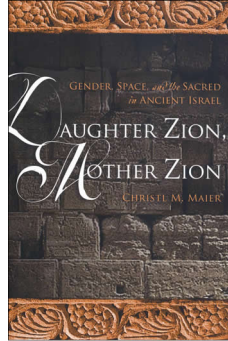


# ○ REVIEW OF CHRISTL M. MAIER, *DAUGHTER ZION, MOTHER ZION: GENDER, SPACE AND THE SACRED IN ANCIENT ISRAEL*

(MINNEAPOLIS: FORTRESS PRESS, 2008)

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In this book, Maier sets out to explore gendered metaphors for Jerusalem in the Hebrew Scriptures. Her focus is the shifting metaphors of Jerusalem as woman – daughter, bride, whore, violated victim, mother – and the way these are influenced by and interact with ancient Near Eastern concepts of sacred space. She aims, thereby, to both trace reactions to conquest and exile leading to the emergence of a new 'Israelite' national religious identity as well as to reflect upon various issues relating to the usage of these metaphors in contemporary religious and cultural contexts. Her project, therefore, makes important contributions to biblical studies, gender studies and studies of ancient Near Eastern cultures. The book, of 285 pages, comprises an Introduction and eight chapters, the last being a short Conclusion. The book also includes three indices – Scriptural, Author and Subject as well as endnotes. I'm not fond of endnotes and with this book my irritation was compounded by the fact that a two page 'Selected' bibliography is provided rather than a full one. In other words, there is no straightforward easy-reference list of (re)sources deployed in the book. Most of the bibliographical items are either historical or other studies of Jerusalem or studies of particular scriptural books together with a small number of broader theoretical works. One of these, Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, is a lynchpin for Maier's analysis and the other theoretical works also figure importantly in her arguments. But there are some frequently referred to authors in the author index who do not make the bibliography and one author, Wischnowsky, in the bibliography who does not appear in the index. In other words, no criteria are given as to why the selected texts have been included in the bibliography – are these the key texts for Maier's argument or is it instead a recommended reading list (or both)? A couple of lines at the outset introducing the list might have been appropriate.

I say all this because in her first chapter, Maier takes the reader on an extensive discursive tour of three conceptual frameworks surrounding her analysis. These are Spatial Theory, Metaphor and Personification and Feminist Perspectives on Body and Personification. Taking them in reverse

order, Maier discusses a range of feminist theorists, such as H el ene Cixous, Paula Cooley, Kathy Davis, Luce Irigaray, Sigrid Wiegel, Julia Kristeva, Iris Marion Young and Judith Butler to introduce contemporary discourse on the body and female personification and through the work of art historians, Zainab Bahrani and Sue Best, to contrast the differences in body understanding between the ‘postmodern West and the ancient Near East’ (pp. 21–22). As Maier observes, ‘personification... is a special case of metaphor’ (p. 17) and so the chapter incorporates a survey of theories of language and metaphor, including Aristotle’s definition, the work of Paul Ricouer and the linguistic theory of George Lakoff, Mark Turner and Mark Johnson. However it is spatial theory that is the most important framework for the book and, while she devotes three pages to Jonathan Z. Smith’s situational definition of the sacred, it is the work of French Marxist sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, that will be the key to Maier’s analysis to follow. Lefebvre outlines three perspectives of societal space:

perceived space, ‘physical space... space produced by a spatial practice’ (p. 11);

conceived space, ‘space depicted by language and metaphor... the results of a social process of planning, naming, and inscribing of significance... the dominant space in any society’ (ibid.);

lived space, ‘the space of inhabitants and users’, the space of ‘everyday activities...concrete, hence, subjective’ space, the ‘dominated... space which the imaginations seeks to change and appropriate’ (p. 11–12).

Maier employs this tripartite model to analyse the female representations of Zion/Jerusalem in a range of Hebrew Bible texts set in a timeline from the (pre-exilic) late Iron Age to an indeterminate point in the second Temple period.

Thus, chapter 2 analyses representations of sacred space in Psalms 46 and 48, Isaiah 6 and Micah 3 which imbue Jerusalem’s topography with theological significance consonant with Near Eastern concepts of sacred space. Such discursive practices underline Jerusalem’s significance as a religious centre. In chapter 3, Maier discusses ‘the emergence of the personification of Zion as a female collective’ (p. 7) – Daughter Zion – in a range of passages from Isaiah 1-39 and Jeremiah 4-6. Her analysis of these passages follows a detailed survey of practices of personification and deification of cities in the ancient Near Eastern and Aegean worlds. Zion as whore is the subject of chapter 4. Maier discusses Hosea 3, Isaiah 1:21-26, Jeremiah 2-3 and 13, and Ezekiel 16 and 23. The chapter concludes with an exploration ‘of the socio-historical background to the whore metaphor to assess its assumptions about women’ (p. 8) before addressing the question of how to interpret the whore metaphor for contemporary contexts. Chapter 5 is devoted to Lamentations and its representation of Daughter Zion as the humiliated and bruised rape victim. Isaiah 40-66 is the focus of chapter 6 which explores representations of Zion’s rebuilding and ascent from captivity to emerge as Queen in a renewed (marriage) covenant with YHWH. In chapter 7, Maier explores representations of Zion as Mother in Isaiah 2:1-4, 49:22-23 & 60, 66:7-14 together with Psalm 87. This motherhood is intertwined with Zion as a site of pilgrimage and shifts from a particularist outlook to a universalist one in which Zion is birthplace of foreign peoples as well as Israelites. Finally, chapter 8 reprises and summarizes the results and conclusions of Maier’s textual analyses.

Overall, this is a rich and impressive work and Maier deploys Lefebvre's model with skill in her engagement with the individual texts. I found her reading of Lamentations, in particular, illuminating, especially her interpretation of the wounded Daughter Zion as a symbol of resistance and agency on the part of the survivors rather than more traditionally pious readings that see Zion here confessing her weakness and failures. I also strongly concur with Maier's position that such personifications of Zion/Jerusalem are too complex to clearly distinguish between negative and positive representations. As she says, modern readers should not identify any 'actual woman, ancient or modern, with Zion, since the female figure is a metaphor that interrelates a space, a human collective, and a deity' (p. 217).

However, I must confess to problems with Maier easily slotting texts into her historical timeline. She provides no reason for such datings but states at the outset 'the suggested dating as well as the arrangement of parallels in this study results from broader text analyses which could not be included in their entirety' (p. 5). It's not clear to me that Psalm 48 or even its 'core... may have been written in remembrance of' (p. 40) Neo-Assyrian threats. The psalm fits well in a general *chaoskampf* pattern. Likewise, I cannot see how Psalm 46 'fits well into the time of Manasseh... or the early years of Josiah' simply because it presents an image of Zion as 'an island of peace and divine blessing' (p. 49). Likewise, Isaiah 1-39 might be set in Iron Age Palestine but that does not mean that the text comes from Iron Age Palestine. Maier's timeline and presumed textual dating shapes how she applies Lefebvre's model. To return to her analysis of Lamentations she argues that the lived space of the text is a Jerusalem in ruins and so dates it to the exilic period (p. 152; pp. 159-60). But how does one distinguish between the conceived and lived space for dating purposes in highly ideological texts such as religious texts? Could not the lived space perceived by the reader in the text, in reality be part of the text's rhetorical affect?

I think the book could have been just as, if not more, effective without the simplistic timeline. Maier is arguing for a shift to a universalist outlook of Mother Zion. She achieves this in the end not by any hypothetical history of Israel but instead by turning to the Old Greek version of Psalm 87.5 (p. 207). Although she calls it a 'misreading' (*ibid.*) of the Hebrew consonantal text (I would call it an alternative reading), the Old Greek nevertheless 'renders the implicit female imagery of the Hebrew text explicit by calling Zion "Mother"' (*ibid.*). In other words, not a hypothetical history but recensional diversity supports Maier's thesis. These criticisms aside, the book's great strengths are both the exploration of the spatial dynamics of female Zion imagery, and setting such gendered spatial imagery against the backdrop of ancient Near Eastern religious worlds.