



## *Hosea 1–3 in Twentieth-Century Scholarship*

BRAD E. KELLE

*Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, California*

*bradkelle@pointloma.edu*

---

### ABSTRACT

Throughout the twentieth century, critical scholarship on the book of Hosea has focused overwhelmingly on the marriage metaphor in Hosea 1–3. Scholars often saw these chapters as establishing the primary interpretive issues for the message of the prophet and the book as a whole, although a lack of consensus concerning even the most basic exegetical issues remains. Newer studies have rightly pushed beyond this isolation of Hosea 1–3. This article surveys the major trends of the modern interpretation of these chapters, with particular attention to the second half of the twentieth century. From the early 1900s to the 1980s, critical works focused primarily on the biographical reconstruction of the prophet and his family life, as well as related historical and form-critical concerns. From the 1930s forward, such study was particularly concerned to read Hosea 1–3 against the background of a purported sexualized Baal cult in eighth-century Israel. Beginning in the 1980s, feminist-critical readings of Hosea 1–3 came to occupy a prominent position. In subsequent years, these concerns have been complemented by an emerging emphasis on metaphor theory, as well as newer kinds of literary, book-oriented, and socio-historical analyses. A follow-up article will treat recent scholarship on Hosea 4–14.

**Keywords:** Baal, eighth-century Israelite history, feminist criticism, gender metaphor, Gomer, Hosea, Hosea 1–3, marriage imagery, metaphor theory, religion of Israel, socio-historical analysis

### 1. *Introduction*

In a period well before the advent of modern critical scholarship, the early Christian interpreter Jerome expressed the puzzle and challenge of the book of Hosea:

If in the interpretation of all the prophets we stand in need of the intervention of the Holy Spirit...how much more should the Lord be invoked in interpreting Hosea, and in St. Peter's words, should it be said, 'Expound for us this parable' (Matt. 15.15) (quoted in Macintosh 1997: liii).

While not always reflecting Jerome's piety, twentieth-century biblical scholarship on Hosea has repeatedly borne witness to the vexing nature of this book and its interpretation.

From the earliest days of scholarship in this century to the present diversity of critical approaches, the story of the scholarly interpretation of Hosea has focused overwhelmingly on the marriage metaphor in Hosea 1–3, often to the exclusion of serious engagement with other parts of the book. Scholarly works have commonly treated Hosea 1–3 as distinct from the remainder of the book, making it the subject of numerous independent monographs, and devoting to it the bulk of the discussion in most of the major commentaries. The 1980 commentary by Andersen and Freedman in the Anchor Bible series, for example, divides the book into two major parts devoted to 'Hosea's Marriage' in chs 1–3, and 'Hosea's Prophecies' in chs 4–14. This typical isolation and elevation of Hosea 1–3 rests primarily on a genre distinction between the mostly narrative and biographical material in these chapters, and the poetic material in the remainder of the book, although numerous other differences in language, background, theme, focus, etc. often receive emphasis. Representing perhaps the most extreme example of the tendency to isolate Hosea 1–3, Kaufmann, followed by Ginsberg, asserted historically what others claimed functionally, namely, that chs 1–3 come from a prophet who lived during the Omride dynasty in the ninth century BCE, while chs 4–14 contain the words of a different prophet, who lived in the latter half of the eighth century BCE (Kaufmann 1961; Ginsberg 1971; cf. Ewald 1875: 214).

Within this dominant focus on Hosea 1–3, interpreters have generally understood these chapters as establishing the primary interpretive issues and framework for the overall message of Hosea. Hence, chs 1–3 have long possessed a special interpretive urgency, for, it is argued, they pose the 'foremost question of introduction concerning Hosea's prophecies' (Clements 1975: 408); and the 'interpretation of the whole book is influenced by the way they are resolved' (Andersen and Freedman 1980: 68). Additionally, scholarly writings over the course of the last century reveal a nearly obsessive preoccupation with the personal, marital, and sexual imagery in Hosea 1–3. The seemingly scandalous nature of a marriage between a

prophet and a ‘woman of fornication’ (Hos. 1.2), a god who is fashioned as a jealous husband, and a text that includes images of sexual violence has proven too much for even coolly detached historical critics of the early twentieth century to pass over briefly (see Rowley 1963; Sherwood 2004).

Although focusing nearly exclusively on the interpretive issues of only three chapters, twentieth-century scholarship on Hosea 1–3 has produced a body of scholarly works as vast as that associated with the whole of some other biblical books. Even so, present scholarship reflects a lack of any significant consensus concerning things as basic as the most effective methodological strategies to be employed, or the most important interpretive issues to be investigated. Throughout the last half of the twentieth century, scholars have regularly lamented that ‘the discussion provoked by the first three chapters of Hosea can easily lead to despair’ (Craghan 1971: 84) and that the ‘one consensus’ available for Hosea is that ‘this is a disturbing, fragmented, outrageous, and notoriously problematic text’ (Sherwood 2004: 11). Nonetheless, the interpretation of Hosea 1–3 continues to blossom, with new works entering the discussion, asking a variety of different questions, and proposing a wide range of fresh insights.

For the better part of the twentieth century, the interpretation of Hosea 1–3 has unfolded largely within the parameters of several shared points of consensus concerning the book as a whole, points which have only recently been challenged in an extensive way (see Sweeney 2000; Sherwood 2004; Ben Zvi 2005; Chalmers 2007). These consensus points include the view that the prophet Hosea was a historical figure in the Northern Kingdom between about 750 and 725 BCE; the texts contain some of the original, distinctively northern Israelite preaching of Hosea, as well as additional elements from Judean, exilic, and perhaps post-exilic editors; the book’s primary concern is Israel’s apostasy through the abandonment or confusion of Yahweh for/with Baal; and Hosea’s oracles have significant points of contact with earlier traditions, such as Jacob and the Sinai covenant, and later books in the deuteronomistic tradition, such as Jeremiah and Deuteronomy.

Within these points of consensus, scholarly work on Hosea 1–3 has typically revolved around the interpretation and reinterpretation of a number of selected issues through the use of differing methodological perspectives. The interpretive issues drawing the most regular attention include the following (see Kelle 2005: 1–20):

1. the relationship between the women and events in ch.1 and ch.3, including the redactional history of chs 1–3 as a whole and possible editorial additions therein;

2. the reality, background, and dynamics of Hosea and Gomer's marriage and children, including the description of Gomer as an אִשָּׁה תְּשָׁבָה ('woman of fornication') and the children as יְלָדֵי תְּשָׁבָה ('children of fornication') in Hos. 1.2;
3. the referents, meanings, and functions of the metaphors of fornication and adultery, especially their possible connections to worship in a Baalistic cult, sexual activity within fertility rites, or other socio-political contexts;
4. the genres and their concomitant institutional settings represented throughout chs 1–3;
5. the use of possibly earlier traditions, such as the exodus and wilderness; and
6. the issues raised by feminist and literary analyses of the text's language, imagery, and structure.

At the risk of reinscribing the scholarly tendency to isolate the opening three chapters, this article sketches the major contours and trends of the modern interpretation of Hosea 1–3 that have emerged out of these consensus points and focus issues, with particular attention to scholarship in the second half of the twentieth century (a follow-up article will treat modern scholarship on Hosea 4–14). While necessarily limited and generalizing, this survey reveals an overall movement within critical scholarship (for major surveys of the history of interpretation, see Rowley 1963; Craghan 1971; Clements 1975; Williams 1975; Renaud 1983; Vogels 1984; Seow 1992; Davies 1993; Neef 1999; Sherwood 2004; Kelle 2005: 1–20). From the early 1900s to the 1980s, the primary interpretive trends of Hosea 1–3 focused on the biography of the prophet and the historical-, form-, and text-critical analysis of the text's language and imagery (e.g., Harper 1905). Investigations prior to the 1930s dedicated much energy to reconstructing the details of Gomer as an unfaithful wife, while scholarship from the 1930s forward increasingly emphasized the purported background of a sexualized Baal cult in eighth-century Israel, with an increasing emphasis on identifying comparative ancient Near Eastern traditions that shed light on the text's imagery. Beginning in the 1980s, feminist-critical readings and gender-related issues came to the fore. In subsequent years, a particular focus on metaphor, literary, and symbolic analyses have joined the variety of gender-focused treatments, resulting in new literary and socio-historical readings that revisit older issues and offer previously unseen ways of conceptualizing the book of Hosea as a whole, as well as the marriage metaphor with which it begins.

## 2. *The Backdrop of Twentieth-Century Scholarship*

The primary backdrop for the trends under consideration in this article is the interpretation of Hosea 1–3 in the pre-modern and early modern periods, interpretation that provided a number of perspectives that underwent development, rejection, and revitalization throughout the twentieth century (for commentaries from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Ewald 1875; Cheyne 1884; Harper 1905; Lindblom 1928; Weiser 1949). For example, the early Christian interpreters, such as Augustine and Jerome, understood Hosea 1–3 as a factual account of Hosea's marriage to a promiscuous woman, even if it was to be interpreted figuratively or typologically. Later medieval Jewish commentators, such as Ibn Ezra, however, saw the situation described in the texts as only a vision, dream, or parable; and the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers Luther and Calvin followed this parabolic interpretation (for studies of pre-modern interpretation of Hosea 1–3, see Bitter 1975; Lipshitz 1988; Neef 1999). The primary argument raised in support of the pre-modern trend of symbolic interpretation revolved around the perceived moral and theological problem of God commanding a holy prophet to marry an unholy woman. As Calvin asserted, 'You see, those who imagine that the prophet married a woman who had been a whore are too dense' (quoted in Wolff 1974: 57). Even so, pre-modern interpretation of Hosea 1–3 was not monolithic, and some attention was already paid to issues of the redactional relationships among the chapters, the meaning of the symbols of fornication and adultery, etc. (see Bitter 1975).

A number of these pre-modern interpretive trends continued into the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, especially the reading of Hosea 1–3 as an allegory or parable (e.g., Hitzig and Steiner 1881; Kaufmann 1961). At the same time, the trend of viewing Hosea's marriage as a historical happening of one kind or another gained increasing attention, alongside purely symbolic interpretations (e.g., Ewald 1867–68). The tensions between such ways of approaching the imagery of Hosea's marriage provided the initial framework for the development of the interpretation of Hosea 1–3 in the remainder of the twentieth century.

## 3. *Recent Commentaries*

A representative survey of some major commentaries on Hosea from the second half of the twentieth century illustrates well the major contours of

interpretation across this period. The fuller examination of the twentieth-century trends in the remainder of this article will contextualize the positions evidenced in these most recent commentaries.

The work that exerted the most significant influence on Hosea scholarship in the second half of the twentieth century was Wolff's commentary, originally published in German in 1965, and translated into English in the *Hermeneia* series in 1974. The heart of Wolff's work is a redactional and form-critical analysis, which explores Hosea's use of legal genres drawn from the institutional setting in the law court and employed in a polemical disputation with Canaanite belief and worship. This commentary is one of several volumes that appeared in the 1960s (see also Rudolph 1966; Mays 1969), and embodied the dominant biographical focus of the interpretation of Hosea 1–3, a focus already defined at this time by the attempt to locate Gomer within a purported Baal fertility cult in eighth-century Israel. In contrast to earlier interpreters, who had identified Gomer as some type of prostitute either before or after her marriage to Hosea (e.g., Harper 1905), Wolff reads the language and imagery of Hosea 1–3 against the backdrop of a supposed ritual defloration in which every ordinary Israelite woman participated. Hence, Gomer's designation as a 'woman of fornication' (Hos. 1.2) simply indicates that she was representative of all Israelite women who engaged in this apostate practice (Wolff 1974: 14).

The commentaries of Rudolph (1966) and Mays (1969) follow the basic biographical impulses of Wolff's analysis, but arrive at different conclusions. Rudolph, for example, opposes Wolff's proposal of a practice of ritual defloration, and offers a sustained analysis of all previous biographical interpretations of Hosea's marriage. Through the application of redaction criticism, Rudolph concludes that the accusation of harlotry against Gomer in Hosea 1 is a later addition, which is extrapolated back into the account in ch. 1 from the metaphor of Yahweh and Israel in ch. 2. The historical Gomer was innocent of any wrongdoing. By contrast, Mays represents one of the most developed attempts to interpret Hosea 1–3 against the backdrop of a flourishing and widespread Baal fertility cult in eighth-century Israel. With decidedly less use of redactional analysis, Mays identifies Gomer as an active Baal cult prostitute and thus a fitting symbol for the people of Israel, who are engaged in sexual rites dedicated to Baal (1969: 2-3).

The next major cluster of critical commentaries comes from the 1980s, and illustrates a developing circumspection concerning the ability to make specific biographical reconstructions of Hosea's marriage. Nevertheless, these commentaries demonstrate the dominance of a Baal fertility cult interpretation of Hosea 1–3 heading into the last two decades of the century. The

magisterial commentary of Andersen and Freedman (1980) employs the general interpretive framework of a Baal fertility cult, and offers some biographical reconstructions of Hosea and Gomer; however, it turns the focus of interpretation away from redactional and biographical concerns to literary, rhetorical, and syntactical analyses of Hosea's poetry and prose, even eschewing the precise dating of the specific rhetorical units (1980: 49–69). In a different vein, Jeremias's 1983 commentary, *Der Prophet Hosea*, revisits older reconstructions of the background of Baalistic worship for Hosea 1–3, suggesting that the issue at hand is not Yahweh's conflict with a foreign, rival deity, but a perverted Yahweh worship in which Yahweh had become conflated with Baal. Likewise, the 1987 commentary by Stuart in the Word Biblical Commentary series (*Hosea–Jonah*) emphasizes a reconstructed Baal cult as the interpretive framework for Hosea's metaphors and imagery (see also Limburg 1988). In keeping with the format of the series, Stuart follows the lead of Wolff, and of Andersen and Freedman, by attending to form-critical, syntactical, and poetic concerns. Yet Stuart, like Andersen and Freedman, generally resists biographical speculation about Hosea and Gomer, and reads the book's oracles, virtually all of which he sees as transcripts of the prophet's original, oral preaching, as dependent upon earlier Sinai covenant traditions (1987: 6–14). Just after the turn of the decade, Davies's 1992 commentary in the New Century Bible series proposes a biographical reconstruction of Hosea and Gomer that reconfigures preceding interpretations, and devotes primary attention to the background of fertility rites within an Israelite Baal cult.

Commentaries since the mid-1990s have moved increasingly away from notions of a sexualized Baal fertility cult as the interpretive framework for Hosea 1–3, emphasizing instead various feminist, literary, metaphorical, and sociological dimensions of the text. Yee's commentary in the New Interpreter's Bible (1996), for example, foregrounds feminist-critical observations on chs 1–3 that have emerged since the early 1980s. She reinterprets the book's religious conflict as one between orthodox and non-orthodox forms of Yahwism, and resists any significant biographical interpretation of the opening chapters in favor of examining the rhetorical function of the metaphors and imagery. While not following Yee in moving away from a fertility cult interpretation or emphasizing gender issues, Macintosh's 1997 commentary in the International Critical Commentary approaches the book of Hosea as a relatively complete literary work, taken to Judah after the fall of Israel. Even the 1997 volume in the New American Commentary series by Garrett on Hosea (which relies on decidedly conservative theological presuppositions about the inerrancy of the Bible, rejects the validity of

feminist-critical interpretations, and returns to the practice of heavy biographical reconstruction) directs much attention to structural and stylistic elements, and approaches the book as a complex, literary whole.

The two most recent commentaries on Hosea pursue such literary and sociological emphases in further ways. Explicitly rejecting the value of biographical reconstructions of Hosea's marriage, Sweeney's commentary in the *Berit Olam* series analyzes chs 1–3 through a synchronic, final form analysis of the book of Hosea and its place within the larger work of the *Book of the Twelve* (2000: I, xxxix, 84). Placing the book's composition in the years just after the death of Jeroboam II, Sweeney concentrates on literary and feminist analyses of the texts against the backdrop of the social and religious dynamics of the eighth century BCE. In a similar vein, Ben Zvi's 2005 commentary in the *Forms of the Old Testament Literature* series brings together the recent emphases on literary and sociological readings to offer a synchronic analysis of Hosea as an intentionally crafted prophetic 'book' designed to socialize the elite literati of Yehud in the postmonarchic period. Hence, Hos. 1.2–3.5 is neither an authentic biographical account of the prophet's personal life, nor a reliable window into a conflict with Baalism in the eighth century. The prophet Hosea exists only as a literary character in the world of the book, and chs 1–3 are a didactic 'set of readings' using marital imagery to educate the postmonarchic literati about the need to be faithful clients to Yahweh their patron (2005: 6-9).

#### *4. Biography and Backgrounds in Hosea 1–3*

As noted above, the dominant issue that occupied scholarship on Hosea 1–3 from 1900 to 1980 was the attempt to reconstruct the historical and biographical details of Hosea, Gomer, and the circumstances surrounding their marriage (see the classic survey in Rowley 1963; cf. Macintosh 1997: 113-26; Green 2003). Although this emphasis has abated in the last two decades, it continues to appear in some recent commentaries (e.g., Garrett 1997; Macintosh 1997). The approaches to such study have taken a myriad of forms, but the results have been inconclusive, and perhaps even unhelpful. Along the course of the century, this biographical effort has also been supplemented by attempts to compare the language and imagery of Hosea 1–3 with relevant data drawn from other biblical and ancient Near Eastern traditions, laws, and practices (see Kelle 2005: 47-79).

The overall interest in both the biographical and comparative approaches has been driven by a concern to identify the background, and perhaps also then the function, of the marriage imagery in Hosea 1–3. The major twen-

tieth-century proposals for such a background have suggested that the marriage imagery stems from one or more of the following sources.

1. the prophet's personal, marital experiences;
2. an active Baal fertility cult in eighth-century Israel;
3. ancient Near Eastern marital laws and practices reflected in biblical and extrabiblical texts;
4. the imagery and language of curses in ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties;
5. ancient Near Eastern traditions concerning sacred marriage and/or the female personification of cities; and,
6. the preexisting notion of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel.

Although the following discussion separates these interpretive trends into distinct categories, there is no clear line of chronological or evolutionary development in Hosea scholarship, and many of the trends are interconnected and interdependent.

#### *a. Biographical Interpretations*

The twentieth century has produced an overwhelming variety of biographical reconstructions of Hosea, of Gomer, and of their marital life. For example, Davies, reflecting on the writing of his earlier commentary, recalled that he 'did not expect...to find anything new to say about Hosea's marriage—the ground has been well-trodden' (1993: 88). Like so many others, however, he proceeded to offer a new proposal for the biographical details of Hosea's relationship with Gomer (see 1992: 48). Perhaps surprisingly, this wide variety of biographical reconstructions has emerged from a remarkably brief, two-verse report.

[T]he LORD said to Hosea, 'Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.' So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son (Hos. 1.2-3 [NRSV]).

Although nearly all scholars acknowledge the paucity of historical and biographical details given in the book, the majority have not taken this as a deterrent from engaging in extensive speculation (e.g., Mays 1969: 1-13).

Modern interpreters' interest in Hosea's biography appears to stem for the most part from the deeply personal and emotional nature of the book's language and messages. One frequently finds interpretive assertions that Hosea's vocational calling, prophetic message, and personal life are inextricably connected, and that the prophet's use of marital language and

imagery comes from his own marital experience, whether that experience was the result of God's command, or the impetus that led to the realization of a divine calling. As Rallis concludes,

In order to use this sort of imagery, he must have had a profound and intense experience which enabled him to penetrate to the core of the Mosaic faith... [T]he particulars of Hosea's own tragic marriage produced this awareness that lay behind his prophetic commission (1990: 200-201; see also Limburg 1988: 9; Garrett 1997: 41).

From this starting point, scholars have devoted their primary attention for more than half of the past century to reconstructing the personal lives of Hosea and Gomer, although Hosea has received less attention than his enigmatic wife. Since nothing is known of Hosea outside of the book, and the textual clues seem limited to identifying Hosea as a citizen of, and prophet to, the Northern Kingdom, biographical reconstructions have relied primarily on indirect clues or psychological speculation. Early in the century, for example, Humbert (1921) concluded that the book's condemnations of urban centers and their religious practices, as well as its regular descriptions of animals and nature, pointed to Hosea's identity as a semi-nomad living between city and desert. Much more common, however, has been the tendency of interpreters to offer evaluations of Hosea's emotional and psychological state. Although some have employed actual theories of psychoanalysis to explain Hosea's apparent marriage to a sexually loose woman (e.g., Allwohn 1926), the dominant tendency, even up to the present, has been to describe Hosea as a 'poor, dejected, spurned and broken-hearted' husband, whose sensitive nature and devoted love went unrequited by his recalcitrant wife (Knight 1960: 25; see also Andersen and Freedman 1980: 263; Limburg 1988: 9; Garrett 1997: 41). In perhaps the most explicit statement of this notion, Rowley goes so far as to liken Hosea's suffering to that of Christ.

Like Another, he learned obedience by the things that he suffered, and because he was not broken by an experience that has broken so many others, but triumphed over it and in triumphing perhaps won back his wife, he received through the vehicle of his very pain an enduring message for Israel and for the world (1963: 97).

Such interpretations of Hosea's emotional and psychological state depend upon particular biographical reconstructions of Gomer, who has been the more dominant focus of interpretation throughout the modern period. Yet, the various proposed reconstructions of Gomer and her relationship with Hosea rely heavily upon particular understandings of the redactional history

of Hosea 1–3 (e.g., Harper 1905: cxliii–cxlvi). Virtually every interpreter recognizes that these chapters are not of a single piece, and scholars draw their redactional conclusions from a variety of textual references:

1. Judean kings alongside Jeroboam (1.1);
2. Jezreel and the House of Jehu (1.4);
3. the House of Judah (1.7, 11);
4. the disappearance of kings and princes (3.4); and,
5. David (3.5).

From these references, most interpreters conclude that portions of chs 1–3 come from the mid-eighth century BCE, likely around the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic War (734–731 BCE), while other portions are of exilic or even post-exilic provenance (e.g., Wolff 1974: xxix; for recent redactional analyses, see Emmerson 1984; Yee 1987; Mitchell 2004; Rudnig-Zelt 2006). Yet, scholars reach differing specific redactional conclusions, and the diversity of views contributes directly to the multitude of divergent biographical reconstructions.

For instance, scholars reach different conclusions concerning the number of textual units in chs 1–3, as well as their provenance and interrelationship. Are these chapters mostly an original unity, or a collection of disparate parts (cf. Toy 1913; Andersen and Freedman 1980: 141)? Do the ‘non-original’ parts, perhaps like 2.1–3 [MT], come from northern or southern settings, pre-exilic or exilic contexts (cf. Harper 1905: 245–48; Wolff 1974: 26)? Is ch. 3 a parallel account of the events in ch. 1, or does it represent later, or perhaps earlier, occurrences (cf. Lindblom 1928: 41; Rowley 1963: 71)? Which chapter in Hosea 1–3 was initially established, how were the other chapters gathered around it, and how should the initial unit dictate their interpretation (cf. Andersen and Freedman 1980: 58; Diebner 1984; Abma 1999: 212)?

The ways in which interpreters answered these redactional questions consistently impacted their biographical reconstructions of Gomer. The dominant biographical questions have focused on the nature and timing of Gomer’s purported unfaithfulness, with an interest in how these factors illuminate her function as a symbol within the prophet’s message. Some of the earliest interpretative trends centered on the question of whether Gomer was involved in sexual misconduct before, or only after, her marriage to Hosea. For some interpreters, the imagery of Hosea 1–3 suggests that Gomer was a professional prostitute whom Hosea felt divinely compelled to marry (or at least have sex with; see Davies 1992: 48) as part of his message to apostate Israel (see Rowley 1963: 90). Others asserted that

the specific language in Hos. 1.2 ('wife of whoredom') is not the typical designation for a prostitute, so Gomer was not a professional harlot, but had engaged in sexual misconduct or perhaps even adultery against another husband prior to her marriage to Hosea (e.g., Garrett 1997: 52). Noting that the marrying of a sexually loose woman does not parallel the story of Yahweh and Israel, in which Israel begins pure, most twentieth-century interpreters reconstructed Gomer as a woman who was pure at the time of her marriage, and only later engaged in unfaithfulness, either through simple adultery, or perhaps by involvement in prostitution (Nowack 1903; Harper 1905: cxliii, 207; Smith 1928; Robinson 1949; Snaith 1956; Andersen and Freedman 1980: 69; Macintosh 1997: 117). In this majority view, Hos. 1.2's descriptive statement of Gomer's fornication is only proleptic, recognizing in retrospect what had been Gomer's character from the beginning.

Reconstructions of the timing and nature of Gomer's conduct were particularly connected to the redactional issue of the relationship between the scenes depicted in Hosea 1 and 3, an issue that continues to receive attention today, although with less emphasis on biographical reconstruction. In this regard, for most of the first half of the twentieth century, biographical study focused primarily upon the question of whether the unnamed woman in ch. 3 is Gomer (see Rowley 1963; Davies 1993: 79-80). Scholarly suggestions have ranged from identifying the scenes in chs 1 and 3 as variant traditions of Hosea's marriage to Gomer (Lindblom 1928; Gordis 1954; McKeating 1971; Green 2003), to interpreting ch.3 as a second sign-act that Hosea performed by purchasing another woman at some point in his career (Nyberg 1941; Snaith 1953; Tushingham 1953; Rudolph 1966; Ginsberg 1971; Stuart 1987; Davies 1992; Sweeney 2000). The long-standing consensus, however, has interpreted ch. 3 as a later episode in the relationship between Hosea and Gomer, in which Hosea takes back his formerly adulterous and apparently divorced wife (Harper 1905: 216; Rowley 1963: 90; Mays 1969: 54-56; Wolff 1974: 59-60; Andersen and Freedman 1980: 293-94; Macintosh 1997: 96). Thus, Gomer was an originally faithful bride, who subsequently committed adultery, underwent divorce and perhaps descent into slavery, but was eventually taken back by Hosea as a symbol of Yahweh's love for apostate Israel.

Within such biographical reconstructions, a sea-change occurred near the middle of the twentieth century. Throughout the century's first three decades, the biographical discussion went very much along the lines noted above, with interpreters offering a variety of reconstructions of Gomer's personal, sexual misconduct. Although Gomer's actions were normally

understood to be used by Hosea as a symbol for the people's apostasy with Baal, the person and behavior of Gomer herself were not identified as specifically cultic in nature (see, e.g., Ewald 1867–68: 192; Lindblom 1928: 34–44; Bucher 1988: 27–28). The 1932 publication of May's article, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', however, proposed a thoroughgoing re-interpretation of the book of Hosea against the background of a functioning fertility cult, and began in earnest the view that Gomer's infidelity was specifically connected to her own participation in a sexualized Baal fertility cult. Throughout the last half of the twentieth century, this view took on many forms, each of which attempted to identify specifically how Gomer was not simply an unfaithful wife who became a symbol for Israel's apostasy with Baal, but was herself a literal representative of, and participant in, that apostasy. In perhaps the most developed example, Mays (1969: 3) proposed that Gomer was an official, sacred prostitute in the Baal cult before Hosea married her (so also May 1936; Jacob, Keller, and Amsler 1965: 20; cf. Davies' [1992: 48] view that Hosea is only a client of Gomer, the prostitute, and that he represents Baal). Hence, for Mays, the description of Gomer in Hos. 1.2 is not proleptic, and the accusations of fornication and adultery in ch. 2 refer to her literal participation as a cult prostitute in sexual rites dedicated to Baal.

While not always identifying Gomer as a sacred prostitute prior to marriage, interpreters throughout the second half of the twentieth century have commonly envisioned her inappropriate behavior as being connected in some way with literal participation in a Baal fertility cult. For some, this took the form of Gomer becoming a cultic prostitute *after* her marriage, while others simply came to identify her illicit sexual actions as the behavior of a common woman who was participating in the general sexual practices of popular Baal rites (see Andersen and Freedman 1980: 69). As noted above, Wolff's seminal commentary (1974) offers a unique reconstruction, utilizing a Baal cult background. In this view, Gomer did not hold a special status as a cult functionary, nor was she abnormally promiscuous. Rather, Wolff amassed evidence from later classical sources in an attempt to show that Gomer was a typical Israelite woman who participated in the ritual of bridal defloration, that is, a custom in which Israelite brides went to a Baal shrine prior to their marriage and engaged in a one-time act of sexual intercourse with a Baal cult functionary in order to promote fertility (Wolff 1974: xxii, 14). Hence, the designation 'woman of fornication' for Gomer simply indicated that she was a representative of all Israelite women, whose practice of ritual defloration symbolized Israel's apostasy with Baal.

While the notion of a Baal fertility cult characterizes the majority of biographical interpretations throughout the second half of the twentieth century, other views avoid attributing any personal misconduct to Gomer. As mentioned above, Rudolph (1966), for example, used redaction criticism to argue that the woman in ch. 3 is not Gomer, and that the accusations against Gomer in Hos. 1.2 were added by a later editor in light of the Yahweh and Israel metaphor in ch. 2. Gomer herself was innocent of any wrongdoing, either before or after her marriage to Hosea (see also Batten 1929). Others went even further to suggest that Gomer functioned only symbolically to represent *any* individual within a spiritually apostate people, and was not guilty of any specific, personal misconduct (Gordis 1954; Stuart 1987: 11-12; Green 2003).

These alternative interpretations return in some ways to pre-modern understandings that read Hosea 1–3 allegorically and symbolically. Yet, they also represent dissatisfaction with biographical reconstruction in general, which has given shape to much recent Hosea scholarship. Several of the most recent major commentaries conclude that the kind of biographical reconstruction that characterized Hosea studies between 1900 and 1980 is ultimately unrewarding for understanding the rhetoric and theology of the text. Ben Zvi (2005), for example, avoids all attempts to reconstruct Hosea's personal life in favor of seeing the prophet as a literary character in the world of the book, and interpreting the book synchronically as a literary whole (see also Sweeney 2000). In a different way, Kelle's monograph on Hosea 2 (2005) makes no attempt to connect the imagery of Hosea 2 to the relationship of Hosea and Gomer, but engages the text's elements as metaphors drawn from biblical and extrabiblical traditions, fashioned to function rhetorically in a theo-political discourse. Even recent studies that are seemingly biographical in nature offer a very different approach to biography, marked by playful and imaginative recreations of the characters in the text (e.g., Cooper and Goldingay 2002; Magonet 2002).

In short, many interpreters are reaching the conclusion that biographical questions ultimately miss the point of the theology, metaphor, and rhetoric at work in Hosea 1–3. As Petersen concludes, 'After years of reflecting on these questions, many scholars have now decided that the texts in Hosea simply do not allow for ready answers... Moreover, the immediate drive to answer historical questions has preempted some more obvious—and answerable—questions' (2002: 177). Out of these growing reservations about the plausibility and usefulness of biographical reconstruction, studies of Hosea 1–3 are increasingly analyzing the text's language, characters, and

actions as specifically metaphorical in character, especially in the context of the broader prophetic marriage metaphor in the HB/OT.

b. *Comparative Backgrounds*

Twentieth-century biographical interpretations have frequently been supplemented by attempts to compare the form and imagery of Hosea 1–3 with data from other biblical and ancient Near Eastern traditions, laws, and practices, and thereby gain insight into the background and function of the chapters (for survey discussions, see Hall 1982; Baumann 2003: 67-81; Kelle 2005: 47-79). These inquiries seek to identify the figures and symbols, or practices and realities, that underlie elements like Hosea's use of the husband and wife metaphors, adultery and divorce language, and economic and punishment imagery. Interpreters have sought such comparative backgrounds in: biblical and ancient Near Eastern laws and practices concerning marriage and divorce; imagery and language of curses in ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties; mythological traditions of sacred marriage and/or the female personification of cities; and biblical notions of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel.

The predominant trend of comparative investigation, which stretches back to the early decades of the twentieth century (e.g., Kuhl 1934; Gordon 1936), centers on reading the marriage imagery of Hosea 1–3 against the background of Israelite and ancient Near Eastern institutions, practices, and laws of marriage, adultery, and divorce. More generally, scholars stress such social practices and legal traditions as the key to understanding all of the prophetic marriage metaphors in the HB/OT. Their comparative analyses explore a wide range of elements and aspects of marriage, adultery, and divorce, such as betrothal, bride price, dowry, marriage gifts and provisions, adultery laws and punishments, divorce formulas and procedures, and inheritance and compensation stipulations. These comparative investigations look to the primary biblical laws concerning adultery (Lev. 18.20; 20.10; and Deut. 22.22), other biblical texts that deal with marriage, divorce, or adultery (e.g., Exod. 21.10-11; Num. 5.11-31; Deut. 24.1-4; Prov. 6.34-35), ancient Near Eastern stipulations in legal texts, such as the Babylonian codices Eshnunna and Hammurabi, and the Middle Assyrian laws, as well as various Hittite, Ugaritic, Nuzi, and Elephantine documents.

Specifically concerning Hosea, interpreters in this tradition commonly claim that knowledge of ancient Near Eastern juridical principles governing marriage and divorce is crucial to a proper understanding of Hosea 1–3 (Muntingh 1964–65; Buss 1969: 88; Hendriks 1982; Kruger 1992; Nwaoru 1999: 141; Kelle 2005: 49-79). Although some scholars combine these

observations with a purported Baal fertility cult background, others assert that the social and legal background of marriage and divorce practices provides a better explanation for Hosea's imagery. For example, the material practices of marriage in the ancient world, it is argued, contain the same notions of exclusivity and inequity that Hosea foregrounds in his marriage metaphor in general, and explain the economic and property elements that appear in Hosea 2 and 3 in particular (Yee 1996: 208; Kelle 2005: 52).

The two parts of Hosea 1–3 that have attracted the most attention in the comparative study of ancient Near Eastern marriage and divorce laws and practices are the so-called 'divorce formula' in Hos. 2.4 [MT] and the punishments against the wife in Hos. 2.5–12 [MT]. Many twentieth-century interpreters have drawn on ancient Near Eastern formulations to ask whether Hos. 2.4 is an actual divorce formula employed by Hosea. On the basis of proposed similarities with formulae in Babylonian and Elephantine texts, scholars early in the century identified this verse as containing an ancient Israelite divorce formula that functioned in actual legal proceedings; some even proposed emending 2.4 to include a parallel divorce statement by the wife, which is typically present in the extrabiblical parallels (so Kuhl 1934; see also Gordon 1936; Geller 1977). The more recent consensus offers a variety of understandings of how this verse depends upon the general legalities of marriage and divorce in the ancient world, but does not identify it as a technical, Israelite divorce formula (e.g., Andersen and Freedman 1980: 127, 219; Stienstra 1993: 104; Nwaoru 1999: 138).

It is along these lines of legal comparisons that form-critical study of Hosea 1–3 has received its primary attention in the modern period, especially in the attempt to identify the basic form reflected in texts like Hos. 2.4–24 [MT]. The classic form-critical commentary of Wolff (1974: 92), for example, emphasizes Hosea's use of the term *רִיב* and concludes that the oracles in Hos. 2.4–17 [MT] have their background in a legal process against an unfaithful wife (so also Mays 1969: 35; Stuart 1987: 45; but cf. Ben Zvi 2005).

Concerning the punishments against the wife in Hosea 2, a number of interpreters have attempted to find parallels for the stripping described in vv. 5–12 [MT] and to argue that such public exposure was an established legal punishment for adulteresses in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East. These interpretations generally read the relevant verses of Hosea 2 in light of other prophetic texts that use the imagery of sexual violence against women (e.g., Jer. 2–3; Ezek. 16; 23), and ancient Near Eastern texts from places like Babylonia and Nuzi that seem to link public exposure with divorce procedures. For example, Kuhl (1934) proposed that the *Ḫana*

marriage text, which dates to the second millennium BCE, shows a divorce due to adultery sequence, in which the issuing of a divorce declaration is followed by stripping and public exposure. Kuhl claims that the imagery in Hosea 2 parallels this sequence. Drawing on similar comparisons, Gordon asserted ‘that the custom of stripping and driving out the shameful woman first appears at Nuzi and Hana... Next it crops up in Palestine of Hosea’s day and then in Germany of Tacitus’ time’ (1936: 280; see also Gordis 1954; Greengus 1969–70; Kruger 1992; Nwaoru 1999).

More recently, however, major critiques of this proposed ancient Near Eastern background, some of which come from outside Hosea studies, have argued forcefully that the often-cited biblical and extrabiblical texts do not establish the existence of a customary punishment of stripping for adulteresses. As Day has shown, all of the typically cited ancient Near Eastern texts are either fragmentary or do not directly concern cases of adultery, while the prophetic texts to which appeal is often made are only metaphorical and figurative in their stripping imagery, perhaps symbolizing the experiences of victims in war rather than drawing upon real-life social practices (Day 2000a; 2000b; within Hosea studies, see Garrett 1997; Kelle 2005). One may simply explain the imagery of the removal of the clothes in Hosea and other texts as a symbolic and economic act in which the wife goes from the house naked, thereby representing her legal change in relationship brought about by various types of divorce (Hendriks 1982: 658; Kelle 2005: 63–72).

Critical works in the last two decades have expanded the use of comparative data beyond these two typical areas, exploring how ancient Near Eastern practices of marriage and divorce, as well as the laws that govern them, provide the primary background for the majority of imagery throughout Hosea 1–3. For these approaches, most of the statements, punishments, and promises in Hosea 2, for example, especially those dealing with provisions, gifts, property, and sustenance, reflect the economic and inheritance stipulations that govern different types of marriage and divorce in the ancient Near East (Vogels 1988; Kruger 1992; Kelle 2005). Such treatments show increased and expanded use of the corpus of fifth-century Jewish marriage texts from Elephantine, which have received varying degrees of attention in Hosea scholarship since the 1950s. Studies such as Geller (1977) and Kelle (2005: 72–79) concentrate on several Elephantine marriage contracts that deal with elements like the tabulation of the bride price and dowry, and the distribution of finances and property. They argue that these contracts follow legal conventions that stretch back to before the eighth century BCE, and provide the primary context for understanding Hosea’s references to the removal of provisions and the bestowal of gifts.

Along with the ancient Near Eastern marriage laws and practices, Hosea scholarship over the last century has proposed other, less developed, suggestions for the comparative background of Hosea 1–3. Drawing especially on the work of Hillers (1964), some scholars have identified the curses in ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties as the primary background for Hosea 1–3’s imagery of prostitution, stripping, and exposure, particularly those curses that describe a city or nation being stripped, women becoming prostitutes, or wives being raped (Magdalene 1995; cf. Baumann 2003: 78–81). Others have pointed to more mythological traditions, such as a purported Baalistic practice of sacred marriage, in which a god has a cultically enacted sexual union with the earth envisioned as a mother goddess to ensure fertility (Wolff 1974: xxvi; cf. Abma 1999: 15), and an understanding of capital cities, or goddesses associated with them, as consorts or wives of their patron gods (Schmitt 1989; 1995; Kelle 2005; cf. Day 2000a; 2000b).

One of the more pervasive interpretations of the background of Hosea 1–3 draws upon a biblical tradition. Hosea’s marriage imagery, it is suggested, derives from and metaphorically represents the preexisting notion of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel, particularly the covenant concept represented by Deuteronomy (e.g., Fensham 1984; Adler 1989; Stienstra 1993; Ortlund 1996; Abma 1999). This view highlights similarities between the ideas of covenant and marriage, such as a legal and artificial nature, a demand for exclusivity from one party, a concept of choice/election, and a similar range of associated emotions. A number of powerful critiques have been raised concerning this proposal, however, especially regarding the lack of a singular conception of covenant in the HB/OT. Several interesting suggestions have been made for conceiving of covenant itself as another metaphor for expressing the relationship which Hosea’s marriage metaphor also symbolizes (Hendriks 1982: 94; Baumann 2003: 57–58).

The investigation of the comparative background of Hosea 1–3 is now beginning to incorporate new insights emerging from the study of ancient Near Eastern texts and iconography, especially insights that explore the gendered and ideological nature of textual and pictorial data. Chapman (2004), for example, sets forth the ways that gendered metaphorical imagery is used in descriptions and representations of warfare in both Neo-Assyrian royal sources and HB/OT prophetic literature. Given the gendered nature of Hosea 1–3’s discourse and the frequent connections drawn between these chapters and contexts of war and destruction, such an approach may yield new kinds of comparative insights into Hosea’s imagery (as may be seen already in Haddox 2005).

### 5. *Gender and Hosea 1–3*

Beginning in the 1980s, the rising tide of feminist criticism swept into Hosea scholarship alongside the primary currents of historical, comparative, and theological studies (for general surveys, see Boshoff 2002; Baumann 2003: 8–23; Sherwood 2004: 254–322). Within a few short years, gender-based studies came virtually to dominate Hosea scholarship, and chs 1–3 quickly became one of the primary foci of feminist biblical criticism in general. In 1989, for example, Weems remarked that virtually no past or present commentators paid attention to Hosea’s gendered and sexual imagery for God (1989: 89), but just three years later Yee (1992: 195) could observe that Hosea had become a ‘much-examined work among feminist biblical scholars’. Such attention, which continues to the present, certainly developed because of Hosea 1–3’s gendered, sexual, and violent imagery. As Sherwood summarizes, ‘[T]his text seems to violate all feminist principles and to actualize virtually every indictment against androcentric texts... Hosea 1–3 becomes a proof-text for practically every keynote speech of feminist criticism’ (2004: 298–99).

The emergence of feminist-critical studies marked a significant shift in Hosea scholarship. As seen above, prior to the 1980s, scholars largely explored Hosea’s marriage metaphor under a theological and historical rubric, emphasizing the experiences of Hosea and the nature of Yahweh’s love (cf. the continuation of this approach in Seifert 1996). Since the rise of feminist criticism, the metaphor has increasingly been examined under topics like pornography and sexual violence (Baumann 2003: 8). Even so, feminist studies of Hosea 1–3 from the last two decades vary greatly, forming something analogous to a complex web of diverse strands united around a center of gender concerns. Several interpretive strands move outward from this center:

1. examinations of the cultural, ethical, and theological problematics of Hosea’s metaphor and the ancient Near Eastern conceptions of marriage on which it is based;
2. challenges to the tendency of biblical commentators to reinscribe the patriarchy and sexism of the marriage imagery;
3. creative reinterpretations of Gomer and Israelite religious practices, especially concerning the role of goddess worship; and
4. new readings of the text using deconstruction, materialist analysis, and metaphor theory.

These strands often employ perspectives and data used in other approaches, such as biographical reconstruction of Gomer's role in the cult, and comparative examination of ancient marriage practices, but use these perspectives and data in markedly different ways to achieve ends related to the consideration of gender constructions and their cultural and ethical effects. Additionally, feminist criticism of Hosea 1–3 displays a general chronological development since the 1980s from more cautious analyses, which approached the gender and sexual imagery in a way that explained its role in the text's overall theological affirmations and somewhat softened its problematic aspects, to more strident hermeneutics of suspicion and rejection. Yet, there is no single line of evolutionary development, and much overlap characterizes the variety of feminist approaches.

The basic feminist critique of Hosea 1–3 focuses on both the text's content and implications, especially the ideological constructions of the imagery and how they shape women's experiences: the discourse objectifies female sexuality, denies any significant subjectivity to the woman, establishes a hierarchical relationship that equates the divine with male and the sinful with female, and legitimates physical and sexual violence against a woman. As Yee summarizes,

The representation of the battered wife in Hosea was and still is linked to very real situations of women who are continually assaulted by men. Hosea's metaphor makes its monotheistic point at the expense of real women and children who were and still are victims of sexual violence. This abuse of power is not simply a social problem; in Hosea it becomes a theological problem (1996: 227).

Part of this basic critique uses a comparative approach similar to those surveyed above, highlighting the asymmetrical conceptions of ancient marriage upon which Hosea's imagery relies, namely, a social structure in which males control female sexuality, and a marriage understanding in which the man has the superior position (see Yee 1992). As a means of highlighting these problematic dimensions of Hosea 1–3, a significant strand of feminist criticism looks to Song of Songs as a foil that offers a nearly opposite construction of female subjectivity and non-patriarchal male-female relationality (e.g., van Selmes 1964–65; van Dijk-Hemmes 1989; Buss 1996).

These basic lines of analysis gave rise early on to two feminist approaches to Hosea 1–3 that continue to develop. In one of the first feminist analyses, still cited extensively in contemporary studies, Setel (1985) labeled Hosea's imagery as pornographic on the basis of the features, functions,

and causes that it shares with modern pornography. In so doing, she initiated a line of inquiry aimed at exposing and undermining the patriarchy and sexism inherent in this biblical discourse. In another of the earliest feminist studies of Hosea 1–3, however, Weems (1989) also began from the basic feminist critiques, but inaugurated a line of inquiry aimed at redeeming Hosea's sexual imagery in some way by reading it as both beneficial and problematic in light of the theological dynamics of the book. She remained committed theologically to the general convictions of the text, affirming that Yahweh is justified in punishing his people, but rejected the use of marital and sexual imagery to express these convictions. Weems attributed the problematic imagery to the human prophet's location within culture, denying that Hosea's imagery yields troubling insights into the actual nature of the deity.

As feminist criticism of Hosea developed, a number of interpreters followed Weems's more cautious approach, acknowledging the problems with Hosea's marriage imagery, but also affirming its benefits in some ways, and finding elements in the text itself that counter patriarchy. In her earlier work, Yee (1992), for example, affirmed the imagery's theological assertion that Yahweh can punish his people, and suggested that the marital imagery becomes dangerous only when its metaphorical character is forgotten. While others have similarly contextualized Hosea's imagery in order to find its theological value, and have not questioned its lingering effects (e.g., Leith 1989; Rallis 1990), the interpretive posture represented by Setel's initial study has become more characteristic of feminist study of Hosea 1–3. For this posture, Weem's separation of the tenor and vehicle of Hosea's metaphor is problematic in light of insights from metaphor theory; and her language of 'risky' does not adequately expose the immoral or pornographic nature of the text. Hence, Fontaine (1995: 63) asserts that one cannot separate the deity from the imagery of the text. Similarly, Törnkvist questions both the theological assertion that God has the right to punish, as well as the legitimacy of using a marriage metaphor to describe God. Törnkvist concludes that feminist readers should reject the whole metaphor as 'sexist and oppressive' (1998: 72; cf. Baumann 2003: 3–4).

Another strand of feminist criticism of Hosea 1–3 offers a critique not only of the content of the chapters, but also of the ways in which ancient and modern, especially male, biblical commentators have identified with the text's imagery, adopted its ideological biases, and reinscribed its misogyny. These critiques often make the observation that commentators have traditionally sympathized almost completely with the purportedly abandoned husband, and ignored Gomer and the children. Summarizing this line of

interpretation, Fontaine states, 'Many of the commentators...displayed an almost prurient interest in Hosea's marital partner, and their outrage at her alleged behavior echoed Hosea's. To be sure, the text is unclear...but that did not stop comments on her actions which ranged from erotic fantasy to moralistic condemnation' (1995: 61; see the survey of male commentators in Törnkvist 1998: 58-62). Sherwood's aptly titled, 'Boxing Gomer: Controlling the Deviant Woman in Hosea 1-3' (1995), for example, surveys male commentaries on Hosea 1-3 ranging from Midrash to twentieth-century scholarship, and demonstrates their discomfort with the notion of Gomer as the prophet's wife, and their subjective and androcentric means of remaking her, exonerating her, or erasing her.

An additional type of feminist analysis of Hosea 1-3 particularly devotes itself to reading against the grain of the text by liberating and re-imagining Gomer as an independent, powerful, and subversive figure within or against Hosea's religious and social ideology. These interpretations 'take Gomer's side' and employ a wide variety of literary, historical, and sociological interpretive techniques in order to reconstruct Gomer's personal life and broader context in different ways. In two prominent examples, Balz-Cochois (1982) and Wacker (1996) use a religio-historical approach to recast Gomer as a symbol of repressed goddess worship in ancient Israel, suggesting that the marriage metaphor contains veiled references to both Hosea's partial assimilation of and partial opposition to long-standing goddess worship within Baalistic and/or Yahwistic religion (see also Törnkvist 1998: 17; cf. Sherwood 1995: 123-25). Balz-Cochois (1982) argues that Gomer worshiped Ashtarte through acts of cultic prostitution, intentionally and defiantly representing a popular religion centered on fertility that opposed a Yahwism that was stagnant and not life-giving. Wacker (1996) also claims to find the historical presence of an erasure of female religious symbols and practices, especially goddess worship, in Hosea's rhetoric. In a somewhat different way, Hornsby (1999) employs a socio-historical approach to argue that the Gomer figure in Hosea 1-3 should be read as a strong, independent business-woman prostitute who is resisting a single client's domineering efforts to control her. In this way, Gomer serves as a positive symbol of Israel for natives of Yehud in the post-exilic period who were also formerly independent but were now experiencing attempts at control by priestly immigrants.

Many recent forms of feminist criticism of Hosea 1-3 increasingly operate from the perspectives of newer literary and metaphorical theories, bringing them to bear specifically on questions of gender constructions and ideologies within the text, and either bracketing historical questions, or

pursuing them in a different way. The major feminist study of Sherwood (2004), for example, offers a deconstructionist reading of Hosea's marriage metaphor that focuses on tensions in the literary representations of Gomer, especially how those tensions deny coherence to the text's patriarchal ideology, and expose tensions between the text and reader. These tensions and contradictions in the text, such as the failed attempts to erase the woman's voice and activity, reveal the text's tendency to undermine its own patriarchal ideology (see also Landy 1995; Jobling 2003). In that light, Sherwood interprets Gomer as a 'subversive counter-voice', whose desertion of Hosea exposes a 'lack' in Hosea and his god (2004: 254).

Feminist scholarship in the last couple of decades has especially become rooted in metaphor theory, particularly those perspectives that emphasize the interactional and conceptual dimensions of metaphor, that is, the ways in which metaphors redefine all elements of the metaphorical construction, and depend upon larger cultural constructions. While some recent works use metaphor theory without raising critical questions about the sexualized depictions of women in Hosea (Stienstra 1993; Seifert 1996; see below), several use approaches to metaphor specifically to elucidate the ideological background and function of Hosea's gendered language. Törnkvist (1998: 9-17, 171-73), for instance, employs Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory to expose the cultural assumptions about social identity, access to power, and denial of subjectivity contained in the text's metaphors, as well as to identify how the gendered metaphors function to construct social identity by depicting one's opponents as sexually other and deviant according to the norms of society.

Two recent studies by Keefe (2001) and Yee (2003) significantly broaden the consideration of gender in Hosea 1–3, and provide a bridge to the focus on metaphors in general, which will be surveyed below. These studies, which may be seen in some ways as 'post-feminist' (Boshoff 2002: 38), embed the consideration of gender within a complex materialist analysis that approaches Hosea's discourse and background through the lenses of socio-economic, religio-historical, and theo-political study. The text's gendered language and sexual metaphors come in for analysis as symbols of the disintegration of Israel's social body, and the emergence of oppressive and interlocking political, religious, and economic structures that the prophet Hosea opposed. Hence, while not overlooking the problematic nature of the gendered language itself, Keefe and Yee attend to the material and socio-historical conditions that gave rise to, and provided the rhetorical context for that language, namely, a social and economic struggle in which Hosea's metaphors characterize changes in modes of agricultural

production, and the disintegration of Israel's community because of royal powerbrokers who are 'prostituting' Israel's religious and social identity. As Yee concludes, 'A materialist reading thus grounds Hosea's polemical monolatry in specific material practices and social conditions... [T]hrough a shaming, feminizing metaphor, Hosea directs a stringent critique against the nation's male leadership' (2003: 109).

### 6. *The Metaphors of Hosea 1–3*

As the discussion thus far demonstrates, virtually every interpretive trend in scholarship on Hosea 1–3 has concerned itself in some way with the text's metaphors. Since the 1980s, however, the study of Hosea through the lens of metaphor, especially the use of metaphor theory and the question of the primary function of the text's marriage imagery, has achieved the dominant position in Hosea scholarship. Naturally, such studies make use of insights from historical reconstruction, comparative data, and gender analysis, but they are characterized by a central concern to elucidate the primary underlying issue(s) or rhetorical focus that stands behind Hosea's metaphors. Part of the explanation for the prominence of these metaphor-focused studies is dissatisfaction with the results of biographical and historical readings. For example, Ben Zvi states,

The text is written so as to strongly communicate to its intended readers that its main concern is *not* with the reported sexual sins and marital life of Gomer (or of the unnamed woman in chapter 3)...or even the fate and actions of Hosea, but rather that which they symbolized (2005: 40; italics original; see also Andersen and Freedman 1980: 263).

Out of these convictions and alongside some of the feminist studies mentioned above, a number of works have emerged in the last 20 years that deal with Hosea's marriage imagery in dialogue with various kinds of metaphor theory: e.g., Adler (1989), Stienstra (1993), Weider (1993), Ortlund (1996), Seifert (1996), Abma (1999), Dearman (1999), Nwaoru (1999), Baumann (2003), Ben Zvi (2004), and Kelle (2005). Many of these studies treat more than Hosea 1–3, placing their analysis of these chapters within the context of the general prophetic marriage metaphor. Often assuming that Hosea was the first to employ the metaphor of marriage for Yahweh and Israel, which was then developed by later prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, several of these studies discuss the influences from which Hosea drew his metaphor, and the precise ways in which it was developed in subsequent texts (e.g., Stienstra 1993; Abma 1999; Baumann 2003). Additionally, a

number of more specific studies focus on one or more of Hosea's particular metaphors, especially the wife/mother, fornication, adultery, and lovers in chapter 2 (see Bucher 1988; Schmitt 1989; Bird 1989; Ackerman 2002).

In the various metaphor studies, we find three predominant interpretations of the overall rhetorical issue and metaphorical imagery in Hosea 1–3, with many overlapping features among them:

1. cultic-religious interpretation;
2. socio-economic interpretation; and,
3. historical-political interpretation.

Each of these general interpretations also has implications for understanding the nature and function of the specific metaphors embedded within the discourse as a whole.

The longest-standing interpretation of the imagery of Hosea 1–3, which has attained nearly unanimous support during various periods of the twentieth century, understands the discourse as addressing a widespread religious conflict in eighth-century Israel between Yahwism and Baalism, and as symbolizing Israel's apostasy through some form of the veneration of Baal (see Harper 1905: cli; Wolff 1974: 33-34; Andersen and Freedman 1980: 431-44; Stienstra 1993: 234; Abma 1999: 138). Hence, Hosea's use of marriage imagery, especially its sexual aspects and exclusivistic claims, is a deliberate foil that daringly co-opts the fertility and nature imagery of the supposed Baal cult, in order to oppose it with the covenantal claims of Yahweh worship. This view is related to the biographical reconstructions of Gomer surveyed above. The worship of Baal is seen as a nature cult, in which Baal stands as the husband of the land who brings rain and fertility. The primary features of Baalism involve worship of the rain god and Canaanite goddesses of sex through various ritual acts designed to secure fertility. Hosea's marriage metaphor stems from, and reacts to, this Canaanite mythology present in Israel. Accordingly, the specific metaphors in Hosea 2 take on religious meanings: the wife/mother is the people of Israel; the lovers are other gods to whom the people of Israel are giving loyalty and devotion; and 'fornication' and 'adultery' are metaphors for religious disloyalty to Yahweh in favor of Baal (Harper 1905: 229; Rudolph 1966: 67; Mays 1969: 9).

As an example of this common view, Stienstra (1993) analyzes Hosea's marriage metaphor by using Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (1980), concluding that the governing metaphor operative in Hosea's culture was 'YHWH IS THE HUSBAND OF HIS PEOPLE'. From this conceptual metaphor, Hosea develops a number of the more specific meta-

phors in the text by relying on notions of marriage and family in ancient Israel. For Stienstra, such cultural notions, including not only the asymmetrical nature of marriage, but also a degree of love and 'complementarity' between the partners, allow Hosea's marriage imagery to provide a contrast between Yahweh's continual faithfulness to his people and Israel's one-sided unfaithfulness to the relationship (1993: 97, 104).

Since virtually all cultic-religious interpretations of Hosea 1–3 link these chapters in some way with a supposed Baalism active in Hosea's day, scholarship has often looked to the text's metaphors as sources for reconstructing the history of Israelite religion. Such religio-historical study has produced a massive amount of scholarly attention, and has moved from a relatively stable consensus in the middle of the twentieth century to a state of fragmented debate at present. General questions center on the proper definitions of Baal and Baalism in relation to Hosea's language and imagery. As Dearman's (2001) comprehensive survey demonstrates, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century views, picking up on the presence of both singular and plural references to Baal and the *baalim* in Hosea 2, tended to interpret Hosea's references to Baal not as referring to a single deity, but to a variety of deities that Hosea condemned in a general opposition to polytheism. After the discovery of the Ras Shamra materials in 1929, however, which revealed the presence of a single, unitary high god named Baal in the Ugaritic corpus, scholars extended this picture geographically and chronologically to the background of eighth-century Israel. Hence, the dominant scholarly view came to interpret the background of Hosea's rhetoric as a flourishing cult of a specific, rival god to Yahweh in Iron Age Syria-Palestine (Mays 1969; Wolff 1974; Andersen and Freedman 1980). By contrast, the diversity of the Syro-Palestinian iconography and the HB/OT's references to Baal led Dearman (2001: 17) to conclude that we cannot maintain the notion of a single, rival deity named Baal in eighth-century Israel, but only the presence of a variety of *baalim*, worshiped at different places and having different functions.

Concomitant with this general debate has been an extensive scholarly effort to reconstruct the nature and practice of the purported Baal cult in eighth-century Israel. By combining the sexual imagery of Hosea's metaphors with particular readings of Ugaritic and other biblical texts, the scholarly consensus throughout a large portion of the twentieth century concluded that Hosea 1–3 condemned the people's literal participation in sexual rites devoted to Baal (see Bucher 1988). As mentioned with the biographical reconstructions discussed above, this fertility cult interpretation gained special emphasis in Hosea studies after the 1932 article by May, and

the Baalistic sexual rites proposed by scholars generally revolved around three practices that were often not clearly distinguished:

1. cultic prostitution (Mays 1969: 3);
2. ritual defloration of virgins (Wolff 1974: xxii, 14); and
3. sexual promiscuity at worship festivals (Andersen and Freedman 1980: 69).

According to this view, Hosea's terms, such as 'fornication' and 'adultery', are not simply religious metaphors; these terms denote actual sexual activity of one kind or another within a Baal cult (e.g., cf. Mays 1969; Wolff 1974).

The purported practice of cultic prostitution formed the most prominent example of such fertility interpretations of Hosea 1–3. Scholars drew evidence for this practice primarily from prophetic texts and classical writers like Herodotus, and suggested that Hosea's sexual imagery portrays Israel as literally engaging in such rituals to Baal (e.g., Mays 1969: 3; Jacob, Keller, and Amsler 1965: 20). Since the 1980s, however, scholars have challenged nearly every aspect of the commonly cited literary and archaeological evidence for this practice in general, and its relevance for the study of Hosea 1–3 in particular (see Bucher 1988; Bird 1989; Nwaoru 1999; Keefe 2001; Kelle 2005). The present consensus seems to be that the notion of an institution of cultic prostitution providing the background for texts like Hosea 2 can no longer be sustained without great caution. These developments concerning the specific notion of cultic prostitution are representative of the changes that have occurred in the last two decades concerning the overall idea of a literal, sexual Baal cult as the key to the religious interpretation of Hosea's metaphors. Virtually every 'fertility rite' proposed by earlier scholars (cultic prostitution, ritual defloration, sexual promiscuity at Baalistic worship festivals, etc.) has come under scrutiny, and the scholarly consensus has moved away from even the general concept of sexualized cultic practices as the background for a religious interpretation of Hosea 1–3's central rhetorical issue. As Keefe summarizes, '[T]he popular thesis concerning a syncretistic fertility cult in eighth-century Israel does not rest on any firm textual or extratextual evidence' (2001: 11).

Although the lack of evidence for a *sexualized* Baal cult in Hosea's day has led most scholars to move away from cultic, fertility interpretations of Hosea 1–3, the dominant reading of these chapters continues to see widespread, *non-sexual* Baal worship in eighth-century Israel as the interpretive key for the text's metaphors (e.g., Stuart 1987; Bucher 1988; Bird 1989;

Garrett 1997). Hence, while the metaphors of fornication and adultery may not refer to literal sexual activity, they serve as negative metaphors describing Israel's veneration of Baal. In keeping with recent changes in the study of the history of Israelite religion, however, the religious interpretation of Hosea 1–3 has become more complex than the notion of a simple conflict between Yahwism and Baalism. Some recent treatments, for example, identify the background of Hosea's metaphors not as the Israelites' abandonment of Yahweh for Baal, but as their syncretistic practice of blending or identifying Yahweh with Baal. Thus, for Jeremias (1994), Hosea 1–3 reflects an inner-Israelite religious conflict, and represents the prophet's condemnation of a corrupted form of Yahweh worship in which Yahweh is conflated with Baal. Similarly, in the most recent study of the religion of Hosea, Chalmers (2007) follows Jeremias in seeing Hosea 1–2 as condemning the confusion of Yahweh with Baal, while proposing that other parts of the book condemn the confusion of Yahweh with El. Kelle's recent study of the metaphors of Hosea 2 (2005: 137–52) builds upon newer epigraphic and onomastic studies (e.g., Tigay 1986), highlighting the lack of concern regarding Baal worship in the other eighth-century prophets, and the use of the term 'baal' as a metaphorical and political designation in ancient Near Eastern texts. Kelle proposes that there is no evidence of widespread, even non-sexual, Baal worship in eighth-century Israel (see also Bechtel 2004).

Along similar lines, Yee (1996) and Bechtel (2004) operate with a different concept of pre-exilic Yahwism, which they consider a much more heterodox phenomenon than normally thought. At the time of Hosea, it is suggested, many of the practices condemned in prophetic and deuteronomic texts were traditionally and presently accepted forms of popular Yahwism. By contrast, the language and imagery of Hosea 1–3 represent an emerging polemical monolatry that labels many of these traditionally Yahwistic practices as 'baalism'. For other recent treatments, the metaphors of Hosea 1–3 do not relate to the religious situation of the eighth century at all, but serve rhetorical/ideological functions for later audiences. Ben Zvi (2004; 2005), for instance, sees the marriage metaphor as designed to shape/educate the male literati in postmonarchic Yehud by explaining their history of unfaithfulness to Yahweh, and socializing them into a proper form of a patron-client relationship with their god.

In sum, the dominant religious interpretation of the metaphors of Hosea 1–3 takes many forms in present scholarship, including a conflict between the rival gods Yahweh and Baal, the veneration of numerous local deities, the blending of Yahweh and Baal in Israelite worship, and the presence of

‘non-orthodox’ forms of Yahwism as a part of ‘popular’ religion. These various religious reconstructions and rhetorical analyses, as opposed to the literal sex-cult readings of earlier in the twentieth century, represent the present primary form of the religious interpretation of Hosea’s language and imagery.

Alongside the dominant trend of religious interpretation, a socio-economic reading of the metaphors of Hosea 1–3 has emerged more recently, and has reached its fullest expression so far in the works of Keefe (2001) and Yee (2003) mentioned above (see also Premnath 1984; Chaney 2004). Beginning with the lack of evidence for a Baal fertility cult in Hosea’s day, and thus questioning a singularly religious interpretation of the text’s major metaphors, these studies read the prophet’s speech as directly concerned with shifting social, political, and economic relationships among king, cult, priest, and prophet within Israel’s body politic. Hence, for Keefe, the female body being prostituted in Hosea 1–3 symbolizes the social body of eighth-century Israel in the midst of a crisis over communal identity and socio-economic practice. Hosea uses his metaphors of fornication and adultery to condemn a ‘rising market-based economy revolving around interregional trade, land consolidation and cash cropping’, which produced a conflict between a ‘centralizing agrarian state’ and ‘patrimonial farms and local economies of the hill-country villages’ (Keefe 2001: 12, 27). Through the symbol of a female body that accepts illegitimate lovers, Hosea condemns Israel’s social body, especially the royal elites who govern it, as accepting a new social organization based on land accumulation and dispossession. This view expands the interpretive focus of Hosea’s imagery beyond that of a husband and wife by reading Hosea 1–3 as a *family* or *household* metaphor, in which the breakup of Hosea’s family/household is a metonym for the disintegration of Israel’s society (Keefe 2001: 15; see also Dearman 1999: 106; Ben Zvi 2005: 35).

Similarly, Yee interprets Hosea 1–3 as the prophet’s condemnation of the material and socio-economic conditions in eighth-century Israel. She especially highlights the text’s attack on the political rulers and the ways in which religious practices like Baal worship are interrelated with oppressive foreign and domestic policies. Hosea 1–3 denounces the move from a native-tributary to a foreign-tributary mode of production, as well as the foreign alliances and Baalistic practices that supported that move, by using sexual imagery to feminize the male ruling elite as faithless to Yahweh, and to proclaim a polemical monolatry (2003: 83, 109). Like Keefe, Yee understands Hosea’s sexual imagery as a critique of the rulers of Israel, and a symbol of wrongdoing in all areas of social, political, and religious life;

yet, she identifies the metaphors' primary concern as the socio-economic practices that underlie the religious and political developments.

In addition to these religious and socio-economic readings, a number of individual studies of different aspects of Hosea 1–3 have moved toward a more thoroughly political interpretation of Hosea's metaphors. Kelle's monograph (2005) presents a comprehensive interpretation of Hosea 2 from this perspective. Citing the lack of evidence for widespread Baal worship in eighth-century Israel, some of these works (e.g., Schmitt 1989) examine the wife/mother image in Hosea 2 against its ancient Near Eastern background as a metaphor for the capital city of Samaria, and thus for the political leaders who rule there. Others observe the prevalent use of 'lovers' as a metaphor for allies in ancient Near Eastern political treaties and biblical texts (see Ackerman 2002; Yee 2003: 104; Kelle 2005: 112–22), as well as the use of 'fornication' as a metaphorical vehicle for political and commercial alliances (e.g., Day 2006). In addition, there are recent suggestions that the term 'baal' may, in fact, be only a metaphor within Hosea's discourse (see Bechtel 2004; Kelle 2005: 111–66).

From these and other observations, Kelle has suggested that Hosea 2 in particular is a rhetorical discourse that attempts to persuade the prophet's audience to a particular perspective regarding a political crisis. Hosea condemns the political rulers in the capital city of Samaria for their involvement with Aram-Damascus during the Syro-Ephraimitic War by feminizing them as sexually loose women, labeling their political alliances as fornication and adultery, and using the term 'baal' for their Aramean ally, in order to evoke an association with sinful Baal worship of Israel's earlier history. Thus, the metaphors of Hosea 2 work together as a rhetorical speech that offers a metaphorical and theological commentary on the political affairs of Samaria at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic War, ultimately asserting that the 'political misdeeds of Samaria and her rulers are equivalent to the religious apostasy of previous generations and constitute a complete abandonment of Yahweh' (Kelle 2005: 283–84).

### *7. Conclusion*

It is clear that twentieth-century scholarship on Hosea 1–3 has addressed an exceptionally wide range of questions and employed various methodological approaches that often reflected the changing trends within biblical studies in general. While recent scholarship continues to pay much attention to more traditional issues like form-critical analysis, biographical reconstruction, and religio-cultic interpretation, several new modes of

investigation have opened innovative avenues into the meaning and significance of these complex chapters. Among these approaches, the use of metaphor theory to engage the nature and function of the text's metaphors seems likely to continue to occupy the prominent position. Such analyses will surely employ metaphor study for a variety of ends, however, including offering new perspectives on gender for the text and its readers (e.g., Baumann 2003), and providing new reconstructions of the religious situation in Hosea's day that move beyond the older Baalism versus Yahwism framework into a more complex picture of the social and religious realities that stand behind the text's imagery (see Chalmers 2007).

Among the newest trends that show promise of development in the coming years is an emphasis on synchronic and final form readings not only of Hosea 1–3, but also of these chapters' place within the larger context of the book of Hosea as a whole. Building on some previous works that move in this direction (Landy 1995; Abma 1999), one is beginning to hear the call for more sustained and coherent literary readings and even book-oriented interpretations of the discourse in Hosea 1–3. Witness the newest commentary on Hosea by Ben Zvi (2005) and its emphasis upon viewing Hosea 1–3 as one of many didactic sets of readings that function within an intentionally crafted prophetic 'book' designed to socialize the elite literati of Yehud in the postmonarchic period. At a similar but broader level, some newer studies show increasing interest in interpreting Hosea 1–3, and indeed the whole book of Hosea, within the context of the Book of the Twelve (e.g., Sweeney 2000; Bowman 2006).

Above all, the approach taken in several recent studies, which innovatively uses and combines various methodological perspectives, holds much promise for the future study of Hosea 1–3. These kinds of integrative analyses combine metaphorical study with feminist, materialist, anthropological, and rhetorical perspectives to yield exciting new insights into the dynamics of the text (see Keefe 2001; Yee 2003; Kelle 2005). Such integrative approaches, especially, in my view, the use of rhetorical criticism to engage Hosea 1–3 and its metaphors in interlocking literary, historical, and comparative contexts and as functioning persuasively in particular rhetorical contexts, allow us to approach the text anew in light of developing notions of prophetic discourse in general and social, political, anthropological, and religious realities in particular. Rather than simplifying the meaning(s) of Hosea 1–3, however, future study along these lines promises to produce a diversity of interpretations that accurately reflects the complexity of the chapters themselves.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abma, R.  
1999 *Bonds of Love: Methodic Studies of Prophetic Texts with Marriage Imagery (Isaiah 50: 1-3 and 54: 1-10, Hosea 1-3, Jeremiah 2-3)* (SSN; Assen: Van Gorcum).
- Ackerman, S.  
2002 'The Personal is Political: Covenantal and Affectionate Love ('ĀHĒB, 'AHĀBĀ) in the Hebrew Bible', *VT* 52: 437-58.
- Adler, E.  
1989 'The Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage in the Hebrew Bible' (PhD dissertation, University of California at Berkeley).
- Allwohn, A.  
1926 *Die Ehe des Propheten Hosea in psychoanalytischer Beleuchtung* (BZAW, 44; Geissen: Alfred Töpelmann).
- Andersen, F.I., and D.N. Freedman  
1980 *Hosea* (AB, 24; Garden City, NY: Doubleday).
- Balz-Cochois, H.  
1982 *Gomer: Der Höhencult Israels im Selbstverständnis der Volksfrömmigkeit: Untersuchungen zu Hosea 4, 1-5, 7* (Europäische Hochschulschriften, 23; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang).
- Batten, L.W.  
1929 'Hosea's Message and Marriage', *JBL* 48: 257-73.
- Baumann, G.  
2003 *Love and Violence: Marriage as a Metaphor for the Relationship between Yahweh and Israel in the Prophetic Books* (trans. L.M. Maloney; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical; 1st German edn, 2000).
- Bechtel, L.M.  
2004 'The Metaphors of "Canaanite" and "Baal" in Hosea', in J. Kaltner and L. Stulman (eds.), *Inspired Speech: Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Herbert H. Huffmon* (JSOTSup, 378; London: T&T Clark): 203-15.
- Ben Zvi, E.  
2004 'Observations on the Marital Metaphor of YHWH and Israel in its Ancient Israelite Context: General Considerations and Particular Images in Hosea 1.2', *JSOT* 28: 363-84.  
2005 *Hosea* (FOTL, 21a; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).
- Bird, P.  
1989 '"To Play the Harlot": An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor', in Day (ed.) 1989: 75-94.
- Bitter, S.  
1975 *Die Ehe des Propheten Hosea: Eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (GTA, 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).
- Boshoff, W.  
2002 'The Female Imagery in the Book of Hosea: Considering the Marriage Metaphor in Hosea 1-2 by Listening to Female Voices', *OTE* 15: 23-41.
- Bowman, C.D.  
2006 'Reading the Twelve as One: Hosea 1-3 as an Introduction to the Book of the Twelve (the Minor Prophets)', *Stone Campbell Journal* 9: 41-59.

- Brenner, A. (ed.)  
 1995 *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press)
- Bucher, C.  
 1988 'The Origin and Meaning of ZNH Terminology in the Book of Hosea' (PhD dissertation, Claremont Graduate School).
- Buss, M.J.  
 1969 *The Prophetic Word of Hosea* (BZAW, 111; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann).  
 1996 'Hosea as a Canonical Problem: With Attention to the Song of Songs', in *Prophets and Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker* (ed. S.B. Reid; JSOTSup, 229; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press): 79-93.
- Chalmers, R.S.  
 2007 *The Struggle of Yahweh and El for Hosea's Israel* (Hebrew Bible Monographs, 11; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix).
- Chaney, M.L.  
 2004 'Accusing Whom of What? Hosea's Rhetoric of Promiscuity', in M.L. Chaney *et al.* (eds.), *Distant Voices Drawing Near: Essays in Honor of Antoinette Clark Wire* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press): 97-115.
- Chapman, C.R.  
 2004 *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (HSM, 62; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns).
- Cheyne, T.  
 1884 *Hosea* (The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; London: Cambridge University Press).
- Clements, R.E.  
 1975 'Understanding the Book of Hosea', *RevExp* 72: 405-23.
- Cooper, G., and J. Goldingay  
 2002 'Hosea and Gomer Visit the Marriage Counselor', in Davies (ed.) 2002: 119-36.
- Craghan, J.  
 1971 'The Book of Hosea: A Survey of Recent Literature on the First of the Minor Prophets', *BTB* 1: 81-100, 145-70.
- Davies, G.I.  
 1992 *Hosea* (NCB, 21; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).  
 1993 *Hosea* (Old Testament Guides; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).
- Davies, P.R. (ed.)  
 2002 *First Person: Essays in Biblical Autobiography* (Biblical Seminar, 81; London: Sheffield Academic Press).
- Day, P.L.  
 2000a 'Adulterous Jerusalem's Imagined Demise: Death of a Metaphor in Ezekiel XVI', *VT* 50: 285-309.  
 2000b 'The Bitch Had It Coming to Her: Rhetoric and Interpretation in Ezekiel 16', *BibInt* 8: 231-54.  
 2006 'A Prostitute Unlike Women: Whoring as a Metaphoric Vehicle for Foreign Alliances', in B.E. Kelle and M.B. Moore (eds.), *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes* (LHB/OTS, 446; New York: T&T Clark International): 167-73.

- Day, P.L. (ed.)  
1989 *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress).
- Dearman, J.A.  
1999 'YHWH's House: Gender Roles and Metaphors for Israel in Hosea', *JNSL* 25: 97-108.  
2001 'Interpreting the Religious Polemics against Baal and the Baalim in the Book of Hosea', *OTE* 14: 9-25.
- Diebner, B.J.  
1984 'Die Zweite Frau des Hosea (Hos 3)', *DBAT* 19: 134-38.
- Emmerson, G.I.  
1984 *Hosea: An Israelite Prophet in Judean Perspective* (JSOTSup, 28; Sheffield: JSOT Press).
- Ewald, H.  
1867-68 *Die Propheten des alten Bundes* (3 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).  
1875 *Amos, Hosea and Zechariah* (trans. J. Smith; London: Williams and Norgate).
- Fensham, F.C.  
1984 'The Marriage Metaphor in Hosea for the Covenant Relationship between the Lord and His People (Hos 1: 2-9)', *JNSL* 12: 71-78.
- Fontaine, C.R.  
1995 'A Response to "Hosea"', in Brenner (ed.) 1995: 60-69.
- Garrett, D.A.  
1997 *Hosea, Joel* (NAC, 19A; Nashville: Broadman & Holman).
- Geller, M.J.  
1977 'The Elephantine Papyri and Hosea 2,3: Evidence for the Form of the Early Jewish Divorce Writ', *JSJ* 8: 139-48.
- Ginsberg, H.L.  
1971 'Hosea', *EncJud* 8: cols. 1010-24.
- Gordis, R.  
1954 'Hosea's Marriage and Message', *HUCA* 25: 9-40.
- Gordon, C.H.  
1936 'Hos 2:4-5 in the Light of New Semitic Inscriptions', *ZAW* 54: 277-80.
- Green, Y.  
2003 'Hosea and Gomer Revisited', *JBQ* 31: 84-89.
- Greengus, S.  
1969-70 'A Textbook Case of Adultery in Ancient Mesopotamia', *HUCA* 40-41: 33-44.
- Haddox, S.E.  
2005 'Metaphor and Masculinity in Hosea' (PhD dissertation, Emory University).
- Hall, G.  
1982 'Origin of the Marriage Metaphor', *HS* 23: 169-71.
- Harper, W.R.  
1905 *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark).
- Hendriks, H.  
1982 'Juridical Aspects of the Marriage Metaphor in Hosea and Jeremiah' (PhD dissertation, University of Stellenbosch).
- Hillers, D.R.  
1964 *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (BibOr, 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute).

- Hitzig, F., and H. Steiner  
1881 *Die Zwölf kleinen Propheten* (Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament; Leipzig: S. Hirzel).
- Hornsby, T.J.  
1999 ‘“Israel Has Become a Worthless Thing”: Re-Reading Gomer in Hosea 1–3’, *JSOT* 82: 115–28.
- Humbert, P.  
1921 ‘Osee le prophète bédouin’, *RHPR* 1: 97–118.
- Jacob, E., C.A. Keller, and S. Amsler  
1965 *Osee* (CAT, 11a; Paris: Neuchâtel, Delachaux et Niestlé).
- Jeremias, J.  
1983 *Der Prophet Hosea* (ATD, 24; Neuer Göttingen Bibelwerk; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).  
1994 ‘Der Begriff “Baal” im Hoseabuch und seine Wirkungsgeschichte’, in W. Dietrich and M. Klopfenstein (eds.), *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (OBO, 139; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag): 441–62.
- Jobling, D.  
2003 ‘A Deconstructive Reading of Hosea 1–3’, in T.J. Sandoval and C. Mandolfo (eds.), *Relating to the Text: Interdisciplinary and Form-Critical Insights on the Bible* (JSOTSup, 384; London: T&T Clark International): 206–15.
- Kaufmann, Y.  
1961 *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. M. Greenberg; London: George Allen and Unwin; 1st edn, 1937–56).
- Keefe, A.A.  
2001 *Woman’s Body and the Social Body in Hosea* (JSOTSup, 338; GCT, 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).
- Kelle, B.E.  
2005 *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective* (SBLAcBib, 20; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature).
- Knight, G.A.  
1960 *Hosea: Introduction and Commentary* (Torch Bible Commentaries; London: SCM Press).
- Kruger, P.  
1992 ‘The Marriage Metaphor in Hosea 2:4–17 against its Ancient Near Eastern Background’, *OTE* 5: 7–25.
- Kuhl, C.  
1934 ‘Neue Dokumente zum Verständnis von Hosea 2:4–15’, *ZAW* 52: 102–109.
- Lakoff, G., and M. Johnson  
1980 *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Landy, F.  
1995 *Hosea* (Readings; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press).
- Leith, M.J.W.  
1989 ‘Verse and Reverse: The Transformation of the Woman, Israel, in Hosea 1–3’, in Day (ed.) 1989: 95–108.
- Limburg, J.  
1988 *Hosea-Micah* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press).

- Lindblom, J.  
1928 *Hosea: Literarisch Untersucht* (Acta Academiae Aboensis Humaniora, 5; Åbo: Åbo Akademi).
- Lipshitz, A.  
1988 *The Commentary of Rabbi Ibn Ezra on Hosea: Edited from Six Manuscripts and Translated with an Introduction and Notes* (New York: Sepher-Hermon).
- Macintosh, A.A.  
1997 *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark).
- Magdalene, F.R.  
1995 'Ancient Near Eastern Treaty-Curses and the Ultimate Texts of Terror: A Study of the Language of Divine Sexual Abuse in the Prophetic Corpus', in Brenner (ed.) 1995: 326-52.
- Magonet, J.  
2002 'Gomer's Revenge', in Davies (ed.) 2002: 115-18.
- May, H.G.  
1932 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', *AJSL* 48: 73-98.  
1936 'An Interpretation of the Names of Hosea's Children', *JBL* 55: 285-91.
- Mays, J.L.  
1969 *Hosea* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster).
- McKeating, H.  
1971 *The Books of Amos, Hosea and Micah* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Mitchell, M.W.  
2004 'Hosea 1-2 and the Search for Unity', *JSOT* 29: 115-27.
- Muntingh, L.M.  
1964-65 'Married Life in Israel According to the Book of Hosea', *OTWSA* 7/8: 77-84.
- Neef, H.-D.  
1999 'Hosea, Book of', *DBI* 1: 521-25.
- Nowack, H.  
1903 *Die Kleinen Propheten* (HKAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).
- Nwaoru, E.  
1999 *Imagery in the Prophecy of Hosea* (Ägypten und Altes Testament, 41; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz).
- Nyberg, H.S.  
1941 *Hoseaboken* (UUA, 7.2; Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska).
- Ortlund, R.C.  
1996 *Whoredom: God's Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).
- Petersen, D.L.  
2002 *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press).
- Premnath, D.N.  
1984 'The Process of Latifundation Mirrored in the Oracles Pertaining to the Eighth Century B.C.E. in the Books of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah' (PhD dissertation, Graduate Theological Union).
- Rallis, I.K.  
1990 'Nuptial Imagery in the Book of Hosea: Israel as the Bride of Yahweh', *SVTQ* 34: 197-219.

- Renaud, B.  
1983 'Osee 1-3: Analyse diachronique et lecture synchronique: Problems de Methode', *RevScRel* 57: 249-60.
- Robinson, H.W.  
1949 *The Cross of Hosea* (Philadelphia: Westminster).
- Rowley, H.H.  
1963 'The Marriage of Hosea', in Rowley, *Men of God: Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons; orig., 1956–57): 66-97.
- Rudnig-Zelt, S.  
2006 *Hoseastudien: Redaktionskritische Untersuchungen zur Genese des Hoseabuches* (FRLANT, 213; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).
- Rudolph, W.  
1966 *Hosea* (KAT, 13.1; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn).
- Schmitt, J.J.  
1989 'The Wife of God in Hosea 2', *BR* 34: 5-18.  
1995 'Yahweh's Divorce in Hosea 2—Who Is That Woman?', *SJOT* 9: 119-32.
- Seifert, B.  
1996 *Metaphorisches Reden Gott im Hoseabuch* (FRLANT, 166; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).
- Seow, C.L.  
1992 'Hosea, Book of', *ABD* 3: 291-97.
- Setel, T.D.  
1985 'Prophets and Pornography: Female Sexual Imagery in Hosea', in L.M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster): 86-95.
- Sherwood, Y.  
1995 'Boxing Gomer: Controlling the Deviant Woman in Hosea 1–3', in Brenner (ed.) 1995: 101-25.  
2004 *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Reading Hosea in the Late 20th Century* (London: T&T Clark International, 2nd edn; 1st edn, 1996).
- Smith, G.A.  
1928 'The Book of Hosea', in Rowley, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets, Commonly Called the Minor* (2 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers), I: 219-379.
- Snaith, N.  
1953 *Mercy and Sacrifice: A Study of the Book of Hosea* (London: SCM Press).  
1956 *Amos, Hosea, and Micah* (Epworth Preacher's Commentaries; London: Epworth Press).
- Stienstra, N.  
1993 *YHWH Is the Husband of His People: Analysis of a Biblical Metaphor with Special Reference to Translation* (Kampen: Kok Pharos).
- Stuart, D.  
1987 *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC, 31; Waco, TX: Word Books).
- Sweeney, M.A.  
2000 *The Twelve Prophets* (2 vols.; Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press).
- Tigay, J.H.  
1986 *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (HSS, 31; Atlanta: Scholars Press).

- Törnkvist, R.  
1998 *The Use and Abuse of Female Sexual Imagery in the Book of Hosea: A Feminist Critical Approach to Hos 1–3* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis; Uppsala Women's Studies A; Women in Religion 7; Uppsala: Uppsala University Library).
- Toy, C.H.  
1913 'Note on Hosea 1–3', *JBL* 32: 75-79.
- Tushingam, A.D.  
1953 'A Reconsideration of Hosea Chapters 1–3', *JNES* 12: 150-59.
- van Dijk-Hemmes, F.  
1989 'The Imagination of Power and the Power of Imagination: An Intertextual Analysis of Two Biblical Love Songs: The Song of Songs and Hosea 2', *JSOT* 44: 75-88.
- van Selms, A.  
1964–65 'Hosea and Canticles', *OTWSA* 7.8: 85-89.
- Vogels, W.  
1984 'Diachronic and Synchronic Studies of Hosea 1–3', *BZ* 28: 94-98.  
1988 'Hosea's Gift to Gomer', *Bib* 69: 412-21.
- Wacker, M.T.  
1996 *Figurationen des Weiblichen im Hosea-Buch* (Herder's Biblical Studies, 8; Freiburg: Herder).
- Weems, R.J.  
1989 'Gomer: Victim of Violence or Victim of Metaphor?', *Semeia* 47: 87-104.
- Weider, A.  
1993 *Ehemetaphorik in prophetischer Verkündigung: Hos 1–3 und seine Wirkungsgeschichte im Jeremiabuch: Ein Beitrag zum alttestamentlichen Gottes-Bild* (FB, 71; Würzburg: Echter).
- Weiser, A.  
1949 *Das Buch der Zwölf kleinen Propheten 1: Die Propheten Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona, Micha* (ATD, 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).
- Wellhausen, J.  
1898 *Die Kleinen Propheten* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 3rd edn).
- Williams, D.L.  
1975 'Annotated Bibliography on Hosea', *RevExp* 72: 495-501.
- Wolff, H.W.  
1974 *Hosea* (trans. G. Stansell; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress; 1st German edn, 1965).
- Yee, G.A.  
1987 *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction Critical Investigation* (SBLDS, 102; Atlanta: Scholars Press).  
1992 'Hosea', in C.A. Newsom and S.H. Ringe (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press): 195-204.  
1996 'The Book of Hosea', in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press), VII: 197-297.  
2003 *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress).