2013

Dangerous Feminine Sexuality: Biblical Metaphors and Sexual Violence Against Women

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DANGEROUS FEMININE SEXUALITY: BIBLICAL METAPHORS AND SEXUAL
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Master of Humanities

BY

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B.A., Wright State University, 2009

2013
Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

March 7, 2013

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY
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Biblical Metaphors and Sexual Violence Against Women</u> BE ACCEPTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
<u>Master of Humanities</u>.

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ABSTRACT

Ewing, Lisa Marie. M.H. Masters of Humanities Program, Wright State University, 2013.
Dangerous Feminine Sexuality: Biblical Metaphors and Sexual Violence Against
Women.

This analysis responds to an ongoing debate between feminist and traditional
readings of sexually violent (SV) metaphors in the prophetic texts of Hosea, Jeremiah,
and Ezekiel, and the New Testament book of Revelation. Whereas feminist scholars have
often argued that such metaphors are built upon the exploitation of women's sexuality,
traditionalist scholars have insisted that the metaphors are merely literary devices that
should only be read within their historical and literary contexts. Taking a moderate
position, this analysis uses the cognitive metaphor theory to explain that the SV
metaphors depend on cognitive associations of dangerous feminine sexuality to relate to
historically-specific concerns of the original authors and audiences. This analysis then
examines said historically-specific concerns to reveal the literary function of the
metaphors in their original contexts. Finally, this analysis closes by considering current
sociopsychological concerns that cause contemporary society to continue relying on the
same cognitive associations of dangerous feminine sexuality as seen the SV metaphors.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the students, faculty, and staff of the Wright State University
Women's Studies Program.

Thank you for contributing to who I am today.

One day, we shall overcome rape culture.

I: THE METAPHOR DEBATE AND COGNITIVE METAPHOR THEORY

Some of the Biblical authors used metaphors that depict geographic locations of

the Ancient Near East (specifically the cities of Babylon and Jerusalem, and the nation of

Israel) as adulterous wives and sexually-robust whores whose actions lead to sexually

humiliating punishments for their sins.[1] In such metaphors, these "women" are sexually

violated as retribution for committing acts of sexual immorality; these metaphors

symbolize the consequences of apostasy and sinful activity. These particular metaphors

are in the Hebrew prophetic books of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The metaphor

represents Israel as an unfaithful wife whose sexually-charged sinful acts of infidelity are

violently confronted: "she" (Israel/Jerusalem) is sexually shamed by her jilted "husband"

(YHWH). Specifically, in these metaphors the wife/Israel is (1) denounced from her title

as wife (Hosea 2:2; Jeremiah 3:8); (2) cut from her husband's/YHWH's provided

resources for her survival (Hosea 2:3, 9; Ezekiel 16:39); and (3) punished for her adultery

with public stripping/sexual humiliation (Hosea 2:3, 10; Jeremiah 13:26; Ezekiel 16:37).

This metaphor is also found in the New Testament book of Revelation: the author

describes a majestic prostitute with many lovers, and who is "drunk with the blood of

saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus" (Revelation 17:6, NRSV).[2] The prostitute,

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[1] These metaphors should not to be confused with Biblical narratives about sexual assault, such as the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34), the gang-rape of the Levite concubine (Judges 19:22-29), and the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13). The narratives portray actual events of sexual assault as part of a story; in the metaphors, sexual violence is used only figuratively—there is no "actual" sexually violent act committed.

[2] Some scholars identify the metaphor in Revelation 2:19-25 (e.g., Barr "Women in Myth" 60-62, Duff 69 & 75, and in Pippin's *Apocalyptic Bodies*). The author warns the church in Thyatira against "that woman Jezebel" who led followers of Jesus into sexual immorality (2:20). He ordered for her to be punished by "throwing her on a bed" and for her lovers to join her suffering (2:22).

called "Babylon the Great Mother of Whores and Earthly Abominations" (17:5), is brutally destroyed by her enemies, who strip her naked, murder, burn, and eat her (17:16). By applying the name "Babylon" to Rome the Whore, the author connects his metaphor to the prophetic versions of the metaphor: as an apostate, the prophets' insist that Israel's fornication and sin against YHWH lead to the Babylonian invasion. Revelation reverses the original metaphor as used in the prophetic text: the prophets presented Israel/Jerusalem as the whore and apostate, whereas Revelation depicts the whore as the city of Rome, not Jerusalem. The ancient city is portrayed as an evil, corrupt, and sinful empire in comparison to the "New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2), now presented as holy and prosperous (Rossing 2). The purpose of reversing the metaphor is to warn the audience to avoid the same fate as Israel had during the Babylonian invasion: he calls for the followers of Jesus to "come out of her [Rome]" so they would "not take part in her sins" and that they would "not share in her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). Therefore, while the prophetic texts use the metaphor to emphasize that Israel deserved punishment for playing the whore, Revelation calls for its follows to turn away from the Whore lest they be punished alongside her, just as Israel had been punished.

These metaphors are controversial. Feminist critics have argued that these metaphors are sexually violent[3] because they are built upon exploitation and objectification of feminine sexuality (Day "The Bitch Had It Coming" 235; Nelavala 62; Pippin "Death and Desire" 58; Thistlethewaite 107). Marla Selvidge provides an excellent summary of these feminist concerns: she claims that the metaphors "portray

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[3] The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines "sexual violence" as "any sexual act that is perpetrated against someone's will" ("Sexual Violence: Definitions"). This includes "nonconsensual" acts of either "completed" or "attempted" sexual contact; this also includes "non-contact sexual abuse," which can be anything from making sexually abusive threats or inflicting sexual humiliation on another person with the intention "to accomplish some other end" on the perpetrator's part (Ibid.). In this analysis, the use of the term SV shall refer to non-contact sexual abuse.

women either being sadistically brutalized or violently coerced through language that uses their bodies and sexuality as metaphors for activities which threaten the writer" (Selvidge 275). The overall concern of such feminist critics is that these metaphors encourage sexual violence (SV) against women (275; Newsom 381). This contradicts more conventional readings of the texts, which often argue that the metaphors are merely literary devices intended for specific purposes (381; Moughtin-Mumby 1). Disagreement between feminist and conventional readings of the metaphors has caused a "gulf" to develop between the two opposing groups (1).

This present analysis responds to this ongoing debate, taking a moderate position between conventional and feminist standpoints. This analysis first argues that the SV metaphors ultimately depend on cognitive associations of destructive feminine sexuality (i.e., the image of women who use their feminine wiles to do evil), which in the texts relate to historically-specific concerns of the original authors/audience. The authority of the SV metaphors ends with the texts themselves, as they correspond to such historically-specific concerns. Furthermore, in response to feminist concerns, this analysis argues that the same cognitive associations in the SV metaphors still exist in present-day society not merely because the metaphors influence current sexual ideologies; rather, deeper sociopsychological concerns prevent contemporary culture from moving beyond the same cognitive associations that supported the authors of the SV metaphors.

This analysis will examine the literary function that these metaphors serve in the prophetic texts of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel of the Hebrew Scriptures, and New Testament book of Revelation. The discussion of these texts will concentrate on the metaphors as they are used for literary purposes in light of the unique sociohistorical

context of each text. Using the cognitive metaphor theory, this analysis will examine the

SV metaphors in terms of how they fit with the overall context of both the larger text and

the social world in which they were written. This analysis will show how the metaphors

depend on ancient cultural perceptions of women's sexuality to support the texts'

purpose. This analysis stresses that, it is best that the SV metaphors remain in their

unique sociohistorical and literary contexts.

This analysis will close by shifting from sociohistorical investigations of the SV

metaphors to exploring potential reasons why similar cognitive associations as those

within the SV metaphors prevail in contemporary society. To provide such a discussion,

this analysis will then examine present-day culture's continued reliance on similar

cognitive associations of women's sexuality as destructive. This discussion will evaluate

potential psychosocial factors enabling society to justify similar cognitive associations of

women's sexuality as destructive as appropriate and reasonable. The final discussion will

demonstrate that such cognitive associations reflect societal concerns that certainly

compare to the SV metaphors, but that are beyond mere textual influence. The final

discussion hopes to end this analysis with a meaningful contemplation of why related

cognitive associations prevail in present-day society, and what will need to done to move

beyond those cognitive associations.

OVERVIEW OF THE DEBATE

This analysis is inspired by the approach of Sharon Moughtin-Mumby, who

presents the SV metaphor debate as an ongoing dispute between two opposing groups of

scholars (Moughtin-Mumby 1). She identifies these groups as "traditional" and

"feminist" scholars (1). On the one hand, as Moughtin-Mumby claims, feminist academics insist that "sexual and marital metaphorical language reinforces negative stereotypes of women and female sexuality and condones male physical violence" (1). She references feminist scholar Athalya Brenner, who identifies the main goal of feminist scholars is the "analyses of female images" found within the text (Brenner "Introduction" 21; cf. Moughtin-Mumby 1). Brenner points out that according to feminist scholars, the SV metaphors "constitute an act of religious propaganda anchored in preconceptions of gender relations and the nature of female sexuality which reinforces a vision of negative female sexuality as against positive or neutral male sexuality" (Brenner "Introduction" 26; cf. Moughtin-Mumby 1). Overall, feminist scholars ponder whether women can trust the authority of a text in which "patriarchal" images of male violence are presented as morally justifiable (Brenner "Introduction" 37). On the other hand, traditionalist scholars approach the texts with a different goal in mind. Moughtin-Mumby states that the "persistent response" of "more traditional scholarship" claims that "such readings miss the point: these are 'only' metaphors" that "should be read within their historical and literary contexts" (Moughtin-Mumby 1). The goal in this context is to interpret the metaphor based upon that "historical and literary context."

Moughtin-Mumby's grouping of the opposing scholars as "traditional" and "feminist" oversimplifies the point of view of each scholar within both categories. Moughtin-Mumby's classification incorrectly assumes that the term "feminism" encompasses a homogenous, unified group with a single purpose. While most feminists certainly have the common goal to eradicate sexism from society, feminism is highly diverse and incorporates various identities, interests, and ideologies. To reduce the term

"feminism" to a single meaning would be to overlook its complex nature. Furthermore, in the debate pertaining to SV metaphors, it is misleading to simply refer to one side as "traditionalist" and the other as "feminist," as both groups may contain scholars who personally identify as feminists.

This brings us to a new question: how is it possible for both the so-called "traditionalist" and "feminist" scholars (using Moughtin-Mumby's classifications) to be feminist-identified? It is important to differentiate between feminism as a *personal identity* and feminism as an *academic approach*. The difference is that the former relates to a person's political ideology, whereas the latter relates to a specific academic approach and perspective. As a political ideology, feminism encompasses one's personal belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes. Examples of such feminists are activists who petition for feminist political causes, such as those who were involved in the Women's Liberation movement. Feminism as an academic approach, known as "feminist criticism," seeks to examine "the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women" (Tyson 83). Moughtin-Mumby does not discuss any of this; it seems as though she has overlooked this distinction. Yet it is crucial to acknowledge this distinction because to assume that "traditionalists" scholars cannot be feminist-identified sets a false pretense that scholars who favor more conventional readings of the text minimize or even altogether ignore issues concerning women that are raised by the texts.

Therefore, this analysis seeks to avoid the oversimplification of the term "feminism." Therefore, this analysis will omit Moughtin-Mumby's terms "traditionalist" and "feminist." Instead, this analysis will use new terminology that more accurately

summarizes the perspective of each group. From this point forward, the "traditionalist" scholars will be referred to as *sociohistorical scholars* and the "feminist" scholars will be referred to as *feminist-critical scholars.* These new terms summarize the collective position of each group, allowing for a more inclusive definition of "feminism" that could potentially transcend both groups' boundaries.

The next two sections will explore the unique perspectives of each group will be examined. This analysis does not intend to provide a comprehensive examination of all scholarly work from each group; such a review is beyond the scope of this present analysis. Instead, these literature reviews will evaluate carefully-selected works from a wide range of scholars with the goal of highlighting recurring themes and perspectives in each group.

LITERATURE REVIEW: FEMINIST-CRITICAL SCHOLARS

Feminists have long criticized the negative implications that have been historically associated with women's sexuality. Many of these feminists have identified what has been referred to as the virgin/whore dichotomy (sometimes called "the Madonna/Whore complex"). The virgin/whore dichotomy is a "bipolar sexual code for women" that defines women's sexuality only in extremities: a woman is either a "virgin" or she is a "whore" (Conrad Browyn 310). Sociologist Kara Conrad Browyn outlines the definition of this concept by explaining that society defines sexuality in terms "male dominance" (309). She points out that masculinity is "the standard against which all things feminine, including the female body and female sexuality, are defined and understood" (310). In order to be "masculine," a man must "'accomplish' his manhood"

by having sex with multiple women (310). She points out that masculine sexuality is culturally assumed to be a "natural" occurrence resulting from men's "raging levels of testosterone" that gives them the "unruly desire" to sleep with a many women as possible (310).

Conrad Browyn contrasts this perspective of male sexuality with the cultural attitude toward women's sexuality:

> The meaning and significance of female sexuality . . . is defined in relation to and against the natural sexual aggression and prowess of a man. Her body and sexuality are passive objects, the bait on a (story) line that revolves around the fishing expeditions of men. As a consequence, woman's sexuality is fragmented into opposite possibilities: "good girls" submit themselves to a male-defined double standard that says women should not consummate a sexual relationship too often, too quickly, with too many men, or under the wrong circumstances, while "bad girls" proudly defy this standard, only to find they have been played as pawns in a sexual game conceived and controlled by men. (Conrad 310)

In this passage, Conrad Browyn points to a double-standard between socially acceptable male and female sexual roles. According to this logic, it is socially acceptable for men to have many sexual partners, yet it is socially taboo for women to do likewise.

The sexual double-standard and dualistic nature of feminine sexuality has been applied to some feminist Biblical interpretations. Rosemary Radford Reuther argues that much of the Western understanding about sexual relations have been shaped by early Christian theologians' emphasis on an assumed contrast between the soul and body, both

of which were understood in gendered terms. She says the "assimilation of male–female dualism into soul–body dualism" within theological thought formed "the definition of woman, both in terms of her subordination to the male in the order of nature and her 'carnality' in the disorder of sin" to develop (Reuther "Religion and Sexism" 156). According to this thought, the "flesh must be subject to spirit in the right ordering of nature" (157)—or, in other words, the (female) body must be controlled by the (male) spirit to overcome its tendency toward "carnality." Reuther claims this thought process led to the understanding of women's sexuality: a woman whose carnality remained under male control was the virginal "Madonna" figure and the woman who defied male control of her sexuality was the "Whore" (164). The Whore, Reuther continues, is understood as "the very incarnation of the 'fleshy' principle in revolt against its 'head'" (164).

Reuther's idea of deeply-embedded sexual double-standards has shaped the thinking of various feminist scholars. One such scholar is Susan Brooks Thistlethewaite, who points out that the "ability of women's bodies to create life has resulted in awe, fear, and the desire to control that power" from males (Thistlethewaite 106). Thistlethewaite's and Reuther's respective analyses relate to one another in the sense that each has pointed to the unequal nature of the male/female Biblical relationship. As Reuther has pointed out, the "line between human and divine" is understood using a "gender hierarchy" in which the female is in the subordinate role (Reuther "Gaia and God" 180). The female in this case symbolizes "both the creaturely and the unclean" (180). Going from this same idea, Thistlethewaite claims that in texts containing the SV metaphors, the relationship "is not one of mutuality" but rather "it is an image of dominance and subordination" (Thistlethewaite 107). For Thistlethewaite, "tying marriage to the divine-human

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relationship clearly divinizes male superiority in that relationship" (107). Once again following Reuther, she also emphasizes that this model of the text's divine-human relationship "has shaped cultural attitudes toward women" (107).

While feminist-critical scholars such as Reuther and Thistlethewaite have focused upon the inequalities of the male/female Biblical model, other scholars have taken these same ideas into a different direction. Many feminist-critical scholars have pointed out that SV metaphors take advantage of women's sexuality in order to promote a Biblical cause. Peggy L. Day, for example, criticizes such texts for the use of "emotionally loaded language" of "carnal betrayal" used to "manipulate the audience into taking its proffered ideological position" (P. Day "The Bitch Had It Coming" 235). Furthermore, she argues that such images instigate both sexual arousal and "righteous fury and indignation" from the male audience, thus provoking them into action (235). Similarly, Surekha Nelavala points out that such images involve "a chosen, fundamental and patriarchal symbol" strategically used to "designate the enemy as evil, one that is not only drawn from, but has repercussions for, women's lives" (Nelavala 62).

Tina Pippin contributes to the discussion by pointing out the deliberate gendered implications to the text. For example, she refers to the death of the Whore in Revelation 18 as "the most vividly misogynist passage in the New Testament" because the "sexual murder" of a feminine figure "accentuates the hatred . . . of women" (Pippin "Death and Desire" 58). Pippin also claims that it is not a coincidence that a woman's body is used to personify the Roman Empire in the text (94). In response to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's critique that she "takes the symbolism too literally," Pippin asks her readers to imagine the symbolism as reversed, so that the Whore is the perpetrator of SV and the

victim is a man (Pippin "Apocalyptic Bodies" 94). She then asks if the symbolism would

acceptable in this circumstance (94). Pippin then answers her own rhetorical question by

stating that "the gang rape and murder of a male would be totally unacceptable to Biblical

scholars and the 'symbolism' of the empire would break down at this point'" (94). For

scholars such as Day, Nelavala, and Pippin, SV metaphors thus reflect a deep male hatred

for women, using the idea of an unfaithful woman to lead the male audience into thinking

that the unfaithful woman's punishment is justifiable.

In addition to the claim that the text emphasizes male hatred for women, Pippin

also draws parallels to the SV metaphors and pornography. For one thing, she refers to

Revelation as a "pornoapocalypse" (Pippin "Apocalyptic Bodies" 92). She also asks her

readers to ponder the pornographic elements of Revelation, claiming that "pornography,

like horror and utopian literature, goes beyond societal boundaries" (93-94). She states

that pornography is "like horror" in the sense that "the act of violence repeats itself in our

re-readings, in the violence done on the psyche of the victim" (94).

Pippin is hardly the only feminist-critical scholar who has compared SV

metaphors to pornography; this is a popular interpretation amongst feminist-critical

scholars. T. Dorah Setel discusses both the features and functions of pornography, and

then she compares each to the SV metaphors. She first identifies both the features of

pornography, which contains feminine sexuality portrayed as "negative in relationship to

a positive and neutral male standard," the degradation and public humiliation of women,

and women's bodies presented as the "object of male possession and control" (Setel 87).

Next, Setel identifies the functions of pornography:

The *function* of pornography can be summarized as a maintenance of male

domination through the denial, or misnaming, of female experience. Four general

ways in which this denial occurs are: (1) the representation of female

objectification as universal truth, rather than as an oppressive socially constructed

reality that allows the tolerance rather than acceptance of female objectification as

a normal and inevitable feature of human experience, (2) a concern with *sex* and

with *male domination* and *women* as the "what" and "who" or pornography, (3)

teaching and/or expecting women to identify with a male perspective, and (4) a

failure to distinguish and, hence, a denial of the difference among the terms

"prostitute" (as a nonjudgmental term to describe women who use their sexuality

for economic sustenance), "harlot" (implying a woman whose sexuality is "not

subject to control"), and "whore" (the object of male control and degradation).

(87-88, emphasis original)

Setel's definition contends that the crux of pornography is male-centered—that is,

pornography relates to male desires for female bodies. In this context, women in

pornography exist only through the filter of male interpretation; they cannot stand on

their own because the gaze of pornography is male. This fits with the SV metaphors in

the sense that the women in the texts are seen through a similar male gaze; furthermore,

they are images relatable to the male audiences' understanding of the world (Barr

"Women in Myth and History" 67).

This parallel of the SV metaphors to pornography leads us to question whether it

is appropriate to liken an ancient text to contemporary perceptions of sex and

pornography. Some feminist critics argue that there may be a smaller gap between

ancient and contemporary understandings of pornography as one might assume. Setel explains:

> Although feminist discussion has focused extensively on the nature and effects of objectification in the form of contemporary pornography, examination of Biblical texts shows an interesting congruence between ancient and modern depictions of female sexuality . . . While these writings reflect views of female sexuality current in the history of the Israelites before that time, they appear to develop a specific use of female imagery that does not occur in previous periods. They seem to be the first to use objective female sexuality as a symbol of evil. (Setel 86)

Setel goes on to explain that in the aftermath of the Babylonian invasion, the Israelites had a general change in perspective (94). She explains that "the sense of separation from divine protection may have entailed what seemed a basic reversal of right order" (95). Whereas the ancient Israelites had previously felt "superior" under YHWH's protection, the invasion had disrupted their entire way of life because they had been defeated by enemy forces (95).

Taking this a step further, Setel then proposes that Israelite men may have been attempting to "assert their personal and collective dignity as men over against a negative characterization and restriction of women" (95). Judging by this statement, it seems that Setel assumes the defeat of the (male) Israelite military powers led to feelings of emasculation, and thus, the SV metaphors are a manifestation of their desire to regain control and power. In other words, the SV metaphors relate to the psychological desire of Israelite men to reaffirm their jeopardize masculinity. Although Setel raises an interesting

point, her explanation of how gender fits into this issue lacks clarity; she does not fully explain how she came to such a conclusion.

Despite the frequency of feminist-critical concerns about alleged connections between the texts, pornography, and masculinity, the problem is that such interpretations assume narrow definitions of "pornography" and "masculinity." These limited definitions leave little room for historical or cultural context, assuming that pornography or masculinity (or both) transcends historical and cultural frameworks. It assumes that the definition of pornography and masculinity are universal and not culturally-dependent. This is unlikely, as all cultures have unique sexual ideologies, standards of communicating sexual desires, and socially-acceptable expressions of gender. What is considered to be "pornographic" or "masculine" in some cultures may not necessarily be in other cultures. Thus, in terms of the SV metaphors, it is crucial to look to the unique sociohistorical background of the text to help avoid such assumptions.

LITERATURE REVIEW: SOCIOHISTORICAL SCHOLARS

The sociohistorical scholars are a highly diverse group. Some sociohistorical scholars insist that the texts do not necessarily condemn women per se, thus dismissing feminist-critical concerns. Nelly Stienstra insists that the bottom line is that the metaphors "originated in a patriarchal society where women were not only supposed to be submissive but also very much in need of protection" (Stienstra 97-98). Stienstra says that the metaphorical violence is only a "necessary corollary that should not be taken to imply a negative view of women more generally" (98). John Day applies this logic in a commentary on the book of Hosea: "Hosea has been much studied recently by feminist

scholars . . . The prophet's references to 'whoring' have been much criticized, but his use of this image is not anti-women, since it is applied to the nation as a whole (e.g. Hos 5:3; 6:10), and presumably had particular reference to the male political and religious leaders" (J. Day "Hosea" 572). Day goes on to point out that "stripping a wife naked (v. 3) was a punishment that a wronged husband could inflict" (573), indicating that the metaphor relies on the historically-specific assumption that Israelite men of adulterous wives had the right to inflict such punishments on his wife.

Other sociohistorical scholars are feminist-identified and rely on different scholarly approaches from feminist-critical scholars. These scholars take an interesting approach: while they agree with the more conservative scholars who insist that these metaphors should be interpreted in light of their sociohistorical context, at the same time these feminist scholars acknowledge the repercussions that such texts could have for contemporary readers. While these scholars by no means justify the SV against women in the texts, they offer an explanation that appeals to the text's unique history—a history that does not necessarily apply to contemporary sexual politics.

One such scholar is Renita Weems, an African American womanist who analyzes the Hebrew prophets from a sociohistorical point of view. While she bolsters Stienstra's and Day's interpretations, she ultimately rejects the common interpretation that the metaphors should be read as the story of a jilted husband extracting his righteous vengeance on his adulterous wife. Rather, Weems offers an alternative approach:

In ancient Hebrew culture . . . part of what it meant to be a man was to protect the sexual purity of the women in the household . . . Women's sexuality was expected

to be firmly in the hands of men. Male status and prestige rose and fell according to a man's ability to control the sexual activities of the women in the household. Honor . . . was accorded only to those men who were able to defend their family, who produced legitimate and numerous (male) heirs, and who exercised authority over the subordinates in their household . . . At stake, then, in the image of the outraged, avenging husband was not the husband's wounded pride, his fear of rejection, or his fear of a failed marriage—*all of which are rather anachronistic ways of interpreting the metaphor*. Actually at stake were the husband's honor and status as a man. (Weems 44, emphasis added)

Weems goes on to say that Hebrew women were expected to "modest, chaste, industrious, deferring, and willing to submit to male authority," which glorified women's social roles as wives and mothers (44). Women who failed to maintain these standards "threatened the social order" and "brought shame and dishonor upon the man/men who ruled over her household" (44).

Other sociohistorical scholars use a more "literary" approach in their historical analysis of the SV metaphors. Such scholars argue that these metaphors serve a specific literary purpose that does not necessarily extend beyond the text. Barbara Rossing, for example, argues that such metaphors draw upon an ancient literary tradition she calls "two-women topos," in which two "personified female figures" are juxtaposed: one of the female figures is depicted as "seductive and evil" and the other is depicted as "good" (Rossing 14). Rossing claims that these women are merely "symbolic" because "once they have served the purpose of introducing the basic either/or contrast" that the story presents, they are "transformed" back into "cities or empires" (14-15).

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Schüssler Fiorenza sustains Rossing's assessment, arguing that the gendered language in the metaphors do not relate to flesh-and-blood women (Schüssler Fiorenza "Vision of Just World" 13). In both cases, Rossing and Schüssler Fiorenza reject the idea that the text has repercussions for real women's lives, because the feminine imagery is merely a symbol used for a specific purpose. Once used, as Rossing in particular points out, these images vanish from the text. While neither scholar necessarily justifies the violence inflicted upon these feminine images, they do insist that the ideas have a literary history that has little to do with the hatred for women that their more radical feminist contemporaries have argued.

While sociohistorical scholars are correct to point out the important historical and literary functions of the SV metaphors, pointing out these functions does not remove the problem that feminist-critical readers have brought to our attention. Carol Newsom effectively summarizes the feminist-critical concern of the metaphors: "The objection that [the images are] only a metaphor, a symbol, does not eliminate the problem that the text creates for women readers. The author's exultation over the mutilation . . . of a woman– even a figurative one—tragically implies that women are sometimes deserving of such violence" (Newsom 381). Such concerns present ethical issues that sociohistorical scholars should not ignore. This is particularly true for American scholars, as the United States has a frequent occurrence of SV against women and girls. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), about one in five American women are victims of sexual assault at some point in their lives ("Understanding Sexual Violence"). Furthermore, the statistics also show that the majority of SV victims are women and the majority of the perpetrators are men ("Understanding Sexual Violence"). These statistics

suggest that SV is likely to be a gender-related crime, which validates the concerns of feminist critics.

Yet at the same time, it also cannot be ignored that there are important sociohistorical factors limiting the extent to which the SV metaphors are applicable to our contemporary society. While it is true that ideologies of feminine sexuality as potentially dangerous is still present in contemporary society, the texts addresses historically-specific audiences and promotes definitive agendas. These agendas were intended to exclusively speak to the original audiences. Put simply, the world of the original authors and audiences is not the world in which contemporary readers live .Therefore, this analysis insists that the ancient audience's experiences should be the fundamental concern in approaching SV metaphors, as the text itself was shaped by these experiences.

THE LITERARY FUNCTION OF METAPHOR

The power of metaphors can be summarized by stating that words *matter.* Fifth century Christian theologian Augustine stated that words are "signs": at the most basic level, each word that a speaker uses in a sentence indicates a specific sign that "represents things or realities other than themselves" (Huber 58). A word solely operates "*in reference* to other things," and not as an independent entity (58, emphasis added). The power of words is especially important in terms of how metaphors function: the power held by a certain word (its "sign") is what ultimately gives power to the metaphor. Thus, metaphors are "one of the most powerful . . . tools of persuasion" (Moughtin-Mumby 1).While metaphors may seem to be mere figures of speech that "uses images transposed into words" to "express a relationship" between the words, metaphors force the reader to

make thoughtful connections between two dissimilar concepts to bring about a certain

meaning (Primavesi 160-161).

How does this process work? Consider the following metaphor that is common in

American vernacular. Imagine that there are three Americans, two males and one female.

Imagine that the female is overweight and slothful; one of the males (Male A) dislikes

this. He is expressing his dislike for her to the other male (Male B). To express this

dislike, he uses the following metaphor:

She is a cow.

In this case, Male A has taken two dissimilar concepts (i.e., a woman—a human— and a

cow) and transposed them together: *the woman is the cow*. To understand the metaphoric

language that is being used, Male B must take these dissimilar concepts and connect

them. First, he relies on his present images of a cow: *a "cow" is very large farm animal*

that spends most of the day standing in a pasture eating grass. Second, he takes these

images of cows and applies them to the female. How is the female like a cow? Like the

cow, she is large. Also, since cows spend the majority of their time eating, Male B

interprets this as "lazy" or "unproductive." Thus, like the cow, she is also lazy. Putting

these concepts together, Male B concludes that the female is a cow because *like* the cow,

she is large and lazy.

To come to this conclusion in the above example, Male B must consider how each

unrelated concept (i.e., the female human and the cow—two completely different species)

relate to one another (i.e., they have similar personality characteristics). Male B is

required to use his analytical thinking skills to interpret the concept that Male A is trying

to communicate. This method is the "cognitive process" of a metaphor—that is, the development of ideas as a person uses his or her present ideas of two dissimilar concepts to create a new meaning. This new meaning is what Anna Primavesi refers to as "cognitive gain," or rather, a new way of presenting an idea (162). This theory is known as the "cognitive metaphor theory," which claims that a "metaphor is a ubiquitous and indispensable linguistic and cognitive tool" that is applied "systematically to conceive of our more abstract, subjective experiences . . . in terms of concrete, physical experiences" (Semino and Steen 235).

Also important to consider is that metaphors are dependent on the culture in which they are used. Augustine stated that words are a matter of "convention," meaning that in order for a word to effectively communicate a certain idea, a culture must come to a general agreement for a word to have meaning (Huber 58). Scholars of literature often stress this idea. For example, Elena Semino and Gerard Steen state that metaphors are a "reflection of [the author's] individual worldview" (Semino and Steen 239). Also, Richard Bailey points out that "we talk about things the way we conceive of them, and this is fashioned through and grounded in experience and culture" (Bailey 59).

If cultural experiences influences metaphor, this implies that a metaphor's meaning is specific to the culture in which it exits; elsewhere, the meaning changes. For example, going back to the example of the woman/cow metaphor, consider how the metaphor could change in a non-American context. If the metaphor is used in a culture in which cows are considered sacred, such as in India, does the metaphor have the same meaning? Certainly not! It can be logically concluded that in such a culture, referring to a female as a "cow" may not harbor the same negative meaning as in the culture of Males

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A and B. Therefore, to understand the concept that Male A wished to communicate, it is important to consider the important social and cultural factors that influence the way both Male A (the speaker) and Male B (the audience) conceptualize cows. As Bailey points out, "cultural awareness is at the heart of intercultural communication" (Bailey 68).

Not all metaphors are as innocent as the woman/cow example. Kirsten Nielsen has pointed out that "metaphors are not as harmless as they may seem" (Nielsen 27). Jean Kim further presses this issue by stating that metaphors have the power to "reinforce the status quo of the establishment of society" (Kim 70). In the case of SV Biblical metaphors, the reinforcement of status quo seems to be crucial to the metaphors' intended purposed. Kim points out that "by detailing the sexual abuse of an unfaithful wife," the SV metaphors "appeal to female fear of male violence in order to keep female sexuality in check" (71). Furthermore, since the texts' were generally aimed at a male audience, Kim concludes that the texts "intended to warn the male audience to be aware of the sexual danger of their wives, and to control the sexuality of their wives" (71). She elaborates:

> In ancient Hebrew society, women . . . as mothers are idealized whereas women as wives are sometimes causes of trouble because their sexuality can threaten society when it is not channeled into the business of producing legitimate heirs. In both roles, women were thus no more than sexual beings whose sexuality did not belong to themselves but to their husbands or their fathers. In terms of this socio-cultural context, it is likely that the purpose of the metaphoric use of female sexuality is to call upon the male audiences to reaffirm their belief in a male honor system where a man's prestige rested on his ability to control the behavior

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of his wife. This means that the prophets and their male audience share the same

cultural convention regarding feminized cities, and thus draw the same parallels

between a masculinized God's reaction to Israel's idolatry and the husbands'

reaction to their wives' adultery. (71)

As the above passage reflects, SV metaphors have specific purposes of driving forward

the authors' main message: the punishment is well-deserved because the sexually

promiscuous woman had threatened the larger social order.

This brings us to a question: is there a difference between metaphors used in

everyday speech (i.e., the woman/cow example) and metaphors present in literature (i.e.,

the SV Biblical metaphors)? Semino and Steen point out that the "vast majority of studies

of metaphor in literature," indicate that "there is a difference between metaphor in

literature and metaphor elsewhere" (233). They point out that contrary to metaphors

outside of literature, "the metaphorical expressions typically found in literature are more

creative, novel, original, striking, rich, interesting, complex, difficult, and interpretable"

(233). Metaphors are thus different in the literary context because "writers use metaphor

to go beyond and extend our ordinary linguistic and/or conceptual resources" in order to

"provide novel insights and perspectives into human experience" (233). This indicates

that, unlike everyday language, metaphors present in literature are exceptional.

To close this chapter, it is crucial to understand that in analyzing the SV

metaphors, the literary function of metaphor is at the crux of the debate. The cognitive

associations of the ancient audience will be the focus of the next two chapters. The proper

analysis of SV Biblical metaphors must consider "the unique characteristics" of the

metaphor in respect to the overall theme of the texts, as well as how these characteristics "relate to general conventional patterns, that may reflect shared cognitive structures and processes" (Semino and Steen 244). Such characteristics are what give metaphors their meaning. The next two chapters will explore these particular meanings in further detail, paying close attention to how the metaphors relate to the sociohistorical context of the text. By paying attention to this context, we can come closer to imagining the original audience's cognitive association of feminine sexuality—and how that conceptualization relates to the meaning of the metaphor.

II: "BATTERED LOVE": SV METAPHORS IN HOSEA, JEREMIAH, AND EZEKIEL[4]

Even though Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had their respective prophetic careers during different historical periods, all three portrayed Israel or Jerusalem as an adulterous woman. They used sexual metaphors to symbolize the "worship of gods other than YHWH, participation in undesirable cultic practices, or political alliances with foreign nations" (Moughtin-Mumby 1). The collective purpose of such metaphors was to present YHWH as a betrayed husband and Israel as his unfaithful wife whose whoring warranted punishment—that is, the wife in the texts is sexually violated, which symbolizes Israel's military invasions from Assyria and Babylon.[5] As Weems explains, this metaphor claims that as a wife, "Israel's failure to live up to the obligations and expectations" of her marriage was "a legitimate cause for outrage and retaliation by her husband" (Weems 13). She continues by stating that "widely held, deeply felt attitudes" about marriage allowed the prophets' to use the metaphor as a "very valuable tool for the prophets' rhetorical aims" (13-15). Finally, she claims that the prophets' focus on the reconciliation of YHWH (the husband) and Israel (the wife) transforms the violent texts into a story in which YHWH's "love" for his people "triumphs over adversity" (90). This next chapter will expand on Weems' ideas by applying the cognitive metaphor theory to the historical circumstances that support the text.

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[4] The phrase "battered love" is borrowed from Renita Weems' book of the same title (Weems, Fortress Press, 1995).
[5] Refer to pp. 25-41 for specific passages in the prophetic texts, and to pp. 42-44 for more on the military invasions.

As discussed in chapter 1, the cognitive metaphor theory refers to the process in which a metaphor juxtaposes two different concepts to create a new meaning, or a "cognitive gain" (Primavesi 162). The resulting cognitive gain from the metaphor relates to the preexisting understanding of the two dissimilar concepts—that is, to compare the two concepts, the reader must rely on their understanding of the two concepts in order to link them into a new meaning. This chapter will use the cognitive metaphor theory by considering the historical circumstances that enabled ancient authors and audiences to conceptualize the SV metaphor.

This chapter has three parts. First, this chapter will provide brief commentaries about Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, discussing and comparing how each prophet used the SV metaphor. Second, this chapter will consider three relevant aspects of ancient Israelite history: the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Israel and Judah, the broken covenant between YHWH and the Israelites, and the Israelite model of sexuality and marriage. Third, this chapter will culminate in a discussion of how as a collective group, the three prophets took advantage of the ancient (male) audiences' understanding of sex and marriage to lead the audience into recognizing that engaging in polytheistic religious elements compared to adultery against YHWH. Recognizing this concept from the prophets provided the ancient audience's cognitive gain from this metaphor.

HOSEA

The opening lines of Hosea 1 describe YHWH giving Hosea a strange command: "When the Lord first spoke to Hosea, the Lord said . . . 'Go, get yourself a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land will stray from following the Lord.'

So he went and married Gomer daughter of Diblaim" (1:2-3). [6] It is difficult to determine

whether Gomer was a prostitute by trade or merely an unfaithful wife. The term "wife of

whoredom" in 1:2 does not necessarily suggest that Gomer was a prostitute by

occupation (Kelle 189-190). Rather, it suggests that she was either (1) previously married

and unfaithful in that marriage, or (2) faithful during the beginning of her marriage to

Hosea but later committed adultery (190). As Gale Yee points out, the Hebrew language

in the text does not suggest prostitution by occupation: the text uses the term *zanah*,

which is an "inclusive term covering a range of sexual transgressions," which includes

but is not limited to prostitution (Yee 197; cf. Bird "'To Play the Harlot'" 75-76). The

term for prostitute, *zonah*, is not used while describing Gomer (Yee 197). Yee suggests

that it may be more accurate to refer to Gomer not as a "prostitute," but as a

"promiscuous" woman (197; cf. Bird "'To Play the Harlot'" 75-78). The translation of

zanah to mean "promiscuous woman" will be used in this analysis.

After Hosea married this *zanah,* the couple had had three children (1:2-9). Each of

these children bore names that "symbolized judgment for Israel" (J. Day 571). The first

of these children is a son named "Jezreel," which is a valley in the northern kingdom of

Israel. This place called Jezreel relates to a passage in 1 Kings 21, when the prophet

Elijah warned King Ahab that his wife Jezebel would be killed in "the field of Jezreel" (1

Kings 21:23). Jezebel was a Phoenician princess married to King Ahab of the northern

kingdom of Israel; after Ahab married her, he began to incorporate the worship of Baal, a

well-known Canaanite god, into the kingdom (1 Kings 16:31-33). She later began killing

YHWH's prophets (18:5), and she threatened Elijah after he had slaughtered prophets of

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[6] Unless otherwise stated, all biblical references in this chapter are from *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (Berlin, Oxford University Press, 2004).

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Baal (19:1-2). She was killed at Jezreel by being thrown from a window and trampled upon by horses, with only parts of her dismembered body found after the fact (2 Kings 9:33, 35).

The second child is a daughter named "Lo-ruhamah," which translates to "unpitied" (Berlin 1145). YHWH explains that the daughter is to be named Lo-ruhamah because "I will no longer accept the house of Israel or pardon them" (Hosea 1:6). The next verse states that Judah will continue to survive (1:7), which seems to relate to the tensions between the two separate kingdoms at the time. The third child is a son named "Lo-ammi," which translates to "not my people" (Berlin 1145). YHWH explains that this means that "you are not My people, and I will not be your [God]" (1:9).

In this first chapter, Hosea has presented his family life in a way that symbolizes Israel's sins and her impending doom. He has used four major symbols: the *zanah* (Gomer), the events at Jezreel (Jezreel), YHWH's lack of pity to Israel (Lo-ruhamah), and YHWH denouncing Israel as His people (Lo-ammi). By the end of chapter 1, the metaphor has been sketched into a sequential outline. The four symbols thus represent the following narrative arrangement:

1. YHWH "marries" Israel, a *zanah* (i.e., YHWH establishes a covenant with a people who are likely to be unfaithful, as the deliberate use of the term *zanah* implies a pre-existing wanton nature);

2. Ahab married Jezebel and allows Ba'al worship into the kingdom (i.e., Jezreel links to the actions of Ahab and Jezebel, in addition to Elijah's prophecy of Jezebel's impending death at Jezreel);

3. YHWH shames Israel for her sins, turning His mercy away from them; and

4. YHWH denounces Israel as His people; the line "you are not My people and I will not be your [God]" is comparable to the language of a divorce declaration (Berlin 1146).

The first chapter thus wastes no time in addressing the problem Hosea sees: YHWH married Israel, Israel was an unfaithful wife, and YHWH thus will denounce his bride. Yet Hosea is not finished; he will take this metaphor further in the next chapter.

In Hosea 2, the "first cycle of threats" against the wife begins (Yee 199). YHWH "rebukes" his wife, stating "she is not My wife, and I am not her husband" (2:4a). The term "rebuke" as used in this verse "carries legal connotation[s] of arguing against someone in a court of law," suggesting a declaration of divorce against her[7] (Berlin 1146). The language used here duplicates YHWH's denunciation of Israel in 1:9. Next, the husband declares that if she does not "put away her harlotry from her face and her adultery from between her breasts," he will "strip her naked" and "make her like a wilderness" (2:4b-5). This symbolizes God punishing the land of Israel with a drought and causing it to lose its "fertility" (Berlin 1146). Next, the husband segregates his wife from her lovers, building "a wall against her" to separate her from her lovers (2:8-9). The wife, without resources (food, clothing, etc.), she is "naked and shamed" (1146). She receives no help from her lovers, whom her lover has barred from seeing her (1146). At

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[7] Weems translates this verse as "for is she not my wife and am I not her husband?" (Weems 46). This presents the verse not as a divorce declaration but as a "rhetorical question" (Wang-Huei 5). This analysis does not endorse Weems' translation, because she does not reveal a clear justification for her translation of this verse. However, it must be noted that Wang-Huei correctly points out that this removes some of the negative connotations of the statement because as a rhetorical question, the reader is expected to answer with "yes" (8). Thus, Weems' translation could be a possible alternative approach for contemporary feminist readings.

this point, the wife is powerless against her jilted husband as he releases his wrath upon her.

The physical punishment of the wife intensifies in 2:10-13. The wife, who has used the fine things her husband had provided for her (e.g., new grain, wine, oil, silver and gold) to worship Baal, is punished by having these things taken away from her (verse 10). As the annotations in *The Jewish Study Bible* points out, "Baal" is not only the name of a Canaanite god, but is also can mean "husband" (Berlin 1147). Thus, the wife (Israel) has used all that her husband (YHWH) has provided for her for Baal (her lover). As punishment for dishonoring her husband, the husband "takes back" the things he has provided for her and "uncovers her shame in the very sight of her lovers" (2:11-12a). Once again, the text emphasizes that "none [of her lovers] shall save her from Me" (2:12b), which continues to express the powerlessness of his wife. The "uncovering of her shame" indicates that the husband has removed her clothing and exposed her genitals to her lovers (Yee 199).

Some have argued that in Hosea's time, exposing his unfaithful wife's genitals was a punishment that a husband had the right to impose (J. Day 573; Yee 198). However, beyond the SV metaphor as used in the prophetic texts, there is no Biblical evidence that female adulteresses were punished by genital exposure. The closest Biblical connection is a passage in Numbers 4 that describes the uncovering a woman's head (i.e., exposing her hair) as a ritual for investigating a woman suspected to have committed adultery (Numbers 4:18), but it is not clear if this is an intended connection. From a literary standpoint, exposing the wife's private parts symbolizes her vulnerability and sexual shame; it is not necessarily related to any actual real-life circumstances. Yee

comments that the husband's point of view in the story, "her public and physical

punishment compensated for his own loss of honor" (Yee 199).

After the wife's punishment has been carried out, the husband forgives his wife

and accepts her back. In 2:16, he leads his wife "through the wilderness" and "speaks

tenderly" to her. The wife renounces her lovers and promises "to be faithful forever"

(Berlin 1147). Thus, Israel (the wife) declares that YHWH is her "true husband," who in

turn forgives her and restores her fertility (2:17, 20; Yee 199). In this part of the story,

Hosea cleverly manipulates language to further disassociate Israel from Canaanite

religious culture. In 2:18, he writes, "You will call [Me] *Ishi*, and no more will you call

me *Baali*" (emphasis added). Both *Ishi* and *Baali* mean "husband," yet the term *Baali*

literally means "my Baal" (Berlin 1147). As mentioned earlier in this section, *Baal* was

commonly used in Canaanite culture as a term of endearment for "husband." In contrast,

the term *Ishi* means "my man" or "my husband"; while both words technically have the

same meaning, the term *Ishi* is a more general term for "husband" that does not carry the

same religious association as *Baali* (1147). Also, in the next verse YHWH says, "For I

will remove the names of Baalim from her mouth, and they shall nevermore be

mentioned by name" (2:19). Not only must the wife stop referring to YHWH as *Baali,*

but she also must entirely eradicate the term from her vocabulary. This is important

because from a sociocultural perspective, language is a vital tool in influencing one's

cultural perceptions. As British philosopher Peter Winch once stated, "Our idea of what

belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use" (Winch 15).

Changing Israel's language disassociates Israel from Canaanite culture by providing a

new vocabulary to further differentiate themselves from the Canaanites.

Despite the harsh punishment inflicted on the wife, the story ends on a positive note of restoration and reconciliation. In fact, as Nelly Stienstra points out, it is "not just a matter of YHWH taking back His (adulterous) wife," but "an altogether new beginning" (Stienstra 121). Whereas Israel had sinned against YHWH, the new promise for faithfulness negates the past and allows the relationship to move forward. While Hosea went to lengths to condemn Israel for her sins against YHWH, at the same time, he promotes hope for a better future.

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah echoes Hosea's marital metaphor in 2:1-5, drawing parallels to Israel as the "bride" of YHWH with whom YHWH is "divorcing" (Berlin 923). Jeremiah reminisces about good times between YHWH and his bride Israel: "Thus said the Lord: I accounted to your favor the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride—how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of His harvest. All who ate of it were held guilty; disaster befell them" (2:2-3). Whereas Hosea's story immediately portrays the wife as promiscuous (Hosea 1:2; 2:4) and ends with a romantic reconciliation in "the wilderness" (Hosea 2:16), Jeremiah's story begins his nostalgic reflections of how the wife trustingly followed her husband through "the wilderness" prior to her adultery (Jeremiah 2:2). Thus Hosea's version of the metaphor indicates that the wife was always a whore, while Jeremiah's version indicates that the wife had initially been faithful but later broke her covenant. In a sense, this further emphasizes the wife's marital betrayal to her husband.

When Jeremiah finally discusses the wife's infidelity, the tone of his writing changes from nostalgia to anguish:

> Thus said the Lord, what wrong did your fathers find in Me that they abandoned Me and went after delusions and were deluded? . . . I brought you to this country of farm land to enjoy its fruit and its bounty; but you came and defiled My land, you made My possession abhorrent . . . The guardians of the Teaching ignored Me; the rulers rebelled against Me. And the prophets prophesied by Baal and followed what can do no good. (2:5, 7-8).

In this passage, Jeremiah portrays YHWH as wondering what went wrong in the marriage to Israel. This passage is full of emotionally-loaded language, reflecting YHWH as a suffering victim to people who turned away from Him. Jeremiah connects Israel's apostasy to worship of foreign deities with the reference to Baal.

In chapter 3, Jeremiah returns to the divorce concept. YHWH asks if a man can ever go back to his divorced wife, who left him for another man (3:1a). He asks, "Now that you have whored with many lovers, can you return to Me?" (3:1b). Thus, in Jeremiah, the "marriage" metaphor is transformed into a "divorce" metaphor as the result of a "broken marriage" (O'Connor "Oxford Bible Commentary" 491). This connects to Deuteronomical law of divorce, which mandates that a man who has divorced his wife cannot take her back if she has been with other men (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). This does not imply that a divorced woman is unable to ever remarry. The issue here is that she cannot go back to her first husband if she has been with another man, because the man's bloodline may have potentially been corrupted.

Jeremiah's feminine imagery takes an interesting turn in chapter 13, when he compares Jerusalem's upcoming destruction to a woman having her skirts lifted above her head, exposing her private parts to the public:

> What will you say when they appoint as your heads those among you whom you train to tame? Shall not pangs seize you like a woman in childbirth? And when you ask yourself, "Why have these things befallen me?" It is because of your great inequity that your skirts are lifted up, your limbs exposed. . . . Because you forgot Me and trusted in falsehood, I in turn will lift your skirts over your face and your shame shall be seen. I behold your adulteries, your lustful neighing, your unbridled depravity, your vile acts on the hills of the countryside. Woe to you, Jerusalem, who will not be clean! How much longer shall it be? (13:21-22, 25b-27)

Like Hosea, Jeremiah has used images of forced public exposure of a woman's genitals as an act of retribution. The punishment fits the crime: as she "lifted her skirt in wantonness," she will now "have her skirts lifted in order to shame her" (Berlin 954).

Similar to Hosea, Jeremiah's version of the SV metaphor ends with a message of hope: he speaks of a "new covenant" between YHWH and "the House of Israel and the House of Judah" (33:31). This covenant "will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers," which the people had "broken" (33:32). Instead, YHWH makes a new vow: "I will put My Teaching into their inmost being and inscribe it upon their hearts. Then I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (33:33b). In this context, the "Teaching" refers to the Torah (Berlin 991). By being "inscribed" on "their inmost being" the Torah

will be in "the heart of the people so that the covenant cannot be broken again" (991). He then reinforces this new covenant: "No longer will they need to teach one another and say to one another, 'Heed the LORD'; for all of them, from the least to the greatest, shall heed Me—declares the Lord. For I will forgive their inequities, and remember their sins no more" (33:34). In this passage, the Torah will no longer need to be instructed to the people since it will be "inscribed" within their hearts (Berlin 991). This implies a deeper, more intimate understanding of the Torah—rather than a set of teachings, Jeremiah presents this new covenant as wisdom to stay faithful to YHWH. Thus, in this context, the terrible consequences of Israel's sin brought forth a new understanding of the importance of the Torah. As Weems points out, this "contrasts" the image of Israel in Jeremiah 2 as a whoring wife with this renewed version that is "devoted and loyal" to YHWH (Weems 58).

Jeremiah's version of the SV metaphor is not necessarily limited to his prophetic text. Jeremiah is also the credited author of the Book of Lamentations,[8] which also utilizes the SV metaphor. Lamentations 1 contains a lengthy poem that muses over the death of Jerusalem, personifying Jerusalem as a damaged widow:

> Alas! Lonely sits the city once great with people! She that was great among nations is become like a widow; the princess among states is become a thrall. Bitterly she weeps in the night, her cheek wet with tears. There is none to comfort her of all her friends. All her allies have betrayed her; they have become her foes. (1:1-2)

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[8] Most scholars think Lamentations may have been fashioned from a collection of poems penned by an anonymous source in circa 520 BCE (Berlin 1589). The text is credited to Jeremiah because the literary style is very similar to Jeremiah's prophetic text (1589). Even though it is possible that he did not write Lamentations, the text's usage of the SV metaphor is too important to ignore. For the sake of consistency, this chapter will refer to the anonymous author as "Jeremiah."

Jeremiah then refers back to the sexualized imagery used in his prophetic writings:

> Jerusalem has greatly sinned, therefore she is become a mockery. All who
>
> admired her despised her, for they have seen her disgraced . . . Her uncleanness
>
> clings to her skirts. She gave no thought to her future; she has sunk appallingly,
>
> with none to comfort her . . . The foe has laid hands on everything dear to her. She
>
> has seen her Sanctuary invaded by nations which You have denied admission into
>
> Your community. (1:8-10)

Once again, Jeremiah has used sexualized imagery to describe Jerusalem's sin. The

phrase "they have seen her disgraced" alludes to sexual promiscuity; Berlin points out

that the literal translation of "her disgraced" is "her nakedness," which refers to "her

shame" (Berlin 1590). Likewise, "her uncleanliness" refers to the guilt of her sins; the use

of the phrase "her skirts" links to the imagery of Jerusalem's "skirts [being] lifted up" in

Jeremiah 13:22. Furthermore, the reference to her enemies "invading" her "Sanctuary"

appears to be a subtle reference to rape. This does not present Jerusalem necessarily as a

wanton woman who got what she deserved; this presents her as a victim to her enemies.

Even though Lamentations 1:8 says, "Jerusalem has greatly sinned," Jeremiah does not

say in this passage that she is raped *because* she sinned, compared to Jeremiah 13:22

when he says "*It is because of your great inequity* that your skirts are lifted up, your

limbs exposed" (emphasis added).

Lamentations 1 also expands the SV metaphor by incorporating the punishment

from Jerusalem's point of view—a perspective noticeably absent from the other prophetic

writings discussed in this chapter. In 1:12-13, Jeremiah writes, ". . . all who pass along

the road—look about and see: is there any agony like mine, which was dealt out to me when the Lord afflicted me on His day of wrath? From above He sent a fire down into my bones. . . . He had left me forlorn, in constant misery." These verses provide a first person account of Jerusalem's despair: the "agony" and "constant misery" she suffers as a result of her punishment causes her to cry out for sympathy to anyone she sees (Berlin 1591). This first person account goes on to describe Jerusalem as alone and helpless at the mercy of YHWH's wrath (1:14-17), thus provoking a sense of sympathy for Jerusalem. Yet the emphasis on Jerusalem's suffering is quickly shifts to her sense of guilt and repentance. In 1:18, she confesses, "The Lord is in the right, for I have disobeyed Him"; in 1:20, she further confesses her guilt by saying, "See, O Lord, the distress I am in! My heart is in anguish, I know how wrong I was to disobey." Her confessions indicate acceptance of her punishment, despite the anguish it has caused, because she understand that she "disobeyed" the Lord. She concedes that YHWH is "in the right" (1:18) and she is "wrong" (1:20). Thus Jeremiah acknowledges Jerusalem's suffering by providing a first person account of her misery, he quickly reinforces the idea that her agony is the result of her wrongdoing. By portraying Jerusalem as guilty and repentant, Jeremiah further supports his argument that Jerusalem's punishment is justified because she had sinned.

Jeremiah's use of the SV metaphor shames the nation for her sins; she sinned, thus she must face what is coming to her. Yet unlike Hosea, some aspects of Jeremiah's writing do not reflect condemnation, but rather mourning for Jerusalem's fall from grace. Whereas the language in Jeremiah 13 appears to be more accusing, implying that she deserved her punishment (verse 22), his language in Lamentations 1 reflects sorrow and grief. Even as he uses the same SV metaphor as in his prophetic writings, Jeremiah's tone

in this poem is grief-stricken, not necessarily critical. This is interesting, as the change in tone between his prophetic writings and Lamentations 1 reveals the complex nature of Jeremiah's attitude toward Jerusalem. On the one hand, he condemns her; yet in the same breath, he mourns her. Jeremiah's contradictory attitude toward Jerusalem reflects a complicated relationship between YHWH and his people: even though Jerusalem deserved her punishment because she sinned, YHWH still loves her.

EZEKIEL

As if Jeremiah's contradictory attitude toward his wife is not complicated enough, Ezekiel's use of the SV metaphor is even more peculiar. In general, his writings are known to be "some of the most theologically challenging and dynamic material among the prophets of the bible" (Berlin 1042). While he follows suite from earlier prophets in his inclusion of metaphors, Ezekiel takes this trend a step further: his metaphors are "extended" with "striking imagery," creating "some of the most difficult and bizarre passages" of the Hebrew Scriptures (1042). Moughtin-Mumby agrees, arguing that Ezekiel "is the most problematic of all prophetic books for its sexual and marital metaphorical language, notoriously the most extreme and offensive in the Hebrew Bible" (Moughtin-Mumby 161).

To understand the harsh tone of Ezekiel's writing, it is important to note that unlike Hosea and Jeremiah, Ezekiel's prophesized during the post-exilic period (Berlin 1044). Unlike his older contemporaries, Ezekiel's prophecies were the result of a first-hand experience of the destruction of Jerusalem; Hosea's and Jeremiah's prophecies merely predicted the events before they actually took place. It is also worth noting that

unlike Hosea and Jeremiah, Ezekiel was a priest prior to his prophetic career (1042; cf.

Ezekiel 1:2). Thus, Ezekiel's prophecy comes from the perspective of a religious leader

who is concerned with issues of Jerusalem's adherence to the Law of Moses (1042).

Unlike Hosea and Jeremiah, Ezekiel's position as a priest may have provided a sense of

religious duty beyond the scope of the prophetic duties of Hosea and Jeremiah.

Ezekiel's SV metaphor has been referred to as "the most extreme case among the

prophetic oracles of accusation using marital and sexual imagery" (Shields 137). He

begins with a depiction of a female baby who is abandoned and unwanted (16:1-5).

YHWH finds the baby, and allows her to survive (16:6-7); then, after she grew into a

young woman, He marries her. This marriage is described as follows: ". . . you were still

naked and bear when I passed by you [again] and saw that your time for love has arrived.

So I spread my robe over you and covered your nakedness, and I entered into a covenant

with you by oath—declares the Lord God; thus you became Mine" (16:7b-8). YHWH

adorned this bride in nice clothing and provided good food for her (16:9-14). This

suddenly shifts from here, in which the spoiled bride "played the harlot" and "lavished"

her "favors" on "every passerby" (16:15). She "took some of her cloths" to create a

"tapestried platform" and "fornicated on them" (16:16). She even created "phallic

images" from her "beautiful things" that YHWH gave her and "fornicated with them"

(16:17). While she was committing these atrocities, it is made clear that she "did not

remember the days of [her] youth" when she was "naked and bare, and lay wallowing" in

her own blood (16:22). At this point, Israel is depicted as a "sexually overcharged

ingrate" who turned her back on the person who rescued her from danger when she was

vulnerable and alone (Berlin 1068). Ezekiel even went as far as to compare her to

Samaria and Sodom, two cities that were also destroyed by YHWH for their sinful

actions; only she (Israel) was depicted as having been worse (1070).

The punishment that is inflicted upon this adulterous woman is very harsh. The

penalty for her sins is described as follows:

> I will assuredly assemble all the lovers to whom you gave your favors, along with
>
> everybody you accepted and everybody you rejected. I will assemble them against
>
> you from every quarter, and I will expose your nakedness to them, and they shall
>
> see all your nakedness. I will inflict upon you the punishment of women who
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> commit adultery and murder, and I will deliver into your hands, and they shall
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> tear down your eminence and level your mounds; and they shall strip you of your
>
> clothing and take away your dazzling jewels, leaving you naked and bear. Then
>
> they shall assemble a mob against you to pelt you with stones and piece you with
>
> their swords. (16:37-40)

This brutal imagery of both the adulterous' lewd acts and of her being stripped, stoned,

and cut with swords exposes quite a bit about the literary devices employed by Ezekiel.

According to Peggy L. Day, the unrelenting images of her sexually explicit actions

provide an "emotive effect on the male audience," promoting both sexual arousal from

visions of her sexuality and "righteous fury and indignation" for her apostasy (P. Day

235). Thus, using this potent mix of sexual arousal and anger in a male audience, Ezekiel

uses "emotionally loaded language" of "carnal betrayal" to "manipulate the audience into

taking its proffered ideological position" on worshipping other gods and on "political

alliances with foreign nations" (235).

From the perspective of ancient male heads of household, this is a horrifying story: even though ancient Israelite husbands had the power to inflict such harsh punishments on their subordinates, this does not mean that they actually *wanted* to do it (Frymer-Kensky "Reading the Women of the Bible" 125). An ancient Israelite husband was not necessarily a cruel oppressor who ruled his household through fear; rather, a man's role as husband and father was the protector and leader of his family (Stienstra 93). However, the relationship between a man and his wife was not egalitarian: it was based on "hierarchy and authority" (Weems 17). As the subordinate, the woman's obligation to her husband was "non-negotiable and firmly established" (17). Therefore, the failure of the wife to comply with such obligation held consequences: punishment from her husband was considered necessary and inevitable (17).

Ezekiel's message undoubtedly condemns the nation far more than Hosea or Jeremiah ever did. Whereas Hosea and Jeremiah each devote just a few strongly-worded verses to describe Israel's/Jerusalem's fall from grace, Ezekiel spares no gory detail in presenting the nation as a wicked, immoral woman who whored herself every chance she got and openly defied her husband. It is easy to dismiss Ezekiel's writings as inherently misogynist, as his explicit imagery of SV gives plenty of evidence to that fact. However, reading further into Ezekiel's writings, his feminine imagery is not entirely negative. A positive reference to femininity is also present toward the conclusion of his prophetic text—a reference so subtle that it is easy to miss. This reference is presented by Katheryn Pfisterer Darr in *The Woman's Bible Commentary:* in chapter 47, Ezekiel discusses a "miraculous stream" of water that "trickles from [the rebuilt Temple] platform and grows as it flows eastward" (Darr 190; cf. Ezekiel 47:1). This stream empties into the Dead Sea,

and it "transforms" from filthy water into nourishing water that is fit to sustain life (190; cf. 47:7-9). The filthy water restoring its purity is an indirect reference to female fertility (190). Although Ezekiel does not refer to the husband-wife metaphor in this passage, the reference to fertility is also feminine image. Arguably, this could be Ezekiel's indirect way of reconciling the husband and wife: the punishment is over, the Temple is rebuilt, and Jerusalem's fertility is restored. Thus, as harsh as Ezekiel's condemnation of Jerusalem is in his usage of the SV metaphor, his writings also show a glimmer of hope for a better future between YHWH and his nation/wife.

Collectively, there are parallels between the three prophets' usage of the SV metaphor. Each prophet presents Israel or Jerusalem as a wanton wife who disgraced her husband by whoring herself to other lovers and YHWH is her jilted husband who retaliates his wife. In each metaphor, to varying extents, each prophet did not hesitate to show that the wife's punishment was deserved and the result of her own wrongdoing. Likewise, to varying extents, each prophet ended the story with a more positive note of promises for reconciliation and a better future. In each case, the husband accepts his wife back (i.e., YHWH accepts Israel/Jerusalem back) and the two move forward in their relationship. What initially seems to be a disturbing story of marital infidelity and spousal abuse turns into a powerful story of love and reconciliation.

Yet Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were not interested in writing love stories. Their interest was far deeper than romantic reconciliation between a jilted husband and his wanton wife. Between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C.E. (the span of time in which the three prophets wrote their works), Israel went through a grim period that was anything but romantic. The texts of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel reflect an era military

strife in the nation of Israel. This chapter will now shift gears and review the historical

circumstances that influenced the SV metaphor in the prophetic writings. These historical

circumstances include the military and political circumstances (i.e., the Assyrian and

Babylonia invasions), the idea that the Israelites had broken their covenant with YHWH

for exclusive monotheistic worship, and, finally, the way the ancient Israelite social

world recognized the concept of sex and marriage. All three of these historical aspects

combined supported the prophets' usage of the SV metaphor.

ASSYRIAN/BABYLONIAN INVASION

Prior to the invasions of Assyria and Babylon, Israel had been in a "golden age"

(Cline 38). During King Solomon's reign in the tenth century B.C.E., as the United

Monarchy of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, the

nation of Israel prospered. The monarchy gained political power, the Temple was

constructed, the twelve tribes of Israel grew in strength, and Jerusalem became a

significant business district (38). In short, the United Monarchy was growing into a small

but flourishing kingdom.

After Solomon's death, this prosperity ended. Solomon's son Rehoboam became

king (Cline 38; Montefiore 35). Following his ascension to throne, conflicts and tensions

began to build, as the result of both foreign encounters and in-fighting amongst Israelites

(Cline 38). After Rehoboam took the throne, a dispute over taxes eventually caused the

northern kingdom to secede from the southern kingdom (41). After the split, a new king

for the northern kingdom, King Jeroboam, came into power; the northern kingdom

resumed a short period of prosperity once again (41). As a more heavily populated and

geographically desirable kingdom (41; Fontaine 45), the northern kingdom of Israel was a thriving independent kingdom next to the southern kingdom of Judah, which in Cline's words "remained a relatively impoverished backwater" (41). This was exacerbated by Jeroboam, who sought to deter the northern tribes away from Jerusalem, including from the Temple and from the House of David (Reviv 81). By doing this, he had the goal to establish the northern kingdom as a "separate and independent" state from Judah (81).

A few years after the United Monarchy split, foreign political and military forces brought more problems to the divided kingdom. The king of Egypt, whom Cline and Montefiore identify as Pharaoh Shoshenq, invaded Israel (Cline 38-39; Montefiore 36). The bible records this event twice, the first time in 1 Kings: "And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam . . . the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took the treasures of the House of the Lord and the treasures of the king's palace, and he took everything; and he took all the golden shields that Solomon had made" (1 Kings 14:25-26). The story is repeated in 2 Chronicles 12:2- 9. Shoshenq also logged his conquest in an inscription in a temple in Egypt (Cline 39), making this invasion the first major biblical event to be supported by archeological data (Montefiore 36).[9]

By 732 B.C.E., the Assyrians occupied Israel (Montefiore 38). King Ahaz questioned whether Israel should submit to the Assyrians or to fight them; the prophet Isaiah advised him to wait so YHWH would protect them (38). He took this advice and submitted to the Assyrian king; when Ahaz died five years later, Israel attempted to rise

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[9] Shoshenq's inscription contradicts the biblical account of the invasion. Shoshenq's inscription records that he attacked various cities in the south, in the north, and along the coast, but that most of the cities Shoshenq's inscription mentions were located in northern Israel; his records never mentions any attack on Jerusalem (Cline 39, 41). Moreover, as suggested by Cline, it is possible that the Temple goods were actually sold directly to Shoshenq's army as payment for the restoration of the lands they conquered (41). This is not unusual, as the biblical authors were less interested in documenting historical fact than they were in theology; they combined both fact and creative liberties in their writings for this reason (Bellis 177). At best, these writings should be considered a primary source that was inspired by actual events.

up against the Assyrians, but they were defeated (38-39). After the defeat of Israel, 27,000 of the inhabitants were deported (39). The northern kingdom of Israel was no more.

Now that the northern kingdom of Israel was out of the picture, Jerusalem became an important business and religious center once again (Cline 45). Many former residents of Israel migrated to Judah as refugees, which boosted the population immensely (45). Yet this did not end the problem of the foreign political and military forces that now sought Judah. In 705 B.C.E., the Assyrian king died, which Judah initially took as a sign that Assyrian rule was about to end (Montefiore 40). In the end, this was true: by 626 B.C.E., the Assyrian Empire disbanded altogether (44). However, there was yet another foreign political force that threatened Judah: Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar inherited Judah in 605 B.C.E. (46). Seven years later, Babylonian military forces marched into Judah and "plundered the Temple," kidnapped the king, and deported the majority of the elite Judahite male population, leaving behind the poor inhabitants to fend for themselves (46, 48). The Babylonian military forces slaughtered Judah, saving the city of Jerusalem for last (47). In 586 B.C.E., the Temple was destroyed (49). The remaining inhabitants were left destitute, starved, and diseased (Cline 60).

ISRAEL'S BROKEN COVENANT

After the destruction of the Temple, the Israelites were left in shambles, not just because of their political and economic problems, but also because of religious questions these events raised. Adele Berlin summarizes these sentiments by explaining:

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[The destruction of the Temple] had more than just political, demographic, and economic impact. From an insider's religious perspective, when the monarchic period came to a close, Jerusalem (= the Lord's city), the Temple (= the Lord's house), and the Davidic dynasty (= the Lord's chosen dynasty) all fell. There is no doubt that the events of 586 represent a watershed in the history of Judah and ancient Israel, and were understood as such by those who lived after these events. Postmonarchic Judahites tried to understand them in terms of divine justice and tried to understand themselves within a world in which their community, from their perspective of the Lord's people, was so powerless when compared to other nations and compared to the memory of monarchic Judah. (Berlin 1139-1140)

The prophets played an important role in answering these questions. Berlin points out that most of these prophets spoke with either messages of "condemnation" of the nation "for sins so great that they justified the Lord's destruction of Jerusalem" or messages of "hope and restoration" promising that "their present situation was not the 'end of the road' but only a minor stop in a journey that led to an ideal and glorious future for Israel" (1140). In the case of Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, the prophets spoke a message of hope that YHWH would one day restore the broken nation; yet the prophets also condemn Israel/Judah for sins that justified the fall of the nation. This new section will explore Israel's sin identified by Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel: the broken covenant with YHWH.

This covenant is mandated by YHWH after he led the enslaved Israelites out of Egypt, expressed in Exodus 20 with the following:[10]

> I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make yourself a sculptured image . . . You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the LORD your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exodus 20:2-6)

The above passage reflects a contractual agreement between YHWH and Israel in which the obedience of Israel is assumed (Houston 80). This is not to be confused with "law" in the sense that modern-day readers understand it, as a closer reading of the passage show a *relational* tone, not a legalistic one. The phrase "an impassioned God" (verse 5) reveals an emotional connection to the Israelites, as does the line "those who love Me and keep My commandments" (verse 6). This indicates that YHWH is understood to have a passionate involvement" with His people (Berlin 149).

The relationship between YHWH and His people, however, is not without terms and conditions. The phrase "visiting the guilt of the parents upon children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me" (verses 5-6) reveals that the Israelites would suffer consequences if they betray their relationship with YHWH. This

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[10] The specific covenant this chapter is concerned with is in Exodus 19-24, which is known as the Mosaic covenant. Other covenants in the Hebrew bible include the Noahide covenant (Genesis 8-9) and the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12-17).

indicates that if the Israelites do not hold up to their conditions in the relationship, then YHWH has the right to inflict punishment upon His people.

Despite such commandments, it is a mistake to assume that the Israelites always practiced monotheism. Yee explains, "The religion described in the biblical texts represents only a part, albeit an important one, of the rich pluralism in Israelite religious belief and practice" (Yee 196). She continues by stating that although YHWH was by far the principal divine figure of the Israelites, some early worshippers of YHWH incorporated other gods into their religious practices as well, such as the Canaanite gods Baal and El, and the goddess Asherah (196). Therefore, in many respects, the early Israelites could more accurately be described as "henotheists," meaning that they favored one god (i.e., YHWH) but did not necessarily deny other gods (Snell 107).

Henotheistic attitudes are reflected in various Biblical literatures. For example, in the aforementioned passage in Exodus 20: this passage does not necessarily deny that other gods may have been at work in the ancient world, but rather reflects that the Israelites should deny all other gods and rely on YHWH alone. Also, Deuteronomy 4:35 says, "The Lord alone is God; there is none beside Him"; the latter half of this statement indicates a comparison of YHWH to others. This implies that there may have been other deities in which to compare YHWH too, yet in an Israelite perspective, these other deities did not measure against YHWH.

Nonetheless, exclusively polytheist religions were different from the Israelite religion. Polytheist religions utilized multiple gods for different purposes. Daniel Snell categorized these gods into the following groups: creator gods who used sex to create the

world and other deities; gods who played an active role in human affairs; goddesses who controlled nature, motherhood and childbirth, love, and war; and gods whose concerns focused on one specific city, on one individual, or on a certain group (Snell 20, 21, 23, 27). None of these gods had absolute power, which was a major difference between the gods of polytheist religions and the Israelite religion (17). Unlike the Israelite religion, polytheistic religious practices often welcomed new gods, new customs, and new ideas (5). Considering these elements on a sociological level, it is possible that the Israelites were attracted to polytheistic religious culture because polytheism seemed more flexible and adaptable compared to the less flexible religion of the Israelites.

Both the northern and southern kingdoms were guilty of incorporating polytheistic elements into their religious life. After the split, Jeroboam was afraid that the people would rise against him if they went to the Temple in Jerusalem (which, by inheritance, was now under Rehoboam's name) (Montefiore 35). He built two smaller temples in the cities of Bethel and Dan, which were golden calves (Reviv 82; Montefiore 35). In 1 Kings 13:33-34, Jeroboam is blamed for bringing sin into Israel by setting up those golden calves; Reviv disagrees with this by stating that the shrines were "intended only to serve as pedestals upon which [YHWH] might descend," referencing 12:32 as support (Reviv 82). Snell points out that there was never any organized attempt to close down these shrines (Snell 108), indicating a possibility that the people of northern Israel may have felt justified in their use of these shrines for the purpose of worshipping YHWH. However, referring back to the Mosaic covenant, the gold calves contradict YHWH's command against making "sculptured images" to worship (Exodus 20:4-5).

Regardless of Jeroboam's "intentions" for the calves, using Canaanite images to worship YHWH is still a breach in the covenant's terms.

After the northern kingdom was invaded, the southern kingdom of Judah initially took steps to rid the kingdom of polytheistic elements (Snell 110). King Josiah set reforms in Jerusalem to abolish Canaanite rituals and idols from the land (110; Montefiore 45). However, his efforts were short lived because he was killed in 609 B.C.E. by Egyptian pharaoh Necho (Montefiore 46). Then, after Nebuchadnezzar inherited Judah, Jeremiah attempted to warn the Judahite king that YHWH was going to destroy Jerusalem if they did not turn away from polytheistic elements of worship; the king burned Jeremiah's writings in response (46; cf. Jeremiah 36). Jeremiah was also arrested and imprisoned; he was still in prison when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple (Montefiore 47).

SEX AND MARRIAGE

The previous two subsections discussed the historical events that influenced the SV metaphor in Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; this leaves one more area of historical relevance left to explore: the ancient Israelite understanding of sex and marriage. The SV metaphor plays upon the culturally-understood purposes of sex and the social function and politics of marriage in ancient Israelite society. Without giving at least brief acknowledgment to these ideas, then the metaphor cannot be reasonably interpreted.

Stienstra has correctly pointed out that "there is no need to explain that the ideas about marriage in modern Western society differ from those held by people in the days of the Old Testament" (Stienstra 74). In ancient Hebrew society, women lived much

different lives than contemporary women. Some scholars have claimed that women had

little control over their lives, as everything was under the direct control of their husbands

or fathers. For example, Tikva Frymer-Kensky points out that an ancient Israelite man

held "considerable power" in his family—in short, he is "king of his castle" (Frymer-

Kensky "Reading the Women of the Bible" 91). She says that even though women

contributed greatly to the family with their reproductive capabilities, women were

nonetheless always the dependents of the male head of their families (91).

This does not imply that women had little significance in ancient Israelite society.

To the contrary, women were imperative to the household for their reproductive

capabilities and their roles as wives and mothers in the family (Frymer-Kensky "Reading

the Women of the Bible" 99). A woman's sense of value primarily came from her ability

to bear children in the family (Frymer-Kensky "Reading the Women of the Bible" xv, 91;

Bird "Images of Women" 51; Yee 197). In an agrarian society such as Israel, children

were important for various reasons: to continue the family, to care for older members of

the family, and to support the economic upkeep of the family (e.g., more people to share

the labor) (Stienstra 76). Even the religious wisdom of the Israelites reflects the

importance of the reproduction of children in the family: "Like arrows in the hand of a

warrior are sons born to a man in his youth. Happy is the man who fills his quiver with

them; they shall not be put to shame when they contend with the enemy in the gate"

(Psalm 127: 4-5).

Even though all children were important in ancient Israelite society, not all

children were equally valued. The value placed on children depended on gender.

Although daughters were "cherished" in the family (Stienstra 76), sons were more

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considered more valuable for the family because they typically never left the household

(Yee 197). As married women, a daughter would leave her birth family and join her

husband's family (197). In many respects, a daughter was seen as "only a temporary

member if her family" (Frymer-Kensky "Reading the Women of the Bible" 99), whereas

a son would continue on their father's name, his legacy, and his property (Stienstra 77).

Therefore, for ancient Israelite women, the stakes to bear sons was very high.

When discussing the ancient Israelite male perspective of the negative side of

women's sexuality, most of the emphasis seems to be on the issue of infidelity. The other

aspect of women's sexuality that seems to have been problematic for ancient Israelite

men was the perceived power of female sexual prowess—i.e., the temptress who uses her

sexuality as a means to control men. As a sexual temptress, a woman could use her sexual

prowess to exploit men's sexual desire for her, which she could in turn use to "undo him

or to gain her own ends at his expense" (Bird "Images of Women" 65). For ancient

Israelite men, enticing feminine sexuality could render a man powerless (65; cf. Judges

16:4-21 and Proverbs 7). Combining this threatening power of female sex with the fear of

wives' infidelity, Israelite men made efforts to keep women's sexuality under control:

groups were sexually segregated, modest dress codes for women were enforced, and

women's social engagement was "restricted" (Yee 198).

Women's sexuality had the potential to be fruitful for a man's wealth (e.g., the

production of sons), but at the same time, her sexuality was understood to have

"potentially dangerous" aspects as well (Bird "Images of Women in the Old Testament"

65). If a woman had sexual intercourse with a man who was not her husband, then it

could not be guaranteed that her children were actually his own offspring, which would

have put his legacy at stake (Stienstra 84). It was the responsibility of men to enforce the sexual fidelity of the women in their family. Frymer-Kensky explains that a woman's sexual virtue was "the prerogative and the duty of the male members of the family" (Frymer-Kensky 'Reading the Women of the Bible" 185).

Some scholars have claimed that women's sexuality was "the exclusive property of her husband or whatever male was head of her household" [11] (Weems 4). Phyllis Bird explains:

> Adultery involving a married woman was a crime of first magnitude in Israelite law (Lev. 20:10; Exod. 20:14), ranking with murder and major religious offenses as a transgression demanding the death penalty . . . The issue was not simply one of extramarital sex . . . The issue was one of property and authority. Adultery was a violation of the fundamental and exclusive right of a man to the sexuality of his wife. It was an attack upon his authority in the family and consequently upon the solidarity and integrity of the family itself. The adulterer robbed the husband of his essential honor, while the unfaithful wife defied his authority, offering to another man that which belonged only to him—and that which constituted her primary responsibility toward him. (51)

For the ancient Israelites, therefore, an unfaithful wife's sexual transgressions left far more at stake than simply the husband's feelings of carnal betrayal. The unfaithful wife dishonored her husband's name, calling into question his ability to control his household

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[11] While scholars such as Weems, Frymer-Kensky, and Bird use terms such as "property" to describe ancient Hebrew husband-wife relationships, this concept appears to be a controversial description. For example, Stienstra comments that "a man did not buy his wife the way he bought a piece of land or a slave" (91), heavily emphasizing that a woman was expected to be "her husband's companion and his support, but certainly not his chattel" (93).

(Yee 198). A man without honor risked losing his "reputation in the community" as a

respectable head of his household (198).

Due to the serious threat that adultery posed, severe punishments were put into

place. The penalty for adultery was death (Leviticus 20:10). Some scholars hypothesize

that the means of execution was probably by stoning (Bush 546; Frymer-Kensky "Law

and Philosophy" 296; Yee 198). Stoning was understood as a "very special penalty" that

was "reserved for those offenses which completely upset the hierarchal arrangements" as

put forth in Biblical law (Frymer-Kensky "Law and Philosophy" 296). For crimes such as

adultery, this threatened not just the families of both offending parties, but also the moral

efficacy of the entire community (296).

Although some scholars have claimed that stoning was the means of execution for

adultery, the Hebrew Bible does not provide direct evidence to support this notion.

Levitical law provides no direct answer as to the means of execution, as Leviticus 20:10

only states that "the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death." The only possible

implication of the means of execution for adultery in Leviticus is a later mandate that any

priest's daughter who whores herself is to be "put to the fire" (21:9). Yet this is an

uncertain connection, as Berlin points out that sexual immorality from a priest's daughter

was a far more serious matter than the same act from a common man's daughter (Berlin

259). While all women were expected to adhere to the same sexual moral code, an

offense by a priest's daughter dishonored her father's position as a priest—thus, her

offense would have been consider far more serious (259). Nonetheless, adultery was

serious business in the perspective of ancient Israelite society; there was far more at stake

than the wife's betrayal of the husband's trust. In the event of adultery, his honor, the honor of the family, and even the honor of the entire community were all at stake.

THE COGNITIVE GAIN: HOW IS A WHORE LIKE ANCIENT ISRAELITE MEN?

In terms of gender, it cannot be ignored that not only were the prophetic texts all written by males, but the audience was also assumed to be male. The perspective of the texts is entirely based on male experience, not female experience. As mentioned in chapter 1, any "female" experiences in these texts are discussed through the filter of male-centered thoughts and experiences; there are no actual "women" in the texts. Thus, since there are no actual women in the texts, the actual victims are all male; after all, as mentioned previously, it was elite male citizens who were exiled from the lands after the Assyrian/Babylonian invasions. Furthermore, references to male victimhood can be seen throughout the prophetic texts (Isaiah 20:2-4; Jeremiah 20:7-18; Ezekiel 4), indicating that the prophets' main concern was the suffering of males, not females.

The feminine sexual imagery is no exception; women's sexuality in the prophetic texts is also filtered by male experience. In a world in which marriage and sex were inextricably linked, sexualized images of women would have undoubtedly been offensive to the original male audience (Weems 42). To present their beloved nation as a wily wife whoring herself to other men was quite insulting to such men: not only did the prophets accuse these men of "acting like women," but it also accused them of acting like "lusty, depraved, and defiled women" (42). Why, then, are the SV metaphors so effective? The answer is that as men who were expected to sustain the sexual purity of the females in

their households lest their honor, status, and manhood be at compromised, these metaphors spoke to their hearts (43).

Weems is correct in her assessment of the emotional level in which ancient Israelite men would be affected by the SV metaphor. However, the ancient audiences' relation to this metaphor goes beyond a mere emotional connection. The cognitive gain from these metaphors, which results from comparing Israel/Jerusalem to a whore (to seemingly dissimilar concepts), serves a more strategic purpose: by connecting the metaphors to the ancient Israelite understanding of sex, marriage, and their relationship with YHWH, this allows the audience to make sense of the political and military events that were taking place. In this time of tragedy, the ancient Israelites were able to use this metaphor to understand that their sin (i.e., the broken covenant with YHWH) of "infidelity" (i.e., incorporating polytheism into their religious practices) is what ultimately led to their current situation (i.e., the Assyrian/Babylonian invasions). The cognitive gain from this metaphor, therefore, is that Israel and Jerusalem is like a whoring wife because, like a whoring wife strays from her husband, they strayed from their covenant with YHWH. Furthermore, just as a husband had the right to punish his unfaithful wife by having her stoned or publicly exposed, YHWH also had the right to punish His unfaithful people by allowing foreign military forces (e.g., Assyria and Babylon) to invade Israel and Jerusalem and "destroy" her.

It has already been established how the SV metaphor could have allowed ancient Israelite men to draw parallels between their punishment for their apostasy and a whoring wife's punishment. Yet in the prophetic texts, the husband forgave his wife and there was a peaceful reconciliation. The remaining question is whether this is intended to be a

hopeful note for the future, or if any further cognitive gain can be made from comparing the conclusion to the metaphor to actual historical circumstances of the post-exilic Israelites.

In the years that followed the destruction of Jerusalem, the exiled Israelites experienced a renewed commitment to YHWH (Montefiore 50). While in exile, new efforts to restore their broken relationship with YHWH began to take place: they reestablished old laws such as dietary restrictions, observing the Sabbath, circumcising their male offspring, and, above all, their exclusive commitment to YHWH (Montefiore 50). It was during this time that monotheism eventually became the more common practice of the Israelites, and some elements of the Jewish religion as it is known today began to develop (50).

The prophetic writings played an important role during the time of exile. Exiled Israelites began to look to the prophetic writings that had tried to warn people the destruction (e.g., Hosea, Jeremiah), attempting to make sense of the nation's demise (Snell 109-110). It seemed as though Israel and Judah had ignored the prophetic warnings that they had broken their covenant with YHWH, and thus, YHWH retaliated by allowing the invasions to take place (110). In retrospect, it can be concluded that it took nearly three centuries of tragedy to persuade the Israelites to fulfill their commandment of exclusive monotheistic worship to YHWH.

The renewed commitment to YHWH post-exile was one step toward reconciliation. In addition, the destroyed Temple was eventually rebuilt. The Babylonians ruled the nation until 539 B.C.E., when Cyrus, king of the Persians, took over

(Montefiore 53; Reviv 109). Within twelve months, the Persians allowed the Israelites to return from exile to their former homeland (Reviv 109; cf. Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5). Upon return, the Persians allowed the Israelites to rebuild the destroyed Temple (Montefiore 53). Connecting these events to the metaphor, the cognitive gain is therefore as follows: just as the husband forgives the wife and restores their marriage, YHWH allowed Israel to restore her broken Temple. The metaphor and the prophecy, therefore, were fulfilled.

III: SV METAPHOR IN REVELATION: SAME COGNITIVE ASSOCIATIONS, NEW CLOTHES?

Several centuries after the creation of the SV metaphors in the prophetic texts, a man called John revived the SV metaphor in the Book of Revelation. As chapter 2 discussed, the SV metaphor in Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel repeated the same theme: (1) YHWH is the husband of Israel/Jerusalem, (2) Israel/Jerusalem is an unfaithful wife, and (3) Israel/Jerusalem is punished for her infidelity to her husband YHWH. In Revelation 17, John describes a majestic woman who is "drunk with the blood of saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus" (17:6).[12] This woman is referred to as a "the great whore" who has "fornicated" with the "kings of the earth," making them "drunk" on her "wine" (17:1-2). Her name is written on her forehead: "'Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations'" (17:5). The Whore is stripped naked, murdered, burned, and eaten by the kings of the earth, who turn against her (17:16). In John's version of the SV metaphor, the object of violence is Rome, whom the Whore is supposed to symbolize (cf. Barr "Women in Myth" 58 and "Tales of the End" 226, 297; Friesen 138; Marshall 17; Vander Stichele 108).

In contrast, Revelation 19 introduces a virginal bride figure (19:7-8). This bride is revealed to be the Bride of the Lamb (i.e., the Bride of Jesus) (19:7); in contrast to the Whore, she is described as being clothed in "fine linen, bright and pure," symbolizing the

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[12] Unless otherwise stated, all Biblical references in this chapter are from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (Coogan, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

"righteous deeds of the saints" (19:8). This Bride symbolizes the New Jerusalem (21:2),

the polar opposite of Rome: whereas the Whore is portrayed as lewd and corrupt, the

Bride is virginal and pure (Rossing 2). John takes the SV metaphor a step further,

contrasting imagery of a whore with a virginal woman to convince his audience to flee

the "Whore's" (Rome's) evil ways (18:4) and await the arrival of the "Bride" (New

Jerusalem). John's juxtaposition of the Whore and the Bride fit into the larger

sociohistorical context of his writing.[13] John contrasted the whore/virgin metaphoric

figures to pontificate his community's opposition to the Roman Empire. John's

community was engaged in a culture war with Rome: his team was a minority culture

who believed that their "enemy" (Rome) threatened their way of life. Unlike the

prophetic texts, John's writings seek to demonize Rome's dominant culture and convince

his community to turn away from "her" sins.

Despite the obvious social changes between the prophetic world and John's

world, the ideology of feminine sexuality as potentially dangerous unites these

metaphors. A closer look at John's text reveals that the same cognitive associations of

women's sexuality as a threat to the social order support John's SV metaphor as in

Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Once again, John's version of the SV metaphor takes

advantage of the ancient (male) audience's cognitive associations of feminine sexuality

as potentially dangerous. From a sociohistorical stance, this consistent theme of

dangerous women's sexuality reveals that there was little change in philosophy across the

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[13] Scholars often discuss Jezebel (2:20-23) and the Woman Clothed with the Sun (chapter 12) alongside the Whore and the Bride. These other two women are contradictory symbols of feminine sexuality: one is a temptress and a whore, and the other is a mother figure (Barr "Women in Myth"62; Duff "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing" 77; Garrett 378). This chapter will limit its focus on the Whore and the Bride, for the sake of focusing on how the two cities of Rome and Jerusalem are illustrated using the virgin/whore motif. For scholarly works that address Jezebel and the Woman Clothed with the Sun, refer to Barr's "Women in Myth and History" in *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John* (T & T Clark, 2009); Duff's *Who Rides the Beast?* (Oxford University Press, 2001); Duff's "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing" and Humphrey's "A Tale of Two Cities and (At Least) Three Women" in *Reading the Book of Revelation* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); and Pippin's "The Heroine and the Whore" in *Every People and Nation* (Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

texts' broad historical settings. Despite the centuries-long gaps between the texts Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation—not to mention changes in worldview and culture—the cognitive associations of women's sexuality remain for the most part unchanged in each respective text. As a result, John's Whore may well be YHWH's unfaithful wife of the prophetic text dressed in Roman clothing.

THE WHORE OF BABYLON

Prior to Revelation 17, John references Babylon twice; both references provide no more than a fleeting glimpse of the Whore prior to her grand entrance in chapter 17. The first reference is in 14:8: "Then another angel, a second, followed, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'" This short proclamation seems to stand on its own in the narrative: at this point in the narrative, no previous connection to Babylon is stated, and the narrative shifts to a different topic in the next verse.[14] The second reference is in chapter 16: "The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, 'It is done!' And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake . . . The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered great Babylon and gave her the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath" (16:17-19). Richard Bauckham points out that this reference refers to the entire world, not just Babylon (Bauckham 1300), indicating that she is just one of many cities that experiences God's wrath. Yet even if all cities are affected by this wrath, the only city John actually names is Babylon. In contrast, the other cities are only

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[14] 14:9-11: "Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, 'Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, they will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name.'"

mentioned with the broad phrase "the cities of the nations." John's use of language in this reference is subtle yet effective: he has separated Babylon from the other cities of the world.

The references to Babylon in 14:8 and 16:17-19 establish two things: (1) she is an influential city that has lured other nations into her evil deeds, and (2) she is a particular target of God's wrath. Yet there is no clue given of what her so-called "evil deeds" are, nor is there any answer as to why God has singled her out for punishment. Keep in mind that at this point, she has not made an appearance in the narrative. She is mentioned, but not yet presented; her significance is implied, but not yet confirmed. In a sense, John is teasing his audience by making cryptic references to the Whore, none of which provide any particularly useful information, but not actually showing her. The purpose of John's cryptic teasing is build suspense in John's audience prior to the point in which he finally reveals her. This literary trick increases the dramatic flair of her grand entrance into the narrative.

The Whore finally makes her grand entrance in chapter 17. According to the narrative, John is "carried away in spirit" to the desert (17:3), where he sees the Whore riding a red beast with seven heads and ten horns (17:3).[15] The significance of the many heads and horns are explained within the narrative itself. The seven heads symbolize the "seven hills of Rome" as well as seven kings of Rome—five of whom have died, one who is living, and one who is forthcoming (17:9-10; cf. Coogan 2174, footnote). Likewise, the ten horns symbolize the subordinate kings under the command of Rome

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[15] Daniel 7 tells a similar story. Daniel dreams of four beasts that came from the sea (7:2), one of whom also has many heads, multiple horns, and authority to reign over the nations (7:6, 20). The beasts are destroyed when a messianic figure came and overthrew the beasts (7:13-14; 21-28). This also connects to Revelation, as chapter 12 discusses a woman "clothed with the sun" who is attacked by a dragon with seven heads and ten horns (12:1-6). The dragon, revealed to be Satan, is defeated (12:7-9). The very next chapter describes the beast of the sea and the beast of the land, and it is implied that the dragon is the sea beast (13:3).

(17:12; cf. Coogan 2174, footnote). The significance of the red beast connects to an earlier narrative of two beasts, one from the sea (13:1-10) and one from the land (13:11-18). The sea beast is described as holding power over "the whole earth" to the point that the world's inhabitants worship the beast (13:3-4). The sea beast gives authority to the land beast to act on its behalf (13:12-14), thus further enforcing the sea beasts' power. The sea beast directly connects to the Whore's red beast, because like the red beast, it is described as "having ten horns and seven heads" (13:1; cf. 17:3). Thus, it is likely that the Whore's red beast is the sea beast as described in chapter 13. Collectively, these symbols (the multiple heads and horns, the red beast/sea beast link) indicate that the Whore is a woman of authority.

In terms of the Whore's physical presence, she is quite the spectacle. John admits that when he sees her, he is "greatly amazed" (17:6b); he is momentarily overtaken by her grandeur. He carefully describes the Whore's appearance, thoroughly review details of her beauty. By doing this, John satisfies the audience, who has been anticipating the Whore's grand entrance until this point. The dramatic tension he has carefully built is satisfied when the audience finally gets to see Babylon.

Specifically, the Whore is described as wearing red and purple cloth, with gold and precious stones as accessories (17:4). This elaborate attire reveals that she is wealthy, because such clothing and jewels were typically reserved for the upperclass during John's time (Barr "Tales of the End" 234, 238; cf. "Women in Myth" 58). At the time, red and purple dyes were very expensive, so only the upperclass could afford to make clothing in such colors (Resseguie 221). Her dress also indicates that the wealth she collects from her lovers allow her to revel in an extravagant lifestyle (Bauckham 1300). The allusions that

she is from the ruling class indicate that she is not only beautiful, but that she has both wealth and power. According to Tina Pippin, this would resonate with the male audience, who would be both attracted to her and terrified of her (Pippin "The Heroine and the Whore" 134).

The Whore's appearance further connects her to the sea beast in chapter 13. Aside from connections to her wealth, the Whore's red clothing connects her to the sea beast, whose color is also red (Resseguie 222; cf. 17:3). Their matching colors indicate that both figures are "cut from the same cloth" (222). John also points out that she has a tattoo on her forehead that reads, "Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations" (17:5). This connects once again to the narrative of the two beasts: in 13:16 the land beast "marks" all earthly followers of the sea beast on the "right hand *or the forehead*" (emphasis added) with the name of the sea beast.

As if the Whore were not already portrayed ostentatiously enough, she is holding a "golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication" (17:4) and she is "drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus" (17:6a). The golden cup could possibly symbolize two things. First, it could be yet another indication of her social class: the "golden cup" could correspond to the gold and precious stones she is wearing. In this context, her golden cup is just another accessory brandished by the Whore. Second, on a more figurative level, the golden cup could also be interpreted as a crude symbol for the Whore's vagina. The cup is full of "impurities" from her "fornications": she carries "impurities" within her vagina, the part of her body used in her "fornications." Her blood-drinking further indicates possible vaginal imagery. The cup is associated with drinking, which leads her to become drunk; she is drunk with blood,

which is associated with the menstruating vagina. These mental images are quite vulgar, thus presenting the Whore in an unflattering and repulsive fashion.

On another vulgar note, it is no trivial matter that the Whore is drinking blood. In the Biblical tradition, blood is a forbidden substance. Leviticus establishes an edict against the consumption of blood: "If anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut that person off from the people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement. . . . You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off" (17:10-11, 14b). Paul Duff adds that in this context, the act of drinking blood is made worse by the fact that she is consuming *human* blood—not animal blood, which Leviticus specifically addresses (Duff "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing" 76). Duff does not explain his conclusion any further, but that may not be necessary, as it can be reasonably assumed that the idea of devouring another human being is despicable in most cultures.

Yet when it comes to taboos about ingesting human blood, there is far more involved than religion and human disgust. Blood-drinking connects to a deeper social taboo that does not necessarily relate to religious tradition or the disgust-factor. Instead, this relates to the larger sociological context of how humans approach their innate desires for both food and sex. Duff explains this by citing sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann:

. . . both sexuality and nutrition are grounded in biological drives . . . Man is

driven by his biological constitution to seek sexual release and nourishment. But

his biological constitution does not tell him *where* he should seek sexual release

and *what* he should eat. Left to himself, man may attach himself sexually to just

about any object and is perfectly capable of eating things that will kill him.

Sexuality and nutrition are channeled in specific directions socially rather than

biologically, a channeling that not only imposes limits upon these activities, but

directly affects organismic functions. Thus the successfully socialized individual

is incapable of functioning sexually with the "wrong" sexual object and may

vomit when confronted with the "wrong" food. (qtd. in Duff "Who Rides the

Beast" 97-98)

The principle here is the individual's ability to maintain self-control over his/her carnal

urges. On a sociological level, the issue of controlling one's appetite for food and sex

symbolizes the individual's level of proper civilization in society (97). From a societal

context, an individual who cannot control these desires is no better than an animal. In the

case of the Whore, she embodies both of these appetites: she drinks blood to the point of

intoxication and she fornicates.

The narrative takes a violent turn in 17:16, when the angel announces the Whore's

undoing: "And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they

will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire."

Ironically, her borderline cannibalistic travesties are reversed: she devoured others, now

others are devouring her. This is an interesting twist on "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a

tooth" (Matthew 5:38). It is at this point in the narrative that John reveals that the Whore

symbolizes the city of Rome (17:18); it is also at this point that the image of the Whore as a woman is transformed. Barbara Rossing argues that this emphasizes that the Whore is not a "real woman," but merely a symbol intended to carry out a specific purpose (Rossing 15).

Like YHWH's unfaithful wife in the prophetic texts, the Whore's evil deeds are punished by sexual shaming—that is, she is publicly stripped naked (Revelation 17:16; cf. Hosea 2:11-12a, Jeremiah 13:27, Ezekiel 16:37). Nudity is a symbol that indicates the shame of the wrongdoer (Resseguie 226; cf. Hosea 2:11-12a, Jeremiah 13:27). Furthermore, nudity is a symbol of her vulnerability: by removing the symbols of the Whore's elite social status (e.g., the expensive clothes and her jewelry), she is demoted from her former status as a powerful aristocrat. James Resseguie explains that in this text, the Whore's attire closely symbolizes her "inward traits": she is powerful and rich while in her extravagant clothing and jewelry, and while naked, she is "impoverished" and weak (Resseguie 226).

The Whore's sexual murder relates to a literary trend that Pippin refers to as the destruction of "the bitch-witch" (Pippin "Eros and the End" 196). Citing literary critics Pierre Horn and Mary Beth Pringle, Pippin explains that the bitch-witch figure is a sexual temptress who uses her feminine wiles to lure others to death (196). She explains that the bitch-witch character is often destroyed violently to put a stop to her evil deeds (196). In turn, the Whore's violent murder "destroy[s] the sexuality and seductiveness" that she used to commit her evil deeds (199). Pippin reemphasizes this point later on, arguing that the "unconscious desire" of the male audience is to eradicate the Whore's sexual power (200).

THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB

Two chapters after the Whore's demise, John brings another feminine figure into the narrative:

> . . . I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure'— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. (19:5-8)

The narrative from here shifts back to John and his angelic host, who blesses the invited guests to the Lamb's wedding to the Bride (19:9). As quickly as the Bride is introduced, she disappears from the narrative.

Yet this short introduction already proves her to be different from the Whore. There is no description of this Bride's appearance, other than one statement that she is wearing virginal and "bright" clothing. This is a major change from the detailed description of the Whore's extravagant attire. The Bride is grooming herself in anticipation for her husband—an act often associated with femininity. It has been suggested that while clearly a woman, the Whore also embodies stereotypically masculine traits such as aggression and power (Collins "Feminine Symbolism" 127). The term that Adela Yarbo Collins uses is "bisexual" (127); Catherine Keller takes this even further by likening the Whore to "patriarchy in drag" (Keller 77; cf. Barr "Women in Myth" 67). In each case, this implies that unlike the Bride, who only engages in

stereotypically feminine behavior, the Whore is only a woman by means of her sex; otherwise, her behavior is far from that of a proper lady.

The Bride's central importance is not revealed until chapter 21: "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal" (21:9-11). The narrative goes on to describe the New Jerusalem in more detail, pointing out that this new city is guarded with gates and walls (21:12-14) and that "nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practises abomination or falsehood" (21:27). Once more, the Bride's imagery ends as quickly as it begins: she is used as a virginal bride to metaphorically describe the heavenly new city, then she abruptly disappears and the focus is placed upon the New Jerusalem as a city rather than a symbolic bride figure.

The Bride's overall presence in the narrative is so small that it is tempting to overlook her. David Barr comments in *Tales of the End* that the Bride "does not bear too close an examination," although he does acknowledge that she is "the clear antithesis of the great whore" (Barr "Tales of the End" 199). Barr continues by stating that "mythic war stories [often] end with weddings," so the Bride figure may have been a means to conform the text to its literary genre (199). Yet even if John is trying to follow an established pattern used in the "war stories" genre, the contrast between New Jerusalem as the Bride and Rome as the Whore seems almost too deliberate to be reduced to just a matter of following the status quo.

John's narrative goes to great lengths to differentiate the Whore and the Bride from one another. The Whore is active, the Bride is passive; the Whore is colorful and extravagant, the Bride is "bright and pure"; the Whore is aggressive and hedonistic, the Bride is submissive and modest. Yet a slightly closer reading reveals that John actually discusses the women using strikingly similar methods. For one thing, the Whore is mentioned twice before she becomes the focal point of the narrative in chapter 17; in chapter 19, John introduces the Bride for no more than one brief moment. Edith Humphrey comments that this introduction is only a mere "glimpse" of the Bride before she will be brought to full attention in the narrative (Humphrey 92). Rossing refers to the Bride's presence in chapter 19 as a "brief but important introduction" to the Bride's "main entrance" in chapter 21 (Rossing 136). Both grand entrances are dramatic enough that they evidently require an introduction from an angelic being (17:1; 21:9). Also, in both cases, John is "carried away" to another place to view the women. In the case of the Whore, he is taken to the wilderness (17:3); in the case of the Bride to a "great, high mountain" (21:10).

To borrow Duff's words, John portrays the Whore and the Bride using the same literary structure so the women "appear as distorted reflections of one another" (Duff "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing" 65). In other words, despite the fact that the women are polar opposites, they are not completely separated from one another. Rather, they are two distinct figures occupying the same historical and literary context. This context will be explored in the next section, which will discuss sociological influences of John's version of the SV metaphor. Like his prophetic predecessors in the Hebrew Scriptures, John's metaphor relies on the audience's cognitive associations of women's sexuality as

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potentially destructive: the Whore's destructive sexual prowess lures the kings and nations of the world into her sin, thus allowing the world to be corrupted by the forces of evil. To understand these cognitive associations, it is important to consider three aspects of John's social world: Greco-Roman culture, the apocalyptic worldview, and the recurrent image of the sexual temptress luring men into sin.

GRECO-ROMAN CULTURE

As mentioned in the conclusion of chapter 2, when the exiled Jewish community returned to their former lands in circa 539 B.C.E., when the Babylonian Empire fell apart and King Cyrus of the Persia gained Palestine (formerly Israel) (Montefiore 53; Reviv 109). Upon their return, the once-exiled Hebrews rebuilt the Second Temple (Montefiore 53). After the Second Temple was built, it "became the nucleus" of the reestablished Jewish community (Coogan 2243). In a sense, the rebuilt Temple reflected a newfound mission of Jews to reaffirm their community's traditions, including re-writing sacred texts (2243) and reinstating religious rites such as circumcision and dietary laws (Montefiore 50). In fact, many of the elements that are associated with present-day Judaism were developed during this time (50).

Almost two centuries after the Second Temple was rebuilt, a Macedonian Greek known as Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire (Ermatinger 5). Because of this victory, Alexander usurped the control of Palestine from Persian power. He became the new ruler following the death of the final Persian king, Darius II (Martin 36). Once he established himself as king, Alexander then started a military campaign in which he

expanded his Empire, eventually taking the majority of the Ancient Near East[16] (36-37;

Coogan 2244).

After Alexander's expansions, various small kingdoms were established

throughout the Near East, ruled by various generals (Martin 37). These kingdoms were

modeled after the Greek *polis*, which are cities of about 1,000 to 5,000 residents (38).

While these cities were different sizes, none of them were particularly "larger" areas (38-

39). These cities had an urban city-center for business and political sites, surrounded by

larger rural farming areas known as the *chōra,* where most of the population lived (39).

According to Dale Martin, the polis and chōra were "mutually dependent" on one

another: the polis needed the chōra for agricultural resources, and the chōra needed the

polis for business and political purposes (39).

While these new cities were very diverse at the time of Alexander's conquests,

Hellenistic influence began to permeate these various cultures (Newsome 3). Martin

explains:

> The different peoples Alexander had conquered obviously spoke many different
>
> languages and had different customs . . . These cities, though, were all founded on
>
> the model of the previous Greek cities. Gradually, this practice of Alexander, later
>
> followed by his successors, led to the fact that the eastern Mediterranean was
>
> dotted with towns and cities that had at least a strong veneer of hellenization. The
>
> elites were expected to be able to speak Greek, and they educated their sons, and
>
> sometimes their daughters, with Greek education and in Greek ways. The lower

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[16] In this chapter, the "Ancient Near East" refers to the geographic location that is now called the Middle East. This covers a broad area which is as follows: ancient Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), ancient Egypt, ancient Iran, the Eastern Mediterranean (modern-day Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon), the Arabian Peninsula, and the Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). According to Daniel Snell, this term reflects a Eurocentric standpoint of the world; other terms could include "Western Asia" or "Northeast Africa" (Snell 2).

class continued to live mainly in the countryside . . . speaking their own ethnic

languages and maintaining their local customs. But those who intended to occupy

the upper class and live in the cities had to accommodate themselves to the

hellenization program of Alexander and his successors. (Martin 37-38).

The above passage indicates that these cities, despite their initial diversity, became

immersed in Greek lifestyles. Furthermore, as the elitist populations reared new

generations in Greek culture, these areas occupied by Alexander and his successors

became increasingly "Hellenized." The Hellenized world is the first historical example of

a global culture that linked different nations together as "citizens of the same world"

(Newsome 12).

Hellenistic influences came in the form of Greek literature, education, and

language (Newsome 12). During this time, many different forms of Greek literature

developed, most notably the classic works of poetry, drama, and philosophy (14). In

Alexandria, a library was created to facilitate scholarly efforts of Greek intellectuals of

the time (14). This library shaped a "cultural and intellectual center of Hellenistic life,"

later expanding into second branch that allowed space for even more literary works to be

produced (14). These literary works, according to James Newsome, eventually reached to

about 700,000 scrolls—which is a significant achievement of intellectual culture,

considering that these scrolls predate modern printing (14-15). Furthermore, education

advanced during this time, mostly taking place at the gymnasium (Martin 39). In the

gymnasium, young boys were not only trained in athletic abilities, but they were also

taught how to read and write (39). Beyond the educational function of the gymnasium, it

was also a place for youths to socialize with one another, engaging in sports and various

board games (39). Also, older men of the cities often visited the gymnasium to watch the young boys play sports (39). In sum, this gymnasium was a place of both learning and male entertainment culture, establishing it as what Newsome refers to as a "primary transmitter of culture" in the Hellenistic world (Newsome 21).

In addition to literature and education, the spread of the Greek language—especially Attic Greek—is another significant example of the growing influence of Greek culture throughout the region. According to Newsome, Attic Greek was a highly expressive dialect originally considered the "language of literature, philosophy, science, and the arts" (12). Previously, Attic Greek was spoken by educated, affluent Greek citizens (12). As the influence of Hellenistic culture progressed, Attic Greek began to permeate areas such as the marketplace, education, and individual households (12-13). Throughout both western Asia and Europe, Greek words and phrases were blended with existing languages, creating new lexicons (13). Eventually, the blended languages filtered to the lower-class populations, creating new language called Koine Greek (13). This new dialect was more "concise" than the elaborate Attic dialect, and it did not rigidly adhere to any particular structure or order, thus allowing more freedom to blend with other vernaculars (13). Jewish communities eventually adopted this new language, to the point that a new translation of the Hebrew Bible known as the Septuagint was written because new generations of Jews no longer understood Hebrew (13; Ermatinger 5).

It is no small matter that the Jewish communities adopted a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible. In general, many different ethnic groups were recognized in the Ancient Near East; the Jewish community was just one of many ethnic and cultural groups (Martin 35-36). Each group had its own religion and customs (36); thus, the Ancient Near

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East was fairly diverse. Yet this diversity did not imply peace and harmony. The Greeks

saw themselves as superior to all other groups (36); the Jews saw the Greeks as

foreigners who did not share their historical connection to the land (Ermatinger 5). Also,

the Jews constantly had to defend their monotheistic religious practices against the

dominant Greek pagan culture (5). Thus, the Septuagint symbolizes the quandary the

Jews in this era faced: they wanted to defend their religious tradition, yet as minorities

amongst the dominant Greek culture, they were also influenced by the very culture they

were trying to oppose. Ermatinger suggests that the Septuagint could have been an

attempt of Jewish communities to educate the Greeks about the Jewish community's

beliefs, which he says was most likely unsuccessful (Ermatinger 5).

The Greeks continued to rule until about the second century B.C.E., when Roman

military powers began to conquer Greek territories (Martin 43-44). Interestingly, the

Romans did not drastically alter the cultural climate of the Ancient Near East the way the

Greeks had when they conquered Persia; instead, they kept the Greek structure of culture,

politics, language, and religion (44). The "Greek system" remained the dominant cultural

structure, and this continued until well after Christianity's spread throughout the West

(44).

There were recurrent problems between the Jews and Romans. The tension came

from both sides: the Romans saw themselves as "superior" to Jewish custom, and the

Jews objected to Roman taxes (118-119). From a Roman perspective, they ruled with the

goal of keeping the land peaceful (Martin 51). To maintain that peace, the Romans did

not hesitate to take drastic measures to enforce compliance, such as "destroying

communities and forcibly moving populations" (51). Furthermore, their tax system

granted the Empire's wealth (51), so paying taxes were understood as support for the economic well-being of the land. However, human greed enviably corrupted the system, putting a large portion of the tax money into the pockets of the elites (52). For some in the Jewish community, this was unacceptable because the overwhelming majority of the population was impoverished (52). From their perspective, their tax money was not necessarily contributing to "Roman peace," but rather toward the personal wealth of the elites.

At the same time, Jewish communities continued to thrive and evolve (Newsome 251). It was during this long period Roman rule that early Christian[17] groups formed, inspired by Jesus' ministry in Galilee between 30-33 CE. There is a common misconception that these Christian communities were actively persecuted throughout periods of Roman rule; however, this supposition has been long refuted (Barr "Tales of the End" 301; Boxall 12; Collins "Crisis and Catharsis" 69-71; Thompson 172). The Romans mostly tolerated both the Jewish and the Christian communities, allowing them to practice their religion with little intervention (Martin 53). The only time the Romans became involved in the affairs of religious groups was if they had reason to believe their practices could potentially threaten Roman peace (53); the Romans were more concerned with political compliance than they were about religion.

If there was no systematic Roman persecution of Christians, why does John portray Rome as an evil, whoring woman drunk on the blood of Jesus' followers? Collins suggests that John's community was not necessarily oppressed, but they thought they were oppressed (Collins "Crisis and Catharsis" 84). This interpretation seems to have

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[17] The term "Christian" is used very loosely in this chapter, as these early Christian groups were still Jewish sects. The official split between Judaism and Christianity did not occur until after the New Testament period.

merit: even if no actual oppression ever took place, it is important to remember that the majority of John's community lived in poverty compared to the wealthy Roman governing elites. This could have caused the community to *feel* oppressed, regardless of whether they experienced any actual oppression. However, the issue here is not oppression; the real problem here is that John's community was a minority culture whose cooperation with the dominant majority culture (e.g., Rome) could potentially destroy their way of life. The problem was culture war, not a matter of persecution. John's tactic in fighting this culture war was to demonize his enemy while uplifting his own community as moral and righteous—thus, he used a metaphor that presented Rome as a whore and Jerusalem as a virginal bride.

APOCALYPTISICM: A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF THE NATURE OF EVIL

Revelation is an apocalyptic text, a word that derives from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, or "revelation" (Newsome 66). In her book *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, Collins provides an excellent definition of these types of texts with the following statement:

> "Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages an eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world; such a work is intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the

understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.

(Collins "Cosmology and Eschatology" 7).

Collins' statement indicates that apocalyptic literature relates to a mystical interaction between humans and supernatural entities, in which the supernatural entities expose secret information with the intent of explaining worldly circumstances.

In the case of Revelation, John's apocalyptic worldview strayed from that of the prophetic texts' understanding of "evil." In the prophetic texts discussed in chapter 2, "evil" is understood to derive from a human origin: evil exists because human beings "choose to do evil" (Newsome 66-67). In this mindset, humans stray from God's will and actively violate the rights of others because of their own selfishness (66). Although humans could potentially choose to be good, their flawed character causes them to be evil instead. However, in John's perspective, "evil" does not derive from human character flaw, but rather from supernatural forces (67). These forces, which are "superior to human beings, but inferior to God," influence humans to participate in evil deeds (67). To eliminate such evil forces, therefore, requires divine involvement from God to conquer such evil (67).

It is beyond the scope of this present analysis to examine reasons for the shift in worldview between the prophets' and John's respective eras. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that the apocalyptic worldview provides an answer to an inherent problem raised by monotheism: *if God is good, then why do godly people suffer?* While such a worldview does not necessarily absolve blame from humans who participate in evil activities, apocalypticism explains that humans suffer because the world is influenced by

evil beings that separate humans from God (Newsome 67). In turn, this provides an answer to why humans continually fail to withstand against evil (67). In John's text, such a worldview is prevalent: Duff explains that in John's literary world, the world is "clearly divided" between polarized powers of good and evil, which are constantly in combat with one another (Duff "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing" 77).

On a literary level, the difference in genre between the prophetic texts and John's text certainly reveals a shift in priorities. As discussed in chapter 2, the SV metaphors in the prophetic texts refer to concerns about the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions. The message of these metaphors is that Israelites and Judahites brought about such events because of their apostasy against YHWH. The focus is on human actions and resulting consequences: humans acted, YHWH reacted. This cause-and-effect connection is not the view in John's text, where humans participate in evil because the world is full of evil spiritual forces that *cause* humans to commit evil. Humans do not directly do evil things; there is an intercessor that encourages their evildoing. This worldview is congruent with John's social world: as Barr explains in *Tales of the End*, "access to power was always through some intermediary" in John's social world (Barr "Tales of the End" 6). In this world, there was a wide gap between the elite group in power and society's commoners; to bridge this gap, commoners had to use third parties to address those in power (6). Roman imperialism may have caused this indirect access to governing power. The Roman Empire spanned a large geographical area; logically, ruling such a massive area would be impossible for a small, elite group of rulers without assistants. Since the prophetic texts predate the globalized Roman Empire, access to power may not have been as indirect.

In Revelation, John's community's indirect access to power is reflected by his interaction with divine beings. In fact, the very first point John stresses in the entire narrative is that angels grant him contact with heavenly forces: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; *he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John*, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw" (1:1-2, emphasis added). Furthermore, the two beasts in chapter 13 also represent the indirect access to power: the land beast directly interacts with the people of the nations, coercing them to bow down to the sea beast and bear his image (13:12-17). In this case, those who follow the beast are beguiled into it by third party influences; once again, this strays from the cause-and-effect nature of evil in the prophetic texts.

THE SEXUAL TEMPTRESS AS FEMINIZED EVIL

Although historical circumstances and the worldview behind the Revelation are undoubtedly different from that in the prophetic versions, John's version of the SV metaphor nonetheless employs the same cognitive associations as his predecessors. The four authors each associate "evil" with destructive feminine sexuality, relying on the associations with infidelity and promiscuity as a threat to the social order. This reveals that while the social world changed, the underlying beliefs about women's sexuality did not change. This next section will examine said beliefs in John's world, especially focusing on the continuing use of the "sexual temptress" image—that is, the image of sexually aggressive women who use their feminine wiles to seduce men into sinful and potentially dangerous activities.

In general, the image of the sexual temptress is common throughout the Biblical tradition: Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph (Genesis 39), Jezebel beguiles Ahab to "to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 21:25), Delilah lures Samson to disclose the secret to his strength (Judges 16:4-12). Likewise, Biblical wisdom warns men of the dangers of women's seductive charms:

> Then a woman comes toward him, decked out like a prostitute,[18] wily of heart. She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; now in the street, now in the squares, and at every corner she lies in wait. She seizes him and kisses him . . . With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. Right away he follows her, and goes like an ox to the slaughter, or bounds like a stag toward the trap until an arrow pierces its entrails. He is like a bird rushing into a snare, not knowing that it will cost him his life. And now, my children, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Do not let your hearts turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, for many are those she has laid low, and numerous are her victims. Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death. (Proverbs 10-13; 21-27)

According to this mindset, women's sexuality poses a threat to men: through her alluring sexuality and cleverness, the temptress is portrayed as a huntress luring her prey into her trap. The man, like a helpless animal, is portrayed as powerless to her deceit. Phyllis Bird comments that "against this female power not even the strongest man could stand" (Bird "Images of Women in the Old Testament." 65).

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[18] This context specifically refers to her attire ("she is *decked out like a prostitute*"); it only describes her physical appearance, not her role in society. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter 2, there is an important distinction in the Hebrew Bible between a woman who *is* a prostitute (*zonah)* and a woman who is *like* a prostitute in the sense that she is promiscuous (*zanah).* Thus, it should not be assumed that "prostitute" in this context refers to actual sex work.

This image is not unique the Biblical tradition; it is congruent with social attitudes about the nature of women in John's world. In Greco-Roman culture, women were understood to be more carnal and passionate than men, often to the point of lacking self-control (Duff "Who Rides the Beast" 109). This speculation was partially due to the assumption that women were biologically incomplete males (109; Barr "Women in Myth" 67). While the idea of two opposite sexes ("male" and "female") is often taken for granted by contemporaries, the idea of a binary sexual structure is actually a relatively new concept (Barr "Women in Myth" 67). Duff explains that according to this idea, fetuses collected heat during their development in their mother's womb; if a fetus collected enough heat, then it would be born male (Duff "Who Rides the Beast" 109). Those who did not collect enough heat—the children born female—were understood as imperfect, constructed of liquid rather than heat (109). With the absence of heat, females were considered emotionally weak and driven by desires (109). Therefore, women's lack of control over their sexuality was understood as an innate result of their biological imperfection.

This Greco-Roman understanding of femininity was not limited to the medical field. Duff states that ancient non-biblical narratives reflect these ideals about women's carnal nature. He cites Hesiod's *Theogeny,* in which Prometheus tricked Zeus into getting access to fire; as punishment to humankind, Zeus created a female creature with unquenchable sexual hunger to "eat up the results of his labor and wear him out" (Duff "Who Rides the Beast" 109; cf. Hesiod ll. 570–612). Hesiod's narrative describes this beguiling ways of this new creature:

. . . when he had made the beautiful evil to be the price for the blessing, he

brought her out, delighting in the finery which the bright-eyed daughter of a

mighty father had given her, to the place where the other gods and men were. And

wonder took hold of the deathless gods and mortal men when they saw that which

was sheer guile, not to be withstood by men. For from her is the race of women

and female kind: of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst

mortal men to their great trouble, no helpmeets in hateful poverty, but only in

wealth. And as in thatched hives bees feed the drones whose nature is to do

mischief . . . even so Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to

mortal men, with a nature to do evil. (Hesiod ll. 585-612)

Hesiod's description of this so-called "beautiful evil" has many connections to John's

description of the Whore in Revelation 17. Like Hesiod, John basks in the physical

beauty of his female subject: the Whore is decked in precious stones and expensive fabric

(17:4), and Hesiod's evil female is "delighted" in lavish clothes. As the men in Hesiod's

narrative are smitten by "wonder" for this new feminine creature, John is "greatly

amazed" when he first saw the Whore (17:6). Finally, as Hesiod's female torments men

with her evil nature, John's Whore intoxicates the kings of the earth with her

"fornication" (17:2). Comparing these two narratives, it is evident that in the Greco-

Roman world, feminine sexuality was understood as a dangerous and powerful force

against (male) society. As Pippin points out, women were both "desired and feared"

because their "power identified in the form of seduction" could potentially overpower

and destroy men (Pippin "The Heroine and the Whore" 133).

THE COGNITIVE GAIN: SAME COGNITIVE ASSOCIATIONS, DIFFERENT BACKGROUND

As discussed previously, Revelation is an apocalyptic book, a genre that assumes a polarization between "good" and "evil" in a cosmic battle for control over the world (Newsome 67). In apocalyptic literature, the goal is to identify the source of evil (67) and speak of a time in which a new world order will be introduced (69). In this new world order, evil will be destroyed and the good will be "conducted into a never-ending paradise" (69). In the case of Revelation, the exposed evil is Rome, which is to be destroyed; the "never-ending paradise" is the New Jerusalem. As this chapter has established, John uses the SV metaphor to illustrate his apocalyptic scenario: Rome is a Whore, Jerusalem is a Bride—that is, Rome is evil, New Jerusalem is good. John expanded upon the previous usage of the SV metaphor in the prophetic text by portraying two contradictory feminine characters to personify each city as "evil" and "good." This final section will discuss how the Whore/Bride juxtaposition leads the audience to the cognitive gain that to follow Rome is comparable to falling prey to a sexual temptress, whereas to follow the New Jerusalem is comparable to the culturally-respectable sexual bond between husband and wife.

The good/evil dichotomy assumes that one has an active choice to participate in either category. To resist the power of evil, this requires a great deal of moral strength; George Lakoff explains that moral strength is built through one's sense of "courage" and "self-control" (Lakoff 141). Thus, a person who is "morally weak" will succumb to evil and thus, they "give in to evil, to preform immoral acts, and thus [will] become part of the evil forces" (141). To prevent themselves from succumbing to evil, they must

"develop willpower" to actively combat evil—thus, they will seek self-control over selfish desires such as "money, sex, food, comfort, glory, and things other people have" (141). In this mindset, the world is a battleground of forces of the good/evil dichotomy, in which the evil must be sought out and eradicated (142). Clearly, there is no middle ground in this mindset; one must be one or the other.

In Revelation, John relies on this same mindset. Pippin explains how John's perspective of world in a strict good/evil dichotomy is revealed with his portrayal of the Whore:

> The dualistic, either/or nature of the political/religious stance in the *Apocalypse* is clear. It is either Satan or God, either Rome or the New Jerusalem. . . . The erotic, enchanting female brings either birth or death. The distinct female archetypes in the *Apocalypse* represent either the way to God (rebirth in the New Jerusalem) or the way to Satan (death in the abyss). . . . if we can overcome these females in fantasy, we can overcome our fears. Remove or completely destroy the females, and all is right with the world again. (Pippin "Heroine and the Whore" 134)

The Whore, as Pippin has pointed out, is the embodiment of all that is evil; thus, it is the responsibility of John's community to do away with her, lest they fall prey to her malevolent ways. On the contrary, the virginal Bride provides a morally strong ideal: she is "pure and bright," the only woman worthy of marriage to Jesus in the narrative. She is the center of the heavenly wedding party in chapter 21—the party does not begin until she arrives, so to speak. With the evil Whore out of the narrative for good, the Bride

represents the "never-ending paradise" that has replaced the former corrupt world order that the Whore controlled.

The key concept in this metaphor is the choice between two contradictory worldviews. One can follow Rome and her evil ways, falling prey to her treachery and becoming drunk from her dangerous feminine wiles; or, one can follow the New Jerusalem and overcome evil, thus becoming part of the utopian paradise the Bride symbolizes. From John's perspective, the culture war between Rome and Jerusalem has no room for ambiguity: the audience must follow one or the other.

Despite changes in culture and worldview from the world of the prophets, John's version of the SV metaphor continues the previous prophetic tradition by relying on similar cognitive associations of women's sexuality as dangerous. The image of the sexual temptress bent on destroying the social order continues in John's text. This reveals that images of destructive feminine sexually are time-honored. As the next chapter will explore, cognitive associations of destructive feminine sexuality are still prevalent in contemporary culture. With the historical backdrop of the SV metaphors now established, this analysis will shift its focus from ancient times to contemporary times. Despite social changes between the ancient world and the contemporary world, destructive female sexuality still holds a potential threat to the social order. Therefore, just as the prophetic and apocalyptic traditions of the SV metaphor shared similar cognitive associations of dangerous feminine sexuality, the contemporary world continues to cling to these associations as well. The next chapter will explore why such cognitive associations have yet to disappear.

IV: UNCHANGED COGNITIVE ASSOCIATIONS: CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL CONCERNS

This analysis has examined the Biblical SV metaphors. Chapter 1 discussed the cognitive metaphor theory, which claims that metaphors connect to dissimilar concepts to create a new meaning, or a cognitive gain. This process depends on culturally-specific cognitive associations of the two concepts. [19] The cognitive metaphor theory shaped the next two chapters, which examined the SV metaphors from a sociohistorical standpoint. Chapter 2 argued that Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel took advantage of the ancient (male) audiences' understanding of sex and marriage to claim that engaging in polytheistic religious practices (as opposed to exclusive monotheistic worship) was comparable to marital infidelity. This metaphor relates to the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions on Israel and Jerusalem: the idea is that as an unfaithful wife warrants punishment from her jaded husband, YHWH's unfaithful people brought about their destructions because they broke their covenant with YHWH. Chapter 3 argued that Revelation relied on the same sexual ideologies, once again using the image of a whoring woman as a symbol of evil influences that turn people from God. Revelation calls for the audience to turn away from the whoring woman (symbolic for the Roman Empire) and her evil influence. While the prophetic texts and Revelation have different historical contexts and agendas, both employ the same cognitive associations of women's sexuality as destructive.

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[19] Refer to pp. 18-23 for a more in-depth discussion of cognitive metaphor theory.

To this point, what is absent from this analysis is consideration of the ethical implications of the SV metaphors. The main idea of this analysis is that the SV metaphors as found in the texts discussed in this analysis refer to the concerns of the original authors, who wrote the texts in a particular historical setting with a specific agenda. The SV metaphors are merely literary tools—albeit insensitively articulated literary tools—used to promote each author's historically-specific agenda. As for contemporary society, the agendas of the original authors no longer hold urgent relevance.

The conversation is not yet finished. Although the textual authorities of the SV metaphors end with the texts, one theme continues to prevail in contemporary culture: *sexually deviant women are deserving or responsible for any SV victimization*. In contemporary world, it is common for SV victims to be blamed for their abuse (Burt 217; Suarez and Gadalla 2011). This is congruent with the ancient SV metaphors, which also blame the victim for "her" mistreatment (Hosea 2:5; Jeremiah 13:22; Ezekiel 16:36-37; Revelation 18:4-8). This cycle of victim-blaming raises the question of why such attitudes have prevailed in the lengthy time-gap between ancient culture and contemporary culture.

The purpose of this final chapter moves beyond analyzing the SV metaphor through sociohistorical perspective and shifts the attention to contemporary society. This chapter argues that the victim-blaming principle in the SV metaphor does not necessarily prevail because the metaphors influence modern perceptions of women's sexuality; it continues because eradicating the perceptions threatens the pre-established societal structure. Contemporary culture has failed to move beyond the same attitudes about women's sexuality as seen in the Biblical texts. The problem is not just that the texts'

influence contemporary thoughts about women's sexuality; the problem is that society has never stopped relying on such ideas in the first place. The goal of this final chapter is to suggest a different approach in discussing the connection between the SV metaphors and present-day feminist ethical concerns about SV against women: rather than focusing on how Biblical texts influence (or do not influence) contemporary ideologies about SV, the emphasis ought to be on larger sociocultural principles that allow the same ideologies about SV to continue.

To plead this case, this chapter employs the system justification theory, which claims society is motivated to defend its established status quo for the sake of maintaining stability and order (Liviatan and Jost 231; Stapel and Noordewier 239). The status quo is desirable because supports the societal structure; change is undesirable because it unsettles the structure. This chapter will first discuss the system justification theory and how it applies to justify SV. One case study of a contemporary instance SV will be discussed, providing a recent example of how victim-blaming influences the way society responded to each case. This case will be compared to the SV metaphors in terms of victim-blaming in both contexts.

Before continuing this discussion, a disclaimer must be addressed. While various psychological research has connected the system justification theory to SV, to my knowledge Biblical scholars have not incorporated this theory into discussion of the SV metaphors. The information provided for this discussion is from empirical psychological studies, reflecting a sociopsychological point of view rather than from Biblical scholarship or feminist theory. By doing this, my intention is to suggest a new way of explaining why cognitive associations of women's sexuality as potentially dangerous

continue to prevail; other scholars are certainly welcome to provide their own interpretation as well.

SYSTEM JUSTIFICATION THEORY

System justification theory is a psychological hypothesis introduced in 1994 by John T. Jost and Mahzarin R. Banaji (Liviatan and Jost 231). This theory testifies that individuals are often driven "rationalize the status quo" and "justify" their current societal system (231; cf. Stapel and Noordewier 239). According to this theory, "people are motivated to justify and rationalize the way things are, so that existing social, economic, and political arrangements tend to be perceived as fair and legitimate" (qtd. in Ståhl et al. 241; cf. Jost and Orsolya 260). When change is introduced to a system, this activates peoples' tendencies to validate their current system and discredit the change (Ståhl et al. 242). Maintaining the current system provides stability and organization, which gives members of society comfortable feelings of, to use Stapel and Noordewier's words, "nonrandomness and predictability" (Stapel and Noordewier 239). Overall, people dislike randomness and unpredictability because it is confusing, disorderly, and chaotic (239, 241-242). When a current system ideology is threatened, feelings of stability will decline and the need for organization intensifies (239, 241-242).

The system justification theory connects to the tendency to victim-blame SV victims because of two interrelated principles: the use of stereotypes and the acceptance of false beliefs. According to Stapel and Noordewier, stereotyping is used to excuse unfairness in a system:

According to system justification theory, people use stereotypes to maintain their

belief in a just world (see Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Simmons, 1966) and to

rationalize the status quo (see Jost & Banaji, 1994). People use stereotypes to

explain why some groups of people get so little, while others get so much, as a

way to view the world they live in as fair. Put differently, people use stereotypes

because stereotypes are handy tools that allow them to blame society's victims

(poor people are just lazy) and to idolize its winners (rich people simply work

hard). According to system justification research, people stereotype because

stereotypes help them to believe that the social structure they are part of is

legitimate and justifiable . . . (Stapel and Noordewier 239).

Thus stereotyping allows members of system to assure themselves that social injustices

exist because certain people may be deserving of unfair treatment. This perpetuates the

idea that the system is fair and just, and that the problem is with individuals themselves.

The tendency to stereotype SV victims goes hand-in-hand with the acceptance of

false beliefs about SV. Martha Burt describes such false beliefs as "rape myths" that

maintain "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists"

(Burt 217).[20] In Burt's article, she poses a series of question to research participants to

assess their acceptance of rape myths and their attitude toward women who are victims of

rape. Following Burt's findings, these statements are the six most commonly accepted

false beliefs about SV:

(1) Women have the power to stop a rape "if they really want to";

_____

[20] Although Burt's analysis specifically discusses rape and the SV metaphors of the Biblical texts refer to other forms of SV, this chapter will consider Burt's ideas using a more general application to SV—not just specifically pertaining to rape.

(2) Women who dress in provocative clothing "are just asking for trouble";

(3) Most women who get raped are "promiscuous" or have a "bad reputation";

(4) Women who engage in "heavy petting" are at fault if their partner "forces sex";

(5) Women who imbibe at social engagements and engage in consensual sexual activity are "fair game" to any other male partygoer who wishes to have sex with her "whether she wants to or not";

(6) Women who think they are "too good" to accept a man's advances "deserve to be taught a lesson."[21] (Burt 223, numbering of items not original)

Such stereotypical, false beliefs serve the purpose to convince society that victims of SV are not targets of social injustice because they are responsible for their abuse. From the perspective of system justification theory, SV victims jeopardize the idea that society is fair and just; by crediting victims' mistreatment as a consequence to their own bad behavior, and not to a flaw in society's response to SV victims, this prevents potential disruption of the social system.

The best way to illustrate the system justification theory in action is to discuss how it is applied to real-life examples of SV. This section will introduce a recent case study of SV, which was also examined in a content analysis by Shannon O'Hara. In O'Hara's paper, she analyzed news media handling of three different cases, taking seriously the tendency of the media to perpetuate rape myths. This chapter will discuss

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[21] This item is the highest rated on Burt's list.

one of the three cases O'Hara analyzed. This case was sensationalized by the media in ways that promoted rape myths. After briefly discussing this incident, this section will compare the case to the SV metaphors, noting the similar tendency in both contexts toward victim-blaming and, as a result, fitting into system justification theory.

Before discussing the case study, it is important to note that SV covers a broad range of sexually abusive acts. According to the CDC, SV includes "*any sexual act* that is perpetrated against someone's will" ("Sexual Violence: Definitions," emphasis added). This case study specifically pertains to rape; this differs from the acts of SV depicted in the metaphors, which is forced stripping for the purpose of inflicting shame. Forced stripping falls within a category of SV the CDC refers to as "non-contact sexual abuse," which involves imposing sexual humiliation on another person with the intention "to accomplish some other end" on the perpetrator's part ("Sexual Violence: Definition"). The technical difference between rape and forced stripping does not necessarily discredit the connection between the case study and the SV metaphors. Both cases pertain to an act of SV that are discussed in a way that assumes the victim is at fault; in each case, the victim is depicted as being at least partially deserving of her abuse.

CASE STUDY: CLEVELAND, TEXAS GANG-RAPE

In fall 2010, an unnamed 11 year-old female was gang-raped by a group of young men in the small town of Cleveland, Texas. The group of men was highly diverse in age, ranging from 14 to 27 years-old (McKinley and Goode para. 4). The young woman was lured from her home by three young men, who claimed they wanted to take her out for a drive (McKinley and Goode paras. 16-17; McKinley para. 10; O'Hara 249). The three

men brought her to the home of one of the three young men's relatives, where she was forced to remove her clothes under the threat that she would be beaten if she did not obey (McKinley and Goode para. 20; McKinley para. 10; O'Hara 249). The young men forced the young woman to engage in sexual intercourse and oral sex with them (McKinley and Goode para. 21). During the attack, one of the young men telephoned some of his friends and invited them to join the rape (McKinley and Goode para. 22; O'Hara 249); four more young men came to the scene and joined the attack after this invitation (McKinley and Goode para. 22). The event was temporarily disrupted when the residence's owner arrived; the men escaped through a window in the back of the house, still in possession of the young woman, and relocated to a neighboring unoccupied mobile home and continued the gang-rape (McKinley para. 11; McKinley and Goode para. 23).

As the gang-rape took place, some of the men used their cellular phones to take photographs and record videos of the incident (McKinley para. 11; O'Hara 249). The photo and video files were sent around the small community, mostly throughout the local schools (McKinley and Goode para. 11). The victim's father eventually received some of these images on his own phone (para. 8). The photographs prompted investigation from the local police, especially when an unidentified elementary school student reported to a teacher that they had seen sexually-explicit photographs of the young woman with two of the attackers, one of whom was a well-known athlete at the local high school (para. 15).

This case was known for employing rape myths, often to the extent of portraying the young woman as a promiscuous and unruly youth. Some local residents told the press that "she dressed older than her age, wearing makeup and fashions more appropriate to a woman in her 20s" (McKinley para. 12). This fixation on the victim's appearance

coincides with Burt's point that SV victims are commonly blamed for their abuse if they dress provocatively (e.g., women who dress suggestively "are just asking for trouble") (Burt 223; cf. O'Hara 253). Furthermore, some residents report that she had often frequented the mobile home community in which some of the attack took place (McKinley para. 12). This article also states that she was known for mingling with "teenage boys at a playground" (para. 12). Another article says that the young woman's parents "scolded her almost daily" for several months prior to the assault because "she had been sneaking out of the house two or three nights a week" by "climbing out a bedroom window" (McKinley and Goode para. 33). The article reports that the young woman's father claimed she had been coming home late at night, claiming that she was spending time with female friends (para. 33). These allegations against the young woman further portray her as an irresponsible and out-of-control delinquent, which also coincides with Burt's research (e.g., women who get raped are "promiscuous" or have a "bad reputation") (Burt 223; cf. O'Hara 253).

The representation of the young woman as promiscuous follows a tradition of justifying SV against women with bad reputations. For example, as discussed in a *California Law Review* document, the legal system often takes SV victims' sexual history into account during rape trials (Murthy 543). This practice is supported by recurring assumptions that (1) women who consent to multiple partners are likely to consent to rape, and (2) women who have extramarital sex are dishonest (550-551). The document quotes former Ohio judge John Angelotta: "A nice girl who gets raped is different than a bad girl who gets raped, a bad girl being one who carries on this course of conduct with men. To me, she's a lot different than a good girl when you come to the question of

rape—while agreeing that you may not rape either kind of girl" (550). Although the statement "you may not rape either kind of girl" suggests that he does not advocate SV per se, Angelotta's categorization of "bad girls" from "nice girls" implies a belief that women's personal conduct makes a difference in judging her rapability. Also, in a more recent example, British sociologist Alison Phipps argues that women who are perceived as indecent are often "thought to have permanent consent to sexual violation written into their behaviour" (qtd. in O'Hara 253; Phipps 674). In other words, women who are seen as "bad girls," to use Angelotta's rhetoric, are understood as overtly sexual and, thus, rapable.

THE CLEVELAND CASE AND THE SV METAPHORS

This brings us to a new question: why is the contemporary Cleveland case relevant to the SV metaphors? Admittedly, there is a crucial difference between the ancient SV metaphors and the modern-day Cleveland case. On the one hand, the SV metaphors do not pertain to actual, real-life instances of violence against women; such texts use figurative instances of SV to represent a different idea. There is no actual flesh-and-blood SV victim in these texts; the women in the texts are the product of the authors' fantasies. On the other hand, the young woman from the Cleveland case is a flesh-and-blood woman who was sexually assaulted in real life. She is not a fantasy created by an author's imagination; she is reality. However, comparing the metaphors to the Cleveland case reveals a disturbing blur between the boundaries of "fantasy" and "reality," as each context relies on the same cognitive association that "bad girls" (to continue using Angelotta's term) are a detriment to society, which in turn justifies violence against such women.

Specifically in the prophetic texts, the message of the SV metaphor is that the unfaithful wife's violent fate is the result of her own wrongdoing. Hosea writes that the wife "acted shamelessly" by persistently trying to "go after" her lovers (Hosea 2:6-7). Likewise, Jeremiah continues the same portrait of the wife as a shameless woman, referring to her as a "lustful she-camel, restlessly running about, or like a wild ass used to the desert, snuffing the wind in her eagerness, whose passion none can restrain" (Jeremiah 2:23-24). The image of a whoring wife is even stronger in the Ezekiel account, as he takes great pains to describe her as a woman "confident in her beauty and fame" who "lavished her favors on every passerby" (Ezekiel 16:15). In all contexts, the wife is an active seeker of extramarital affairs.

The image of the wife as an insistent chaser of adulterous relationships concurs Burt's assessment that promiscuous women are prone to rape or are partly responsible for their rape because of their sexual conduct (Burt 223). As a woman who aggressively pursues sex, the wife is presented as deserving of punishment. Likewise, media coverage of the Cleveland case reported that the young woman was known in the community for running around with older boys (McKinley para. 12). The media did not directly accuse her of being sexually involved with these older boys. Yet contempt for her conduct was clear by quotes such as this from one local resident: "'Where was her mother? What was her mother thinking? . . . How can you have an 11-year-old child missing down in [the mobile home community]?'" (McKinley para. 12). Although this statement is aimed at the young woman's mother, it also implies that the neighborhood is not considered a place for a respectable young woman to frequent. The idea of the young woman in a neighborhood of ill-repute, combined with the reports that she was often accompanied by

older men and had a habit of sneaking out of her house late at night, collectively

represents a portrait of the young woman as a seeker of male attention. In this sense, her

characterization is similar to the whoring wife of the prophetic texts; in both contexts, the

woman is a relentless pursuer of trouble. In short, both contexts present the women as

social delinquents.

In the SV metaphor context, the idea that the sexually aggressive women are

trouble-seekers does not end with their tireless hunt for lovers. Their sexual conduct is

also portrayed as inappropriate. In Revelation, for example, the Whore is presented as a

stunning display of flashy clothing and jewelry (Revelation 17:4). In fact, she is so

stunning that even the author admits that he was "greatly amazed" by her attractiveness

(17:6). In short, the Whore is sinful woman who has accumulated many lovers with her

feminine wiles (18:3). Revelation's characterization of the Whore compares to the

media's characterization of the young woman in Cleveland: as discussed previously, the

media reports that the young woman "dressed older than her age, wearing makeup and

fashions more appropriate to a woman in her 20s" (McKinley para. 12). The media also

reports that as she reached adolescence, she would often "talk about wanting to be a

fashion model" (McKinley and Goode para. 10). Like the Whore, the young woman is

also represented as flashy and attractive.

Although the Whore and the young women are each portrayed as flashy and

attractive, the reason for their ostentatiousness relates directly to their historical purpose

and context. As discussed in chapter 3, the Whore's attire symbolizes her power and

wealth as the great Roman Empire.[22] In the case of the young woman, her age-inappropriate clothing relates to a growing social concern about the hypersexualization of female youth. Recently, there has been a noted upsurge in the sexualization of adolescent girls (Starr and Ferguson 463-464). This trend, referred to as "the Lolita effect" by author M. Gigi Durham, promotes the image of a young girl who dresses provocatively and presents herself in a sexual manner (Durham 22). This trend is further explained by R. Egan and Gail Hawkes:

> Once sexualized, girls fall outside of the parameters of "normal" girlhood and morph into something else—an ambivalent and ultimately irresolvable category—girl-woman or 'miniature adults.' A dangerous manifestation, it challenges the hegemonic construction of the child and renders societal boundaries between adult and child arcane at best and unattainable at worst . . . She wants to be "hot" or "sexy" instead of "cute" and definitely likes to "attract attention" . . . She is the antithesis of dominant constructions of girlhood innocence . . . (Egan and Hawkes 305)

Thus on a sociological level, the stereotypical Lolita blurs societal boundaries between adult sexuality and childhood innocence. In a sense, she jeopardizes the boundaries of the virgin/whore concept of discussed in chapter 1: she is a virgin in the sense that she is still an innocent child, yet she is a whore in the sense that she conducts herself like a grown woman.

The concern about the hypersexualization of girls relates to the larger sociological concern about the erosion of societal morals. This larger concern is present in the SV

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[22] Refer to pp. 62-64.

metaphors. As discussed in chapter 2, the prophetic texts' version of the SV metaphors call for ancient Israelites and Judahites abandoning polytheistic elements as opposed to the exclusive monotheistic worship of YHWH, which is thus symbolized in the SV metaphors as marital infidelity. In Revelation, the author's concern is that the Roman Empire, perceived as evil, lured early Christians into sin. Beyond the clear religious concerns in each context, the SV metaphors reflect larger sociological concerns that the morality of the audiences' community was in jeopardy. In the Cleveland case, the young woman's alleged hypersexed conduct relates to the sociological concern that society's sexual boundaries between adults and youth are being blurred. The media's treatment of this case has indicated that this threat to society's sexual boundaries has resulted in efforts to portray the young woman as somehow deserving of her rape; she is portrayed as an unruly Lolita whose actions lead to rape.

The SV metaphors indicate that the acts of SV are justified because the women's sexuality threatened the moral standards of the larger community. The SV metaphors in both the prophetic texts and Revelation feature women who openly defy the sexual standards of their community by engaging in extramarital sexual relationships. Rape myths presented in Burt's research are employed: the women are promiscuous and actively pursue male lovers; thus, according to this logic, they are responsible for their own victimization. By rationalizing their abuse, the societal status quo that separates the virgins from the whores is reinforced. The media coverage of the Cleveland case, which likened the young woman to a promiscuous girl whose provocative attire and hypersexual conduct lead to gang-rape, relies on the same victim-blaming justification as presented in

the SV metaphors. Historical circumstances may have changed, but the victim-blaming principle remains the same.

CLOSING THOUGHTS: CAN WE EVER MOVE BEYOND THE COGNITIVE ASSOCIATIONS?

In the final lines of Tina Pippin's essay "The Heroine and the Whore," she states that "women of the past as well as the present are going to have to be about the business of creating their own apocalyptic tales, their own utopian narratives" (Pippin 144). Her statement is a challenge to female readers to look beyond the Biblical images of feminine sexuality and make their own female-centered tradition. While Pippin's challenge leaves open the door for future female readers to create that female-centered tradition, she neglects to inform the reader of what such a tradition could even look like. Thus, with the absence of guidance from Pippin, a fellow female reader aware of the misogynist implications of the SV metaphors, her female successors are left with the task of creating a new tradition with no idea of what it means to be free from the misogynistic sexual ideals.

Arguably one of the most frustrating limitations of combating SV in society is that it is difficult to conceptualize a world without SV. Eliana Suarez and Tahany Gadalla point out that contemporary North American society has been deemed a "rape culture," meaning that SV is so commonplace that society considers it to be an inevitable and normal part of life (Suarez and Gadalla 2028). As this chapter has reviewed, the prevalence of rape myths contribute to the continued existence of rape culture; as long as rape myths are accepted, SV will continue to be prevalent. On the surface, the solution

seems simple: eradicate the rape myths, and in turn, SV will also be eradicated. Yet it is not so simple. The Cleveland case and the SV metaphors bear disturbing similarities, indicating that while the purpose of the SV metaphor relates historically-specific agenda, the cognitive associations of feminine sexuality have survived. The stereotypical image of a destructive sexual female (e.g., the "whore") is still a powerful cultural image that dominates our concept of women's sexuality. This reveals that as a society, we continue to rely on the same cognitive associations that the ancient authors used in their writing. Even though the SV metaphors reflect ancient times that far exceed contemporary culture, we have never abandoned the same stereotypical ideas about women's sexuality.

The problem, however, is not that the SV metaphors are a continuing influence of societal attitudes about women's sexuality. While the sacred value of the Bible may hold at least some influence some religious devotees' attitude about women's sexuality, the texts alone do not adequately explain why the ideas have survived for thousands of years. The real problem can be understood by applying the principle of system justification theory: the ideas have survived because we actively rationalize these attitudes to protect the status quo of society. The possibility of change, even if it benefits society, threatens the stability of the current system. To change the system, a complete overhaul of our current beliefs about sexuality would be necessary; according to system justification theory, this change leads to persistent attempts to rationalize the current system out of fear of social instability and chaos (Stapel and Noordewier 239). In short, the real problem is that rape culture traps contemporary society in a cycle of rationalizing SV out of fear of change.

Suarez and Gadalla promote an optimistic attitude that a "rape-free" society could be possible one day in the Western world (Suarez and Gadalla 2028). They cite anthropologist Peggy Sanday, who points to some non-Western cultures in which sexual aggression is highly frowned upon and "punished severely" (2028; cf. Sanday 193). Such a culture is established because it embraces an "egalitarian view" of gender rather than a patriarchal model (Suarez and Gadalla 2028; cf. Sanday 193). However, the fact that cultural critics such as Pippin cannot even provide a clear example of what such a society would look like calls such optimism into question. Yet it is possible that acknowledging cultural acceptance of rape myths and the victim-blaming cycle could eventually lead us to a clearer picture of what such a society would look like. When the time comes for such a society to exist, the stereotypical images of feminine sexuality SV metaphors will then remind us of how far we have come.

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