



RESISTING THE THEOLOGY OF A RAPIST

AGAINST THE POETICS OF RAPE IN PROPHETIC LITERATURE

Rape Metaphors in Contemporary Language

Contemporary language is rife with metaphors about rape, although such vocabulary often goes unnoticed. It is commonly understood that the “rape of nature” refers to the industrial exploitation of the earth’s resources or that the “rape of Nanjing” describes the massacre by Japanese troops of the Chinese city of Nanjing between December 1937 and March 1938. Similarly, when a white male professor claimed to have “felt like a rape victim,”¹ he was using metaphoric speech to describe a conflict he had with students. The expression does not literally refer to rape; it is a figure of speech that compares two unlike entities and aims to connect emotionally with the audience, often to move them to political action.

According to the analysis of linguist George Lakoff and his collaborator, Tim Rohrer, such a metaphoric call for action occurred in 1991 when U.S. president George Bush tried to convince the American public of the need for going to war against Iraq. Many of the metaphors portrayed the nation of Kuwait as raped by the military invasion of Iraq and its then-president, Saddam Hussein, and called for American intervention to help the “victim.” Quoted in Rohrer’s analysis, Bush stated:

But I simply say the “rape” and the systematic dismantling of Kuwait defies description. . . . Saddam Hussein’s unprovoked “invasion”—his ruthless, systematic “rape” of a peaceful neighbor—“violated” everything the community of nations holds dear. . . . Kuwait was the “victim,” Iraq the aggressor.²

This kind of metaphoric language, which according to Rohrer is characteristic of U.S. foreign policy rhetoric, assumes that nations are persons, that a ruler stands for the nation, and that if one nation bullies its neighbor leading to "crimes," America has the "moral" obligation to help the violated state.³ In this particular case, Kuwait turns into a nation-person and is cast rhetorically as raped by the bully, Saddam Hussein, from whom the U.S. military is compelled to defend the victim, to do what is morally right.

According to Rohrer and Lakoff, Bush's rape metaphors obfuscated the prevailing sociopolitical and economic dynamics between Kuwait and Iraq. For instance, Lakoff suggests that Kuwait was not innocent like a classic rape victim "but an innocent ingénue."⁴ Previously, the government of Kuwait had been allied with Iraq and had assisted Iraq in financing its war against Iran. Yet, after the war, Kuwait claimed to have given loans and demanded repayment from Iraq. Kuwait had also used its oil production to keep oil prices down to the disadvantage of Iraq, and it did not want to provide resources for rebuilding postwar Iraq, although the Kuwaiti government was investing in Europe, America, and Japan at the time and had the resources. In addition, most foreign workers and many Kuwaiti citizens experienced severe discriminatory practices in Kuwait, and wealthy Kuwaiti men indulged themselves with cheap Iraqi goods and sexual services from Iraqi widows and orphans. In "real" life, Kuwait was powerful, and according to Lakoff, it was "badly miscast as a purely innocent victim."⁵ When Bush used the rape metaphor, his vocabulary hid the strength of the Kuwaiti monarchy.

Not only did the rape metaphor misrepresent the actual power dynamics between Kuwait and Iraq, Rohrer and Lakoff argue, but it also added insult to Arab androcentric sensibilities. The metaphor correlates "weakness" with femininity, which even an Iraqi proverb finds unacceptable, saying: "It is better to be cock for a day than a chicken for a year."⁶ In short, the metaphor describes the socioeconomic and political interests of the involved countries, particularly the United States, in a woefully inadequate fashion. Instead of rational discourse and explanation grounded in an understanding of society, politics, economics, religion, and history, the metaphor functions as

propaganda that rallies people's deep-seated fears and irrationalities. In Lakoff's view, "it hides the main ideas that drive Middle Eastern politics."⁷

Rohrer notes that it is difficult to develop metaphoric speech, and he therefore suggests that we "refine the one we have." His suggestion makes sense, especially in light of the long tradition of viewing nations as women (raped or not). Yet refining existing metaphors is not easily accomplished, especially when we look at the prophetic literature in the Hebrew Bible. This poetry contains the so-called marriage metaphor, which describes powerful cities in the ancient Near East: Jerusalem, Babylon, Nineveh, Sidon, and Edom. Prophetic poems describe these cities as raped women, violated by military powers and even by God. In the latter case, the prophetic metaphor presents God as the husband of his wife, Jerusalem; God is enraged by his wife's infidelities and prescribes and executes the rape of his wife. A more disturbing and destructive metaphor can hardly be envisioned, and even contemporary politicians do not go that far. It is to these prophetic poems we turn next.

Divinely Authorized Rape Rhetoric in Prophetic Speech

Throughout the androcentric history of interpretation, biblical poems that depict God as the angry punisher of the idolatrous actions of the biblical and ancient Near Eastern cities of Jerusalem, Babylon, Nineveh, Sidon, or Edom have been largely ignored. Yet, since the emergence of feminist interpretation, these poems have gained recognition, and the theologically problematic implications of the metaphors have been brought to light, exposing the prophetic poetics of rape as violent and pornographic. The poems contain rape metaphors that justify sexual violence as divinely mandated punishment. Many of these poems were written during the time of the Babylonian exile in the sixth century B.C.E.⁸ and depict major cities as personified women. The poems present God as decreeing sexual violence upon the women-cities, who are punished for their misbehaviors. Crude, brutal, and violent vocabulary prevails. In the case of Jerusalem, the charge is that she prostituted herself to other male nation-persons and disobeyed her husband/

God; the charge in the case of the other ancient Near Eastern cities is that they destroyed Israel. The metaphors are prophetic speech gone awry; the images have to be resisted by rereading them against the misogynist ideology of text and interpreters.⁹

"Lifting Up Her Skirt":

The Besieged City of Jerusalem as a Raped Woman

Several prophetic poems imagine female figures—women of Jerusalem and also the city of Jerusalem itself personified as a woman—as punished by God through acts of sexual violence. As Rachel Magdalene explains, "Metaphorically, then, God is seemingly quite willing to perpetrate repeated sexual assaults and abuse on women. Such texts are the ultimate in biblical texts of terror."¹⁰ Four texts are discussed here: Isa 3:16-17; Jer 13:22, 26; Ezekiel 16; and Ezekiel 23.

In the first poem, Isa 3:16-17, God prescribes sexual attacks and rape of Jerusalem's female population. The poem characterizes the daughters of Zion as "haughty" and "walk[ing] with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet" (v. 16).¹¹ Fashion-conscious in look and posture, women of Jerusalem are the recipients of androcentric mockery. They are viewed as "serious infractions of the social order,"¹² and their exaggerated obedience to androcentric standards of femininity makes them fair game for sexual attacks, at least according to the prophetic imagination. Once the poem of Isaiah 3 establishes the women's arrogance and pride, God appears as the authorizer and executer of pornographic attacks. Verse 17 describes God's action against the women:

The Lord will afflict with scabs the heads of the daughters of Zion,
and the Lord [Yahweh] will lay bare their secret parts [*pōt*, פֹּת].
[NRSV]

The sexual candor of this poem makes many translators nervous, and so they read the second line as a reference to the head rather than the genital area, "and Yahweh will lay bare their forehead."¹³ Translators substitute for sexual violence a description that presents captive

women as being humiliated when their hair is shorn off because grammatical ambiguity allows for a changed meaning from the genitals to the head. In question is the Hebrew noun *pōt* (פֹּת), which appears only one other time in the Hebrew Bible—in 1 Kgs 7:50 it refers to a "door socket." Some scholars recognize that the text offers "coarse language" and refers to female genitals in a vulgar and colloquial expression.¹⁴ Accordingly, J. Cheryl Exum translates Isa 3:17 thus: "The Lord will make bald the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will bare their cunts."¹⁵ Biblical literature is often flexible and elastic, and this is a theologically problematic setting, in which God is portrayed as the violator of Jerusalem's women. Why be plain when an image of a door socket in which a door swings will do?

The rhetoric of this poem leads Johnny Miles to declare the poem "an act of violence" that "screams 'abuse of power'—poetically, metaphorically, and ideologically."¹⁶ He explains:

The undercurrents of misogynist biases within this poem actuate its rape story despite attempts to deflect our attention. The "daughters of Zion" become unwitting victims in a poetic abuse of power as they are raped by the pen. . . . In an act of poetic collusion, (male) poet and God mock . . . and degrade the "daughters of Zion," the effects of which relegate Woman to the point of erasure as "other."¹⁷

What is needed in reading such rape rhetoric is "a voice of advocacy" that names the violence, holds the perpetrators accountable, and questions the divinely sanctioned abuse of power. Such an interpretation also emphasizes that "this misogynist text really says nothing about YHWH" because in this poem androcentric culture and history have "culturally inscribed" God in the poetics of rape.¹⁸

Jeremiah 13:22, 26 contains similarly troubling metaphoric speech. God announces the rape of Jerusalem—here the city itself is personified as a woman. In v. 22, the verb is in the passive voice, which avoids mentioning the identity of the rapist. But in v. 26, the verb is active and God the subject. God is the sexual violator.¹⁹ The following translation is close to the syntax of the Hebrew text:

(22) On account of the greatness of your iniquity
exposed/uncovered are your skirts,
violated are your heels/genitals. . . .

(26) and also I myself I shall strip your skirts over your face,
so that is seen your shame.²⁰

The passage is part of a larger poem in Jer 13:20-27. The personal pronouns in vv. 22 and 26 are in the second person feminine singular (“you”). God addresses the feminine city and decrees sexual punishment for her transgressions. In v. 22, the two verbs, “to uncover” and “to violate,” are in the passive voice and the focus is on the woman’s situation. In v. 22, the perpetrator remains unnamed, although the scene is “clearly”²¹ one of rape. Robert P. Carroll suggests that Jeremiah uses euphemisms in vv. 22 and 26, perhaps to “conceal an obscene practice of exposing women by drawing their legs over their heads in order to uncover their vulvas completely”²²—in itself an astonishing act of conjecture by the commentator.

Interpreters usually assume that in v. 24 the rapists are the victorious Babylonian soldiers, because Jeremiah’s predictions often warn about the Babylonian siege and ultimate victory. Trying to ignore the “raw sexuality and violence” of this rape poem, commentators offer little or “no resistance to the powerful, ideological effects of this misogynist text upon a rape culture”²³ and omit that in v. 26 God is the rapist. They perpetuate the poetics of rape in Jer 13:20-27, in which the female is the victim and the male dominates, even violates, her. The poem proclaims that the woman brought this fate upon herself and she is to be blamed for it, while the prophet sides with the sexually violent perpetrators, viewing the attack as deserved and God as justifying it. Rape poetics endorses “masculine authoritarianism” and the “dehumanization of women,” perhaps especially when the subject is God.²⁴ As Miles observes correctly, “violence unnamed is tacitly violence condoned.”²⁵ Interestingly, commentators acknowledge freely that the passage is loaded with sexual metaphors. The nouns “skirt” and “shame” carry several sexual connotations, and two verbs (*gālā*, גלה, “to uncover”; *nā’ā*, נא, “to see”) appear also in other contexts of sexual violence, such as Isa 47:3; Ezek 16:36, 37; 23:29; and Nah 3:5.²⁶

The prophetic poem in Jeremiah 13, then, envisions God as relishing the rape of woman Jerusalem, a rape that is presumably perpetrated by the Babylonian army and supported by the male God. It represents a climax of androcentric fury, and as such it constitutes a major theological problem. God turns out to be a rapist.²⁷

Commentators are uncomfortable with this passage, define it as “a difficult section,”²⁸ and sometimes classify it as a rape scene. Carroll states: “Jerusalem has become a violated woman, a typical victim of invading warriors”; this is an oracle of “outrage and violence of rape.”²⁹ He points to the suffering of the women who are brutally raped by the invading army and finds it difficult to excuse the metaphor in which the rapist is God. He states further: “[M]etaphors and reality combine to portray a sickening picture of battered sexuality and torn flesh, an image of a culture invaded, raped and devastated.”³⁰ Yet he does not reject the prophetic sense of justice in which God turns into a sexual predator. He reads with the metaphor even while wondering, “Why are these outrages Yahweh’s portion for the city?”³¹

This lack of what might be termed “readerly resistance” is not unusual. Other readers tolerate God punishing Jerusalem with sexual violence, and they read the poem from the prophet’s perspective. For instance, R. E. Clements muses:

[T]he people were eagerly placing the blame for their tragic misfortunes upon God and regarding themselves self-pityingly as the unfortunate victims of a fate that they had not deserved. It was the concern of the prophet, as well as of his editors and followers, to show that the people could not evade the acceptance of responsibility for what they had suffered.³²

Like other interpreters, Clements does not reject androcentric extremism that characterizes God as a perpetrator of rape. Instead, he approves of the prophetic criticism that scorns the contemporaries of the prophet for their mistaken political allegiance. The prophet tells his listeners that they are not victims, as they believe, but brought their fate upon themselves because they did not follow God. Their own actions led to war, national annihilation, and exile because they

abandoned God. Hence, they themselves are responsible for the national disaster in the form of foreign occupation. For Jeremiah, the Israelites are like a raped woman who is told to blame herself for the sexual violence. Many interpreters are caught in this prophetic perspective and endorse the prophetic position, which promotes a "theology of the rapist." The question is why interpreters find it so easy to accept this prophetic argument. Do they find it too difficult to go against prophetic authority, which takes for granted androcentric assumptions that portray God as "Father, Lord, Master, King, or Judge?"³³

There are those, however, who question the depiction of God as a sexually violent retaliator. One of the first feminist commentators to struggle with this passage in Jeremiah was Gracia Fay Ellwood.³⁴ She identifies God as a rapist and also discusses the poem's implications. She worries what the image of God as a rapist might mean for the prevalence of violence against women and cautions that perhaps God speaks through these texts "in a different sense than we had thought." Ellwood insists that the prophetic metaphor cannot mean what it seems to imply. It cannot be that God commands the rape of women. In her opinion, there has to be another meaning, but she does not offer an alternative.

Other feminist interpreters pick up on her question and continue wrestling with it. Gerlinde Baumann, after an extensive linguistic and grammatical discussion, states: "Here we definitely have a rape scene" and "if the verse [v. 22] is read together with v. 26 . . . YHWH would be represented as a perpetrator of sexual violence."³⁵ She emphasizes that "[i]n v. 26 YHWH appears explicitly as a perpetrator of sexual violence"³⁶ who punishes woman Jerusalem for breaking the covenant with her husband, God. Baumann also observes that woman Jerusalem does not have an opportunity to repent; her punishment is rape prescribed and executed by God. Like Ellwood, Baumann worries that rapists might use this and similar texts to justify their behavior because even God "lives within damaged relationships" and punishes his wife.³⁷

This concern resonates in feminist readings. Exum observes that "God not only endorses it [that is, rape], he participates in the

attack."³⁸ The problem is that most readers read "with" God and privilege the prophetic perspective to justify rape as the proper form of punishment for idolatry and adultery. The metaphor, read accordingly, can be used to excuse men who use sexual violence against women. Thus, the rape metaphor has real-life consequences and "reinscribes patriarchal hierarchy" in the lives of women and men.³⁹ As Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington put it, "[T]he city as an object of violence is always a feminine Other, reinforcing the status of the feminine as secondary, and facilitating a pornographic objectification of women by setting the female as the model victim."⁴⁰

The problem of a pornographic objectification of Jerusalem as the wife of her husband, Yahweh, is most dramatically depicted in two additional poems in Ezekiel 16 and 23. They are among the most extreme representations of God as the advocate and executor of rape. The city-wife is the target of verbal rape threats that in length and detail go far beyond the poems in Isaiah and Jeremiah. The prophet Ezekiel portrays the following words as those of God:

The adulterous wife,
 though subordinate to her husband,
 takes foreign men
 who give payment to all prostitutes.

 Thus, prostitute, hear the word of YHWH:
 Thus says the Lord YHWH:
 Because your cunt was exposed
 and uncovered were your genitals in your prostitution with your
 lovers
 and with all your abominable idols . . .
 and for the blood-guilt of your children
 that you gave them;
 therefore, I will gather all your lovers
 with whom you had pleasure,
 and all whom you loved
 and all whom you hated;
 I will gather them against you from everywhere.

I will uncover your genitals to them
and they shall see all of your genitals.
I will give you into their hands.

.....

They shall strip you of your clothes
and they shall take away all of your fine jewels
and they shall leave you naked and uncovered.
They shall bring up a mob against you,
and they shall stone you
and they shall cut you into pieces with their swords.

.....

I will satisfy my fury on you
and my jealousy will turn away from you.
I will be calm
and I will not be angry anymore. (Ezek 16:32, 35-37, 39, 40)⁴¹

These violent words obscure the perspective of the woman, and the accusations are presented solely through the eyes of the accuser, Yahweh.⁴² God speaks, accuses his wife of adultery, and prescribes the punishment in the form of public stripping, violation, and killing. In the prophetic imagination, the woman is not given an opportunity to reply. She is the exclusive recipient of divine wrath, and her point of view is absent. The woman's body is the focus of the attention, as is the treatment with which Yahweh curses her, and repetitive terminology hammers it home. She is to be stripped naked. Stoned and cut into pieces, the woman is ordered to be killed, and God expresses satisfaction about the prospect of her being thus punished. Carroll characterizes "the texture and intensity of the violent images" as "shocking," stating, "The YHWH of these narratives is a tyrant and a bully—an abusive husband of a kind utterly unacceptable to modern readers" and "a monster, guilty of bouts of pornographic violence."⁴³

The emphasis on the woman's nakedness stimulates androcentric pornographic fantasy. The objectified and naked woman is the forbidden sight of the perverse desire for more. Ezekiel 23 satisfies that desire. Two women feature prominently in it: Oholah as Samaria and Oholibah as Jerusalem, both portrayed as wives of the divine husband.

Oholah prostituted herself,
though (she was) subordinate to me,
and she yearned for her lovers,
the Assyrians who approached her.
They were dressed in blue,
governors and commanders,
young and handsome all of them,
mounted horsemen . . .
Therefore I gave her into the hands of her lovers,
into the hands of the Assyrians
for whom she had yearned. (Ezek 23:5-6, 9)⁴⁴

In accordance with pornographic fantasy, the text depicts Oholah's transgression as sex with uniformed men whose status signifies power and hierarchy. The extensive description of the wife's sexual partners follows the punishment by the divine husband. The pronouncement suggests that Samaria (Ohola) brought the destruction by the Assyrian empire upon herself.⁴⁵ The prophet portrays the military defeat of the nation of Samaria, by the other nation, Assyria, as a sexual violation:

They uncovered her genitals,
her sons and her daughters they took.
They killed her with the sword.
And so she became a warning sign for women
and they applied the laws on her. (Ezek 23:10)

The poem depicts Oholah being publicly stripped and killed, as God commanded. Mercy is not an option because, according to the prophet, this is God's way of punishing the wife for her infidelities.

The fate of the sister, Oholibah (Jerusalem), is similarly violent, and the divine rage prescribes torture for the woman:

Therefore, Oholibah, thus says the Lord YHWH:
I will rouse against you your lovers
from whom you turned in disgust,
and I will bring them against you from every side.

.....

I will direct my indignation against you,
 in order that they may deal with you in fury.
 They shall cut off your nose and your ears,
 and your survivors shall fall by the sword.
 They shall seize your sons and your daughters,
 and your survivors shall be devoured by fire.
 They shall also strip you of your clothes
 and take away your fine jewels.
 So I will put an end to your lewdness and your whoring
 brought from the land of Egypt;
 you shall not long for them,
 or remember Egypt any more.
 For thus says the Lord YHWH:
 I will deliver you into the hands of those
 whom you hate,
 into the hands of those
 from whom you turned in disgust;
 and they shall deal with you in hatred,
 and take away all the fruit of your labor,
 and leave you naked and bare,
 and the nakedness of your whoring shall be exposed.
 Your lewdness and your whorings have brought this upon you,
 because you played the whore with the nations,
 and polluted yourself with their idols.
 You have gone the way of your sister;
 therefore I will give her cup into your hand. (Ezek 23:22, 25-31)

As Mary E. Shields points out, “the language in these verses is clearly rape language.”⁴⁶ The women are stripped in public, mutilated, raped, and murdered, all of which is initiated and commanded by God, the husband. The other nations—Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt—follow God’s order and sexually violate and murder the women with whom they had sex before (see also Mic 4:11). Most important, in the classic fashion of absolving the abusers, God’s speech blames the women for the sexual violence they experience; the women brought it upon themselves by not listening to their divine husband and by following, even

inviting, other men (that is, nations) to sexual play (that is, idolatry). The prophet portrays God as justified for punishing his wives with rape and murder.

The poem also stresses that women should remember Oholah’s and Oholibah’s fate as a warning to adhere to their husbands. Already Ezek 23:10 includes such a warning (“And so she became a warning sign for women”), but a later verse is even more direct:

Thus will I put an end to lewdness in the land,
 so that all women may take warning
 and not commit lewdness as you have done. (Ezek 23:48)

The prophetic rape metaphor turns the tortured, raped, and murdered wives into a warning sign for all women. It teaches that women better obey their husbands, stay in their houses, and forgo any signs of sexual independence. This “masculine fantasy of punishment and violence”⁴⁷ threatens women in particular because it cements male domination, hierarchy, and supremacy with God’s authority. This prophetic fantasy constructs women as objects, never as subjects, and it reduces women to sexualized objects who bring God’s punishment upon themselves and fully deserve it. Male control in the form of the divine husband and military men/nations defines women’s sexuality—metaphoric men force metaphoric women into a submissive role.

Some commentators also reflect on the consequences of the prophetic rape metaphor that portrays God as a sexually violent punisher. Shields observes that interpreters often empathize with the deity, downplay divine rage and jealousy, and consider God’s rage as a sign of love for his wife.⁴⁸ Yet, from a postmodern perspective, the raped and murdered women/cities simultaneously threaten the power and identity—the subject role—of God. Accordingly, “YHWH is actually the antireflection of the sisters” and the subject position attributed to male characters is “harmful to men as well.”⁴⁹ Shields’s analysis tries to deconstruct the binary gender perspective of the rape metaphor and to return some power to the female characters and perhaps to women in general. Yet the argument underestimates the historical pervasiveness of rape metaphors. Even if one recognizes that violators, torturers,

and rapists are also victims of their own weakness, which makes them employ violence, and if one even sympathizes with the psychological weakness of oppressors, they have hurt untold numbers of people in theory and practice throughout the ages. Their dysfunctional notions about love and relationships have brought death to women, children, and even some men. Commenting on this problem, Shields contends: "it is dangerous . . . to let the male figure off the hook here, even if that figure is God," and she encourages readers to look closely and to endure being "repelled by what we see" and "to call into question this text's validity as 'the word of God'."⁵⁰ Ultimately, Shields wants to move beyond "a divine figure who is identified in such violent, horrific ways."⁵¹ Unlike Renita Weems, who identifies with the abused and battered woman Jerusalem, Shields maintains that the image of a raping God does not leave any room for grace.⁵² Thus, she wonders how we will be reconciled with a prophet who presents God as a raping murderer of women.

Shields suggests deconstructing this image of God so that it cannot any longer be read as a justification of sexual violence.⁵³ While she herself does not offer such a deconstructed reading, she locates the metaphor firmly within the male prophetic psyche and insists that androcentric imagination links God with misogyny and sexual violence. The prophet who justifies male violence pictures God as a sexually violent punisher of women. In Shields's opinion, readers have to remember at all times that Ezekiel 16 and 23 are words of the prophet. It is he who speaks his androcentric truth, and this truth comes in words that are not the words of God.

Daniel L. Smith-Christopher goes even further, proposing that the portrayal of "a sadistic God," as described in Ezekiel 16 and 23, might actually be an empowering ideology for the victims of imperial oppression. Perhaps sixth-century Israelites, after being defeated by the Babylonians and displaced in exile, used "self-blaming ideologies to take away the ultimate victory of the conqueror by attributing defeat to one's own failures or sins."⁵⁴ The self-blaming ideology includes the notion that the "male and military images of violence" describe the exilic conditions of lost power and control. As customary in ancient Near Eastern war (and mentioned also in Isa 19:16;

Jer 50:37; and Jer 51:30), the images present the unsuccessful army as metaphoric "women"—weak, stripped naked, and lacking control. Hence, Smith-Christopher proposes that perhaps "the image of stripped and humiliated Jerusalem may not have 'titillated' the male hearer at all, but rather shocked them precisely because it reminded them of their own treatment at the hands of the Babylonian conquerors! Accordingly, they would have identified with the female Jerusalem, rather than the 'male God'."⁵⁵ Thus, for Smith-Christopher, Ezekiel's rape metaphors give evidence not only of gendered hierarchies but of "degrading imperial hierarchies"⁵⁶ that oppress people—women and men—who are forced to endure life under military occupation and imperial power.

Yet another very powerful analysis comes from Linda Day. She observes that "the profile of YHWH in Ezek. 16 matches that of real-life batterers in significant ways."⁵⁷ Day agrees with the notion, as outlined by Smith-Christopher, that "woman abuse" originates "in a patriarchal system of society at large" and depends on "a hierarchical stratification of power."⁵⁸ Hence, she focuses on the battering relationship between God and his wife, as depicted in Ezekiel 16, and identifies a three-stage cycle in the poem that is typical of battering relationships. The first phase, illustrated in vv. 1-26, consists of "tension building," during which the male batterer increases the violence and the battered woman tries to avoid the escalation by overlooking the verbal tirades and psychological pressures. The second phase, described in vv. 27-41, begins with "an acute violent incident," during which the batterer cannot control himself anymore; he attacks the woman. She is no longer able to manipulate his anger and rage; she is powerless. The ensuing violence inflicts physical injuries, and her only safeguard is to escape until the batterer decides to stop the violence. The third phase, as presented in vv. 42-63, is characterized by the batterer's return to kindness, regret, and the plea to the battered woman to come back.⁵⁹

According to Day, the problem is that the mostly male commentators have bought into the perspective of the battering husband, God. They consider "the man YHWH . . . to be perfectly justified, even obligated, to react to the woman as he does, and the punishment is

appropriate.”⁶⁰ These male commentators accept that God is justified in being angry about his wife’s infidelities and strongly believe in God’s love and grace as God’s main character trait. They view divine rage as “romantic passion”⁶¹ and emphasize God’s love and benevolence in taking Jerusalem back, even suggesting that human husbands emulate God’s attitude. Like battered women, commentators find little fault with the abusive divinity and express gratitude for God’s willingness to forgive them like Jerusalem.

This attitude toward divine rage and love demonstrates, according to Day, that commentators themselves often behave like battered women. Day explains:

A battered woman tends to see only the positive side of her abuser. She chooses to believe that the loving, caring behavior before and after a physically abusive incident shows the man’s true character. Abused women will state that they love their men and that they believe that their men, deep down, really do love them. Idealizing the relationship, they hope that phases one and two will not happen again. Time and time again the woman chooses to return to the man, believing again in her original dream of how wonderful love is.⁶²

Commentators, too, want to believe in divine goodness and generosity. They see only the “beauty and grace of divine love,” all of which proves them to be completely dependent on their God. Yet for Day, this exclusive belief in God’s goodness reflects a battered woman’s consciousness.

It can be deduced from Day’s explanations that a post-battered faith in God would not limit God to goodness alone. Rather, such a faith is based on a theology that challenges hierarchies and rejects power differentials. It also requires an unambiguous acknowledgment of prophetic rape metaphors as violent, harmful, and ultimately unacceptable. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr pursues such a theological path. Responding to Ezekiel’s insistence that suffering and exile are appropriate divine punishment, she exclaims: “No, in this, I cannot follow you.”⁶³ Only a rejection of the binary characterization of the

divinity avoids the prophetic projection of God as a rapist. A post-battered faith requires a critical engagement of these rape metaphors, so that readers can develop post-hierarchical ways of thought and ways of life. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr expresses this insight best when she states:

Yet even if they [students] decide to say “no” to him [Ezekiel], that does not mean that the text in question is ill-suited to the canon and should be discarded, or relegated beyond the borders of their “canon within the canon.” Sometimes, we continue to embrace hurtful texts not because we affirm their answers, but rather because they force us to confront the important questions.⁶⁴

“Uncovering Their Nakedness”: The Besieged Cities of Babylon, Nineveh, Sidon, and Edom as Raped Women
Prophetic androcentrism does not rest with the depiction of Jerusalem as a woman cursed by God and punished with rape, abuse, and murder. The cities of Babylon, Nineveh, Sidon, and Edom receive similar metaphoric treatment. Several divine oracles address Babylon, and in Isa 13:16 the women of Babylon are threatened with rape. The NRSV offers this English translation of verse 16:

Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes;
their houses will be plundered,
and their wives ravished.

The oracle presents a violent and graphic depiction of the violence perpetrated on the Babylonian inhabitants, especially children and women, but the important text is the last line of v. 16. The verb connoting sexual violation is *šāgal* (שגל), which appears also in Deut 28:30 and Zech 14:2.⁶⁵ The NRSV translates it as “ravished.” Interestingly, Hans Wildberger notes that already the Masoretes recognized the verb *šāgal* as a “gutter term.” They wanted to soften the “offensive” meaning and often substituted another verb, “to sleep with” (*šāhab*, שכב),

because, in their view, “[p]assages written with unclean expressions are changed to more seemly readings.”⁶⁶

Many translators and commentators follow this convention and avoid terminology that specifies what was actually done to women in Isa 13:16—although some express revulsion at the extent of the violence. Others admit that such violence is common in today’s world as well, but they still do not describe what exactly happens to the women in Isa 13:16. For instance, Joseph Blenkinsopp makes a connection to contemporary sensibilities and realities: “By closing with the scene, not unfamiliar in our day, of refugees trying to escape a victorious army bent on murder and mayhem, the stanza provides an appropriate transition to the capture and sack of the city of Babylon.”⁶⁷ Yet, despite an explicit, if welcome, comparison to “our day,” Blenkinsopp does not address the women’s fate.

Even when commentators mention the gross violations prescribed in the Isaian poem and point to its androcentric bias, they still refrain from clearly defining the women’s fate. For instance, Gene M. Tucker writes:

Among the most horrible of lines in Scripture are those in v. 16 promising that “their infants will be dashed to pieces . . . and their wives ravished.” As if those violent acts were not sufficient, one must notice that the perspective is not that of the children and women, but of the men. The picture stresses their pain at seeing such horrors. The loss of the children is a punishment for their fathers.⁶⁸

Tucker recognizes the destructive violence pictured in the poem, but he does not specifically deal with the verb *šāgal*. Similar to the NRSV and other translations, he uses the archaic term “to ravish” for a commentary published in 2001. He also seems unaware of the androcentric bias. He silently accepts the omission of rape when he speculates what the murder of the children might mean for the fathers, ignoring what the women’s rapes might mean to spouses, children, and the women themselves. These details remain unspoken and are left to a reader’s imagination.

The tendency to ignore the women’s plight is apparent also in the Isaiah commentary by Otto Kaiser, who describes v. 16 thus: “In a few bold strokes the poet draws a picture of total defeat and complete abandonment to the conqueror, describing the conquest of the city only indirectly, as it is reflected in what happens to its defenders and its inhabitants.”⁶⁹ This kind of fatalistic acceptance of the prescribed punishment of the civilian population makes Kaiser and other commentators compliant with the poem’s envisioned “total defeat.” To them, the fate of the women in v. 16 remains an unspoken horror, a silenced fact of war that is not openly characterized as unacceptable. Whether it is fatalism or the reliance on antiquated and indirect terminology in v. 16, the androcentric perspective—consciously or unconsciously—eliminates rape discourse from the biblical text and interpretation.

Only a few interpretations provide a translation that lifts the rape out of the poetic shadows. For instance, Brevard S. Childs translates Isa 13:16c as “and their wives (will be) raped,” although he, too, reverts to the old-fashioned “ravish” in the exposition of his commentary: “The final description (vv. 14-16) leaves the arena of the heavenly judgment and returns to the description—all too well known in the ancient Near East—of the cruel massacre of a helpless people by an invading army: infants dashed on the rocks, wives ravished, and houses looted.”⁷⁰

The fate of the Babylonian women, as depicted in this prophetic oracle, is a horrible one, as is the fate of the infants (see also Ps 137:9). The problem is not that the oppressed nation fantasizes about revenge, but that the revenge relies on such androcentric images in the first place. Nor does the latter part of the poem propose to take on the men (except for the “boys” [*nē‘ārîm*, נערים] in v. 18), but it presents “wombs” (*beten*, בטן), children (*bānîm*, בנים), and animals as the victims of the destructive fantasy. Isaiah 13:18 states:

Their bows will slaughter the young men;
they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb;
their eyes will not pity children.

In other prophetic poems, the androcentric fantasy of revenge goes even further in oracles about the city of Babylon. In Isa 47:2-3, the prophet envisions God as cursing the city of Babylon personified as a young woman.

Take the millstones
and grind meal,
take off [gālā, גלה] your veil,
strip off your robe,
uncover [gālā, גלה] your thigh,
pass through the rivers.
Your genitals [‘erwā, ערוה] shall be uncovered [gālā, גלה]
and your vagina [ḥerpā, חרפה] shall be seen.
I will take vengeance,
and I will spare no human. (Isa 47:2-3)⁷¹

This poem contains the same features that prophetic speech uses to refer to Israelite cities,⁷² as Blenkinsopp explains: “[T]his type of saying can very easily also be ‘recycled’ in accordance with the changing international scene. . . . Feminine personification was traditional for cities (Babylon, Jerusalem, Nineveh, Sidon in Isa. 23:12) and peoples.”⁷³ Here the “ritualized verbal humiliation” is addressed to Babylon, “the dishonored queen” who is “the mirror image” of “the female *persona* of Jerusalem-Zion.”⁷⁴ In Isaiah 47, Babylon is a woman whom God threatens to strip, to lead around naked, and to expose her genitals, whereas elsewhere in Deutero-Isaiah Jerusalem is a woman for whom God cares (for example, 52:1-2; 54:1-4). Blenkinsopp recognizes that in chapter 47 the oracle contains violent, “at times pornographic imagery” that clearly “involves rape,” similar to other prophetic sayings on Jerusalem as a woman (for example, Jer 13:22, 26).⁷⁵ Blenkinsopp notes that the notion of Babylon “grinding” grain in v. 2 has “a dreadful double entendre”; it is “a euphemism for coercive sexual activity.”⁷⁶ Already in 1968, commentator John L. McKenzie acknowledged the passage’s reference to rape:

Babylon is addressed in terms similar to those prophets and poets used in addressing Jerusalem when it was threatened; they

personify her as a young woman, the most helpless of the captives of ancient warfare. She is enslaved, put to hard labor, or forced to submit to sexual abuse.⁷⁷

Others point also to the “sexual connotation” of the phrase in v. 2, although they do not use plain and direct vocabulary. For instance, Klaus Baltzer translates the verse as: “Your nakedness will be exposed . . . your shame will become visible,” and remarks: “But this is not actually shown. Drastic though Deutero-Isaiah can be, here—especially since this is divine speech—the utmost limit has been reached.”⁷⁸ Brevard S. Childs identifies the action as “sexual humiliation.”⁷⁹ What is missing in these comments is a simple and declarative statement that recognizes rape in this poem.

The reticence disappears when the metaphor applies to Nineveh, another ancient Near Eastern city. In Nah 3:5-7, this Assyrian city appears as a woman whom God threatens with sexual violence:

I am against you, says Yahweh of hosts.
I will take off [gālā, גלה] your skirts over your face;⁸⁰
I will let nations look at your genitals [ma‘ar, מוער]
and kingdoms at your disgrace [qālôn, קלון].
I will throw filth at you,
I will sexually violate you [nibbēl, נבל piel],⁸¹
I will make you a gazing stock.
Then all who see you will shrink from you
and they will say:
“Wasted is Nineveh;
who will bemoan her?”
Where shall I seek comforters for you?⁸²

Familiar imagery dominates the poem, “typical of the *Prophecy of Punishment against Foreign Nation*” genre.⁸³ God is said to act as a sexually violent force. The terms “skirts,” “nakedness,” and “shame” are references to female genitals.⁸⁴ Marvin A. Sweeney explains: “At this point, verse 5 turns to the treatment of women by a conqueror by metaphorically portraying Nineveh as a woman who is exposed before

her captors, presumably to be raped.”⁸⁵ The sentence “I will sexually violate you” uses the Hebrew verb *nābal* (נבל) in the *piel*, which appears also in rape narratives such as Gen 34:7, Judges 19–21, and 2 Sam 13:12.⁸⁶ In the entire poem of Nah 3:1–19, Nineveh is depicted as succumbing to the military attack. The enemy’s horses overrun the city. Citizens die by the sword, fire destroys the houses in the town, and no one is there to assist the victims. As in other prophetic poems, sexual violence intermingles with sexual harassment and murder. Rape is a predictable ingredient of complete destruction; it is the climax of this gruesome prophetic poem.⁸⁷ To some commentators, the woman’s punishment is justified because she is characterized as a prostitute⁸⁸ who is “made the object of scorn and an example to all who see her.”⁸⁹ To others, Nahum’s abusive words are questionable not because they try to provide justice in words, but because they engender “verbal and physical abuse of women” in the name of God.⁹⁰

The question, though, is why God is upset about Nineveh’s sexual promiscuities, since Nineveh does not have a relationship with God. Gerlinde Baumann proposes that the allusions of sexual promiscuity have broader meaning. They describe pejoratively how a feminized nation makes political deals with the other national powers of its day. The poem characterizes “Ms. Nineveh” ironically as a “prostitute” who receives due punishment for her unacceptable behavior.⁹¹ In the prophetic imagination, God takes revenge on this previous oppressor of Israel and hands her over to the next powerful empire for systematic annihilation. The prophet sees no greater penalty, no superior depiction of total destruction than rape. Thus, in this poem God acts again as a rapist; this time against a hated oppressor of Israel. Does it make the rape metaphor less abhorrent? Francisco O. García-Treto takes exception to this portrayal of woman Nineveh, contending:

[T]oday’s reader must question Nahum’s choice of poetic expression for God’s activity. . . . The image of God’s humiliation of the prostitute is particularly abhorrent to modern readers. Nahum clearly speaks as a male representative of a patriarchal culture. . . . Add to this the harm that an image of God abusing

and humiliating a woman can do, and it is clear that these verses in the book of Nahum must be treated as dangerous territory.⁹²

Nahum stands in a considerable tradition of prophetic poetry that applies the rape metaphor to nations and cities, foreign or Israelite. All of them are “dangerous territory,” and all of them demonstrate the dangerous power of androcentric hierarchical thought. A brief passage in Isa 23:12 cites another Mediterranean town, Sidon, as “destroyed” or “crushed” by God. Baumann contends that here, too, God threatens a non-Israelite city with rape. The line “O virgin daughter Sidon who was treated violently” contains the verb *‘āšaq* (אָשַׁק) in the *pual*. Elsewhere, the verb describes the oppression of widows, orphans, foreigners, or poor people and connotes an unjust condition of exploitation that should be opposed.⁹³ Only in Isa 23:12 does the verb refer to violence that is directed against a woman. It is thus possible to conjecture, Baumann argues, that the “exploitation” endured by virgin Sidon is indeed rape.⁹⁴

Finally, a one-line reference to Edom, a neighboring country south of Judah, appears in Lam 4:21, and this foreign nation, too, is personified as a woman. The short address begins with a sarcastic appeal to “daughter Edom,” asking her to “rejoice and be glad.” A brief description of her “ugly and hurtful . . . violation”⁹⁵ follows. She is to be punished, probably for being a vassal of Babylonia under Nebuchadnezzar after 605 B.C.E. She is made drunk and ordered to strip herself, similar to an earlier divine speech on daughter Jerusalem, who in Lam 1:8–10 is imagined as naked and violated.⁹⁶ In other words, prophetic poetry personifies foreign and Israelite cities as women who, according to the prophetic imagination, are publicly abused and raped. Divine authority, “Thus says YHWH,” sanctions the sexual violence as legitimate punishment for these women’s disobedience to God and sexual independence. Often the imagined abusers and rapists are military men from Israel or from other nations. In the case of Ezekiel 16 and 23, the divinity—projected as a husband—orders the rape and murder of his wives, Jerusalem and Samaria. Yet elsewhere in biblical prophecy, God rapes even the prophet himself. The next section discusses briefly two such scenarios.

“You Overpowered Me and Prevailed”:

Prophetic Responses to the Experience of Divine Rape

In two poems, God appears to rape the male prophet. The poems are ambiguous and leave room for interpretation, but when the hermeneutical interest focuses on rape it is difficult to exclude these texts. The image of God as a violator is indeed a most disturbing theological possibility, and perhaps for that very reason the poems are of elastic meaning and, at least in one case, grammatically unclear.

In the first case, Jer 20:7, the prophet’s reference to the experience of divine rape is part of a longer lament about his unfortunate fate of being deceived and despairing (20:7-18).

You seduced [*pātā*, פתה, *piel*] me, YHWH, and I was seduced.
 You overpowered/raped [*hāzaq*, קזק] me, and you prevailed.
 I have become a laughingstock all day long,
 everyone mocks me.⁹⁷

Already Abraham Joshua Heschel saw the connotation of rape in the combined verbs of “persuade” (פתה) and “overpower” (קזק).⁹⁸ William L. Holladay also finds it “clear that in the present passage Jeremiah is engaged in a bitter complaint to Yahweh, that Yahweh led him into the situation of misery and danger.” For Holladay, “[i]t is possible that the image of seduction is carried forward in the verb קזק ‘overcome’ in the second colon.”⁹⁹ He thus suggests that the verse stands in a “semantic field of sexual violence” that is not only “deeply rebellious” but even “blasphemous” because it presents God as “brute force, as deceptive, beyond any conventional norm.”¹⁰⁰ Angela Bauer agrees with this interpretation because, in her view, the verbs “seduce” and “overpower” “embody a forceful accusation” in which “Jeremiah identifying as female accuses YHWH of seduction and rape.”¹⁰¹

This is a challenging image of God, and so, perhaps predictably, several commentators reject a reading of Jer 20:7 that emphasizes rape. Robert P. Carroll cautions that such a “literalist” reading would “put v. 7 into the mouth of Jeremiah” and create “the bizarre image of the *celibate* prophet . . . accusing the deity of *rape*.”¹⁰² For Carroll, the notion of “a disgruntled prophet complaining about divine rape

in a life devoted to ranting about his neighbour’s sexual excesses . . . is an image too grotesque and modern to be the likeliest reading of the text.” He claims that this meaning “*can* be derived from v. 7” but he finds other possibilities more convincing,¹⁰³ especially when they do not correlate with the prophet’s life.

Other interpreters, among them Patrick D. Miller, point to Jer 20:11 to hint at the theological complexities in the prophetic God-talk: “But YHWH is with me like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed.” To Miller, the poem praises God as a mighty warrior who makes Jeremiah’s persecutors stumble and fail. The verse stands in sharp contrast to v. 7, in which the prophet portrays God as his prosecutor, perhaps even rapist. Miller tries to resolve the contradiction:

That jarring juxtaposition, however, is significant for the character and context of prayer. It reflects a fundamental tension that may run against our tendency to seek logical connections but is a part of the dialogue of faith that prayer becomes. It is the one who trusts in God who complains to God. The complaints and accusations, no matter how extreme, arise out of a fundamental relationship that is asserted as the grounds for the petition and thus a part of the urging of God that goes on in prayer. It is only the person who truly believes that God can and will help who dares to challenge the Lord so forthrightly.¹⁰⁴

For these interpreters, the prophet’s closeness to God enables both rape and faith, lament and prayer, because without a believer’s relationship with the divinity neither complaint nor faith is possible. Miller asserts that the prophetic poem in Jeremiah 20 provides evidence for this theological dynamic

Another hermeneutical solution to Jer 20:7 comes from Ken Stone, who questions whether the verse describes the rape of the prophet.¹⁰⁵ In his view, a connection between power and sex does not find expression only in sexual violence, and so he suggests an alternative. He observes, like Miller, that the literary context of v. 7 does not indicate

the prophet's distrust of God but just the opposite. Jeremiah praises God and rejoices in the power of the divinity. In addition, commentators previously observed that the prophet is both attracted to and coerced by God. Hence, Stone finds in Jer 20:7-13 a power dynamic that entails both "attraction and coercion. Appeal and pressure. Charm and stress. Overwhelming and irresistible. Power and trust."¹⁰⁶ This description sexualizes a religious experience, and there is no indication that the prophet did not consent. Stone emphasizes that the prophet enjoys the experience, although he also complains "about the *social* disapproval that accompanies his status as Yahweh's partner." Stone maintains, "[T]he text can therefore be construed, I think, as replicating dynamics at least associated with an S/M [Sadomasochism] scene."¹⁰⁷ Read accordingly, the poem depicts a male homoerotic experience of sadomasochism between the prophet and God that needs to be evaluated differently from "the now common hermeneutics of rape."¹⁰⁸ For Stone, the text requires a "distinct" ethical critique that relates to male homoerotic sadomasochism and engages parallels between "the dynamics of S/M and the dynamics of prayer," as articulated in ethical discussions on the use of sadomasochism in religion.¹⁰⁹

Shall Stone's call for a "hermeneutics of sadomasochism" be applied to another poem, one that describes the sexual violation of the main character in the book of Job, or is a "hermeneutics of rape" more appropriate? The highly ambiguous verse Job 30:11, which depicts Job's struggle with divine forces, allows for the possibility that Job's encounter with the divinity is a violation. Job exclaims in v. 11: "Because God has loosed my bowstring and humbled [*innā*, עָנָה *piel*] me, they have cast off restraint in my presence." The verse is part of a longer poem in chapter 30 that depicts "the misery of his [Job's] present condition"¹¹⁰ and Job's treatment by God and his enemies in vv. 11-15.¹¹¹ In the early twentieth century, Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray submitted that "the text . . . is so uncertain or ambiguous that it is impossible to determine with confidence whether these vv. refer" to God, the men in the rest of the chapter, or partially to God and partially to the men.¹¹² Hence, Driver and Gray ask if it can really be that "God has weakened me and tormented me" or is it rather that "God loosened his cord and tormented me so that they have cast

off restraint in my presence?"¹¹³ In Job 30:21, God is Job's tormenter for sure, and Job exclaims that God is "assaulting me with your heavy hand."¹¹⁴ In v. 11, the verb *innā* (עָנָה) further connotes oppressive violence and, in fact, rape. Perhaps the text is ambiguous and corrupted because it contains such a radical notion of God; God is the rapist of Job, opens his pants ("loosening his rope"¹¹⁵), and rapes Job—truly a metaphor that seems blasphemous. E. Dhorme's translation of Job 30:11 demonstrates the problem: "As soon as he [God] has untied his rope, he handles me [Job] roughly."¹¹⁶ Is it possible that "rope" is a euphemism for the male genital? The Hebrew text is ambiguous and the possible meaning is not only irritatingly andromorphous but also theologically disconcerting. Its content is so thoroughly indefensible, it "could scarcely be."¹¹⁷

The Difficulties with the Prophetic Poetics of Rape: Concluding Comments

So what shall we do with these poems that promote a theology of the rapist? They are likely to be shocking to anybody who was not aware of these metaphors before reading this chapter, but they also contain the power to disturb those who knew of them before. Who included these texts in the Sacred Scriptures of Christianity and Judaism, and why were they not omitted? They have been part of the canon for so long; why were they not more vigorously discussed, deconstructed, or even rejected? It is upsetting to realize that androcentric bias has hindered, prevented, and obstructed intellectually and theologically honest debates on the theology of rape in biblical literature. Only when feminist scholars began studying the Hebrew Bible did they uncover these prophetic metaphors, make them central to feminist interpretations, and expose androcentric bias. In short, the theological problem of rape has become unavoidable, and the prophetic poetics of rape cannot stay hidden any longer.

During Talmudic times, the rabbis understood the grave theological challenges of these passages and prohibited the liturgical reading of a text such as Ezekiel 16. They explained: "R. Eliezer says: We do not read the chapter, 'Cause Jerusalem to know' as the concluding

recitation following a Torah reading" (*m. Meg.* 4.10).¹¹⁸ They ordered the biblical poetics of rape to remain unread in public settings. Yet, despite the various efforts to keep these texts out of sight from "ordinary readers," they have always been part of the biblical canon. The question is how we should engage them now that we know they exist.

Over the past few years, different hermeneutical strategies have been proposed to help readers cope. In fact, four strategies have proven effective in the hermeneutical process of wrestling with these highly problematic passages. One strategy teaches readers to renounce metaphors that depict women as the victim-survivors of rape and murder. Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington promote this strategy: "So we suggest in conclusion that it is necessary for us to renounce, for a moment, the use of the raped woman as a metaphorical figure of something else—a feminine city assaulted by an army of men."¹¹⁹ Gordon and Washington give permission to reject the rape metaphors as inadequate, unacceptable, and hateful language about raped women.¹²⁰ No longer are readers required to side with the prophet and the image of God, but they are advised openly to reject the poetics of rape. We may say no to the poetics of rape and define these passages as "beyond salvation not only for feminists but also for any objector to violence."¹²¹ This is probably the most "spontaneous" reading strategy when one encounters the prophetic texts for the first time.

Another closely related reading strategy locates the metaphors in the historical context from which they emerged. Johnny Miles reminds us of this approach when he writes that the prophetic texts do not "really" tell us what Yahweh says or does. Rather, the texts inform us about "the perspectives of an ancient culture on men, women, and, yes, God."¹²² Perhaps it makes sense to justify the poetics of rape when we recognize that, historically, "Nineveh . . . certainly deserved to be humiliated," and the announcements of punishment stand in line with ancient Near Eastern understanding of justice.¹²³ Christl M. Maier holds a similar position, advising on how best to deal with prophetic metaphors: "Readings that merely name texts like Jer 13:20-27, Ezekiel 16 and 23 'prophetic pornography' without any discussion of the historical background take the sexual imagery literally and do

not provide an appropriate interpretation of the metaphors," although she also suggests that "feminist scholars should focus on explaining the implications of these metaphors for readers then and now." The historical description, Maier argues, would disclose gender bias and androcentric rhetoric in the biblical texts and allow contemporary readers "to distance ourselves from their implicit message and their image of the violent deity."¹²⁴ Yet Athalya Brenner, along with some other feminist readers, questions this line of argument, stating: "Ultimately, no reconsideration of 'original circumstances,' whether grounded in reconstructed history or anthropology or religious studies or psychology or developmental theory or positivism, can change that [that is, that depictions of God in the Hebrew Bible are also violent] or serve as an excuse of 'understanding'."¹²⁵

Yet another strategy correlates the prophetic metaphors with other biblical books and seeks to counteract the rhetorical violence against women in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Carleen Mandolfo follows this approach when she recovers Zion's voice in the book of Lamentations and defines it as a challenge to "God's abusing voice."¹²⁶ Daughter Zion talks back to God and refuses to submit to the prophetic charges of her guilt and punishment in the form of rape, abuse, and murder. In Lamentations, says Mandolfo, Zion disputes the validity of these charges and questions "the hegemony" of God's authority over her. Only when readers recover the different voices from the biblical text will they take on their "responsibility to protect victims of abuse."¹²⁷

Finally, some commentators encourage wrestling with the difficult texts and trying to take them back. Julia M. O'Brien acknowledges that "I find myself less willing than in the past to write off texts that offend me. . . . I tend to wrestle with them instead,"¹²⁸ because in this way androcentrism does not have the last word. As Miles puts it:

"Taking back the text" becomes a means of liberation; it marks an act of inhabiting the gap and breaking the silence through the power of imagination. . . . It does not leave, in this case, the "daughters of Zion" as silent and as victim, an act of gynocide. Instead, it offers them a voice of advocacy by naming the violence committed against them and holding their perpetrator(s)

accountable. Confronting the androcentric perspectives (en)gendering the divinely sanctioned abuse of power perpetrated against Woman within this rape text is crucial to breaking the cycle of a patriarchal ethos of violence perpetuated by its uncritical readers. Only by critically engaging in a resistant reading can we re-inscribe valuation for devaluation and reverse the (circum) (in)scribed fate of the “daughters of Zion” from victimization, from textual marginalization, from “other.” Only by re-reading can we begin to envision a society that fosters values of sharing, warmth, and equality among gender relations.¹²⁹

Reading the text and rereading the readings of the text help one to come to grips not only with metaphoric rape in the text but also with rape in the world. The goal of this strategy is that readers learn to connect texts, interpretations, and the world and to interpret toward justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, including animals and nature. As a *via negativa*, rape metaphors provide direction and purpose in the negative, guiding toward the healing of the world, what the Jewish mystics called *tikkun olam*. Perhaps readers of the prophetic poetics of rape will come to understand that a “raping God” does not exist. Such a god is an invention of biblical prophecy. Majella Franzmann said it well: “The metaphor is a scandal—a scandal for the human persons who thought it worthwhile to express some aspect of God in this way, rather than a scandal about this God.”¹³⁰ As problematic image, then, the biblical rape metaphor should not be classified as a “sacred” witness.



CONCLUSION

THE BLESSING OF A SACRED WITNESS

“In naming it [sexual violence], we reclaim the truth which we know, that the way things are is not the way they have to be,” writes feminist ethicist Marie M. Fortune.¹ This study has accomplished just that: it has named the manifold versions of rape, as understood from feminist perspectives, and located these versions in biblical texts of prose and poetry. We visited acquaintance rape in the stories of Dinah, Tamar, Abishag the Shunammite, and Susanna. We encountered the rape of enslaved women in the narratives of Hagar, Bilhah and Zilpah, and the royal concubines to understand how rape links both to gender and class. We examined marital rape fantasies about Sarah, Rebekah, Ms. Gomer, and Bathsheba. We evaluated biblical and ancient Near Eastern rape laws and also noted the connection of rape to legislation on incest and bestiality. The link between misogyny and rape in times of peace and war occupied us in the stories about the unnamed concubine and the women of Jabesh-gilead and Shiloh. That the recognition of male rape is a possibility became clear in the narratives about Ms. Potiphar, Delilah, and Lot’s daughters. These stories indicated also that androcentric interests might have had a say in disguising Joseph’s and Samson’s accountability for sexual violence and, in Lot’s case, incest. Finally, our investigation considered the prophetic “theology of a rapist,” which depicts even God as an endorser and perpetrator of sexual violence, probably the theologically most disturbing chapter of this book.

All of these investigations were necessary to assert “that the way things are is not the way they have to be.” Biblical texts do *not* prescribe rape as an unavoidable fact in life. Instead, they are a “sacred witness” to the ongoing pervasiveness, existence, and harm of rape in the world then and now. This is the theo-ethical conviction from

of *Biblical Love Stories*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 38.

96. See, for example, the discussion by J. Cheryl Exum, "Why, Why, Why, Delilah?" in eadem, *Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 215 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 175–237.

97. See also Carol Smith, "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?" in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 92–116.

98. The Septuagint translates the pronoun accordingly, perhaps hinting at the sexual nature of the moment.

99. See, for example, Arthur Cundall, *Judges: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England/Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1968), 178; James L. Crenshaw, *Samson: A Secret Betrayed, a Vow Ignored* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 93; Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 161; Tammi J. Schneider, *Judges* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 220, 222; Carolyn Pressler, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 220. Some ignore the significance of this verb; see, for example, Gregory Mobley, *The Empty Men: The Heroic Tradition of Ancient Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 191–94.

100. See, for example, Hilary B. Lipka, *Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 7 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 253.

101. My colleague Richard D. Nelson (W. J. A. Power Professor of Biblical Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation at Perkins School of Theology) suggested this possibility to me in a private e-mail correspondence on December 18, 2008.

102. The verb appears also in Gen 26:8, where it may connote sexual abuse; see the discussion on marital rape in chapter 4 above.

103. Lori Rowlett, "Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah," in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ken Stone, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 334 (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 106–15, here 106.

104. *Ibid.*, 109.

105. *Ibid.*

106. *Ibid.*, 110.

107. *Ibid.*

108. *Ibid.*, 111.

109. *Ibid.*, 115.

110. *Ibid.*

111. McCann, *Judges*, 108.

112. Soggin, *Judges*, 256.

113. Rowlett, "Violent Femmes and S/M," 108.

7. Resisting the Theology of a Rapist

1. Quoted in Sally Robinson, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 60.

2. Tim Rohrer, "The Metaphorical Logic of (Political) Rape Revisited: The New Wor(l)d Order," *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 115–37.

3. Rohrer's analysis is based on the earlier one by George Lakoff, "Metaphor in Politics: An Open Letter to the Internet (1991)," <http://uch-com.botik.ru/IHPCS/MET/WebLibrary/Lakoff/Metaphor-in-Politics.html> (accessed November 24, 2009).

4. *Ibid.*, 7.

5. *Ibid.*, 8.

6. *Ibid.*, 9.

7. *Ibid.*, 11.

8. Perhaps Isa 3:16–17 is a preexilic text, although some commentators question an early date. For example, Joseph Blenkinsopp is uncertain if Isaiah or a later writer composed the passage (*Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 201.

9. Johnny Miles, "Re-reading the Power of Satire: Isaiah's 'Daughters of Zion,' Pope's 'Belinda,' and the Rhetoric of Rape," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31, no. 2 (2006): 193–219, here 206.

10. E. Rachel Magdalene, "Ancient Near Eastern Treaty-Curses and the Ultimate Texts of Terror: A Study of Divine Sexual Abuse in the Prophetic Corpus," in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 326–52.

11. For another example of the poetics of rape in which the wife of a prophet is punished, see Hosea 1–3, esp. 2:3, 9–10. See also chapter 4 above, pp. 119–127.

12. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 201.

13. See, for example, Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, trans. John Bowden, 2nd rev. ed., Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); Gene M. Tucker, "The Book of Isaiah 1–39: Introduction,

Commentary, Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 6:25–305, here 81.

14. So Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 201. See also J. Cheryl Exum, “The Ethics of Biblical Violence against Women,” in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. John W. Rogerson et al., Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 207 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 248–761, here 252: “I take it as an obscene reference to the woman’s vagina.”

15. Exum, “Ethics of Biblical Violence,” 252. See also Magdalene, “Ancient Near Eastern Treaty-Curses,” esp. 333, 341–46, who links the prophetic metaphors with ancient Near Eastern treaties and the concept of divine covenant to show that the biblical metaphor originated in ancient Near Eastern treaties.

16. Miles, “Re-reading the Power of Satire,” 209.

17. *Ibid.*, 216.

18. *Ibid.*, 215.

19. So also Christl M. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space, and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 108: “YHWH reveals himself as the perpetrator.”

20. This translation is taken from Angela Bauer, *Gender in the Book of Jeremiah: A Feminist-Literary Reading*, Studies in Biblical Literature 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 101–2. A similar passage appears also in Jer 49:10, in which God threatens the male-personified nation of Edom with stripping him bare and uncovering his hiding places. The verb “to strip” (הִשָּׁחַת) appears also in Jer 13:26 and the verb “to uncover” (גִּלָּה) appears in many rape poems, such as Jer 13:22.

21. So, for example, William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1–25*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 414. See also R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), 87: “Jerusalem is now to be faced with the inevitable fate of violence and rape that awaited a young woman captured as a prisoner of war (v. 26).”

22. Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 303.

23. Miles, “Re-reading the Power of Satire,” 201.

24. *Ibid.*, 211.

25. *Ibid.*, 209.

26. See, for example, Bauer, *Gender in the Book of Jeremiah*, 103–4; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 303; Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 414.

27. See related but less explicit passages in Jer 2:14–25, 33–3:20; 4:18, 20; 6:8; 13:24–27; 15:15–16; 22:20–23; 30:12–15.

28. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 303.

29. *Ibid.*, 304.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. Clements, *Jeremiah*, 88.

33. Miles, “Re-reading the Power of Satire,” 214.

34. See Gracia Fay Ellwood, “Rape and Judgment,” *Daughters of Sarah* 11 (1985): 9–13, here 13.

35. Gerlinde Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship between YHWH and Israel in the Prophetic Books*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 120.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, 134.

38. Exum, “Ethics of Biblical Violence,” 253.

39. *Ibid.*, 265. See also Christina Nießen, “Schuld, Strafe und Geschlecht: Die Auswirkungen der Genderkonstruktionen auf Schuldzuweisungen und Gerichtsankündigungen in Jer 23,9–32 und Jer 13,20–27,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 48, no. 1 (2004): 86–96, here 96: “Frauen werden hier ausschließlich über ihre Sexualität definiert, die als unkontrolliert gilt und mit dem Bösen identifiziert wird. Männliche Sexualität hingegen ist positiv konnotiert und kann, da sie als Bestrafungsmittel eingesetzt wird, für Gerechtigkeit sorgen.”

40. Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington, “Rape as a Military Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible,” in *A Feminist Companion to The Latter Prophets*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 318.

41. The translation of this and the following passages from Ezekiel is that of the NRSV, slightly modified.

42. Mary E. Shields, “Multiple Exposures: Body Rhetoric and Gender in Ezekiel 16,” in *Prophets and Daniel: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 140.

43. Robert P. Carroll, “Whorusalamin: A Tale of Three Cities as Three Sisters,” in *On Reading Prophetic Texts: Gender-Specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkelen van Dijk-Hemmes*, ed. Bob Becking and Meindert Dijkstra, Biblical Interpretation Series 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 77. See also the imagery in Lam 1:8–10, 13, 22, which, according to F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp

and Tod Linafelt, are part of “a network of mutually reinforcing images of rape” (“The Rape of Zion in Thr 1,10,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 133 [2001]: 77–81, here 81).

44. The translation of this and the following passages from Ezekiel is that of the NRSV, slightly modified.

45. See also Jer 3:2; Hab 2:15; Zeph 2:15; 3:1. These references to Jerusalem/Zion as bringing destruction upon herself are shorter and less explicit than those in Ezekiel 16 and 23. Lamentations 1:8–10 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem as a consequence of her “grievous sin.” Jerusalem even asks for divine help: “O Lord, look at my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed,” but there is no answer here. For Zion gaining back her voice, see Carleen R. Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogue Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, Semeia Studies 58 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

46. Mary E. Shields, “An Abusive God? Identity and Power/Gender and Violence in Ezekiel 23,” in *Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible—A Reader*, ed. A. K. M. Adam (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2001), 136.

47. *Ibid.*, 144.

48. Shields, “Multiple Exposures,” 146–47.

49. See Shields, “Abusive God?” 149–50.

50. *Ibid.*, 148, 150.

51. *Ibid.*, 150–51.

52. Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995), 113; Shields, “Multiple Exposures,” 152.

53. Shields, “Multiple Exposures,” 153.

54. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Ezekiel in Abu Ghraib: Rereading Ezekiel 16:37–39 in the Context of Imperial Conquest,” in *Ezekiel’s Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality*, ed. Stephen L. Cook and Corrine L. Patton, Symposium Series (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 141–57, here 155.

55. *Ibid.*, 155–56.

56. *Ibid.*, 157. See also the discussion in Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 121–24.

57. Linda Day, “Rhetoric and Domestic Violence in Ezekiel 16,” *Biblical Interpretation* 8, no. 3 (2000): 205–30, here 218.

58. *Ibid.*, 212.

59. See also Hos 2:1–23 for this pattern as it relates to the prophet/God and the prophet’s wife, Gomer.

60. Day, “Rhetoric and Domestic Violence,” 225.

61. *Ibid.*, 227.

62. *Ibid.*, 228.

63. Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, “Ezekiel’s Justifications of God: Teaching Troubling Texts,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 55 (1992): 97–117, here 114.

64. *Ibid.*, 117.

65. The NRSV translates: “and their wives (will be) ravished.” The Brown, Driver, and Briggs lexicon provides two translation options: “to violate, ravish” (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius* [1906; Oxford: Clarendon, 1951], 993).

66. Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 9, 28.

67. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 279.

68. Tucker, “Book of Isaiah 1–39,” 157.

69. Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39: A Commentary*, trans. R. A. Wilson, Old Testament Library (London: SCM, 1974), 19.

70. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 118, 125.

71. Slightly modified translation of the NRSV.

72. Baumann, *Love and Violence*, 192.

73. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 280. See also Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 2 vols., Berit Olam (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 2:443.

74. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 278, 279.

75. *Ibid.*, 280.

76. *Ibid.*

77. John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible 20 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), 92.

78. Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, trans. Margaret Kohl, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 271.

79. Childs, *Isaiah*, 366.

80. The stem *gh* (גח), which was used in Isa 47:2–3, appears also, for example, in Nah 2:8 and Lam 4:22 (see below).

81. See Baumann’s translation of this verse in the German (*Liebe und Gewalt: Die Ehe als Metapher für das Verhältnis JHWH—Israel in the Prophetenbüchern* [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000], 218 n. 629):

“Ich will dich schänden.” The English translation of the German text offers a weak translation of v. 6 (*Love and Violence*, 209): “. . . and I will defile you. . .” See also Gerlinde Baumann, *Gottes Gewalt im Wandel: Traditionsgeschichtliche und intertextuelle Studien zu Nahum 1,2-8*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 108 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005).

82. Slightly modified translation of the NRSV.
83. Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets: Part 2*, Forms of the Old Testament Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 71. See also Magdalene, “Ancient Near Eastern Treaty-Curses,” 328–30, 333.
84. Baumann, *Love and Violence*, 52–55, 210.
85. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 2:443.
86. Baumann, *Love and Violence*, 209.
87. Elke Seifert, *Tochter und Vater im Alten Testament: Eine ideologiekritische Untersuchung zur Verfügungsgewalt von Vätern über ihre Töchter*, Neukirchener theologische Dissertationen und Habilitationen 9 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 308.
88. The repeated use of the Hebrew stem *znh* (זנח) has led interpreters to characterize woman Babylon as a prostitute. The verb is usually translated as “to play the harlot” or “to commit adultery.” See Phyllis Bird, “To Play the Harlot: Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor,” in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 75–94.
89. Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 2:24.
90. Mayer I. Gruber, “Nineveh the Adulteress,” in *Prophets and Daniel: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 220–25, here 225.
91. Baumann, *Love and Violence*, 211–12.
92. Francisco O. García-Treto, “The Book of Nahum: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 7:591–619, here 615. Despite these comments, he entitles this section in his commentary as “Nahum 3:4–7, The Humiliated Prostitute” (emphasis added).
93. See also Erhard Gerstenberger, “קשע ‘āšaq,” *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. Heinz-Joseph Fabry and Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1989), 6:442–46, here 443.
94. Baumann, *Love and Violence*, 179.
95. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 137.

96. Adele Berlin, *Lamentations: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 114. See also Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 141–60.
97. This translation is based on Bauer, *Gender in the Book of Jeremiah*, 114.
98. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 113.
99. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 552.
100. *Ibid.*, 553.
101. Bauer, *Gender in the Book of Jeremiah*, 114.
102. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 398.
103. *Ibid.*
104. Patrick D. Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (2001), 6:553–926, here 729–30.
105. Ken Stone, “‘You Seduced Me, You Overpowered Me, and You Prevailed’: Religious Experience and Homoerotic Sodomasochism in Jeremiah,” in *Patriarchs, Prophets and Other Villains*, ed. Lisa Isherwood (London/Oakville: Equinox, 2007), 101–9.
106. *Ibid.*, 106.
107. *Ibid.*, 107.
108. *Ibid.*, 109.
109. *Ibid.*
110. Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies*, Moreshet Series 2 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978), 325.
111. Others characterize 30:9–15 as a poem and entitle it “One Whom God Has Humbled”; see J. Gerald Janzen, *Job: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 206.
112. Samuel R. Driver and George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner, 1921), 1:254.
113. See Gordis, *Book of Job*, 333; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 415: “God is the subject of the verb here.”
114. For this translation, see Habel, *Book of Job*, 414.
115. Gordis, *Book of Job*, 326.
116. E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Nelson, 1967), 437.

117. Driver and Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Job*, 256.
118. Quoted in S. Tamar Kamionkowski, "Gender Reversal in Ezekiel 16," in *Prophets and Daniel: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 170–85, here 171–72.
119. Gordon and Washington, "Rape as a Military Metaphor," 325.
120. For the discussion of the real-life implications of metaphors, see Athalya Brenner, "On Prophetic Propaganda and the Politics of 'Love': The Case of Jeremiah," in *A Feminist Companion to The Latter Prophets*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 259: "Fantasy in pornography, as in rape, is not simply a fantasy of sex and desire. . . . Within the fantasy desire becomes a metaphor which reflects social 'reality'."
121. Athalya Brenner, "Some Reflections on Violence against Women and the Image of the Hebrew Bible," in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs (New York/London: Continuum, 2004), 79.
122. Miles, "Re-reading the Power of Satire," 215.
123. Gruber, "Nineveh the Adulteress," 224.
124. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion*, 135, 136.
125. See Brenner, "Some Reflections on Violence against Women," 79.
126. Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back*, 127.
127. *Ibid.*, 127.
128. Julia M. O'Brien, "In Retrospect . . . Self-Response to 'On Saying No' to a Prophet," in *Prophets and Daniel: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 206–19, here 218–19.
129. Miles, "Re-reading the Power of Satire," 216.
130. Majella Franzmann, "The City as Woman: The Case of Babylon in Isaiah 47," *Australian Biblical Review* 43 (1995): 119, here 19.

Conclusion

1. Marie M. Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 237.
2. This was the subtitle of Marie Fortune's earlier book: *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1980).
3. Jeffrey Gettleman, "Rape Victims' Words Help Jolt Congo into Change," *New York Times*, October 17, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/18/world/africa/18congo.html> (accessed March 18, 2009);

idem, "Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War," *New York Times*, October 7, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/world/africa/07congo.html> (accessed March 18, 2009).

4. For more information on the problem of Christian anti-Judaism and anti-Old Testament attitudes, see, for example, Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz, eds., *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Crucified Jew: Twenty Centuries of Christian Anti-Semitism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); and Charlotte Klein, *Anti-Judaism in Christian Theology*, trans. Edward Quinn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

5. Julia M. O'Brien, "In Retrospect . . . Self-Response to 'On Saying No' to a Prophet," in *Prophets and Daniel: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 206–19, here 218–19.

6. Johnny Miles, "Re-reading the Power of Satire: Isaiah's 'Daughters of Zion,' Pope's 'Belinda,' and the Rhetoric of Rape," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31, no. 2 (2006): 193–219, here 216.

7. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, "Ezekiel's Justifications of God: Teaching Troubling Texts," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 55 (1992): 97–117, here 117.



SACRED WITNESS

RAPE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

SUSANNE SCHOLZ

FORTRESS PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS