spoke to their heart’ (*vayenakhem otham vayedhabber al libbam*). This shows that the collocation of *nkhm* Piel and *dabber al lev* is not unique in Classical Hebrew, but portrays a different situation to Isa. 40:1-2. Joseph consoles his brothers and speaks tenderly to them without inflicting upon them the punishment that their treatment of him deserved (cf. 50:15). Joseph sees the positive aspects of their wrongdoing (50:20). This contrasts with Isa. 40:1-2, where YHWH’s representatives do not speak to the heart of Jerusalem until the punishment required by her wickedness had been enacted. Joseph is answerable to Elohim in Gen. 50:19, while YHWH is answerable to no-one. In Ruth 2:13, Ruth responds gratefully to Boaz, saying that she had found favour in his sight, ‘because you have comforted me and spoken tenderly to your maid-servant’ (*ki nikhamtani vekhi dhibbarta al lev shifkhathekha*). André LaCocque (2004) notes that *dabber al lev* may mean ‘comfort’ or ‘seduce a woman’ (77). Clearly, Boaz is not reassuring Ruth that he will not punish her for some former wrongdoing, nor is he offering comfort after punishing her. The fact that sexual undertones emerge as the liaison between Boaz and Ruth develops means both that the second meaning noted by LaCocque is plausible, and that the phrase may be read as a *double entendre*.

In Genesis 34, Shechem rapes Dinah, then falls in love with her and tries to seduce her. In 34:2, Dinah is the object of four verbs of which Shechem is the subject (*vayyar, vayyiqqakh, vayyishkav, vaye’anneha*).<sup>15</sup> If *vayedabber al lev* in v. 3 belongs to the ‘language of love’, it is also bound to the language of rape. While rape is surely the sense of *vaye’anneha* (Davies 2003: 56, 78 n. 1; Gravett 2004: 282–284), it is also suggested by the use of *othah*, indicating the direct

object following *vayyishkav*. There is no ambiguity in 34:2, though there is in 34:7 where ‘to lay/lie with Jacob’s daughter’ (*lishkav eth bath ya’aqov*) is described as an ‘outrage’ (*nevalah*). Thus the rape of Dinah resembles that of Tamar (Fuchs 2000: 200–224; Gravett 2004: 280–281, 283), where *’nh Piel* describes Amnon’s violence (2 Sam. 13:12, 14, 22), Amnon ‘laid’ Tamar (*vayyishkav othab*: 13:14), and Tamar describes her imminent rape as *nevalah* (13:12). It also resembles Oholah’s enforced sex at the hands of Egyptian men in Ezek. 23:8 (L) (van Dijk-Hemmes 2004b: 174 n. 6). Furthermore, the rape of Dinah constitutes not a crime against her, but against her father and brothers (Bird 1997: 222, 232; Törnkvist 1998: 80; Fuchs 2000: 204, 213–214; Davies 2003: 56, 76; Gravett 2004: 280).<sup>16</sup> In avenging their sister’s violation, the sons of Jacob sack Hamor’s city, the narrator discreetly passing over an act of retribution that may have replicated Dinah’s rape many times over.

Similar to Genesis 34 is the rape of the Levite’s concubine in Judges 19. A Levite ‘took for himself a woman, a concubine’ (*vayyiqqakh lo ishab phileghesh*), just as Shechem ‘took’ Dinah (19:1; cf. 19:28, 29), and, according to the MT (*vattizneh alav*) and Syriac (*wazenayt ’law*), she ‘played the whore against him’ (19:2). Once again, the woman is property to be traded between men. As in Gen. 34:2 and 2 Sam. 13:14, *’nh Piel* describes the offence committed by the men of Gibeah (Judg. 19:24), and as in Gen. 34:7; 2 Sam. 13:12 the actions of the sexual offenders are *nevalah*, the disturbing implication being that the rape of the Levite’s concubine is a lesser *nevalah* than the intended rape of the Levite (19:23–24). But whereas in Gen. 34:31 Dinah is treated as a whore by Shechem (Gen. 34:31), in the MT the Levite’s concubine is responsible (Guest 1999: 428 n. 30; Davies 2003: 76), being the subject of *vattizneh*, though her return to her father’s house suggests either that it is she who feels wronged (cf. LXX: ‘she was angry at him’, *ōrgisthē autō*), or that ‘she despised him’ (Tg.: *vebassarath alohi*).<sup>17</sup> She is pursued by the Levite, who intends to ‘speak to her heart’ (*ledhabber al libbah*, 19:3). Why might she have felt wronged? Has he committed an offence against her that the narrator does not share with us? Alternatively, following the MT and Syriac we have the familiar sequence of a woman acting as (being treated as?) a whore followed by her man speaking to her heart. Did a scribe’s memory of the collocation of *znh* with *dabber al lev* in Genesis 34 and Hosea 2 cause him to write *vattizneh* rather than *vattiznakh*? If so, the MS tradition is compounding the abuse by implying the woman’s complicity in her own fate. There is clearly a collocation between *dabber al lev* and sexual violence, though what distinguishes Judges 19 from Genesis 34 and Hosea 2 is that the concubine is raped *after* the Levite has spoken to her heart, and by the men of Gibeah rather than by her man, notwithstanding the fact that the Levite is responsible for putting his concubine in this situation in the first place, and may actually be the one who killed her (19:29).

What about Hos. 2:16? Hosea is to ‘take’ (*qakh*) for himself *esheth zenunim*, a ‘woman of unfaithfulness’ (1:2),<sup>18</sup> recalling Shechem taking Dinah and the Levite taking his concubine, the transparency between YHWH and his prophet implying that YHWH had ‘taken’ Israel. The root *znh* links 1:1–5:7 with Gen. 34:31; Judg. 19:2 (MT, Syr.). The sexual profligacy of the land is construed as an offence against YHWH (1:2), YHWH responding by wreaking violent revenge (1:4–5, 6), and giving up his identity as Israel’s covenant partner (1:9). The tension between judgement and salvation links 1:9 with 2:1, the enactment of YHWH’s punishment dwelling in the gap between the two, anticipating the comparable gap between Isa. 39:8 and Isa. 40:1. Unlike the Isaiah scroll, the gap in Hosea is belatedly filled by the violent imagery of 2:4–15. There are,

however, additional similarities between the two texts that suggest the influence of the Hosea text on the Isaiah scroll, suggesting further that the absence of an explicit description of Jerusalem's punishment after Isa. 39:8 is full of meaning: would an explicit description of punishment at that point ruin YHWH's imminent overtures of love by casting over them the shadow of violence? Further similarities emerge in 2:5, where YHWH threatens to 'make her like a desert' (*vesamtihā khammidhbar*), a motif whose negative use there is reversed in Isa. 40:3, where a voice calls out, 'prepare in the desert the way of YHWH' (*bammidhbar pannu derekh yhw̄h*), anticipating the further application of Exodus imagery in Hosea and Deutero-Isaiah. Both Hosea and Deutero-Isaiah make significant use of the *ryb* pattern, which first appears in the prophetic books in Hos. 2:4.

In Hos. 2:12, YHWH threatens to 'reveal her shame' (*aghalleh eth navluthah*), the *hapax legomenon* *navluthah* (*kethiv*) recalling *nevalah* in Gen. 34:7; Judg. 19:23-24; 2 Sam. 13:12 and anticipating YHWH's charge in Jeremiah that the community of Judahite exiles had committed a *nevalah* in Israel (Jer. 29:23).<sup>19</sup> After exposing his partner before her lovers, YHWH says in 2:16 that he will 'seduce her' (*mefateha*), lead her into the desert and 'speak to her heart' (*vedhibbarti al libbah*). Several points should be made. First, *pth* Piel occurs elsewhere with the overlapping meanings 'seduce'<sup>20</sup> and 'deceive',<sup>21</sup> once in a context possibly suggestive of sexual violence.<sup>22</sup> The polyvalence of *pth* Piel means that while 'seduce' may be the likeliest sense here, the possibility of *double entendre* is high, the ambiguity sowing seeds of doubt concerning the trustworthiness of the deity speaking. Second, the 'desert' motif reverses the threat of 2:5 and promises a new Exodus (cf. 2:17). Third, the collocation between the desert motif and speaking to the heart in 2:16-17 anticipates the same collocation in Isa. 40:2-3. The fact that Hosea and Deutero-Isaiah share this collocation suggests that a direct literary relationship is plausible. To the fuller exploration of this possibility we now turn.

## HOSEA AND THE ABUSIVE REDEEMER OF DEUTERO-ISAIAH

B.J. van der Merwe has surveyed a number of echoes of Hosea in Deutero-Isaiah, most notably the metaphor of marriage and family life (van der Merwe 1964-65: 93-95; Blenkinsopp 2000: 316). In both Hosea and Deutero-Isaiah, either the people or the land of Israel (or both) is a 'mother' (*em*).<sup>23</sup> The people as a whole are identified as a 'mother', while the individual people are identified as her children.<sup>24</sup> YHWH is depicted as the 'husband' of Israel, Hosea opting for *ish* to express the idea, and Deutero-Isaiah opting for *ba'al*.<sup>25</sup> The metaphor of divorce is used in both to represent divine punishment for Israel's sin.<sup>26</sup> Most importantly, Hosea and Deutero-Isaiah share the metaphor of the restoration of the bride and mother as an image of the restoration of Israel. Thus in Hos. 2:4-15, YHWH's sexual violence against his bride is intended to incite her to recognise her sin and to return to him and be reconciled, and when YHWH/Hosea announces the future reconciliation between Israel and her erstwhile spouse in Hos. 2:16, it is in terms of speaking to the heart, as in Isa. 40:2. This metaphor dominates the prediction of Zion's restoration in Isa. 54:1-10.

If *dabber al lev* were the only point of similarity between Hosea and Deutero-Isaiah, it would be simpler to argue that the similarity is coincidental (cf. Sommer 1998: 32-35). But two points make a conscious allusion plausible. First, both works use the metaphor of the sexual union between YHWH and Israel. It is appropriate to read *dabberu al lev* in relation to this metaphor

not just because the relationship between this phrase and the metaphor of sexual union exists in Hosea, but because this metaphor is used explicitly at a later stage in the Isaiah scroll, the primary literary context of Isa. 40:2. Second, Isaiah 40, in common with the rest of Deutero-Isaiah, is saturated with allusions to earlier texts, both within the Isaiah scroll itself, and elsewhere in Israel's literary heritage.<sup>27</sup>

The connection between Hos. 2:16 and Isa. 40:2 belongs to the broader appropriation and actualisation of earlier prophetic poetry by Deutero-Isaiah. The similarities van der Merwe identifies reflect the trend in Deutero-Isaiah to appropriate and reverse the language of earlier prophetic texts. As B.D. Sommer notes, '[w]ords and images earlier prophets used in rebuking the people or predicting their doom often reappear in passages where Deutero-Isaiah comforts the exiled Judeans or announces their restoration' (Sommer 1998: 36–37, cf. 36–46, 226–227 n. 45).<sup>28</sup> Isaiah 40:1–10 may be a reversal of Isa. 28:1–5, and 58:1 a reversal of Mic. 3:5–8 (Sommer 1998: 75–78; Blenkinsopp 2003: 177). Isaiah 40:2 belongs more precisely in Sommer's category of 'fulfilment of earlier prophecies' (57–60, 234 n. 91; Fishbane 1985: 444–445, 467–469, 495–499). Sommer argues that Isa. 40:2 and 61:7 point to the fulfilment of the prophecy recorded in Jer. 16:18 (57–58; Cassuto 1973: 155), and, within the Isaiah scroll, that Isa. 42:18–25 points to the fulfilment of 30:9–14, and 51:17–22 to the fulfilment of 29:9–10 (96–100). The verbal similarities between Isa. 40:2 and Hos. 2:16 suggest that precisely the same scenario obtains there: Isa. 40:2 points to the fulfilment of Hos. 2:4–15 in the past, this past fulfilment being hidden in the gap between Isa. 39:8 and 40:1, and to the imminent fulfilment of Hos. 2:16–25.

Sommer (1998: 100–104) offers a more detailed treatment of the use of Hosea 1–2 in Isaiah 54 than does van der Merwe.<sup>29</sup> Isaiah 54 shares several motifs with Hosea 1–2, including the divine rejection of Israel,<sup>30</sup> Israel's subsequent reconciliation,<sup>31</sup> and the bestowing of names on God and Israel. The reference to 'the shame of your youth' (*bosheth alumayikh*) and 'the reproach of your widowhood' (*kherpath almenuthayikh*) in 54:4 recalls Hosea's portrayal of Israel as sexually promiscuous in her youth, given the link elsewhere between *kherpah* and sexual sin.<sup>32</sup> The occurrence of the root *rkhm* in 54:7, 8, 10 recalls the name *lo rukhamah* (Hos. 1:8),<sup>33</sup> as does 'not comforted' (*lo nukhamah*) in 54:11 (cf. 40:1). A common vowel pattern is also shared by *esheth ne'urim* (Isa. 54:6) and *esheth zenunim* (Hos. 1:2). Given the extent of Deutero-Isaiah's engagement with Hosea, I submit that *dabberu al lev* in Isa. 40:2 acts as an overture, briefly alluding to Hos. 2:16 in anticipation of the more extensive appropriation of Hosea 1–2 in Isaiah 54.

Sexual language is also used in Lamentations to depict Jerusalem's desolation in the wake of 586 BCE, though YHWH is not explicitly depicted as the husband of Jerusalem (Abma 1999: 2).<sup>34</sup> Several scholars note allusions to Lamentations in Deutero-Isaiah,<sup>35</sup> with Baumann (2001) suggesting, for example, that the mention of Zion's widowhood in Isa. 54:4 is an allusion to Lam. 1:1, where Zion has become like a widow (108 n. 76), and Sommer (1998) suggesting that Isa. 51:17–22 reverses the lament of Lam. 2:13–19, and Isa. 62:6–7 reverses Lam. 2:17–19. A crucial connection is the motif of 'comforting' (*nkhm*) YHWH's people. Several times in Lamentations it is mentioned that Jerusalem has no 'comforter' (*menakhem*).<sup>36</sup> This is reversed in Deutero-Isaiah, with YHWH, the cause of Jerusalem's anguish, himself becoming her comforter.<sup>37</sup> This is anticipated in Lam. 4:22 (cf. Isa. 40:2), which mentions the fulfilment of the expiation for daughter Zion's sins (*tam avonekh bath tsiyyon*). Such is the importance of this theme to Deutero-

Isaiah's message that the poet begins in Isa. 40:1 with the command to 'comfort, comfort my people' (*nakhamu nakhamu ammi*), immediately followed by the command to speak to the heart of Jerusalem. Thus inasmuch as the poet is announcing the imminent fulfilment of Hos. 2:16-25, in anticipation of its more elaborate exposition in Isaiah 54, she/he is also announcing the imminent reversal of Jerusalem's destitution, adopting the language of Lamentations, in anticipation of the fuller reversal of Zion's laments later on.

## READING DEUTERO-ISAIAH WITH SUSPICION

The ideologies reflected in Hosea, Lamentations, and Deutero-Isaiah have been the subject of incisive criticism by feminist scholars in particular, on account of their dependence on, and reinscription of, a deeply androcentric and violent means of constructing the world. Considerable discussion has taken place in relation to specific texts in the Tanakh that objectify, or imply the objectification of female sexuality as wicked, or that explicitly portray sexual violence perpetrated by a male figure, representing YHWH, against a woman, representing Samaria/Israel, Zion/Jerusalem/Judah, Nineveh, Edom, or Babylon.<sup>38</sup> The above discussion has focused on texts that do not explicitly portray such violence, but assume such violence to have taken place: Isa. 40:1-2 and 54:1-10 offer a message of hope, but depend on earlier texts portraying sexual violence against women for their meaning, thus helping to authorise and validate such texts, and the ideologies they reflect.

In order to accept Deutero-Isaiah's prophecies of hope and restoration, the underlying image of Jerusalem as a woman unfaithful to her man and of YHWH as a faithful, yet jealous and abusive husband must also be accepted: metaphor and reality cannot be fully separated. This jealous and violent husband must be accepted back in 'love'. The one who is expected to recognise herself in these prophecies is expected to assent to this scenario. What might this mean for her, seduced into identifying with the textual Zion/Jerusalem?<sup>39</sup> Should she assent to the images of Zion/Jerusalem and YHWH that the poet is proposing? If so, she must accept that she is a 'woman of unfaithfulness', justly punished with metaphorical sexual violence by her husband, and that she has no choice but to respond to his advances, to trust in his renewed love for her, as these are the terms of the fulfilment of Hos. 2:16-25: this restoration has been announced beforehand, and must be brought to pass.<sup>40</sup> She must collude with the sexual violence that YHWH, the warrior-rapist, threatens to wreak on Babylon, a fate that Jerusalem has already suffered. She must trust his overtures of love, despite his proclivity for sexual violence. Indeed, *she* must take responsibility for *his* violence.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps she must accept a picture of herself as one who is addicted to her husband, who cannot bring herself to believe that he would violate her again, or as one who feels she has no choice but to accept her abuser, either because he exerts complete control over her, or because she can't imagine where else she might turn: 'Where else can she turn except to her abuser in the hope things will improve?' (Exum 1996: 112) Perhaps she must believe that if only she accepts YHWH's overtures, returns to her man, and truly proves her love for him then he won't batter her again (cf. Graetz 1995: 130-131). Most disturbingly, the scenario assumed by Deutero-Isaiah resonates with cycles of abuse in the lives of real women. As Gale Yee comments, in relation to Hosea:



Studies have shown that many wives remain in abusive relationships because periods of mistreatment are often followed by intervals of kindness and generosity. This ambivalent strategy reinforces the wife's dependence on the husband. During periods of kindness, her fears are temporarily eased so that she decides to remain in the relationship; then the cycle of abuse begins again (Yee 1998: 212a; Graetz 1995: 141–142).

How, then, can the textual woman, with whom the implied reader is to identify, trust this abusive redeemer's overtures of restoration? Why should she thus identify against herself?

Could Deutero-Isaiah be redeemed by the reader? Gerlinde Baumann has explored the possibility of focusing on alternatives or objections to the marriage metaphor in Deutero-Isaiah. For example, in Isa. 47:2-3 YHWH is no longer perpetrating sexual violence on Jerusalem, but is now enacting comparable vengeance against Babylon (Baumann 2003: 181–183). He is no longer Jerusalem's abusive husband. Yet this text still vividly portrays violence against a woman, whose title, 'virgin daughter Babylon' (*bethulath bath bavel*), echoes the equivalent epithet for Jerusalem/Zion (192–194). YHWH the warrior-rapist is scarcely more positive an image than YHWH the abusive husband (Baumann 2001: 99–101). Another alternative looks to texts that allude to the marriage metaphor but either reverse earlier texts so that the metaphor becomes a vehicle for a message of hope, as in Isaiah 49 and 54 (Baumann 2001: 104, 106–109; Tull Willey 1997: 203–204), or suggest that it is Zion's children and not Zion herself that sinned and incurred the punishment that caused her suffering, as in 50:1 (Baumann 2001: 102–106). Like the servant in 53:12, Zion bears the punishment for another's iniquities (Baumann 2001: 114–115, 116). However, Deutero-Isaiah is still acknowledging, and implicitly validating, the more negative portrayals of Hosea and Jeremiah, as well as continuing to assume the potentially abusive framework of patriarchal marriage (2001: 106).<sup>42</sup> A further alternative focuses on texts that use maternal imagery to represent YHWH.<sup>43</sup> However, many different images are used for YHWH in Deutero-Isaiah, including husband and warrior (42:13; 47:2-3), and maternal imagery for the deity cannot be separated from the broader spectrum of images used by the poet. Despite a thorough examination of the possibility of redeeming Deutero-Isaiah's imagery, Baumann is forced to conclude that Deutero-Isaiah's objections to the prophetic marriage metaphor are limited (2001: 118–120; 2003: 234–237).

But should the reader buy into any aspect of this scenario? All four prophetic books of the Masoretic canon, supported by the Deuteronomic History, portray Israel and Judah as YHWH's covenant partner(s), justly punished by the invasion of foreign armies in reality, and by sexual violation in metaphor. But is this not blaming the victim? (cf. van Dijk-Hemmes 2004b: 173) This theodicy may dominate post-exilic Yehud's book religion, but texts such as Jer. 44:15-19 and the book of Job, not to mention Zion's own voice in Deutero-Isaiah, demonstrate that this scenario was not self-evident to all concerned Jews during and after the exile. The notions that Jerusalem and Judah suffered because they ceased to honour the Queen of Heaven (*melekbeth/malkath hashamayim*),<sup>44</sup> or that YHWH's canons of justice are beyond human comprehension, or that YHWH had indeed abandoned Zion (Isa. 49:14), were scarcely less plausible than the theodicies offered by the dominant voices of the four canonical prophetic books. In the case of Jer. 44:15-19, 'it was only the gradual process of canonization beginning in the post-exilic period that made Deuteronomic, priestly, and prophetic religion the norm

and that condemned the cults Deuteronomists, priests, and prophets denounced to obscurity and defamation' (Ackerman 1992: 1–2), and the fact that the cult of the Queen of Heaven seems to have had particular appeal for women adds a notable gender bias to this process of canonisation, and thus to the dominant theodicies of the resulting canon. These theodicies, and the canonical process that normalised them, must therefore be regarded with suspicion from gender- and ideological- critical perspectives. Given the deep ethical problems created by texts that help to reinscribe social orders that permit male violence against women and blame the victims for it, surely the most ethically acceptable stance is to resist (cf. Davies 2003: 42–47).

## CONCLUSION

This essay has shown that Isa. 40:1-2 points to the fulfilment of Hos. 2:16-25, thus participating in the so-called prophetic marriage metaphor. Deutero-Isaiah's prophecies of comfort and restoration announce the imminent fulfilment of the prophecies of restoration found in Hos. 2:16-25, but this implies that the metaphorical sexual abuse threatened by YHWH against Israel has been enacted. The ethical challenge for the reader is that the prophecies of restoration in Deutero-Isaiah are bound up, in complex ways, with the most violent aspects of the prophetic marriage metaphor, a metaphor whose power to truthfully describe Israel's reality is to be accepted without question by the implied reader of Deutero-Isaiah's poetry. What is so disturbing is that the metaphorical world of divine sexual abuse is *implicit* in Deutero-Isaiah, except in 47:1-4 (where it is explicit but refers to violence inflicted by YHWH on Zion's enemy, Virgin Daughter Babylon, and not on Zion herself), and it is by subtle manipulation that Deutero-Isaiah's rhetoric achieves its insidious effect. The position of dissenting reader is the most ethical acceptable stance, on the basis that, to re-word Robert Allen Warrior, as long as people believe in the YHWH of restoration and redemption, the world will not be safe from YHWH the wife-batterer or YHWH the warrior-rapist (cf. Warrior 1995: 284).

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> On the rhetoric of Deutero-Isaiah, see esp. Muilenberg 1969: 13–17.
- <sup>2</sup> See, eg Clines 1995; The Bible and Culture Collective 1995: 272–308; Sherwood 1996: 19–82; Exum 1996: 101–128; Törnkvist 1998: 12–17, 55–72; Guest 1999: 420–422, 424–428, 432–435, 442–444; Fuchs 2000: 11–33, 34–43; Keefe 2001: 36–65, 66–78; Baumann 2003: 229–231; Davies 2003: 47–52, 55–81, 83–107.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. eg Brenner 2003: 76–78, 79.
- <sup>4</sup> In her brief remarks on Isa. 40:2, Gerlinde Baumann (2003) notes that 'without any use of terms from the marriage imagery, there is the injunction to "speak tenderly" to the city' (180). My reading challenges this statement, and also Patricia Tull Willey's that '[s]ubstantive signs of influence by the eighth century prophets Isaiah, Micah, Amos and Hosea [on Deutero-Isaiah] are not easily found' (Tull Willey 1997: 270).
- <sup>5</sup> This builds indirectly on Gerlinde Baumann's insistence, in her discussion of Nah. 3:4-7, that 'we engage the whole complex of [prophetic marriage] imagery in a critical fashion' (Baumann 2003: 213).
- <sup>6</sup> Van Dijk-Hemmes is responding to the commentary on Hos. 2:11-12 by Andersen and Freedman (1980: 249). See also van Dijk-Hemmes 2004a: 121–126. Responding to the original Dutch of van

Dijk-Hemmes (2004a), Richtsjie Abma (1999) dissents from her reading, noting that '[t]his expression seems to have predominantly positive connotations. It occurs in combination with terms of love, kindness and consolation and thus usually points to a kind and affirmative sort of speech' (186). Van Dijk-Hemmes's point is lost on Abma, to whom the possibility of reading against the grain of this text and its androcentric translators and commentators apparently doesn't occur.

7 The ambiguity is resolved in the LXX by making 'the priests' (*hiereis*) the addressees, and in Targum Jonathan by making 'the prophets' (*neviyyayya*) the addressees.

8 Unless *ammi* is the addressee, and thus the subject rather than object of *nakhamu* (cf. NEB n.).

9 Acknowledged by the *vacat* left by the scribe in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> XXXII, 28. Note also the scribal marking in the right-hand margin.

10 Cf. van der Merwe 1964-65: 92. Abolition: Hos. 1:9; reestablishment: Hos. 2:25; Isa. 40:9; 41:10; 43:3; 48:17; 51:15, 16.

11 Athalya Brenner (2003) observes that 'in metaphor ... the signifier and the signified ... tend to blur or collapse into each other', rendering artificial the distinction between metaphor and reality (72-73; cf. Guest 1999: 438). It is impossible to summarise the vast and complex field of the study of metaphor here. On the interpretation of metaphor, with particular relevance for prophetic marriage imagery, see, *inter alia*, Bird 1997; Weems 1989; Bal 1993; Stienstra 1993: 9-69; Graetz 1995; Törnkvist 1998: 36-50; Abma 1999: 7-13; Baumann 2003: 27-37; Kelle 2005: 34-44.

12 Blenkinsopp is here commenting on Isa. 43:1-7.

13 Thus JPS; NRSV; NIV; NEB; Childs 2000: 293.

14 10 texts in the MT use the phrase *dabber al lev*. Brad Kelle (2005) counts nine occurrences in the Tanakh (269 n. 171), omitting 1 Sam. 1:13, where *medhabbereth al libbah* in the MT should arguably be emended to *medhabbereth el libbah* (cf. Gen. 24:45). The prepositions *el* (Gen. 24:45), *b* (Qoh. 2:15), and *im* (Qoh. 1:16) are used in the Tanakh when the speaker is addressing her or his own heart rather than that of another. Three texts use the phrase *dabber al lev* that seem, on the face of it, not to relate to either familial (Gen. 50:21; Ruth 2:13?) or sexual (Gen. 34:3; Judg. 19:3; Isa. 40:2; Hos. 2:16; Ruth 2:13?) contexts. In 2 Sam. 19:8, Joab commands David to 'speak to the heart' (*dabber al lev*) of his servants, to placate them and win them over, preventing them from deserting him. The possibility that 2 Sam. 19:8 and Isa. 40:2 share the same nuance of this phrase should not be dismissed (cf. Driver 1913: 333), given Israel's apparent frustration with YHWH in Isa. 40:27. While *dabber al lev* seems to have the nuance 'persuade' in 2 Chr. 30:22, it is difficult to see how Hezekiah speaking to the heart of the Levites relates to the other texts discussed here, though in 2 Chr. 32:6 Hezekiah's speaking to the heart of the people of Jerusalem may have been an attempt to keep them on his side (cf. 2 Sam. 19:8?), at the outset of a vicious siege.

15 Fuchs 2000: 207. While *lqkb* is used in the Tanakh as an idiom for marriage, it also has connotations of force (Gravett 2004: 282 n. 10).

16 Gen. 34:5, 7, 13, 27.

17 Cf. BHS n.

18 For this translation, see Törnkvist 1998: 118 n. 395. Like Alice Keefe's rendering 'woman (or wife) of fornications', this highlights the primary semantic nuance for *znh* of illicit extramarital relations, which threatens the patriarchal social order, rather than the derivative nuance of prostitution, which does not. Cf. Bird 1997; Weems 1989: 90 n. 11; Yee 1998: 209a; Keefe 2001: 18-21.

19 As Renita Weems (1989) notes, *navluthab* in 2:12 may be read as a deliberate ambiguity, drawing on nuances of both foolishness and genitalia (195-196 n. 18).

20 Exod. 22:15; Judg. 14:15; 16:5; Jer. 20:7.

21 2 Sam. 3:25; 1 Kgs 22:20, 21, 22; Jer. 20:10 (Pual); Ezek. 14:9; Ps. 78:36; Prov. 1:10; 24:28; 2 Chron.  
18:19, 20, 21; cf. Judg. 14:15; 16:5.

22 Jer. 20:7 (cf. v. 10). Gravett 2004: 294-96, but see Baumann 2003: 132 n. 85. On the potentially  
negative connotations of this verb in Hos. 2:16, cf. Baumann 2003: 93-94. Note the collocation of  
*lev* with *pth* Qal 'be simple, gullible' in Hos. 7:11; Job 31:27 and with *pth* Niphal in Job 31:9.

23 Hos. 2:4, 7; Isa. 50:1.

24 Hos. 2:4-7; Isa. 50:1; 54:1-5. It is sometimes argued that in Hosea, the referent of the wife/mother  
metaphors is not the people of Israel as a whole, but the capital city, Samaria: eg Kelle 2005: 18,  
86-90.

25 Hos. 2:18; Isa. 54:5; cf. 62:5. Baumann (2003) notes that since Baal was no longer YHWH's primary  
competitor at the time of Deutero-Isaiah, YHWH can be connected with this term without risking  
associating himself with the Canaanite deity (185, 189).

26 Hos. 2:4; Isa. 50:1; cf. Jer. 3:8; Deut. 24:1, 3.

27 The phrase *ki pi yhub dibber* in Isa. 40:5 may be read as an explicit pointer to an earlier divine  
communication, cf. Kaminka 1938: 160; Fishbane 1985: 477; Sommer 1998: 171.

28 Eg Jer. 2:32 and Isa. 49:14-18; Jer. 10:17-25 and Isa. 54:1-3, 5; Jer. 14:2-9 and Isa. 42:10-16; Jer.  
29:4-6 and Isa. 65:18-23.

29 Stienstra (1993) mentions the connection between Isaiah 54 and Hosea *en passant* (173; cf. 177).

30 Hos. 1:2-9; 2:4-15; Isa. 54:6-8.

31 Hos. 2:1-3, 16-25; Isa. 54:1-10 *passim*.

32 See 2 Sam. 13:13; Prov. 6:33; and esp. Isa. 47:3; Ezek. 16:57.

33 Cf. Hos. 1:6, 7; 2:3, 6, 21, 25.

34 Jerusalem and Zion are portrayed as a woman (Lam. 1:6, 15; 2:1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 15, 18), as a  
widow (1:1), as a mother whose children are the people of the city (1:4, 5, 16, 18; 2:19, 21, 22; 4:2,  
22), as a woman exposed and made into a thing unclean in punishment for her sexual misdemeanours  
(1:8, 9, 17). For an incisive feminist critique of Lamentations and its interpreters, see Guest 1999.

35 For example: Gottwald 1954: 43-45; Newsom 1992; Tull Willey 1997: 86-89, 106-109, 125-132,  
155-171, 187-193, 214-222, 233-241; Sommer 1998: 127-130, 270-272 nn. 45-55; Abma 1999:  
108.

36 Lam. 1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21; 2:13; cf. Nah. 3:7.

37 Isa. 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; 61:2; 66:13; cf. 12:1. Fishbane 1985: 497; Tull Willey 1997: 129-131,  
155-158, 188.

38 Eg Isa. 47:1-4; Jer. 2:20-24; 3:1-13; 5:6-7; 13:20-27; Ezek. 16:1-63; 23:1-49; Hos. 1:1-5:7; Mic. 1:5-  
7; Nah. 3:4-7; Lam. 1:1-22; 4:21-22. The catalyst for this discussion seems to have been Setel 1985.  
There is not space to survey this rich and expanding field here. See the recent reviews and evaluations  
in Keefe 2001: 140-161 and Baumann 2003: 7-22.

39 I am working here within the terms of the metaphor, where the one punished and redeemed by YHWH  
is a textual woman, while accepting that YHWH's metaphorical spouse probably represents predom-  
inantly male members of the community, and that males would thus have been the primary audience  
of the poetry.

40 Isa. 37:26; 42:9; 48:3, 5; cf. Jer. 4:28; Lam. 2:17.

- 41 For example, the text implies that this metaphorical woman is ‘morally degraded, and therefore ultimately responsible for what happens’ to her (Baumann 2003: 25). Cf. van Dijk-Hemmes 2004b: 173–174; Exum 1996: 110 (on Ezekiel 23); Guest 1999: 422–432 (on Lamentations). On the problems for real modern women of identifying with the textual women of Scripture, see, eg Thistlethwaite 1985; Baumann 2003: 229–230.
- 42 Cf. Exum 1996: 121–122: ‘the prospect these texts hold out of reconciliation following punishment provides no solution to the problem posed by the imagery of sexual abuse because it is part of the pattern. It reinforces the harmful ideology of abuse as something for the victim’s own good and makes acceptance of blame and submission the price of forgiveness’.
- 43 Isa. 42:14; 45:9-11; 46:3-4; 49:15; cf. 66:9, 13. Tribble 1973: 33; Gruber 1992: 3–15; Baumann 2001: 110–114; Baumann 2003: 200–201.
- 44 Jer. 44:15-19, 25; cf. 7:16-20. See eg Ackerman 1992: 5–35; Dever 2005: 190–192, 236–237.

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