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**The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible:  
The Prophetic Contribution**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the phenomenon of shame in the context of the Hebrew Bible, focusing particularly on the three major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel), because it is here that shame vocabulary is most prevalent.

Shame is prominently discussed in the literature of psychology and anthropology. In the first chapter psychological explanations for the origins of the apparently universal human emotion of shame are described. In the course of this, phenomenological similarities between shame and guilt, grounded in the shared centrality of negative self-evaluation, are outlined. The role of shame in social contexts is described with regard to stigma and, more fully, in the second chapter, in the light of socio-anthropological field studies conducted primarily in the Levant. In the Mediterranean studies shame is usually paired with its binary opposite honour. The honour/shame model is characterised especially by defined gender roles and challenge-ripostes. Shame is associated particularly with women's sexuality; honour with competition among men of relatively equal status.

Although the model has been criticised from within the discipline of anthropology, it has generally-speaking been received with enthusiasm by biblical interpreters. In the third chapter shame studies, most of which apply the honour/shame model, are summarised and commented upon. In the fourth chapter, on the Book of Isaiah, the shortcomings of the model are illustrated and the context of shame discourses discussed. The following chapter, on Jeremiah, describes the implications of ideological influences and the role of shame language in the context of sexual metaphors and anti-foreign polemic. The final chapter, on Ezekiel, compares shame with impurity and focuses on the female imagery of chapters 16 and 23.

The complications of imposing modern socio-critical methods upon ancient literature, the possible infiltration of ideological influences and the fact that biblical texts represent neither psychological case nor anthropological field studies are stressed repeatedly. In search of alternative approaches to the honour/shame model, Ezekiel 16 is explored from the perspective of the phenomenon known as 'antilanguage'. An examination of the possible existence of what in the discipline of sociology is called 'deviance amplification' is proposed for future study.

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## Introduction

Shame is a phenomenon straddling psychological, cultural, social and ethical aspects of human experience. As a self-conscious emotion shame focuses on the vulnerability and conspicuousness of one's self-image in terms of a perceived ideal. To experience shame is to designate an action, experience, or state of affairs as belonging in the category of the shameful. The criteria determining this category derive from a combination of sources. *The Oxford English Dictionary* definition of 'shame' is, 'the feeling of humiliation or distress arising from the consciousness of something dishonourable or ridiculous in one's own or another's behaviour or circumstances, or from a situation offensive to one's own or another's sense of propriety or decency,' which alludes to the complexity of shame phenomenology. Shame can derive from either or both subjective attitudes and sensitivity to 'propriety or decency', which is, I think it is safe to assert, at least to some extent culturally and socially-constructed.

In an attempt to describe the subjective-objective tensions inherent in the concept of shame, I will first turn to the two subject areas where it is discussed most prominently: psychology and anthropology. Both depict shame as a universal concept.<sup>1</sup> While in psychological literature shame is often described in contradistinction to guilt, anthropological literature most commonly contrasts shame with honour. I will go on to review how shame, or the matrix honour and shame, has been incorporated into interpretations of the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and pseudepigraphical literature. Here the tendency has been to focus on the applicability

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<sup>1</sup> This shared depiction of shame as universal concept rarely receives acknowledgement. With a few notable exceptions (see III.ii.e) the psychological dimension of shame is underdeveloped, even ignored, in both anthropological studies and biblical scholarship. Alongside the (qualified) concession that findings from anthropological field studies can provide a useful fillip for reflection when approaching shame in the Hebrew Bible, I will argue that in examining shame in the Prophets attention to the psychology of shame is not only appropriate but important.

of findings from modern anthropological studies<sup>2</sup> and on the perceived cultural context of the narratives. As the narrative is, within the context of the Hebrew Bible, a more conventional literary genre for descriptions of social and historical issues than, for instance, the poetry of the Prophets or Psalter, and as such books as Genesis and Samuel indeed tell of such matters as familial values, kinship structures and women's role in systems of exchange, this tendency has some justification.

After arguing first, that a cultural context or social reality is impossible to reconstruct on the basis of texts and stressing secondly, the need to be wary of the infiltration of ideological biases, I will turn to the biblical literature where shame discourses are actually most in evidence: the Prophets. The implications of this fact and the possibility that some prophetic literature exploits the sensitivity to shame with a view to inculcating proper conduct in a setting where social mores have become compromised, will constitute the major part of this thesis. I will be looking at the minor prophets, Lamentations and the Psalter - but cursorily. An examination of shame in the Psalms would deserve a separate study, while the minor prophets provide only isolated instances of shame terminology. My primary focus is on Isaiah,

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<sup>2</sup> Some social anthropologists have characterised traditional, face-to-face communities as shame cultures and modern, more anonymous, industrial and post-industrial societies as guilt cultures (see II.i). In the light of the shame/guilt binary opposition of psychology, this might be regarded as an incorporation of psychological attributes into social anthropology. Similar typologies exist, too, within the discipline of sociology. I am aware of Tönnies, for instance, who speaks of a corporate and communal *Gemeinschaft* ('community') as opposed to a secular and associational *Gesellschaft* ('society'). The latter is distinguished by 'a high degree of individualism, impersonality, contractualism, and proceeding from volition or sheer interest rather than from the complex of affective states, habits, and traditions that underlies *Gemeinschaft*' (Nisbet 1967: 74). Durkheim also describes two ideals of social solidarity: the mechanical and organic. The former, 'associated with primitive peoples', pertains to 'regimented' communities where religion pervades the whole social life; the latter to 'greater individual freedom' and a more differentiated social life (Pickering 1984: 446). Such distinctions do allow for varieties and degrees of shame. Their emphasis, however, is on behavioural responses to social settings, with the self-evaluating psychological dimension rarely being addressed. I perceive this to be a lack and will argue that the two disciplines have much to learn from each other. The nonexistence of a single neat model which could illuminate such a complex phenomenon as shame, however, remains ever before me. As with the shame/guilt distinction popular in psychology (see I.ii), I believe that the ideal sociological categories of Tönnies and Durkheim are problematic. I am in agreement with Pickering, writing with regard to Durkheim's taxonomy, that: 'A perfect example of mechanical solidarity or a perfect example of organic solidarity does not exist. Exaggerated characteristics of certain social states and conditions are made for analytical purposes' (1984: 265; cf. Cairns 1993: 24, cited in I.ii).

Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as these are substantial texts where shame language occurs with comparative insistence. I will discuss the shame discourses of these books in turn and, additionally, explore each from a special angle. With regard to Isaiah, I will point out the difficulties posed by interpreting ancient literature from the perspective of the social-scientific honour/shame model. In examining Jeremiah, I will focus on the interplay of shame language and such ideological currents as anti-foreign polemic. In the chapter on Ezekiel, I will describe the connections and distinctions between shame and impurity and probe the possible purposes of bawdy imagery.

A detailed discussion (even a summary) of scholarly opinion regarding the dating, provenance and authorship of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel is beyond the scope of this thesis. While I acknowledge that these matters are very significant, they are also very contentious. The fall of Jerusalem strikes me as the salient event giving rise to shame discourses, hence I am assuming a date of composition well after 587 BCE:<sup>3</sup> possibly the Second Temple Period, which would have provided a more stable environment for the production of such substantial literary works than the period leading up to, during or immediately after the sacking of Jerusalem and the Exile. I believe, further, that all three prophetic books were composed and compiled over an extended period of time and by several authors and editors. At the risk of sounding on occasion vague, I consider it preferable to be frank about the fact that the social and historical contexts, as well as the identities and aims of the authors who contributed to these texts ultimately remain unverifiable. Any attempts at reconstruction, therefore, are at best intelligent guesswork, the subjectiveness of which I concede.

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<sup>3</sup> Seebaß points out: 'Bemerkenswert ... dürfte sein, daß die Wurzel [בּוֹשׁ] von den großen Propheten auf die Katastrophe ihres Volkes vor seinem Gott angewandt worden ist und sie diese Dimension in einem alles entscheidenden Moment der Geschichte ihres Volkes zur Sprache gebracht haben' (1973: 571).

# I. Shame and Psychology<sup>1</sup>

## *i. The Emotion Shame*

There is general agreement that shame is a human<sup>2</sup> emotion. Dennett designates it in the emotion or affect category of conscious experience which mediates between experiences of the purely external world (e.g. sights, sounds, feeling the position of our limbs) and experiences of the purely internal world (e.g. fantasy images, sudden hunches). This category spans a broad range of evaluative experiences, from storms of anger and astonishment to the less corporeal visitations of pride or ironic detachment (Dennett 1991: 45). Within this, shame has been allocated to the sub-category of self-conscious emotions. These are described by Tangney and Fischer as ‘especially social’; that is, they are founded in social relationships in which people interact and evaluate both themselves and each other: ‘For example, people are ashamed or guilty because they assume that someone (self and/or other) is making a negative judgment about some activity or characteristic of theirs’ (1995: 3). Cairns has argued that although the presence of an ‘other’ or audience, be it real or eidetic, is the main catalyst of the emotion of shame, the judgment constitutive of the emotion still depends on oneself: ‘in every case shame is a matter of the self’s judging the self in terms of some ideal that is one’s own’ (1993: 16).

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<sup>1</sup> This section comprises a variety of elucidations from the disciplines of both psychology and psychoanalysis. Its aim is to provide a selective sample of prominent approaches to shame. I have drawn heavily on Cairns’ Introduction and on texts for the non-specialist of this complex discipline.

<sup>2</sup> Scheler argues that shame is the emotion which most clearly sets humanity apart from other beings: ‘For man’s unique place within the structure of the world and its entities is between the divine and animality. It expresses itself nowhere both so clearly and so immediately as in the feeling of shame. ... According to up-to-date information and observations, the animal, which shares so many feelings with us such as dread, anxiety, disgust and even jealousy, seems to lack the feeling of shame and its expressions. It would also be nonsensical to think of a “Godhead who feels shame”’ (1987: 3f). Cf. also Burne: ‘shame, like laughter and language, seems to be rooted in what it is to be human’ (1996: 2).

Cairns, Tangney and Fischer agree that emotions have a cognitive aspect (Cairns 1993: 5; Tangney and Fischer 1995: 7ff.)<sup>3</sup> and that they may be identified by the fact that they often have physical or physiological symptoms or characteristic behavioural responses. Tangney and Fischer thus describe that:

In shame ... physical signs seem typically to include lowering the gaze, covering the face, and sometimes blushing and staying quiet. The subjective experience of being ashamed includes feeling exposed, heavy, or small, and dwelling on the flaw that one is ashamed of. The organizing action tendency describes the whole sequence from situation to primary actions, perceptions, and reactions. With shame, a person wishes to be judged positively in a given situation but instead is judged negatively (by self or other) for some action or characteristic, especially something that signals a deep-seated flaw. The person reacts by trying to hide or escape, or, alternatively, trying to blame others for the event. Emotion refers to all three of these facets (physical signs, subjective experiences, and action tendencies) (1995: 7).

Cairns stresses that evaluation again remains the crucial defining factor: 'the paradigm case of an emotion will involve both an evaluation of the situation and occurrent physiological changes. Yet it remains the evaluative aspect that specifies and differentiates the emotion' (1993: 6). In order to illustrate this, Cairns points out that the emotions of embarrassment and shame, for instance, are distinct not due to 'the putative specificity of the deep physiological changes involved' (1993: 7), such as the extent of one's blushing or degree of eye-contact avoidance, but because they belong to different scenarios. Embarrassment is thus restricted in application to social situations of exposure, while shame is related to perceived moral shortcoming. Hence, if one is embarrassed to speak in public, embarrassment is adequately justified by the public nature of the action; if, on the other hand, one is ashamed to speak in public the question arises what one is ashamed *of* (Cairns 1993: 7, note 13).

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<sup>3</sup> Dennett's description of the phenomenology of emotion, as entailing a reaction (e.g. amusement) to an external variable that is evaluated or appraised, also suggests a cognitive basis for emotional experience (1991: 64).

## *ii. Shame and Guilt*

The origin of the emotion of shame and its relationship to or distinction from guilt are prominent themes in psychology-oriented discussions. More often than not, shame is depicted as the more original or primitive of the two (cf. Caplovitz Barrett's summary 1995: 27). The difference is frequently attributed to socialisation, with guilt being characterised as more 'Western' and reliant on internal sanctions provided by the individual conscience, that is, one's own disapproval of oneself; whilst shame is said to be typically and most pronouncedly found in face-to-face societies and exacerbated by a fear of external sanctions, especially the disapproval of others.<sup>4</sup> As has emerged from the discussion on emotion above, simply reducing shame to a response to external sanctions is inadequate because self-judgment, an internalised evaluation, is constitutive of shame. Even if an audience real or imagined should be the primary catalyst of shame, the role of internalised ideals and standards cannot be ignored. How this in practice differs from conscience then becomes increasingly difficult to establish.

Freud relates both shame and guilt to intrapsychic conflict. He depicts guilt as a conflict between the superego (the internalised parental and social prohibitions or ideals which act as censor upon the ego, loosely equated with conscience) and the id (the inherited instinctive impulses of the unconscious). Shame is a more specialised form of this conflict constraining primarily sexual impulses such as exhibitionism and voyeurism (cf. Caplovitz Barrett's summary 1995: 28).<sup>5</sup> In 1971 Piers, a psychoanalyst, and Singer, an anthropologist, collaborated on a treatise on shame and guilt. Their proposal is that shame arises from the tension between ego and ego-ideal; guilt from the tension between ego and superego. Guilt, therefore, is generated when a boundary defined by the superego is transgressed (rule violation) whereas shame occurs when a goal presented by the ego-ideal is not attained (shortcoming, failure) (Caplovitz Barrett 1995: 29f.). As Cairns points out, such a shame/guilt differentiation is complicated by the fact that the ego-ideal constitutes an aspect of the superego: it too is a construction of internalised parental and social rules (1993: 19).

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<sup>4</sup> This will be developed in chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> The sexualisation of the emotion of shame reappears in the anthropological definition, cf. chapter 2.

This then leaves us with little more than the (unsurprising) conclusion that both shame and guilt involve evaluations of the ego--be it measured against the rules and prohibitions of the superego or the perceived ego-ideal. Cairns argues that both are 'abstract constructs which therefore have no explanatory force in demonstrating that the phenomena are, in fact, distinct' (1993: 20).

The focus, therefore, should perhaps be not on such abstract constructs as id and superego but on the nature of self-perception: if one regards oneself as a whole, as what one is and would like to be, one might be said to be more prone to shame; whereas someone more focused on their actions as an agent would be more prone to guilt. As Cairns admits:

This distinction explains a lot; it explains why shame tends to be assuaged by restoration or increase of self-respect, guilt by making amends, why causal responsibility is necessary for guilt, but not for shame, why shame can be felt with reference not just to one's own actions and omissions, but also to wishes, desires, character traits, physical characteristics, passive experiences, and those actions of others which somehow reflect on oneself. These are the most important phenomenal criteria which establish that shame and guilt are indeed distinct concepts ... (1993: 21f.).

Again, however, as with the 'superego versus ego-ideal' distinction, a fine-tuned 'self-as-whole versus self-as-agent' distinction is difficult to maintain in practice. The idea that shame involves thoughts like 'what a terrible person I am!' and guilt thoughts like 'what a terrible thing to do!' with 'what a terrible person I am to do such a terrible thing!' representing a concurrence of shame and guilt, may be tidy but it is also unrealistic. Therefore, Cairns' conclusion that shame and guilt resemble each other in that *both* centre on dissatisfaction with aspects of self and behaviour seems safest:

... the 'pure' case of shame *qua* evaluation of the whole self will frequently contain an integral reference to some action perpetrated by the self as agent, and the 'pure' case of guilt will inevitably encompass a reference to an overall ideal of the self. Quite simply, self-image will constantly be called into question by specific acts, and in such situations the sharp distinction between shame and guilt will begin to disappear (1993:

There exists some scope for arguing that people may tend more towards either guilt or shame. Caplovitz Barrett describes an experiment with 2 year old children, for example, where the experimenter gives her 'favourite' doll to the child to play with before leaving the room. When the child plays with the toy, a leg comes off: 'Such an event is relevant to both shame and guilt, in that it involves violating a standard of harm to another by harming the other's prized property' (1995: 46). The experimenter returns and the child's response is video-taped. It was found that some of the children tended more to guilt responses (trying to repair, make amends, confess - especially before the experimenter 'noticed' the breakage), others to shame responses (averting, avoiding behaviour, slow to tell). Caplovitz Barrett believes that nondisciplinary socialising practices are especially important in influencing a propensity to shame or guilt, suggesting that where there exists pronounced parental emphasis on the importance of achievement in conjunction with a strong bond between parent and child, for instance, the likelihood of shame-of-failure feelings may be increased (1995: 54f.). She is careful, however, to stress that these designations are by no means absolute but of degree.

Shame and guilt then, overlap in that they both pertain to negative self-evaluation, they are not mutually exclusive and may be difficult to distinguish in practice. Their possible origin, too, is difficult to pin down. According to Freud, both develop in the child after the resolution of the Oedipus complex, during the so-called latency period<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Scheler, too, connects shame to self-perception. Hence, he describes that a bashful woman may not feel shame when being a model for a painter, a patient of a physician or when bathing in the presence of a servant, because there is no 'turn-experience'. That is, she regards herself in these situations as 'visual thing', a 'case' or 'the lady' rather than as an individual. Likewise, 'prostitutes can be without shame when they are with their customers and at the same time show the greatest modesty and tenderness to their beloved. There is in neither case a contradiction in intention. The customer seeks the prostitute, not the individual, and the prostitute seeks the customer; in the other case both seek the individual' (1987:15 and note 14).

<sup>7</sup> According to Freud, the latency period occurs between the diphasic onsets of sexual life. After the first efflorescence of sexuality, climaxing in the fourth or fifth year of a child's life, passes, sexual impulses are overcome by a repression lasting until puberty 'during which the *reaction-formations* of morality, shame, and disgust are built up' (Gay, 1995: 23). Shame and disgust, further, are singled out as the most prominent forces containing sexual forces 'within the limits that are regarded as normal' (Gay, 1995: 254).

(circa 6 to 11 years of age) where they serve to suppress the inclinations of phallic/Oedipal children to exhibit themselves and look at each others' bodies. Prior to this, Freud argues, such emotions as shame or disgust are not active because younger children seem unconcerned about the enjoyment of such practices (cf. Caplovitz Barrett 1995: 29).

Other psychoanalysts have promulgated an earlier development of shame. Schore, for instance, emphasises the pre-verbal nature of shame, identifying its earliest appearance as an inhibitory response to the infant's excessive joy. He argues that 10- to 18-month old babies undergo a period of practising separation from the mother which precedes individuation. This, he maintains, is accompanied by an experience of enthusiasm and interest while exploring the world which would become too much were it not for the regulating mechanism of shame which is first triggered when the mother, on occasions when she is not fully attuned to the baby, mismatches its demands. This, according to Schore, induces a reduction of enthusiasm and 'triggers an assault on the burgeoning narcissism of the practicing infant, on the ideal ego ... and represents the first experience of narcissistic injury and narcissistic depletion associated with all later shame experiences' (cited in Caplovitz Barrett 1995: 31).

Nathanson also situates the earliest experiences of shame in infancy. Like Schore, he argues that shame checks excitement when social interaction first fails. The infantile experience of disappointed expectations and desires, he claims, is crucial for the development of a sense of selfhood because it highlights the distinction between self and (m)other. Shame, then, is initially the rudimentary awareness that something beyond the self is interacting with the baby. Nathanson goes on to say that later developmental stages, such as the toileting situation and sexuality, heighten this sense and likewise evoke shame.

These depictions are not incompatible with the state of being Kristeva calls abjection: a borderline state between subject and object when the infant first begins to perceive itself as separate from the undifferentiated relationship with the mother (the semiotic relationship, which precedes sublimation, or the possibility of naming). Abjection is

depicted as an ambiguous state of revolt of and against the feeling that gives one existence, a threat from something that is neither 'me' nor 'not me', both compelling and horrific. Food loathing is one of the earliest feelings of abjection but it can return at any time and be triggered by anything which disturbs identity, system and order.<sup>8</sup> The unpleasant feeling which attends abjection and its crucial role in the formation of selfhood, have much in common with what Schore and Nathanson have called shame (Kristeva 1982: 1ff.).

### *iii. Shame and Stigma*

While these theories could account for the universality of shame (i.e. people everywhere recognise their selfhood - shame is intimately connected with effecting this recognition) they are problematic. The fact remains that we cannot establish whether the pre-verbal infant experiences shame. Shame is, however, more complex than such primary emotions as pleasure or anger, which exist from the first few months of life and which can be triggered by a simple stimulus: 'joy at the sight of a parent; fury when milk is late in arriving' (Burne 1996: 2). While consciousness of one's self is *one* prerequisite for the emotion of shame, shame is also characterised by an acute sensitivity to standards or rules and the ability to judge oneself in the light of these (cf. Lewis 1995: 207).<sup>9</sup> Connected to this intermediate status of shame, combining subjective and objective factors, is the notion of stigma. Originally this

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<sup>8</sup> Such a phenomenon, of revulsion at anything non-categorisable or composite, is discussed in an anthropological context by Mary Douglas - particularly with regard to the dietary laws of Leviticus (1966). Douglas explains such revulsion in considerably less abstract terms than Kristeva. See also Goffman: 'In social situations with an individual known or perceived to have a stigma, we are likely, then, to employ categorizations that do not fit, and we and he are likely to experience uneasiness' (1963: 19).

<sup>9</sup> Orbach, a representative of popular psychology, acknowledges that alongside the instillation of shame in the narrow social sphere, when the young child shows interest in something that an adult feels is inappropriate, there operate shame-inducing measures in the wider social sphere: 'The Ten Commandments once served as a public standard which, if breached, could induce personal and community shame. Each culture creates such standards and, in this context, shame serves as the emotional social conscience. Transgression costs. We aren't supposed to want our aging parents dead, to envy our friends' fortune, to wish badly [sic] on others. And if we have such thoughts, shame keeps them tightly bound in, choking our ability to explore what they mean. ... Shame is never absent in a culture. It is a regulator, a source of morality, a set of stories and a standard that a culture creates for its members to live by. The suppression of shame is an alarm signal alerting us to the continual violation of cultural mores, the failure of the culture to meet important needs and the consequent disintegration of interpersonal responsibility' (1996: 6).

word signified a physical sign, such as a cut or burn, designed to expose something defective about its bearer. Nowadays it tends to convey the quality perceived as shameful rather than the bodily evidence of it.<sup>10</sup> As Goffman explains, a person's perception of having a stigma incorporates an awareness of societal standards in conjunction with negative self-evaluation:

the standards he has incorporated from the wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he really ought to be. Shame becomes a central possibility, arising from the individual's perception of one of his own attributes as being a defiling thing to possess (1963: 7).

Societies devise standards in order to facilitate and shape human interaction; social living and interdependence effect the need to maintain others' respect and affection - both of these factors may well be connected to the instigation of guilt and shame. Thus, infringement of a rule, or disappointing a loved one or superior can be a catalyst of negative self-evaluation. Where the relationship between shame or guilt on the one hand, and societal standards and methods of enforcing power on the other, is concerned, we are on somewhat firmer ground. The connection between shame, social rules, prohibitions and sources of power will therefore feature in my discussion. This will, I think, be more fruitful than the pursuit of a primarily

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<sup>10</sup> As we have seen, shame *can* be aroused in response to perceived physical defects (cf. Cairns 1993: 21f., cited in I.ii. above). The same is true of stigma. Goffman distinguishes three types of stigma: various physical deformities, blemishes of character (such as rigid beliefs, mental disorder or addiction) and tribal stigma (pertaining to race, nation or religion and transmitted through lineage). All result from sociological labelling and constitute 'a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype' (1963: 4).

psychoanalytical angle.<sup>11</sup>

***Aside: Scheler on Women and the Alleged Inherence of Shame***

Scheler has argued that there is some biological propensity which inclines women to feelings of bodily shame while men have a more refined feeling of spiritual or psychic shame.<sup>12</sup> Women, he claims, feel honour and chastity at a deeper level of confluence because sexuality is 'felt more individually than in men' (1987: 20). This is 'explained' with recourse to women's more confined lives:

The woman lives a less expansive and a more bound and ego-related life. All her thoughts, willings, values, perceptions, and representations do not detach themselves from her body-consciousness as is the case with a man. This explains her lesser degree of duality between spirit and body and, therewith, a lack of the condition for the experience of psychic shame. ... Just as a woman hides her secret life less than a man does, so also she shows less respect of other's [sic] secrets. Her nature is less "discreet"; she lets out more than a man does. For discreteness rests on a co-feeling with the psychic shame of another person. Her tendency to prattle, chatter, and gossip, with which men of all peoples and of all times have found fault, is a consequence of the

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<sup>11</sup> Epstein's anthropological study of shame in Melanesia is heavily influenced by psychoanalysis. Hence he describes that 'the attitudes concerned are an outgrowth or reflection on the cultural or conscious plane of a psychological substrate in which unconscious processes are also at work' (1984: 45). As a result he ascribes some of the similarities between Tolai and Goodenough attitudes to intra-psychic conflict associated in Freudian theory with the anal phase of psycho-sexual development. This shared anal focus, he argues, lies behind such rituals as *abutu*, where an opponent is shamed by presenting him with food of such abundance that he cannot make return. In psychological terms, Epstein 'explains', the giver of food is linked with the prototypical food-giver, namely the mother. When the loving and nurturing mother arouses hostility, the negative feeling cannot be granted expression. *Abutu* allegedly arouses similarly ambivalent feelings of discomfort. The casting of food at an opponent, Epstein continues, is symbolic of anal products. In both--food-giving and reluctant receiving while repressing hostility--retention is focal, combining, Epstein claims, oral and anal elements. The scatological humour prevalent on Goodenough is another expression of this anal orientation, reflecting the unconscious fixation on infantile intra-psychic conflicts (1984: 46f.). As stated above, due to the fact that sexuality and ego-formation of the pre-verbal infant cannot be studied satisfactorily, leading to unfounded--if fascinating--abstractions, such proposals as Epstein's are, I think, best avoided.

<sup>12</sup> The ideas summarised here are from Scheler's essay of 1913, 'Zur Funktion des geschlechtlichen Schamgefühls', translated and discussed in *Person and Self-Value: Three Essays* (1987). Scheler (1874-1928) has been called one of the leading philosophers of twentieth century Germany. His essay is one of the earliest detailed discussions on the topic of shame (cf. Staude, John Raphael. *Max Scheler: An Intellectual Portrait*. London: Collier-Macmillan, New York: The Free Press, 1967).

woman's lesser degree of psychic shame (1987: 84).

While Scheler, then, is willing to attribute an element of women's more pronounced bodily shame and less pronounced psychic shame to their 'less expansive' lives—for which support can be found in the anthropological literature of the Mediterranean, depicting women's lives as largely confined to the home and private sphere while the public sector is a male preserve<sup>13</sup>--he suggests that this tendency is for the most part inherent and inevitable: a part of her 'nature', evidenced in women everywhere.

Even less 'politically correct' and more controversial than this suggestion is Scheler's assertion that propensity for higher feelings of shame is not only sex- but race-determined:

Any loss and diminution of shame is tantamount to a degeneration of the human type. ... The decline of the feeling of shame in modern times is undoubtedly a sign of racial degeneration. ... He who understands the Germans well will find that it is the tall, blond, blue-eyed and long-faced people of lower Saxony that have the most refined feeling of shame easily aroused. And if one ignores prudishness and cant among the English, one will find that it is the English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh peoples that have a most refined feeling of shame and traces of a master-type. What alone produces true culture, and justifiably so, is the gradual transition of more conventional expressions of shame in mores into more changeable ones and transition from more bodily shame to more psychic shame (1987: 68f.).

Scheler could not have predicted how such ideas would be exploited within a few decades of the publication of his essay. Nowadays, such implications are blatantly and deeply disturbing. These excerpts may be considered particularly extreme but I do consider *any* suggestion that shame is somehow inborn or determined by sex or race not propitious and best avoided. While shame is in part an internal psychological phenomenon, it has also been characterised as inter-personal and as exhibiting a sensitivity to external sanctions. In the following chapter I will review how shame has been discussed as a social phenomenon within the discipline of anthropology.

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter II.

## II. Shame and Anthropology

### *i. Shame and Guilt Cultures, Honour and Shame*

As we have seen, the distinction between shame and guilt can be difficult to maintain in practice. In the context of anthropology, certainly, the categories of 'shame culture' and 'guilt culture' have generally-speaking been rejected. Mead popularised the shame versus guilt culture distinction, which is summarised in the following statement:

in societies in which the individual is controlled by fear of being ashamed, he is safe if no-one knows of his misdeeds; he can dismiss his misbehaviour from his mind ... but the individual who feels guilt must repent and atone for his sin (cited in Epstein 1984: 31).

The crux of the distinction concerns sanctions: shame is understood as an external, guilt as an internal sanction. Mead has claimed that there exist Samoan, Balinese and Iatmul (of New Guinea) shame cultures notable for an absence of internalisation. She argues that this stems from a socialisation process in which a child is influenced less exclusively by the commanding presence of its parents, with responsibility for children being more widely shared. In so-called guilt-cultures, meanwhile, such as Western cultures, the parental role is particularly important and children come to internalise the values of their parents who adopt a pose of absolute moral superiority. This later transpires in conscience and feelings of guilt, as opposed to shame. It is guilt, therefore, which prevents the devout Roman Catholic from consuming meat on Fridays - even while alone and unobserved on a desert island.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault's essay on panopticism (1977: 195-228) comes close to describing the existence of a completely internalised sanction. Outlining a system of enforcing discipline based on surveillance, Foucault explains: 'He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. By this very fact, the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects' (1977: 202f.). This sanction, too, however, cannot be disconnected from 'external power' and being in 'a field of visibility' implies the possibility of someone outside who is capable of seeing. Likewise, the Catholic abstaining from meat may arguably be motivated by the belief in an omniscient deity, i.e. a sanction with an external component. Internal and external sanctions are difficult to separate completely.

The case for non-internalisation within alleged shame cultures none the less remains weak. Even Mead's field-studies, recounting complex forms of ritual and culturally approved forms of behaviour which children of these cultures must learn, as well as the procedure of controlling, correcting, rewarding and punishing children until they do so, in fact suggest internalisation (Cairns 1993: 37ff.). While it may not be accidental that public shaming functions as a major and poignantly felt sanction in small-scale societies where the local community provides the setting for the most intensive forms of social interaction and where residents are in a very real sense on face-to-face terms, shame is not absent in technologically more advanced, socially differentiated and anonymous cultures. In the context of contemporary Western cities, shame can play an important role in the dock of a criminal court, for instance (Epstein 1984: 32). The tabloid press, too, could be said to exploit shame-propensity, as does the 'outing' campaign: misdemeanours in the context of the political arena, or closeted sexual activity often emerge as activities about which implicated individuals have no qualms for as long as they are shielded from the glare of publicity. Guilt and the need for atonement, too, are not confined to Western cultures, as is frequently implied. Once again, shame and guilt are not mutually exclusive, or even entirely distinct.<sup>2</sup>

Since the 1960s anthropologists working predominantly in the circum-Mediterranean land mass have distinguished honour and shame as pivotal social values and a 'constant preoccupation' (Peristiany 1965c: 10).<sup>3</sup> In the small-scale, face-to-face communities they describe, an individual's moral obligations are depicted as concentrated primarily within the family. Outside of this close-knit circle, interaction is often marked by distrust and competition. They describe cultures with pronounced gender division where men vie with each other for honour in agonistic fashion and where women are acutely sensitised to shame as a mechanism for preserving their honour.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Epstein, who argues that shame sometimes requires the presence of an 'Other' but that the deepest shame is not shame in the eyes of others but weakness in one's own eyes - where the 'Other' is internalised and the self observes the self (1984: 33). Huber, too, writes that Mead's absolute dichotomy is simplistic, claiming instead that there exists 'a preserve of both shame and guilt in varying degrees in all cultures' (1983: 246).

<sup>3</sup> Peristiany states that Mediterranean honour and shame were first discussed in 1959 with regard to the strong affinities between diverse cultures such as Greek Cypriots, Bedouins and Berbers in terms of male-female relations (1965c: 9).

Male honour derives from both antecedence (that is, it can be inherited) and prowess but it is also bound up with the individual's value in his own eyes and in the eyes of his society. A man's claim to honour hence demands acknowledgement or recognition of the claim. Like shame, as described in the preceding chapter, honour is related to the maintenance of ideals but these are largely socially oriented and determined:

Honour ... provides a nexus between the ideals of a society and their reproduction in the individual through his aspiration to personify them. As such, it implies not merely an habitual preference for a given mode of conduct, but the entitlement to a certain treatment in return (Pitt-Rivers 1977: 1).

As Chalcraft points out, honour can be an incentive for maintaining the status quo: 'Socially, honour "works" in a number of ways. First, by offering social prestige--which brings, in turn, wealth, influence and power--honour motivates individuals to achieve social norms' (1990: 191). Honour is hierarchical and it is honourable to submit to the greater honour of a superior; one's father, a community elder or the king, for instance. Among equals, however, honour is not simply a given but something which must be constantly asserted, competed for and defended. It is a zero-sum game: one can only gain honour by depriving another man of his share.

Shame is intimately connected with woman's variant of honour. It also determines her reputation, claim to pride and status in the community. Unlike male honour, female honour (sometimes referred to as shame in a specialised sense) is a passive quality focused primarily on preservation of virginity prior to marriage and faithfulness to one's husband thereafter. It makes a woman sensitive to the pressures exerted by public opinion and elicits not assertiveness and competitiveness but expressions such as shyness, blushing and other restraints deriving from emotional inhibition and the fear of exposing oneself to comment and criticism (Pitt-Rivers 1965: 42). Once lost, a woman's honour is irrecoverable. A woman's lost honour occasions shame, which has a powerfully defiling property and affects not only the woman herself but her kindred too. Pitt-Rivers thus describes a man's honour as being closely tied to the sexual purity of his mother, wife, sisters and daughters - but not to his own. Variants of the proverb 'the honourable woman: locked in the house with a broken leg' and powerful insults calling into question the purity of one's mother are, he explains, ubiquitous in the countries of

the Mediterranean and indicative of this honour-shame ethos (1965: 45ff). In order to illustrate the characteristics and dynamics of the so-called honour-shame cultures, I have summarised below some major studies conducted in the Mediterranean.

## ***ii. Studies in the Mediterranean***

### ***a. Campbell (1964)***

One of the earliest in-depth studies of honour and shame in the context of the Mediterranean is Campbell's *Honour, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community*, based on his fieldwork among Sarakatsani shepherds. Campbell clearly considers his work illustrative of more widespread social patterns:

the social forms which are described [in this book] have many interesting parallels in other parts of the Mediterranean world, and it is principally as a contribution to the study of social structures in this area that I offer my study (1964: v).

Campbell writes of women's shame that it is exemplified by a professed revulsion at sexual activity and by attempts to disguise the possession of female attributes (such as through veiling, modest attire, movement and attitude). As her honour is always something imputed by others, a Sarakatsani woman can never retreat within her own conscience: she must not allow herself to behave in any way that may so much as be seen to implicate her in anything considered shameful. This expresses itself, for instance, in restraint at showing emotion in public; except when this is dictated by convention, especially in the context of mourning rituals. She must not, for instance, kiss her husband in public or shout (1964: 289). Her honour depends on her reputation which the community is willing to concede and her deportment must therefore conform to its code of sexual shame (1964: 270).

As we read Campbell's study there are some points which may suggest compatibility with the social contexts implied in the Torah. The law of Deuteronomy 25:11-12 (condemning a woman who responds to a fight between her husband and another man by seizing the assailant by his private--literally 'shameful'--parts to having her hand cut off) may be so severe because the woman's public action is viewed as shamefully unrestrained, unbefitting of her sex and damaging to her husband's honour. Further,

Campbell describes that in the Sarakatsani community much is made of brothers' wives in one household quarrelling (1964: 71), which is reminiscent of the topos of a patriarch's quarrelling wives (Sarai and Hagar, Gen. 16; Leah and Rachel, Gen. 30); as well as of rivalry between brothers (1964: 175): this is in accordance with the fact that competition for honour is always most acute between relative equals. The latter may be seen to be reflected in the sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27). Even the observation that wells and sex are somehow linked in the popular imagination, because '[i]f an unmarried man for any reason wants to see the local girls, he has only to sit by the well' (1964: 86), may have a parallel: Abraham's servant, commissioned to find a wife for Isaac, goes to the well where he encounters Rebekah (Gen. 24) and Moses, too, meets the daughters of Jethro (including his future wife) by the well (Exod. 2). It must, however, be said that the Hebrew Bible is a huge and diverse book which can 'prove' or be used to illustrate many things. Suffice it to say for now that it could be argued that modern anthropological studies provide some scope for the illumination of such narrative accounts as those of Genesis.

***b. Peristiany (1965)***

Peristiany's study among the Pitsilloi, the inhabitants of a small Cypriot village, mentions that these people are regarded by other Cypriots as a repository and living embodiment of traditional values of manliness, perseverance, hardihood and generosity (1965a: 174). Furthermore, the word for honour, *time*, he points out, is used in this setting in the classical sense of social worth, ranking and value (1965a: 179). This may lend some substance to the argument that there exist communities in the Mediterranean which, like some kind of time-capsule, retain much older social forms such as might conceivably enable anthropologists to observe social structures not dissimilar to those reflected in and by ancient literature.

### **c. Abou-Zeid (1965)**

Abou-Zeid describes that among the Awlad Ali Bedouins of Egypt there exist several words for honour and shame. Hence, *sharaf* 'honour' refers to social standing and is subject to increase and decrease (1965: 246); 'aib' refers to comparatively minor shameful actions, more often pertaining to women (for instance, the wearing of short clothes), while more offensive acts, such as adultery or rape, confer 'ar. While the latter threatens social equilibrium, 'ird, used of women only and connected to chastity, prudence and continence, is by far the most contaminating.

Women (*h'aram*) live in the *beit*, sometimes referred to as the sanctuary (*haram*), which is regarded as a sacred place taboo (*haram*) for unauthorised strangers. Abou-Zeid suggests that the relationship of these words indicates that women are seen as sacred and to be protected from desecration. This is particularly so, he explains, because women are integral to preserving the honour of their people. As among the Sarakatsani, the reputation of Awlad Ali women depends primarily upon their willingness to observe the rigid rules controlling sexual relationships. If there is gossip about a woman it is the duty of her agnatic kin to get rid of her; if she was slandered falsely, the slanderer is held responsible. Abou-Zeid stresses, however, that the woman is killed if she consented in any way and sometimes even if she was raped (1965: 254). The ending of a feud, furthermore, is occasionally achieved by the aggressors giving one of their girls to the wronged party - not so much as compensation but as a sign of good faith and symbol of their honour. Women's sexuality, then, is, Abou-Zeid argues, a commodity used for political purposes in Bedouin culture - and, according to Pitt-Rivers, in the Mediterranean generally.

### **d. Davis (1977)**

Davis argues that the crux of the Mediterranean honour-system concerns the social constructing of material/economic differences. The distribution of resources occurs, he claims, in a social idiom which prescribes appropriate behaviour for people at various points in the hierarchy. Honour, he continues, is difficult to reconcile with economic dependence (1977: 89ff.) and public perception deems that economically deprived persons would, if faced with the duty of defending their honour, be found wanting

(1977: 92). This can be reconciled with Pitt-Rivers' connection between the Israelites taking possession of the land and becoming sedentary on the one hand and the evolution of the honour-system on the other: ownership of commodities (e.g. land) bolsters the claim to honour.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of continual contact--trading and talking, conquering and converting, marrying and migrating--spanning several millennia, Davis does not consider it unreasonable to speak of the 'people of the Mediterranean' as a collective group. He does not derive this category from a common proto-society but argues that thousands of years of conversation and commerce have none the less resulted in markedly similar social institutions, customs and practices. Honour, while it is not an institution 'universal within the mediterranean [sic] nor exclusive to it' is nevertheless proposed as a defining feature of Mediterranean social construction in his comparative study (1977: 13).

#### *e. Pitt-Rivers (1977)*

Pitt-Rivers argues that the Mediterranean kinship system and marriage strategy are dominated by political values to which the concepts of honour and shame are central. Honour, he claims, may be a ubiquitous notion but it is clothed in conceptions that are not equivalent from place to place. In the Mediterranean honour is, he proposes, 'fundamentally a matter of sexual behaviour' which is 'not the case necessarily elsewhere' (1977: 170). The origins of Mediterranean politics of sex and the honour/shame system can be perceived, he continues, in the book of Genesis, the elucidation of which gives rise to problems 'that can only be approached from an anthropological standpoint' (1977: 127). In a fascinating chapter, illuminated by observations from fieldwork carried out in contemporary Mediterranean societies, Pitt-Rivers argues that Genesis recounts the establishment of rules of marriage and land rights. In the course of this there is a transition from what Pitt-Rivers calls pure myth--characterised by moral indifference, where matters that may be regarded as wrongful and which do not pretend to furnish recommendations of behaviour (e.g. Lot's incest with his daughters) pay off handsomely (i.e. in the issue of male progeny)--towards moral precepts and clearly enunciated rules of conduct. According to Pitt-Rivers, the movement

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<sup>4</sup> See below (II.ii.e).

is irregular but detectable none the less with Genesis 34, recounting the rape of Dinah, constituting a vital turning-point.

The story where Pharaoh takes Sarai and adultery brings copious material advantages for Abram and divine punishment for the Egyptian (Gen. 12) (Pitt-Rivers comments that this is 'a most un-Mediterranean distribution of deserts!', 1977: 151), as well as the repetition of the Sarah-'sister' incident with Abimelech (Gen. 20) and the account where Isaac calls Rebekah (who is his wife and patrilineal cousin) his sister in order to protect himself against the possibility of sexual rivalry with Abimelech and his men (Gen. 26), explore the uncertainty as to whether sisters should be kept and married within the patriline or given away to foreigners for the sake of political advantage (1977: 152). The marriages of Esau and Jacob develop this issue. Esau's marriage to two Hittite women incites his mother's disgust (Gen. 27:46) and Jacob is advised to marry a daughter of Laban, his mother's brother (Gen. 28:2). This, Pitt-Rivers proposes, suggests that Israelites should marry within the covenant.<sup>5</sup> The Shechem story forms the conclusion of the sister-wife stories and resolves any uncertainty:

Abram, Abraham and Isaac offered their sister (or patrilineal cousin) to whom they were already married to the local ruler as a concubine for the sake of political safety and material advantage. Jacob hesitates to complain about the seduction (or violation) of his unmarried daughter and his sons settle the matter negatively by political means and material advantage (pillage) but at subsequent political risk. The rules of marriage are spelled out in detail in subsequent books, but it is never again implied that it might be honourable to give daughters away to foreigners (1977: 155).

The crucial distinction between the earlier stories and the Shechem story then, is that Sarai and Rebekah, had they really been sisters and not wives, might legitimately have been given to a powerful stranger while Dinah, who really is a sister and *only* a sister, emerges as a woman who cannot be given away at all (1977: 157). Abram/Abraham and Isaac may have participated in a form of sexual hospitality which, Pitt-Rivers points out,

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<sup>5</sup> In practice, however, four founders of the twelve tribes are born to slave mothers and two tribes are descended from Joseph's Egyptian wife Asenath. As Pitt-Rivers points out, the four founders may be exempt from the classification 'of foreign descent' because the slave women conceived them as proxies for their mistresses (1977: 155).

is not dissimilar to that of other nomadic peoples who sometimes use their women for purposes of establishing relations with sedentary populations.<sup>6</sup> Simeon and Levi, Pitt-Rivers claims, set a different tone for the remainder of the Hebrew Bible with regard to sexual honour.<sup>7</sup> Their question 'is our sister to be used as a *zônâ*?' might well have been asked of Abraham or Isaac. It foregrounds the notion of sexual honour which corresponds, appropriately, to their first attempt to abandon the nomadic lifestyle. Once they have taken possession of the land the Israelites no longer need to use their women for maintaining political relations. Therefore, Hamor's offer of direct marital exchange draws on a conception of marriage no longer acceptable: by now the Israelites have learned through the harsh experience of political subordination to keep their women to themselves once they can (1977: 161).

The Shechem story then, could be said to illustrate that men's honour is made vulnerable through the sexual behaviour of women and that sex has political and economic significance. According to Pitt-Rivers, the story is not so much 'the unreasoned product of the collective consciousness' as a 'consciously reasoned [construct] of individual men attempting to find in the debris of events a pervasive sense, and ... an authority to be exercised in the present' (1977: 169). The social theory implicit is that sex is a political matter and 'a function of a system of status and power manifest in the idiom of honour' (1977: 170). It has, he concludes, been such in the Mediterranean ever since and the notion of honour fundamentally a matter of sexual behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Genesis 20:13 ('this is the kindness you must do me at every place ...') may imply that Abraham's treatment of Sarah is customary rather than exceptional. Pitt-Rivers mentions that there exist parallels in modern nomadic cultures, among the gypsies and Zapotecs of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Pitt-Rivers 1977: 159f.). Gypsies, he explains, are strictly endogamous, placing high value on female purity. Nevertheless, women's sexual charms--practising seduction without literally granting favours--may be exploited for political advantage. The principles of such customs are explained with recourse to a particular social structure in which nomads live in habitual contact and in a relationship of mutual distrust, even disdain, with sedentary peoples upon whom they, to some extent, depend.

<sup>7</sup> Winkler states explicitly what Pitt-Rivers insinuates, namely that it is penetrative sex which 'was apt for expressing social relations of honor and shame, aggrandizement and loss ... and so it is that aspect which figured most prominently in ancient schemes of sexual classification and moral judgment' (1990: 40).

<sup>8</sup> Pitt-Rivers' conclusion is in agreement with Schneider's of 1971. Schneider argues that it is above all the emphasis on women's chastity and virginity, which is treated similarly to an economic resource and is competed for by men, that is characteristically Mediterranean.

### **iii. *'Mediterranean Honour and Shame' since Herzfeld***

While Pitt-Rivers compared the honour and shame matrix to magic, in that both are ubiquitous but clothed in different conceptions from place to place (1977: 1) and Peristiany admits that honour and shame are universal aspects of social evaluation (1965c: 11), both anthropologists have contributed to the perception that honour and shame belong to a demarcated geographic region, are worthy of cross-cultural analysis and somehow less characteristic of other areas. Schneider (1971) and Pitt-Rivers (1977: 170) in particular attribute this distinctive quality to the peculiarly sexualised conception of Mediterranean honour and shame.

As one reads the articles of Peristiany's 1965 edition *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, however, the Mediterranean-ness of honour and shame becomes increasingly tenuous and both emerge as convenient 'catch-alls' for a variety of social phenomena from diverse field studies. This vagueness is first and most articulately seized upon by Herzfeld. Finding fault with a tendency of Mediterranean anthropologists to attribute a wide range of local-social, sexual, economic and other standards to the words 'honour' and 'shame', Herzfeld claims that they have become no more than 'inefficient glosses' (1980: 339). Reducing the notion of Mediterranean honour to a product of the historical process of social interchanges (Davis 1977), or an emphasis on chastity (Schneider 1971) is, Herzfeld argues, nebulous (1980: 340) and fails to focus sufficiently on ethnographic specificity. Instead, he advises, there should be more emphasis on independent examination of terminology and concepts within confined local settings. If the definitions of honour and shame are as wide as the Mediterranean studies suggest, Herzfeld cautions, the social phenomena they supposedly signify are detectable

everywhere, including outwith the Mediterranean.<sup>9</sup>

The labels 'honour' and 'shame' continue to be used in Mediterranean anthropological studies. Wikan's 'Shame and Honour: A Contestable Pair' (1984) takes into account Herzfeld's suggestions regarding ethnographic particularisation and closely analyses a small urban community in central Cairo. Wikan questions Peristiany's claim that Mediterranean people constantly call upon the concepts of honour and shame in order to assess their own conduct and that of their fellows (1965: 10), observing that in the community s/he [?] focuses on there is much talk of shame but little of honour (1984: 638). Wikan also mentions that the people s/he studied were considerably less uncompromising in judging and ascribing value to others than much anthropological literature would have one believe. Hence s/he describes the surprising tolerance--surprising, that is, in the light of Abou-Zeid's article, for instance (1965)<sup>10</sup>--regarding an adulterous wife: her neighbours refrained from telling her husband and considered her a likable person (1984: 648). Wikan concludes that when honour and shame are studied in detail in a specified context, 'the illusory generality and abstraction which the anthropologist's concept of "honour" and "shame" provide' emerges (1984: 648).

A collection of anthropological articles, *Honor, Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (1987), to which Herzfeld contributes, is also more cautious than some of

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<sup>9</sup> Herzfeld cites such a study conducted in the West Indies. Cf. also Epstein's fieldwork conducted in Melanesia (1984). Epstein, focusing on shame in particular, clarifies indigenous categories and their usage in exercising social control and contrasts shame with pride rather than honour, explaining that: '... in the dynamic and highly individualistic world of New Guinea, where a man is encouraged to be combative and self-assertive, shame is clearly coupled with pride. By contrast, in more static societies, where there is much concern with matters of personal status, shame is more appropriately paired with the concept of honour' (1984: 49). Other shame studies, conducted in settings which are described in similar terms as the Mediterranean ones, are those by Shaver (1987), contrasting shame-terminology in the U.S. with that of Italy and China (cited in Tangney and Fischer 1995: 12) and those referred to by Huber, conducted in China, Japan and among various North American Indian societies (1983, Appendix 2, 245ff.).

<sup>10</sup> See above, II.ii.c.

the earlier Mediterranean studies. In his introduction, however, Gilmore nevertheless writes that:

... Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany were right to look at the Mediterranean area as a unit of culture--though perhaps for the wrong reasons. This unity is at least partly derived from the primordial values of honor and shame, and these values are deeply tied up with sexuality and power, with masculinity and gender relations (Gilmore 1987c: 16).

Gilmore continues that there remains a need for 'a fine-tuned eclectic approach in comparison: but not simply a haphazard, inorganic accretion of ideas', to an extent playing his cards both ways with the following claim:

Like all cultures, Mediterranean culture is an arbitrary symbolic system ... But symbolic systems do not derive from nowhere; they *mediate* between internal and outside worlds ... Honor-and-shame then may be seen as a "master symbol" ... of Mediterranean cultures (1987c: 17).

The articles which follow, while cautiously paying close attention to local variations, are generally favourably inclined to using honour and shame as convenient categories. Delaney thus writes that dispensing with them would be like throwing the proverbial baby out with the bath water: 'The mistake has been to interpret the honor code somewhat like a dress code--as a set of rules and regulations--focused on superficial conformity. Instead, I propose that it is more like a kind of genetic code--a structure of relations--generative of possibilities' (1987: 35). Giovannini, meanwhile, is unapologetic:

Despite considerable variation in the content of mediterranean [sic] moral-evaluative systems, some striking parallels exist which cannot be ignored ... The cultural equation between female chastity and social worth may not be a mediterranean "cultural universal." Nor is it necessarily restricted to the mediterranean region. Yet, it is very pervasive in that part of the world where it is associated with institutionalized practices that both affect and reflect gender-based relations of authority, dominance, and coercion (1987: 61).

The upshot of the anthropological studies on honour and shame is that while these social values are not considered exclusive to particular geographic domains, the small communities of the Mediterranean have been regarded as providing fertile ground for a multitude of field studies that have illuminated certain alleged tendencies. These tendencies are often connected with defined gender roles and issues of kinship. Honour is exemplified by publicly proving oneself a man (through behaviour approximating that associated with socially-constructed masculine ideals: such as assertiveness, success in competing with men of equal rank and being seen to control and protect the women of one's family), or woman (through modest conduct that might be seen to epitomise the feminine ideal of sexual purity prior to marriage and complete fidelity to one's husband after marriage). Shame sometimes refers to women's honour but it also signifies the diminution or loss of social standing. The argument is that women are very potent in terms of capacity to jeopardise the honour of their kin; hence, this dual nuance of the word 'shame' is appropriate.

Criticism of the idea of Mediterranean social systems constructed according to the values of honour and shame has arisen from within the discipline of anthropology itself. This has highlighted a need for particularisation: for assessing social phenomena in specified contexts and paying close attention to terminology and its usage. When attempting to discern the social setting behind a text, as opposed to observing social dynamics at first hand,<sup>11</sup> the difficulties, as we shall see, are compounded. The suggestions of anthropologists, however, that the honour/shame-system has very ancient roots such as can be detected in biblical literature (Pitt-Rivers 1977) and that findings from modern-day field studies in small-scale, more remote Mediterranean cultures, due to their static nature, can also illuminate ancient societies (Peristiany 1965a), have been seized upon by biblical scholars exploring the social contexts of the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and

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<sup>11</sup> The reliability and authority of anthropologists, who usually carry out their research in communities foreign to them, can, of course, and has been, questioned.

Pseudepigrapha.<sup>12</sup> In the following chapter I will examine how shame is discussed in interpretations of biblical literature. It will become clear from this that, as in more recent anthropological studies, shame is most prominently written of here in terms of its alleged binary opposite honour.

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<sup>12</sup> The problems attending the transfer of findings from anthropology to biblical criticism have, however, been discussed by various authors: cf. Culley's summary (1982b) and Rogerson's comments that biblical scholars should not underestimate the complexities of tackling another discipline such as anthropology and also, that 'it will do no harm to Old Testament study to have to recognize more clearly the limits of what it can know about ancient Israelite society' (1984: 2, 18). Fiensy (1987, reprinted in Chalcraft 1997: 43-52) points out that while accounts from the Hebrew Bible have been compared with such cultures as the Nuer of Africa 'for at least 200 years' (1997: 43), this is sometimes conducted without following current debates in anthropology, which has transpired in biblical research founded upon discredited ethnological theories. Fiensy illustrates that the Nuer segmentary political and lineage theory developed by Evans-Pritchard, for instance, while enthusiastically received by Old Testament scholars as a means of understanding ancient Israelite society, is being seriously challenged from within the discipline of anthropology. As we shall see, the honour/shame model has been adopted by biblical scholars with comparable enthusiasm and often without acknowledging its limitations.

### III. Shame and Biblical Studies

The binary pairs ‘honour and shame’ and ‘shame and guilt’, familiar from anthropological studies, have begun to appear in interpretations of ancient literature with increasing frequency. Some prominent examples on literature from classical Greece, for instance, include Dodds’ chapter ‘From Shame-Culture to Guilt-Culture’ in *The Greeks and the Irrational*;<sup>1</sup> Fisher’s *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece*; Gérard’s *The Phaedra Syndrome: Of Shame and Guilt in Drama*;<sup>2</sup> Winkler’s *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*<sup>3</sup> and Cairns’ *Aidôs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame In Ancient Greek Literature*.<sup>4</sup> Biblical literature, too, has become a focus,

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<sup>1</sup> Dodds uses both as ‘only relative’ labels (1951: 28) and describes what he sees as a gradual transition perceptible in Greek literature from a respect which is primarily focused on public opinion (shame culture) to a respect which is primarily focused on the fear of God and what is right (guilt culture).

<sup>2</sup> Gérard argues for a clear distinction between shame and guilt (1993: 16) and describes Euripides’ depiction of Phaedra as presenting us with a shame-prone character: she is determined to kill herself, the motivation being that she does not wish to be exposed and seen as wicked (1993: 10). Gérard does not claim that such a response is necessarily typical of a particular era (cf. Dodds) or culture; he refers to Democritus, twenty years younger than Euripides, who concerned himself with finding moral restraint and order within the individual self rather than in the opinions of others, which accords with Gérard’s working definition of guilt (1993: 17).

<sup>3</sup> Winkler uses observations from modern Greek cultures cautiously (‘... the issue of continuity between ancient Greek and modern Greek culture is a red herring. It is not that cultural ways have survived intact and can be taken as evidence for ancient life. My own observations in Greece were a fillip to reflection, not the basis of an interpretation. It is simply the case that certain deep premises (protocols) about social life, widely shared and with very significant variations around the Mediterranean basin, can be used to frame and illuminate ancient texts, bringing out their unspoken assumptions. Even that is too strong as a description of my methods ... Rather, my readings in ethnography from ... especially the Mediterranean, have opened up avenues of thought ...’ (1990: 10). Winkler does refer to honour and shame as values connected to the anthropology of sex in ancient Greece (e.g. 1990: 40).

<sup>4</sup> Cairns describes *aidôs* (sometimes translated ‘shame’) within the context of Greek literature, paying close attention to ‘the values of honour which constitute the sphere in which *aidôs* operates and which give rise to the evaluative judgments which are constitutive of the emotion ... [T]he inclusivity of *aidôs* as a response to the honour of self and others is mirrored in the inclusivity of the code of honour itself, a code which integrates self-regarding and other-regarding, competitive and co-operative standards into a remarkably unified whole’ (1993: 14).

especially since the 1990s. While this thesis is concerned primarily with shame, we shall see that especially in interpretations of the New Testament and Apocrypha, the pairing with honour and the argument that the social structures described in modern Mediterranean field studies reach far back in time and are discernible in these texts, persist. With regard to the Hebrew Bible, the reception of anthropological evaluations has in general been more reserved.

### *i. Honour and Shame in the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and New Testament*

#### *a. Camp (1991)*

In her analysis of Ben Sira, which aims to gain a deeper understanding of women's lives in second century Jerusalem, Camp argues that the apocryphal text was embedded in a cultural context in which honour and shame functioned as focal social values. Camp agrees with the New Testament scholars she refers to that: 'Though details remain debated, there is a wide consensus that variations of what is called the "honor-shame complex" are a determinant feature of contemporary Mediterranean life' and further, that 'Mediterranean cultural continuity, at least in the villages, allows us to consider ancient society and persons from this framework' (1991: 2).

Ben Sira, she continues, is notable for the considerable number of shame words<sup>5</sup> and a relentless recourse to 'fear of the Lord'. The motivation for the latter, she argues, lies in preserving one's good name and avoiding shame (1991: 4). Camp is careful to distinguish between proper and improper shame--'the shame-by-which-one-must-be-bound in order to avoid the shame-that-destroys' (1991: 5)--and goes on to illustrate how the connections among shame, sexuality and economics, which are an important focus in Mediterranean anthropological studies, pervade Ben Sira. In her analysis Camp describes the strong relationship between honour and wealth. While there is an emphasis in Ben Sira on the pivotal importance of wisdom and on the moral imperative to care for the poor and practise alms giving, there are also expressions of

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<sup>5</sup> Camp points out that while reputation is a consistent feature of biblical ethos, there is nowhere in the Hebrew Bible a concentration of shame vocabulary comparable to that of Ben Sira: 'our sage has added almost a nineteen percent increase to the canonical works' (1991: 5, note 16).

grief for the wealthy reduced to want and an appreciation of financial security (1991: 7ff.). Camp summarises:

Thus, while the sage holds an idealized vision of the poor man honoured for his wisdom, he also, realistically, advises his students not to wrap sheer laziness in such a flag. Better to be wise *and* wealthy (10:31a) (1991: 10).

Lack of wealth, then, can, by implication, signify idleness and thereby bring dishonour.<sup>6</sup>

By far the most potent source of dishonour depicted in Ben Sira is women's sexuality. This, Camp claims, is typically Mediterranean. The poem on sexual relationships in 9:1-9, providing 'a fairly complete list of female nemeses' (1991: 20f.) and envisaging women as being inherently dangerous for men, expresses, Camp argues, '[a] belief about the indiscriminate sexuality of women ... typical among men in contemporary Mediterranean culture' (1991: 22). Control of the women in one's household is, Camp illustrates, extremely important in Ben Sira. Women, like a man's material possessions (with which they are sometimes associated), can confer honour on a man but the idealised notion of a good wife's benefits includes bringing cheer even amid poverty (26:4). For the most part, however, her goodness is inextricably linked with material benefit: the good wife brings fatness to her husband (a sign of prosperity) and she is likened to a good portion (that is, a valuable asset) (26: 1-4). The bad wife, meanwhile, is depicted as one who exposes a man to the danger of losing control over his household as well as face in public. The connection between shame and failure to control one's women and money is particularly clear in 25:21-26: a wife who controls the household finances (v.22) and gives orders (v.25) brings disgrace (v.22) and ruin (v.23).

Ben Sira's 'rather extreme commentary on controlling the sexuality of one's daughters' (1991: 34) has no biblical parallel but is, Camp claims, entirely compatible with the attitudes reflected in contemporary Mediterranean studies. There is, for instance, an emphasis on concern for one's daughters' chastity (7:24), which Schneider has identified as the crux of the Mediterranean value system. Camp's

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. also Davis II.ii.d.

conviction that the findings of contemporary anthropologists working in the Mediterranean are applicable to Ben Sira leads her to reject the traditional interpretation of 7:24 ('... do not let your face shine towards them') as alluding to fathers indulging their daughters<sup>7</sup> because:

In typical Mediterranean family arrangements ... there is "unusual absention of Mediterranean males generally from domestic affairs" and "a rigid spatial and behavioral segregation of the sexes." Thus, there would have been little opportunity for such paternal indulgence. ...Since the actions of children, virtuous or otherwise, advert to their parents, we should probably read our present stich to mean something like "do not count on your daughters' capacity to bring you honor" (1991: 34).

Camp also favours Trenchard's interpretation of the adjective 'sensible', when used of a daughter at 22:4, as having 'the perversely narrow sense of "faithful to her husband"' (1991: 34)<sup>8</sup> - which would again underline the Mediterranean value system as described in anthropological literature. Characteristic, too, would be Ben Sira's account of the worry which daughters incite in their fathers (cf. 7:25 and 42:9-10). The intensity of paternal anxiety and the fact that women's sexuality in Ben Sira seems to epitomise all that is potentially out of control, is, according to Camp, best understood in the light of 'the enormous reality of shame in Mediterranean culture' (1991: 36), which is compared to 'a culturally defined prison' and 'stigma' (1991: 36). The fear of losing control and incurring shame applies, Camp argues, in Ben Sira as in contemporary Mediterranean culture, to all arenas of a man's life that determine his honour: such as wealth, public standing and family. Daughters, she claims, are a particularly disturbing factor, or 'wild card', in this context:

As his property, he is honor-bound to prevent encroachment on them; as women they share the "woman's wickedness" of indiscriminate sexual inclination; unmarried, they have no stake in regulating their own honor; awakened to their own sexuality in marriage, they may have even less restraint (1991: 36f.).

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. the RSV *ad loc*: 'Do you have daughters? Be concerned for their chastity (Gk *body*), and do not show yourself too indulgent with them'.

<sup>8</sup> The sensible and the shameful daughter are contrasted. RSV *ad loc* has: 'A sensible daughter obtains her husband, but one who acts shamefully brings grief to her father'.

In the contemporary Mediterranean context, Camp claims, ‘more traditional values’, such as those she has gleaned from Ben Sira, continue to ‘shine through the veneer of Catholic teaching’ (1991: 37). Honour and shame are, she continues, central concepts of the traditional cultural symbol system which finds its clearest expression in links between sexual and economic issues in which both money and women operate as ‘overdetermined symbols of male honor’ (1991: 38). In the cultural context underlying Ben Sira’s writing, as well as in the Mediterranean communities described in anthropological literature, Camp concludes, daughters fulfil the role of their family’s repository of honour. Their capacity for conferring shame on their fathers, furthermore, is so potent because:

An adulterous wife can be divorced, but a sexually deviant daughter has no place to go but home. She is an everlasting blot on her father’s name, which is all, in the sage’s view, a man has to live for (1991: 37).

Camp’s enthusiastic reception of contemporary Mediterranean anthropological social categories and her conviction that these provide a suitable model for gaining insights into the cultural context of ancient texts, is reflected in other honour and shame studies conducted in the 1990s in both pseudepigraphical and New Testament Studies. I shall be returning to Camp’s findings and evaluations after summarising these (III.iii).

#### ***b. Neyrey/Malina (1991)<sup>9</sup>***

Neyrey and Malina make strong claims for the distinctive and enduring centrality of the social values of honour and shame in the countries of the Mediterranean. Their discussion opens with the statement:

Visitors to Mediterranean countries are immediately aware of a different social dynamic on the streets and in the marketplaces. People there seem very concerned with appearances. ... In many places men and women never share the same space at the same time ... Anthropologists describe these phenomena in terms of a value considered dominant in Mediterranean culture, namely honor. ... An adequate scenario for

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<sup>9</sup> See chapter II, ‘Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World’, in Neyrey 1991: 25-65.

understanding the people of the Mediterranean, ancient and modern, must include a firm grasp of the pivotal value of honor and its pervasive replication throughout their lives (1991: 25).

After defining honour, with recourse to modern anthropological studies, as becoming concrete when a society's understanding of power, gender and precedence is examined, and pointing to the dissimilarity with Western culture--'[u]nlike Western culture, cultures in which honor is a dominant value depend totally for their sense of worth upon this acknowledgement by others as "honorable"' (1991: 25)<sup>10</sup>--they speak of 'the ever-present phenomenon of concern for honor and shame in the world of Luke-Acts' (1991: 46), thereby leaping from the concept of social reality past and present to the assumption that texts reflect social reality. They continue that '[i]t is truly an understatement to say that the whole of Luke's Gospel, almost every piece of social interaction, should be viewed through the lens of honor and shame' (1991: 64) and purport that 'seeing [Jesus'] life through the lens of honor and shame, we begin to view it from the native's perspective and to appreciate the social dynamic as natives see it' (1991: 64). This strikes me as a somewhat spurious claim. After all, if reader-response criticism has taught us anything, then that any modern reader of texts such as comprise the New Testament will impose upon them diverse kinds of expectations and that the idea of retrieving a determinate or correct 'native' meaning is unrealistic (cf. Bal 1989: 11-15).

Neyrey and Malina, further, claim not only that honour and shame are essential components of the first century personality (1991: 65), they also imply that this personality has remained largely unchanged to this day (1991: 25, cited above) and that it goes far back in time and can be discerned in the Hebrew Bible (they cite from the Hebrew Bible to support their arguments, cf. 1991: 31). Some of their huge generalisations, however, do not stand up well to the evidence in hand. They write, for instance, that:

Honor is always presumed to exist within one's own family of blood, i.e., among all of

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<sup>10</sup> See also Malina (*The New Testament World*): first century Mediterranean societies 'did not consider individualism a pivotal value as we do' (1993: 45). As we have seen, this is in agreement with some sociological typologies (Introduction, note 2). I do, however, find his claim, as its sole basis is textual, too definitive (see III.iii).

one's blood relatives. A person can always trust blood relatives. Outside that circle, all people are presumed dishonorable, guilty unless proved otherwise, a presumption based on the agonistic quality of competition for the scarce commodity, honor. ... Blood replicates honor; with blood relatives there is no honor contest (1991: 32).<sup>11</sup>

The anthropological studies do describe a profound sense of family loyalty, which is depicted as being characteristically Mediterranean<sup>12</sup> and Pitt-Rivers, further, focuses on the centrality of endogamy in Hebrew culture through the ages, both of which might be said to substantiate Neyrey and Malina's argument. Their claim, however, defies both the observations of Campbell concerning rivalry among brothers,<sup>13</sup> and the evidence of the Hebrew Bible. As Carroll has pointed out, the Hebrew Bible frequently depicts interactions among blood-relations as far from amicable or honourable. In fact, the contest for precedence between brothers appears to be a topos:

... the dominant pattern of conflict in the Old Testament is that between brothers. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and Aaron, Absalom and Amnon, Solomon and Adonijah to name but the more obvious examples. As the Old Testament presents the history of the kingdoms it was a conflict between nations produced by brothers, Judah and Ephraim. It is unlikely that the sage had any ironic intentions when he wrote "a brother is born for adversity" (Prov 17:17) but according to the biblical pattern adversity and conflict characterised the relations between brothers (1977: 201).

The honour and blood relationship, then, is not as straightforward as Neyrey and Malina indicate and their approach in general shows a tendency to sweeping claims.

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<sup>11</sup> Malina repeats this claim in his later publication (1993: 38).

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Campbell, who describes the prevalent idea of 'one blood', impressive solidarity and almost complete identification of interests among Sarakatsani siblings: 'In the eyes of outsiders siblings are morally identified. Whatever, for good or ill, is suffered by one sibling is held to affect the other siblings to an almost equivalent degree. An insult to any member of the group is felt with the same resentment by all the brothers and sisters' (1964: 172). He qualifies, however, that this solidarity comes into force in the face of challenges from outside of the close family group. The blood bond does not eliminate honour contests (1964: 175ff.).

<sup>13</sup> See above II.ii.a.

***c. Pilch /Malina/Plevnik (1993)***

The purpose of Pilch and Malina's handbook of biblical social values is to facilitate 'deeper immersion into the world of the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular' (1993: xxx). Defining a value as 'some general quality and direction of life that human beings are expected to embody in their behavior' (1993: xiii), they contrast what they consider to be the U.S. core values, efficiency and guilt, with the core values of the Mediterranean world, honour and shame (1993: xvii and 103). Alongside these core values they describe also so-called 'means values': 'Power, generosity, and eloquence are means values because they facilitate the realization of honor, which is the Mediterranean goal or end cultural value' (1993: xvii).

In Plevnik's subsection on honour and shame, these are depicted as not only core values in the present-day Mediterranean world but 'in the Bible as well' (1993: 95). Plevnik appears to describe honour and shame as locally-specific, or 'high context words whose content must be deduced from actual social behavior' (1993: 97) - which would accord with the ethnographic studies that have tended to focus on individuals and families in small communities. He continues that 'one must ... describe what in a given social group or society counts as honorable behavior' (1993: 97). In terms of biblical textual analysis such particularisation might be reflected in detailed examinations of separate books or chapters. Instead, Plevnik's illustration rides roughshod over any pretensions to particularisation in that it draws for support from a range of Psalms, some prophetic literature and the New Testament (1993: 97f.). The fact that this 'evidence' very probably stems from several eras and provenances is given no consideration.

Plevnik is also undeterred by a lack of explicit honour or shame references in the words of Jesus:<sup>14</sup>

While the Gospel tradition reports Jesus speaking only rarely about honor and shame, the narrative is replete with honor concerns. This feature is clearly underscored in the many scenarios in which Jesus demonstrates considerable skill at challenge and riposte and thereby reveals himself to be an honorable man, capable of defending God's honor, his group's honor, and his own honor (1993: 100).

In the elucidation of means values meanwhile, these are consistently related to the core values. Purity, for instance, concerns,

a person who knows how to be clean rather than unclean, pure rather than polluted - in other words, how to maintain honor and avoid shame. Purity thus is a means value because it facilitates the realization of the core values of honor and shame (1993: 151).

The question remains, however, whether Jesus' words or the actions of those maintaining purity result from the values of honour and shame which they themselves hold, or whether the authors of the handbook are projecting their analytical model on to the data. I suspect the latter. In any case, if honour and shame indeed are core values for the Bible as a whole, as is claimed by Pilch, Malina and Plevnik, their meanings, when all the means values are taken into account, are rendered little more than that honour is everything approved of and shame everything disapproved of in the context of 'the Bible' - which, of course, is far less homogeneous than the handbook implies.

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<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, however, the importance of occurrence of such words has been emphasised and employed to legitimate critical writing. Peristiany, in arguing for the centrality of these values, mentions that Mediterranean peoples constantly speak of honour and shame in assessing their own conduct and that of their fellows (1965c: 10). Wikan, focusing especially on shame, points out that in the Cairo communities under consideration shame rather than honour is the predominant concern and writes that 'Mediterranean peoples do not, in their daily lives, speak of their own and each other's honour. But they do speak of shame' and "'Shame" accompanies negative sanctions as an exclamation and explicative, it constantly enters both into commentary and transactions. "Honour" figures mainly in "theory" discourse - it is not itself part of the give and take of interaction' (1984: 638). Camp justifies her analysis of shame in Ben Sira by pointing out that 'Ben Sira's concern for shame is evident both in the number and frequency of words within this semantic field' (1991: 41).

#### **d. McVann (1995)**

McVann's article opens with the statement that:

Honor and shame as axial cultural values in the ancient Circum-Mediterranean are by now well enough ... accepted categories in biblical interpretation that they need no lengthy ... defence as legitimate perspectives brought to bear on the interpretation of biblical texts (1995: 179).

Citing Malina and Neyrey's definition that honour serves as 'a register of social rating which entitles a person to interact in specific ways with equals, superiors and subordinates, according to the prescribed cues of the society' (1991: 45), McVann goes on to explain that social boundaries are the source of these prescribed cues. Crossing a social boundary may result in ridicule and being shamed; stalwartly maintaining publicly recognised boundaries, meanwhile, constitutes honourable behaviour (1995: 180). Consequently, expelling 'thieves', whose presence makes a mockery of the house of God, from the temple, is an honourable act because it preserves the boundaries between sacred and profane. Ritual, he continues, focuses on the maintenance of such boundaries and

[i]f ritual focuses attention by framing--that is, by drawing boundaries--and if honor-shame protects status and the *status quo* by focusing on the defence of boundaries drawn, then it seems reasonable to conclude that honor-shame, precisely because it replicates concern with boundaries, is a cultural phenomenon deeply rooted in ritual (1995: 181).

When honour is challenged, he continues, the indeterminacy of boundaries is exposed, accentuating any vulnerability of social organisation. McVann sees in this a resemblance with the liminal period of the ritual process, because 'in both situations statuses and boundaries are denied or challenged before the new ones emerge or the old ones are reaffirmed' (1995: 181).

Following a ritual reading of Mark, focusing on 1:9-20, 8:27-9:1 and 16:1-8, McVann concludes that

the phenomenon of honor-shame as a cultural feature of first century Mediterranean society was accepted (though hardly uncritically) in Mark, since honor-shame concerns are inscribed into the Gospel at its three most important structural points (1995: 195).

He goes on to say that the valuation of honour and shame is reversed in Mark, with persecution and the cross becoming sources of honour rather than shame:

This reversal, however, is much stronger than a mere up-ending of the *status quo*.

Mark's interests range far beyond protest and social criticism. Rather, the consequences of the reversal are so powerful that the very system of honor-shame itself is thrown open to question (1995: 195).

The consequence, McVann claims, is profoundly shocking:

A modern equivalent seeking to convey the sense of shock and blasphemy might run like this: the savior of the world and God's Son was a dark-skinned homosexual refugee on welfare who died of AIDS. Such a proclamation would undoubtedly qualify as an assault on, and rejection of, the neo-conservative worldview currently in vogue (1995: 195).

Like the commentators discussed above, McVann favours the view that honour and shame are distinctive categories which are reflected in New Testament (or apocryphal) literature due to the texts' embeddedness in a cultural context which has much in common with the Mediterranean cultures as discussed in modern anthropological field studies. The Semeia edition in which McVann's article appears contains a response by LaHurd, not unreminiscent of Herzfeld's criticisms, which warns that when the classifications honour and shame are applied one should neither lose sight of 'their tentative and abstract character', nor become guilty of 'generalizing across geographic boundaries and certainly across temporal divides' (1995: 199). LaHurd's criticism, I believe, has validity. By linking honour with everything acceptable within a society and shame with everything transgressing social boundaries, McVann again widens their definitions to a point where they lose meaningfulness. One merit of McVann's discussion is his precision in closely analysing a few demarcated ritual texts, thereby avoiding some of the other generalisations we have come across which purport to speak for 'the Bible' as a whole. McVann's claim that honour and shame are 'inscribed into the Gospel', however, is, I think, too strong. It seems, instead, to be the case once again that values constructed in modern times and which even in the context of contemporary anthropological studies are far from uncritically accepted, have been imposed on to the ancient texts. While this may be convenient, such a procedure obscures more than it reveals by effecting an artificial sense of cohesion.

Of particular interest to me in McVann's discussion is his connection between honour and shame on the one hand and the *status quo* on the other. The probable role of shame in socially subversive contexts is a point I shall be returning to in chapters V and VI.

*e. deSilva (1995 and 1996)*<sup>15</sup>

In an article narrowly focused on the rhetorical interchanges between Antiochus and the martyrs in 4 Maccabees, de Silva describes what he considers to be the nature and centrality of honour and shame in the particular socio-historical context in which the apocryphal text came into being. While he refers approvingly to Pitt-Rivers' definition of the Mediterranean person's conception of honour--as a value in one's own eyes which demands acknowledgement from one's social group and which is often asserted or defended in public contests (1995b: 32, note 3)--deSilva is careful to take into account the 'Hellenistic philosophic garb' of this 'enigmatic piece of Diasporic Jewish literature' (1995b: 31).<sup>16</sup> In his analysis of language related to honour and dishonour, deSilva thus attempts to consider the Hellenistic environment and its affinity with classical Greek literature and culture. *Aidos* and *nemesis*, he explains, were not overwhelmingly concerned with gaining success at the expense of others--which is how the zero-sum-game honour-battles of so-called agonistic Mediterranean cultures are often depicted in anthropological literature--but essentially interactive values serving as much to bond as to divide. Not only the desire to be honoured but also considerations of showing proper reverence to those superior must, according to deSilva, be taken into account and he argues therefore that when approaching a Greco-influenced text such as 4 Maccabees, the agonistic anthropological model which has found its way into biblical studies must be counterbalanced with the fear of overreaching and of violating justice towards fellow human beings and piety towards God (1995b: 33, note 3).

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<sup>15</sup> I have just been alerted to a more recent article of deSilva's examining how honour and shame discourses in Paul's Corinthian correspondence contribute to the maintenance of subcultural and countercultural groups. He argues here that shame is inculcated primarily to encourage group-sustaining, unifying behaviour (1998: 72).

<sup>16</sup> In his later article deSilva claims that 'honor itself is vacuous apart from culture-specific content' and again stresses the importance of delineating the specific cultural context in which such values are discussed (1996: 435).

In 4 Maccabees, deSilva argues, honour is identified with 'devout reason'. The martyrs hence demonstrate reason's mastery over feelings and the endeavour to put nothing, even life itself, above virtue. Unwavering fidelity to the Torah in particular, enables reason to conquer emotions, thereby effecting honourable conduct and enabling honourable remembrance (1995b: 37f.). Such a link between honour on the one hand and reverence for God and his Torah on the other, is presented, deSilva continues, in several *Rededuelle* ('rhetoric duels'). The competitive and public nature of these is, he considers, particularly apt: not only does it confer dramatic potential, it also conjures up the so-called 'court of reputation', the body of externally-sanctioning public opinion to which the so-called Mediterranean personality is said to be especially attuned. The duels are, according to deSilva, contests for honour; the epideictic frame of which allows the author to show which choices and responses are approved of as honourable and praiseworthy and which as dishonourable and deficient (1995b: 44). In the second *Rededuell* the brothers are promised advancement and positions of honour in the kingdom - provided they conform to the Hellenistic ways of life. The brothers, manifesting their honour in their loyalty to their deity and his Law, refuse: an action which is evaluated by the author as honourable (1995b: 41ff.). As praise in the ancient Mediterranean world is, according to deSilva, closely linked with emulation, the author is aiming at inspiring emulation of such perseverance among his listeners. The outcome of the brothers' life is rewarded with honourable remembrance, honour from God, the patriarchs and their nation. In contrast, Antiochus, though formidable, is labelled impious, unjust and shameless.

DeSilva qualifies that what is shameful in 4 Maccabees is culturally specific, far from immune to contemporary Hellenistic influences, and not necessarily compatible with the Hebrew Bible. Torture and physical outrages on the martyrs' bodies, therefore, are not depicted as entailing shame: even when the body is stripped and publicly exposed the martyr is perceived as being clothed with virtue. This might be regarded as less reminiscent of the Hebrew Bible (where stripping constitutes a popular and effective shaming technique to which prisoners of war in particular were subjected) than of Greek attitudes regarding the human body. Instead, it is Antiochus, lacking

‘that important element of αἰδώς which regards the honor of other human beings within the context of reverent fear of God’, who is deemed to be shameful (1995b: 56). Though possibly influenced by Greek ideas, the author exploits, deSilva argues, the centrality of honour and shame in order to reinforce a pronouncedly Jewish way to attaining honour and avoiding shame: by means of steadfast adherence to Yhwh and his Torah, which seem to have become compromised and threatened in the Hellenised atmosphere of second century Palestine.

In his monograph on the Epistle to the Hebrews deSilva demonstrates a keen awareness of the criticisms raised regarding the adequacy of modern social-scientific constructions for the interpretation of ancient texts (1995a: 11ff.). He concedes that the assumption of a static cultural system from Homer to present life in the Cypriot Highlands is unsustainable and further, that narrative texts, such as the conflict stories between Pharisees and Jesus, lend themselves more readily to interpretations from the perspective of the honour/shame model than more discursive texts and epistolary literature (1995a: 15). DeSilva none the less concludes that the model is useful and relevant and that ‘Hebrews itself suggests the importance of honor and shame for the interpretation of New Testament texts as products of the Mediterranean world by so frequently using that realm of language’ (1995a: 23). He discusses honour and shame in Hebrews in terms of what he regards as its implied norms and values. Issues of gender, which, as we have seen, have often been considered the cornerstone of the honour/shame complex of ideas, do not feature in his discussion.

In a later article on honour and shame in Ben Sira, deSilva again focuses on the tensions that arise when orthodox values are defended from within a context of immersion in a dominant culture. DeSilva closely describes the sociocultural situation he perceives as being in the background of Ben Sira as one where Judaea’s inhabitants, subject to Hellenising monarchs, found themselves to be a minority culture whose world view and legitimations were constantly called into question by the attractions associated with the Greek way of life. DeSilva argues that although Ben Sira, like the author of 4 Maccabees, adopts some Hellenistic modes of thought, he is yet deeply suspicious of Hellenisation, considering it a form of apostasy and a

becoming ‘like the nations’. Again, the principal message is that fear of the Lord is ‘the best canopy under which to live one’s life’ (1996: 454) and again the language of honour and shame plays, he claims, a considerable role in conveying this message. While, as in Proverbs (which is cast as Ben Sira’s source book and model text<sup>17</sup>) wisdom remains the path to honour (1996: 440)<sup>18</sup> and a distinguished life, it is here more emphatically identified with obedience to the Torah. Transgression of the Law and apostasy from the covenant are thus depicted as meeting with disgrace and cancelling one’s claim to honour. Again, the ‘court of reputation’, those who watch and pronounce judgment on one’s claim to honour, is perceived by deSilva as being an important factor. Ben Sira, however, seems more concerned with the all-seeing eyes of God than with the eyes of the community:

If one is to have shame, that is to be sensitive to the opinion of another, that other person must be God first and foremost. Effectively, this points to Torah--the revelation of God’s standards and criteria for honor before God--as “the court of reputation” before which one lives one’s life and on the basis of which one claims honor (1996: 454f.).

Honour and shame, which deSilva agrees constitute pivotal values in the society in which Ben Sira lived, emerge, due to their perceived centrality, as apt concepts for the sage’s agenda, namely of ‘preserving or promoting adherence to the values and customs of the minority group, of combating strong tendencies to assimilate and

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<sup>17</sup> DeSilva claims that his comparison between Proverbs and Ben Sira will show that ‘while Ben Sira preserves the traditional use of the language of honor and dishonor in many ways, he intensifies its claims in support of commitment to exclusively Jewish values and behaviors’ (1996: 435).

<sup>18</sup> DeSilva cites 6:29-31, where it is said that wisdom gives a person their καυχημα, which he translates ‘claim to honour’ (cf. Liddell and Scott’s lexicon *ad loc*, ‘a vaunt, boast’). The RSV does not follow deSilva’s honour-interpretation, although the sentiment of the verses might be brought into line with the conferral of honours: ‘Then [wisdom’s] fetters will become for you a strong protection, and her collar a glorious robe. Her yoke is a golden ornament, and her bonds are a cord of blue. You will wear her like a glorious robe, and put her on like a crown of gladness’. It does seem, however, that the desire to discern the ‘pivotal values’ of honour and shame everywhere, or the assumption that they constitute a strong background influence, has again led to gap-filling by imposing later constructions upon the text. Chance has pointed out such a tendency of ‘upstreaming’, which he defines as ‘how to validly project insights gained in the twentieth century--usually through ethnography--back into the distant past’. He continues, ‘upstreaming’s dubious assumption that the cultures that anthropologists study are characterized more by continuity than by change has been increasingly called into question’ (1996: 141f.).

become “like the Gentiles” (1996: 438).<sup>19</sup>

Honour receives repeated mention in 10:19-24 and it is again fear of the Lord and obedience to the commandments which constitute the decisive criteria for evaluating honour (1996: 444). Those who have set a precedent for honourable conduct and earned remembrance and the sage’s panegyric, appear in the catalogue of famous men (chapters 44ff.). In line with Ben Sira’s purpose, Abraham is lauded for his incomparable honour manifested in his keeping of the Law of the Most High (44:19-20). Phinehas, too, is honoured for maintaining the strict boundaries between the congregation and the Gentiles.<sup>20</sup> Solomon, meanwhile, is reproved for his failure to observe God’s exclusive claim to worship (1996: 453f.). Again and again, deSilva argues, Ben Sira makes ‘effective and wide use of the language of honor and dishonor to promote loyalty to the values of Jewish culture and to provide insulation from the non-Jewish world from which Jews increasingly desire recognition’ (1996: 455).

Both Camp and deSilva,<sup>21</sup> we have seen, maintain that the values of honour and shame pervade the text of Ben Sira due to their pivotal status in the sociocultural context in which the text is embedded and both refer to anthropological literature to describe the features one might expect to detect in such a context. Camp, focusing on gender-relations, which are identified as distinctive and focal to the Mediterranean honour-shame matrix,<sup>22</sup> argues that honour, while intimately connected with public standing and economic resources, is again and again associated with women and their perceived capacity to threaten a man’s good name by conferring shame upon him. DeSilva, meanwhile, focuses on the public nature of honour and the effect of the

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<sup>19</sup> DeSilva comes close here to admitting that texts reflect not so much an absolute social reality as the perspectives and biases of their authors, who may be less concerned with recounting historical details than with promoting an ideological agenda (see below, chapter V).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. McVann on the connection between honour/shame and social boundaries maintained through ritual (III.i.d.).

<sup>21</sup> DeSilva makes no reference to Camp’s article.

<sup>22</sup> See especially Campbell 1964; Schneider 1971 and Pitt-Rivers 1977.

court of reputation on a person's feeling of value.<sup>23</sup> Due to an acute sensitivity regarding both one's honour and the public perception of it, stressing a connection between honour and obedience to the Torah, deSilva claims, lent itself as a motif to the authors of both Ben Sira and 4 Maccabees, who were concerned to guard traditional Jewish values in an increasingly Hellenistic world. The fact that the alleged centrality of honour and shame can be shown to 'illuminate' such divergent claims might be said to support the argument for their endemic status. I also think, however, that it once again reveals that the labels 'honour' and 'shame' have become so capacious that they can be used to prove almost anything - at which point they are rendered virtually ineffectual. While I do not consider the findings of Mediterranean anthropological studies valueless, I think there is a strong need for specification, that is for delineating the cultural context of a given text (as deSilva has), and also for admitting to the conjectural status of statements derived from the application of values observed in living communities to ancient texts. The idea that honour and shame are time-tested Mediterranean categories, invariably relevant in examining the social contexts in which biblical literature came into being remains, ultimately, an unverifiable assumption.<sup>24</sup>

*f. Semeia 68 (1996), Hanson and Neyrey*

The premiss of *Semeia 68*, subtitled 'Honor and Shame in the World of the Bible', is that the honour and shame value system 'is a fundamental characteristic of all Mediterranean cultures, including those where ancient Israel and early Christianity took root' (1996:7) and, further, that '[t]he world of the Bible was eastern, virtually changeless, and agricultural' in sharp contrast to '[t]he modern western world [which] is changing and industrial' (1996:10). This seems to leave the door wide

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<sup>23</sup> In his later article on the Corinthian correspondence, deSilva specifies that in this context the court of reputation consists of God, Christ, Paul's apostolic team, the supra-local church and the local Christian community. Here deSilva does refer to Paul reminding his audience of appropriate shame, or modesty, being linked to gender (1998: 72).

<sup>24</sup> As we have seen, Herzfeld and Wikan have already challenged the idea of the distinctively Mediterranean status of honour and shame from within the discipline of anthropology. A similarly critical approach is required for New Testament Studies. If the definitions for honour and shame remain as flexible and wide, these categories could, I am sure, be applied to a wide range of extra-Mediterranean literature, too.

open for assumptions regarding cultural continuity and the enduring relevance of honour and shame, thereby legitimising attempts to project modern anthropological findings on to ancient texts. Indeed, Simkins and Stansell, analysing honour and shame in Joel and the David narratives respectively, find much to support their view that these values were pivotal in the cultures which produced these texts. Hanson and Neyrey, focusing on Matthew and John, also see much scope for illumination in viewing their chosen texts through the lens of honour and shame. More critical and reserved is Bergant's analysis of the Song of Songs which, she considers, sits uneasily within the gender-divided, sexually-repressive picture emerging from modern Mediterranean field studies.

Remaining for the time being with evaluations of honour and shame within New Testament Studies, let me focus first on Hanson's article on Matthew's makarisms and reproaches. Calling honour and shame 'the values-complex in which all other values are grounded' (1996: 82), Hanson claims that support for such a strong statement can be found among Semitists, classicists, Old Testament and New Testament scholars, as well as Mediterraneanists.<sup>25</sup> He continues that the honour-shame complex is 'tied to the symbols of power, sexual status, gender and religion. Consequently, it is a social, rather than a psychological, value' (1996: 83). Disregarding the psychological dimension of social values, Hanson stresses instead the interactive and public nature of honour and shame. Turning to the makarisms, he first distinguishes them sharply from blessings in that they are not 'words of power' pronounced by God or cultic mediators, but pertain rather to humans only, never to God and exist independently of ritual contexts (1996: 89). Hebrew **אַשְׁרֵי** and Greek **μακάριος** refer, he continues, not to ritual blessing or expressions of happiness but are 'understandable only in terms of the Mediterranean competition for honor'

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<sup>25</sup> Hanson cites Klopfenstein among the Old Testament scholars. Klopfenstein's study focuses on shame and dishonour and is primarily philological in its approach. While Klopfenstein points out that shame-terminology is sometimes paired with antonyms, *kabôd* (often translated 'honour') among them, he does not make any pronouncements concerning the centrality of a pivotal value-complex such as 'honour and shame'. He explicitly criticises Pedersen's attempt to pair a multifarious phenomenon like shame with honour (1972: 208; see III.ii.a and c).

(1996: 90). Virtually every formulaic instance of אִשְׁרָא and μακάριος is, according to Hanson, best translated ‘how honoured’ or ‘O how honourable’. They are, he claims, expressions which are understood as pronounced by ‘one’s community of orientation’ which validates one’s personal claim to honour. The opposite of this is the expression אִנִּי, which Hanson translates not ‘woe!’ but ‘shame!’. In Mediterranean societies, he elaborates, ‘this is understood as a serious challenge to the honor of those addressed. To be shamed means the loss of status, respect, and worth in the community’ (1996: 94). Having decided upon the meanings of μακάριος and its counterpart, of which the Hebrew equivalents are אִשְׁרָא and אִנִּי, Hanson thus imposes the modern understanding of honour and shame from anthropological studies on to the New Testament text, which culminates in such strong conclusions as: ‘Makarisms and reproaches are comprehensible only in terms of Mediterranean honor/shame values and the challenge-riposte transactions’ (1996: 104).

Neyrey’s analysis of the Johannine Passion Narratives, meanwhile, begins with a statement describing the profoundly shaming purpose of crucifixion, before elaborating that despite the shameful treatment of Jesus, he is portrayed as maintaining his honour and even gaining glory and prestige:

Far from being a status degrading ritual, his passion is seen as a status elevation ritual.

This hypothesis entails a larger consideration, namely, the importance of honor and shame as pivotal values of the Mediterranean world (1996: 114).

The Cross, although explicitly called ‘shame’ (αἰσχυνεῖς, Hebrews 12:2) none the less transpires in honour<sup>26</sup> and the pivotal social values become part of a larger pattern of inversion: ‘ironic perspective is part and parcel of the principle that Jesus constantly narrates: that last is first, least is greatest, dead is live, shame is honor’

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<sup>26</sup> As we have seen, McVann makes this point too. See also deSilva on Hebrews 12:2, who argues that Jesus, depicted here as despising the shame of the cross, ‘is linked with the exemplars of faith in chapter 11, who in large measure are held together by a shared disregard for certain cultural norms of the honorable and shameful’ (1995a: 2); and Martin, arguing for Paul’s inversion of what constitutes shame and honour (1995: 59ff. and 65).

(1996: 115). Neyrey defends his perspective--‘we must attempt to see things through the lenses of ancient Mediterranean culture, which were those of honor and shame’ (1996: 115)<sup>27</sup>--by stressing the importance and peculiarly Mediterranean status of honour and shame:

It is always tempting for modern readers to psychologize biblical characters, often imposing on them modern notions of the self or motivations and strategies typical of the modern world. Appreciation of the ancient psychology of honor and shame offers more authentic cultural and historical reading of those social dynamics. ... Thus no study of conflict in the biblical texts would be complete without its assessment in terms of the cultural dynamics of honor and shame (1996: 133).

The sweeping claims of the writers in *Semeia* 68 are addressed in a response by Chance. He writes in no uncertain terms that:

The authors in this volume have not heeded Herzfeld’s call: they have employed a common model and applied it to peoples diverse in time and space. Yet they can hardly be blamed for doing so, since the historical--not to mention the biblical--literature lags far behind the ethnographic where Mediterranean values are concerned, and has not yet reached the required critical mass that would enable a more comparative style of analysis (1996: 148).

He points out, further, that ‘there is more to Mediterranean culture than honor and shame’, which, although it may appear obvious, is in the light of the forceful claims of much of the writing on honour and shame in biblical literature, worth keeping in mind. The enthusiastic absorption of the anthropological values of honour and shame

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<sup>27</sup> Although our environment and social values clearly affect our perception of the world around us, it is unlikely that there was ever ‘a Mediterranean way’ of looking at the world which filtered everything through the lenses of honour and shame. Pilch and Malina have argued in their handbook that the core-value in the contemporary US is ‘efficiency’. Surely this cannot mean that all inhabitants of the US construct the world around them on the basis of this one notion. The approach is, I think, too simplistic.

into the study of the New Testament<sup>28</sup> and apocryphal texts<sup>29</sup> has, as Chance recognises, often led to misleading simplifications. As we shall see, the Hebrew Bible, too, has become the focus for studies on honour and shame.

## *ii. Honour and Shame in the Hebrew Bible*

### *a. Pedersen (1926)*

Pedersen's tome *Israel: Its Life and Culture* contains a chapter entitled 'Honour and Shame'. Predating the flourish of Mediterranean field studies, Pedersen's definitions of the two values are somewhat different from, though not entirely incompatible with, those of anthropology. Honour, he describes, is a consequence of blessing affecting the 'substance of the soul', filling it and keeping it upright (1926: 213). Pedersen illustrates that which renders the Israelite soul great with recourse to the example of Job, because the book of the same name is '[a]mong the writings which reveal most of the Israelitic conception of life-values' (1926: 213).

Job, Pedersen describes, is honourable because richly blessed and his blessing is 'typically Israelitic': he has many sons, herds and other possessions; he is highly regarded in his community and able to sustain his brethren by the giving of gifts which is perceived as a privilege rather than a duty (1926: 214f.). Pedersen continues that in Job, honour is manifested by harmony in the community:

The community forms a closely connected circle, a society of friends where all belong. Each communicates to the other of the blessing he possesses, but he who communicates most has the authority and honour, because he upholds them all. This honour maintains harmony in the community, because it is determined by the relation

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<sup>28</sup> There are other studies on honour and shame in the New Testament: deSilva refers to several dozen (on the New Testament and Hebrew Bible) (1995a: 15, note 48). I have tried to provide a representative sample, summarising the studies cited most frequently.

<sup>29</sup> Torjesen, writing about women of the early Christian period, also accepts the centrality of honour and shame and believes that texts from this time should be read with these values in mind (1993: 292). Citing both Tertullian and Paul (1 Cor. 11:6), she argues that boldness and shamelessness were associated by these authors with women's ministries because they are 'writing as rhetoricians, trained to strike the right emotional chords of outraged propriety' (1993: 302). The dynamics of the Mediterranean gender system as described in anthropological literature, thus leave, according to her, discernible traces throughout the literary sources of the early Christian period.

between giving and taking. Honour is not a mechanically established factor which the man possesses, howsoever he may be; on the contrary, it is identical with the very being of the man. At the moment when the blessing departs from him, so that he can no longer give, he has also lost his honour (1926: 215).

In agreement with the anthropological literature, honour is described by Pedersen as a social value which is acknowledged interactively. Pedersen implies, however, that honour is God-given in the form of blessing, whereas the anthropological angle is that it is to an extent ascribed (usually through lineage) but most often acquired in challenge-ripostes by depriving an equal of his share of honour. This agonistic element is played down in Pedersen's description and he accentuates instead that it is harmony that is striven for.<sup>30</sup> Agonistic honour-battles are not disregarded by Pedersen: he refers to Saul who at 1 Samuel 18, on hearing the women sing of David's superior military conquests, has to decide between succumbing to or defeating David in order to defend his preeminent status (1926: 217); as well as to 2 Samuel 2, where Abner must slay Asahel in order to prevent the shame that would ensue a successful challenge from an inferior (1926: 219). Such warrior heroes, however, are not regarded by Pedersen as 'Mediterranean types' but as anachronisms: 'Jephthah, Samson and Saul stand forth in the Israelitic literature as solitary relics of the past' (1926: 224). This 'relic type' has, Pedersen continues, more in common with the Arabian ideal of a chief, for whom there exists nothing higher than to fight and gain honour as the first among one's fellows (1926: 222), than the 'typically Israelitic' Job-type, whose aim is harmony (1926: 224). Whereas the former is distinguished by the desire to gain and defend honour at any cost by means of valiant deeds, the latter seeks honour through the gaining and distribution of counsel and wealth: 'The life of the fighting and plundering nomads is to him a strange world' (1926: 224). Thus, whereas Samson strives for glory to the point of death, Job, on losing his property, ceases in his striving: 'His honour is taken away, and so all is over' (1926: 224).

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<sup>30</sup> DeSilva (1995a), we have seen, also argues for the need in the context of biblical studies to counterbalance the agonistic honour-model with the idea that the acknowledgement of honour could serve as much to bond as to divide (III.i.e.).

Women's honour, according to Pedersen, also reflects these two different types. The allegedly earlier agonistic type is represented by such women as Abigail, who with her cleverness defends her impetuous husband, and Tamar, whose daring and initiative enables her to ensure her deceased husband's lineage. The later type, meanwhile, is reduced to little more than an extension of her husband's property. Abraham's 'lack of chivalry' in calmly giving up his wife and her honour in order to save his own life, Pedersen argues, 'entirely agrees with the conception of honour and the relation of the stronger towards the weaker which gradually came to prevail' (1926: 232).<sup>31</sup> While Pedersen does describe the Israelite woman as sharing in and adding to her husband's honour--by being a 'good wife', as described in Proverbs 31, and by giving him children and thereby perpetuating his line (1926: 231)--and while he does mention that adultery and extra-marital loss of maidenhead confer dishonour upon the Israelite woman, he does not mention the contaminating effect she might have on her male kin - which is a frequent motif in the anthropological literature. Pedersen also mentions the 'fair amount of freedom' the Israelite woman seemed to enjoy--'She goes about tending her sheep, and in the evenings she meets the shepherds at the well' (1926: 232)--which is very different to the restrictive life-style depicted in the writings of Campbell or Peristiany (II.ii.a. and b.).

Pedersen writes that honour is identical with the substance and weight of the soul and therefore individual in its kind: 'The chief has his honour, the lesser man his. The older man has more honour than the younger; one must be *zakan*, a full-grown man, in order to possess full honour' (1926: 230).<sup>32</sup> Further, honour is manifested in the body and associated especially with the head (1926: 227)<sup>33</sup> and may be made visible through the garments worn<sup>34</sup> - according to Pedersen 'because the soul of the man penetrates everything that belongs to his entirety' (1926: 227). Property also

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<sup>31</sup> Pedersen consigns Abraham to a later type. Cf. Pitt-Rivers (1977 and II.ii.e.) who argues that Abram's extension of sexual hospitality in offering Sarai to Pharaoh reflects ancient customs which came to be phased out as the Israelites became sedentary.

<sup>32</sup> This is compatible with Pitt-Rivers' depiction of honour having gradations (1977: 3).

<sup>33</sup> This idea is frequently alluded to in anthropological writing (e.g. Pitt-Rivers 1977: 5) and familiar to biblical criticism (e.g. Neyrey 1991: 34f.).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Pilch and Malina 1993: 20-25, 'Clothing' by Jerome H. Neyrey.

expresses honour, due to 'a particularly intimate association between the man and his property' (1926: 228), and makes the soul 'heavy'. Pedersen cites Genesis 13:2, where Abraham's is made כבד through property, and argues that it is 'immaterial' whether we relate the word to wealth or weight seeing that it refers here to both concepts (1926: 228).

Shame is defined as the opposite of honour. Shame, therefore, is characterised by an emptying out of the soul--such as through a lack of valour in maintaining one's honour: hence the warriors stealing into the town after fleeing from battle are designated shameful (2 Sam. 19:4) (1926: 239)--or through an absence of blessing, such as a lack of rain (Jer. 14:3-4) or poverty (1 Sam. 18:23). Like honour, shame subsumes the whole person: hence, one can be clothed in shame (Ps. 35:26) and express it in one's face (2 Sam. 19:6), or by means of mourning actions (2 Sam. 13:19). Just as giving property or respect confers honour, taking--such as by means of mutilation (Judg. 1:6), shaving (Jer. 7:29) and stripping (Ezek. 16:37), or the not granting of appropriate gratitude or acknowledgement (2 Sam. 19:6)--brings about shame (1926: 241f.). Just as the conception of honour changed substantially over time, so, according to Pedersen, did that of shame, in that it became more and more transferred to the result:

When honour consists in thriving, then defeat, the failure to carry out one's undertaking, becomes a shame. Samson may fall with honour, because he has preserved his inner greatness, the indomitability of his soul; but in the eyes of later Israel the fall is identical with shame, just as wealth and prosperity are identical with honour. "Israel shall be shamed from its counsel" (Hos. 10,6), when it cannot be carried through, and the prophets are shamed when they cannot see visions (Mic. 3,7), or when they see false visions (Zech. 13,4).

According to Pedersen, then, honour derives from blessing, is manifested in an individual's soul and determined by the values of the society in which that individual lives. Shame, meanwhile, signifies an absence of blessing, empty soul and diminished social status. In contrast to some of the New Testament commentators, who have justified the relevance of modern anthropological findings for social

interactions reflected in ancient texts by pointing to cultural continuity reaching far back in time, Pedersen argues for evidence of a development from an older agonistic type to a later harmony-and-property-oriented type. Shame, as in the anthropological literature, is discussed by Pedersen in terms of its relationship to honour but he does not accentuate the gender-focus. Pedersen's chapter is admirable in its attempt to pool the wide-ranging evidence of the Hebrew Bible with a view to attaining a relatively unified idea of the concepts of honour and shame.<sup>35</sup>

**b. Daube (1969)**

Daube argues that the book of Deuteronomy 'contains a strong shame-cultural element' (1969: 27). Such a bias, he claims, does not exclude the presence of guilt feelings generated by 'the inner voice of authority' *per se*, but none the less appeals primarily to people's 'consideration for appearances' (1969: 28) and an acute need to avoid anything that may jeopardise social acceptance and honour, 'the great rewards in a shame culture' (1969: 29). Daube attributes this perceived tendency to Deuteronomy's link with Wisdom because, 'Wisdom, emanating as it does from a circle of counsellors rather than the one commanding figure of the father, and teaching us how to make it in the world, how to find favour and evade disgrace, has a natural penchant towards the shame mechanism' (1969: 28).<sup>36</sup> He also emphasises the centrality of public, visually effective shaming in Deuteronomy, claiming that it contains 'the only instance of a Biblical law with a punishment consisting exclusively in public degradation, [namely, Deut. 25:5ff.]' (1969: 35).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Gottwald, while stating that Pedersen's 'striving to grasp Israel as a totality was exemplary' (1979: 715, note 19), points out that his use of such terms as 'family', 'clan' and 'tribe', when viewed from the perspective of wider social-scientific literature, often conceals a very wide array of kinship and sociopolitical arrangements. This, he concludes, renders the 'totality' somewhat elusive (1979: 237).

<sup>36</sup> Daube's description of a shame culture accords with that of Mead. I have outlined the arguments against the shame culture/guilt culture distinction in II.i.

<sup>37</sup> In a later article, Carmichael, writing of Deuteronomy 25:5-10, also maintains that 'it is the only law in the Pentateuch in which public disgrace is enjoined as a penalty' (1977: 321), explaining that '[i]t is the woman who, having suffered the loss of protection and honor that is associated with her dead husband's name, suffers the further indignity of being denied the means of remedy because of her brother-in-law's non-action. It therefore makes sense that she should strike out, symbolically, at him in order to disgrace him' (1977: 331).

Other laws, too, Daube maintains, play on the importance of what people think of you and your name; he cites Deuteronomy 22:13ff, recounting the making or breaking of reputation, which '[s]ignificantly, ... is in public, before the elders of the gate' (1969: 31). The law of Deuteronomy 24:10f., too, which prevents a person who gives a loan from entering the house of the one giving a pledge, also focuses on the asserted visual accent of shame:

To have the creditor inside the home, for the purpose of collecting his security, would be the most down-putting, dishonouring experience for the debtor and his family. The handing over outside preserves appearances, the worst of the visible, formal disgrace is avoided (1969: 34).

If taking a loan is considered dishonouring, as Daube implies, it seems to me that a transaction outside on the street is far less discreet and thereby presumably more shaming than one conducted in the comparative privacy of a house. Possibly, the public nature of the transaction is instead aimed at protecting the pledge-giver, in that others witness what is being given, thereby deterring the loan giver (by playing on *his* sensitivity to public shaming!) from exploiting his position of relative power and exacting more than might be proper.

Daube cites further support for the visual facet of shame by referring to 18:10--of which he writes, '... that a commandment, instead of forbidding the act, should forbid the impression, "There shall not be found among you", is a phenomenon not evidenced prior to Deuteronomy. It stems from the shame-cultural trend of this work' (1969: 46)<sup>38</sup>--and 24:1. Regarding the latter, Daube comments that the man who 'finds in his eyes' something indecent about his wife, considers not the shortcoming itself but its display offensive (1969: 49). Daube makes much of a perceived interchangeability of 'to find' and 'to see' (1969: 49, note 3), equating both with exposure to view. I find this quite unnecessary and suspect that Daube finds (or sees!) visual features throughout the text, because he has determined that they are integral to a shame-culture. The idiom 'in [someone's] eyes' does, of course, by no

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<sup>38</sup> Unhelpfully, Daube does not elucidate what phenomena *were* evidenced prior to Deuteronomy (e.g. an absence of shame? an emphasis on guilt?).

means always pertain to literal perception<sup>39</sup> and the indecent feature of 24:1, for instance, could conceivably not be visual at all. Possibly, Daube is splitting hairs and the act of 18:10 and offensiveness (literally ‘naked matter’) of 24:1, not solely their impression or display (which surely are difficult to prise from the event or thing which generate them), are at issue here.

Regarding the injunction ‘there shall not be seen with thee leaven in all thy quarters seven days’, which Daube claims again stresses a visual ‘keeping up appearances’ nuance, he comments on how ‘interesting’ it is that it occurs once in Deuteronomy (16:4) and once in Exodus (13:7), in a passage ‘universally attributed to a Deuteronomic editor’ (1969: 49). Further, when guilt-features slide into his picture of a shame-culture, Daube remains undeterred:

A law like that demanding purity in the camp indeed also refers to shame towards God. Now evidently, where it is God himself before whom you wish to preserve appearances, we are approaching the realm of guilt. Perhaps one way of putting the matter is to say that what substantially pertains to guilt is represented here in terms borrowed from shame. Which testifies all the more powerfully to Deuteronomy’s shame-cultural leaning (1969: 50).<sup>40</sup>

I believe that Daube, in insisting on a shame-culture setting for Deuteronomy, both ignores the book’s actual dearth of shame words and overinvests such idioms as ‘to find in one’s eyes’ with meanings such as might allude to the visual recognition of shameful things. In the course of his argument he is, furthermore, prepared first, to regard features which he considers illustrative of guilt rather than shame as *accentuating* shame sensitivity and secondly, to assign passages that support his argument but which occur outside of Deuteronomy to a Deuteronomic editor. Daube also leaves much unanswered: for instance, what preceded and succeeded the supposedly pronounced shame-bias of Deuteronomy? And what gave rise to it? Daube’s article, I believe, illustrates some of the difficulties of imposing an

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<sup>39</sup> Cf BDB 744b, which renders this extremely common phrase ‘in the view, opinion, of’. There are examples of this usage at Deuteronomy 12:8, 25, 28.

<sup>40</sup> Daube does not elaborate upon how Yhwh can be accommodated in the shame/guilt-culture model; i.e. whether he fulfils something approximating the community’s superego.

anthropological model on to an ancient text and of attempting to reconstruct a coherent cultural background on the basis of the collection of stories and regulations that is Deuteronomy.

*c. Klopfenstein (1972)*

Klopfenstein's monograph *Scham und Schande nach dem Alten Testament* acknowledges Pedersen's chapter as the most important scholarly contribution to the examination of shame in the Hebrew Bible to date (1972: 14) and comments on the general scarcity of material on this subject (1972: 199). Writing at a time when honour and shame were already a binary pair widely written about in the context of Mediterranean social anthropology but before their more generalised absorption into biblical studies, Klopfenstein is considerably more reserved regarding the pairing of shame with honour than the commentators on the New Testament and apocrypha/pseudepigrapha discussed above.

Klopfenstein examines the Hebrew roots **בוש**, **כלם** and **חפר** in detail, taking into consideration the translation of these terms in the Septuagint, as well as Ugaritic and Accadian cognates. He applies form critical methods and then categorises individual words from each of these groups according to their meanings and functions within profane as well as indirectly or directly theological contexts.<sup>41</sup> He concludes that Hebrew shame words cover a huge variety of associations:

Der Begriffskomplex "Scham/Schande" umspannt somit das ganze Spektrum psychischer, sozialer, politisch-militärischer, rechtlicher, kultischer, religiöser (und als Randerscheinung sogar kosmischer) Lebensminderung, ja Lebensohnmacht (1972: 208).

Only the **קלה** wordgroup, he continues, has an adequate antonym - namely **כבוד**:

Alle anderen Wurzeln stehen in keinem ausgesprochenen, klar definierten Gegensatz. Man darf daher den ganzen Begriffskomplex "Scham/Schande" nicht einseitig auf die Antithese "Ehre" beziehen, wie Pedersen u.a. es tun. Gewiß ist das eine wichtige Bedeutungsgrenze. Darüber hinaus aber ist es das seelische, gesellschaftliche, politisch-

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<sup>41</sup> On pages 13f. Klopfenstein outlines the purpose and method of his study. He is careful to mention his awareness of Barr's methodology, as expounded in *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 1962 (1972: 13, note 1).

militärische, rechtliche, kultische, religiöse Leben im Vollsinn, das in “Scham” und “Schande” seine Gebrochenheit anzeigt. Von diesem vollen Leben, wie das AT es sieht, ist die “Ehre” nur ein Teil, wenn auch freilich ein gewichtiger. In “Scham” und “Schande” ist aber im Extremfall die Existenz als solche bedroht. Dies ist radikal dort der Fall, wo im “Zuschandenwerden” sich Gottes Gerechtheit vollzieht (1972: 208).

Honour, as depicted in the anthropological literature and as it has been understood by the biblical interpreters referred to above, does have a comprehensive sense encompassing psychological, social, political, legal and cultic aspects.<sup>42</sup> In consequence, Pilch, Malina and Neyrey have advocated that the first century Mediterranean personality is most fully understood when all aspects of life are viewed through the lenses of the core-values honour and shame. I agree with Chance, Herzfeld and Klopfenstein, however, that particularisation and definition of context is very important, because the categories honour and shame have sometimes been depicted as having such a breadth of meaning as to deprive them of meaningfulness.

Klopfenstein is also to be commended, I think, for his clear stand on the close connection between shame and guilt as regards their manifestation in the Hebrew Bible. As emerged from the discussion above, while shame and guilt may differ with regard to their pertaining to either wrongful actions (guilt) or states of being (shame), or to an emphasis on either sensitivity to disapproval of others (shame) or inner conviction of one’s wrongfulness (guilt), in practice they are difficult to differentiate (cf. I.ii. and II.i.). Klopfenstein’s conclusion that the shame/guilt connection is a logical consequence of the forensic context of the majority of biblical shame-words, however, is more disputable:

Die Streitfrage ob im AT Scham mit Schuld gekoppelt sei oder nicht, ist eindeutig positiv zu beantworten. *bos* und insbesondere *klm* zeigen dies schon von der Wurzel her. Alle analysierten Begriffe aber sind ja ... Topoi der Rechtssprache und namentlich der prophetischen Gerichtsrede geworden. Das beweist ihre Affinität zum Begriffskomplex der Schuld (1972: 208).

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<sup>42</sup> As we have seen, there are some divergences. Hanson plays down the psychological dimension of shame and honour (III.i.f.); McVann accentuates the ritual (III.i.d.) and deSilva the Torah (quasi-legal) dimension (III.i.e.). There seems to be agreement, however, that the values of honour and shame are pervasive and central to Mediterranean life generally.

He continues that it is unhelpful to link guilt with remorse ('Reue') instead of shame as Bonhoeffer did--Klopfenstein cites his statement 'Scham und Reue sind meist verwechselt. Reue empfindet der Mensch, wo er sich verfehlt hat, Scham, weil ihm etwas fehlt' (1972: 208)--because the Hebrew Bible knows no such distinction:

subjektive Scham schließt subjektive Reue ... ein. Das Hebräische kennt ja für Reue ... kein eigenes, besonderes Verbum; *nihham* hat nur ganz vereinzelt den Sinn subjektiver Reue über begangene Schuld. Es bleibt dabei, daß "Scham" und "Schande" Schuld anzeigen und daß insbesondere subjektives Sichschämen Schuldbewußtsein und damit Reue impliziert (1972: 209).

Shame, he expands, does not necessarily denote transgression. Hence, the biblical perception repeatedly links widowhood or childlessness with shame without the implication that the widow or infertile woman 'deserves' the disgrace she bears due to any specific transgressive act. Klopfenstein believes, however, that shame connotes transgression: 'Das hängt aber damit zusammen, daß solches Mißgeschick just als Symptom begangener Schuld gewertet wurde, wie am Beispiel Hiobs abzulesen ist' (1972: 209). Ultimately, Klopfenstein claims, both shame and disgrace constitute symptoms of guilt. This is also the case as regards the perception of the enemies of the Ebed-Yhwh in Isaiah 50:6f.:

indem sie ihn schänden, wollen sie ihn also schuldig hinstellen. Doch nun schlägt der Zusammenhang in dramatischer Weise um: Schande zeigt diesmal nicht mehr die Schuld des Geschändeten, sondern seine Gerechtigkeit an - und die Schuld seiner Schänder! (1972: 209).

Klopfenstein's approach throughout is thorough and methodical. He examines each wordgroup in the light of its cognates, supplying both statistics as to the various grammatical forms and tables indicating the distribution of occurrences in the Hebrew Bible. He also arranges these occurrences according to their usage (i.e. profane, directly or indirectly theological) and their form-critical categories and attempts to illustrate changing nuances of meaning. With regard to the **שׁוּב**-wordgroup, Klopfenstein argues that Genesis 2:25--'der bekannte Passus aus der jahwistischen Schöpfungsgeschichte' (1972: 31)--constitutes the oldest occurrence. This singular occurrence in the hithpoel is, he points out, not reflexive (the qal *can* mean 'sich

schämen') but reciprocal, 'sich *voreinander* schämen' (1972: 32). Shame is here the accompaniment of nakedness - this is confirmed with reference to Genesis 3:7 and 10. From this, Klopfenstein concludes that **בוש** is here intimately connected with the sexual realm. Subjectively-speaking, it is an expression of guilt and objectively-speaking an expression of disclosed guilt. In this way the ambivalence of the Hebrew word which, according to Klopfenstein, encompasses the meanings of both 'Scham' and 'Schande', is captured. The word is, furthermore, indicative here of a fractured relationship with fellow humans (2:25) and God (3:7) (1972: 33). Klopfenstein continues that other ancient references (1 Sam. 20:30 and Deut. 25:11) 'erweisen *bôš* als ursprünglich im Sexualbereich verwurzelt' (1972: 48). This sense is then envisaged as widening over time to pertain to that which is considered unseemly ('unschicklich') (Judg. 3:25; 2 Kings 2:17; 8:11) and, even later, to that which is considered inappropriate ('unangemessen') (Job 19:3; Ezra 8:22).

The association of shame with a ruptured relationship once founded on trust and loyalty, already evident in Genesis, according to Klopfenstein, persists and acquires in the Prophets, where the wordgroup is most widely represented,<sup>43</sup> a forensic nuance.<sup>44</sup> The relationship of loyalty, furthermore, is here often politicised (e.g. pertaining to Judah's treaties with or expectations of protection from the nations) and attendant acts of shaming often executed by Yhwh in his role as judge or arbiter who destroys the false foci of loyalty. In Jeremiah 2:36, 30:5 and Isaiah 20:5 **בוש** is the consequence of investing trust in the nations instead of Yhwh. Such a functioning of **בוש** in a concrete political context, so Klopfenstein, leads on naturally to **בוש** becoming a part of the jargon of prophetic-poetic depictions of war. As a result, he

<sup>43</sup> This is strikingly laid out in the tables on pages 29 and 118. These show that of the 167 total occurrences of words of the root **בוש** 99 occur in the Prophets and 42 in the Psalter. The distribution is: Jeremiah: 42; Isaiah: 27; Ezekiel: 5; remaining Prophets: 25; Psalms: 42; remainder of the Hebrew Bible: 26. For the **כלם**-wordgroup (69 occurrences in total) the distribution is similar: Deutero-Isaiah: 7; Jeremiah: 10; Ezekiel: 19; other Prophets: 3 (39 altogether); Psalms: 13; remainder of the Hebrew Bible: 17.

<sup>44</sup> Another author who locates the shame threatened by the prophets in a legal frame-work is Jemielty. He attributes this to his belief that prophetic literature emerged in a shame-culture where public ridicule signified the most poignant form of punishment. The suffering endured by those who are shamed is, he continues, an exemplary punishment for wrongdoing effected by divine judicial authority (1992: 38).

continues, **שׁוּב** is often closely associated with other terminology characteristic of war accounts, such as **חָהַת** ‘to become broken (through fright)’ (Isa. 37:27 = 2 Kings 19:26; Jer. 48:1, 20; 50:2; cf. Isa. 20:5), as well as **שָׁדַד** (Jer. 48:1, 20; Isa. 23:1,4), ‘to be despoiled’ (Jer. 9:18) or ‘to be conquered’ (Jer. 48:1; 50:2).

Klopfenstein argues that Prophetic literature evidences a shift in the meaning of shame/shaming from being a *symptom* of the experience of guilt to becoming *Yhwh’s instrument* for revealing or punishing guilt.<sup>45</sup> This is especially clear, he claims, in Isaiah 37:27 (= 2 Kings 19:26) where Sennacherib, the bringer of humiliating military defeat, acts as Yhwh’s arbiter (‘Gerichtsinstrument Jahwehs’, 1972: 57), or Jeremiah 48:1, 13, 20, 39 and 50:2 where humiliation on a political level is understood as punishment for worshipping foreign gods. This shift, so Klopfenstein, is in accordance with the form and tradition critical observation that all the prophetic **שׁוּב**-references belong to prophetic court speeches (‘prophetische Gerichtsreden’); in particular, words of reproof, threat (‘Schelt- und Drohworte’) and promise (‘Verheißungsworte’) (1972: 85); leading him to conclude: ‘Damit ist erwiesen, daß sich die Theologisierung der Wortgruppe *bôs* in der prophetischen Gerichtsrede vollzogen hat’ (1972: 57).<sup>46</sup>

Klopfenstein claims that concrete ‘Sitze im Leben’ *can* be distinguished and that in the prophetic literature, too, the oldest **שׁוּב**-reference (Hos. 2:7) betrays its origins in the sexual realm (‘Verwurzelung des Begriffs im *Sexualbereich*’) (1972: 87). In Hosea

<sup>45</sup> This represents a secondary shift towards the objective pole, ‘beschämt, zuschanden werden’, which Klopfenstein considers as in keeping with the new forensic context (the original context being the sexual sphere). The **כִּלְם**-wordgroup is considered to be of forensic origin: ‘Tatsache ist, daß von den ältesten Belegen an die profan gebrauchte Wurzel *klm* im AT stets eine Aktion zum Nachweis rechts- oder normwidrigen Verhaltens bedeutet, also stets irgendwie die Vorstellung des “Anklägerischen” ausdrückt. Mit anderen Worten: Die Wortgruppe *klm* bedeutet nie “Bloßstellung” an sich, sondern “Bloßstellung” auf Grund und zur Anprangerung wirklicher oder angeblicher Norm - oder Rechtsverletzung’ (1972: 138); and also: ‘Im prophetischen Schrifttum kommt die Wurzel *klm*, wie die Wurzel *bôs*, ausschließlich in der Gerichtsrede einerseits, im Verheißungswort andererseits vor ... [und ist] Terminus technicus für die prophetische Schelte’ (1972: 158).

<sup>46</sup> Klopfenstein lists the variety of legal scenarios to which he sees **שׁוּב**-words as belonging at 1972: 85ff.

2:7, he continues, **הַבִּישָׁה** belongs to the evidence of guilt in the context of a legal procedure concerning marital infidelity ('ein Element des Schuldnachweises in einem *Rechtsverfahren* wegen ehelicher Untreue') (1972: 87). It is, so to speak, a missing link between the sexual Ur-context and the later prophetic-forensic context: 'So sehen wir in *Hos 2,7* die Wurzel *bôs* im Übergang vom Sitz im Sexualbereich zum Sitz im Gerichtsverfahren' (1972: 87). This shift occurred, Klopfenstein elaborates, due to the fact that all of the five oldest prophetic **בִּישָׁה**-references (Hos. 2:7; 4:19; 9:10; 10:6; Isa. 1:29) occur in polemical texts concerning the Canaanite fertility cult,<sup>47</sup> indicating a transference of **בִּישָׁה** from the primary sexual sphere to the secondary sphere of the fertility cult. In another stage of development, reproof of fertility cults led to the adoption of the **בִּישָׁה** wordgroup into the reproving language of the profane law court, which then became absorbed into theologised legal language as applied in the Prophets (1972: 87f.).

This evolution of **בִּישָׁה**-language sounds remarkably neat. It also sounds unrealistic, I think, and depends entirely on Klopfenstein's proposed chronology and 'Sitze im Leben'. His categorical statements regarding the dating of individual biblical passages and form-critical categories cannot be accepted uncritically.<sup>48</sup> The *Gattungen* of form criticism have long-since been regarded as artificially constructed and imposed

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<sup>47</sup> The connection between Isaiah 1:29 and Canaanite fertility cults is interpretative and has been disputed by some commentators (e.g. Fohrer 1960: 49). The text refers to oaks and gardens - not to their deification; hence, both might conceivably refer to pleasure gardens of the wealthy.

<sup>48</sup> Klopfenstein argues, for instance, that the meaning of **בִּישָׁה**-words in the Psalms, the body of literature second only to the Prophets in terms of the frequency of their occurrence, 'erweist sich als abhängig vom prophetischen Sprachgebrauch einerseits, von der Form- und Traditionsgeschichte der Psalmengattungen und der direkten Belegträger ... andererseits' (1972: 107). He claims that the majority of Psalms using **בִּישָׁה**-words are of the *Gattung* 'lament of the individual', requesting the shaming of enemies and protection from disgrace of the pious. This, he continues, is envisaged as occurring before the divine law court ('Gottesgericht') (1972: 106) - (one may well ask 'why?'). Dependence of the **בִּישָׁה**-Psalms on the Prophets and the forensic background of both, just like the form-critical categories are by no means as uncontentious as Klopfenstein implies. See also Klopfenstein's claim that the Psalms incorporating **כְּלִמ**-words all fall into the lament category and that most of them constitute 'prayers of those accused' ('Gebete von Angeklagten'), which, he concludes, 'darf wohl als Hinweis dafür gewertet werden, daß *klm* seinen ursprünglichen "Sitz" ... im forensischen Bereich hat' (1972: 168).

categories and the dating of biblical passages is a notorious battleground. While Klopfenstein's study, then, is a useful reference work pooling much valuable data, his conclusions are often deceptive in their decisiveness, as he makes apparently sound conclusions on the basis of very much disputed 'evidence'.

#### *d. Bible Dictionaries*

Until Bechtel Huber's PhD thesis on shame and shaming (1983) and articles from the 1990s (many of them responses to the honour and shame studies from the Mediterranean), writings on shame in the biblical context were mostly confined to bible dictionaries. Generally the entries on 'shame' or בּוֹשׁ focus on the objective/subjective ambivalence of meaning, shame/guilt overlap and sometimes on the preponderance of shame vocabulary in the Prophets. The 'shame' entry by de Vries in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, for instance, points out that objectively biblical shame is 'the disgrace a sinner brings upon himself and those associated with him' (1962: 306) and sometimes, too, the result of natural calamities such as barrenness or widowhood, or the opprobrium brought by one's foes. Further, it might be manifested by exposure of nakedness or mutilation. Subjectively, meanwhile, 'shame is experienced as guilt for sin' (1962: 306). Shame, he continues, may be considered 'a violation of one's honor and modesty' (1962: 306) - which could be considered compatible with the honour-shame binary pair familiar from anthropology. Other dictionaries reflect these emphases in varying degrees.<sup>49</sup>

Most detailed are the בּוֹשׁ entries by Seebaß in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* and Stolz in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. These dictionary entries provide much in the way of philological data and some general guidance for decoding the variety of nuances of shame vocabulary but they neither

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Dictionary of the Bible* (2nd ed. Ed. by G. James Hastings and rev. by Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963, 900-01); *New Bible Dictionary* (2nd ed. Ed. by J. D. Douglas et al. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982, 1096), which distinguishes between shame pertaining to states of mind (finding oneself the object of derision or humiliation, feeling embarrassed or bashful, feeling awe or respect) and physical states (shame as accompaniment of exposure, shame as euphemism for sexual organs); and, very summarily, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (ed. by Paul J. Achtemeier et al. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985, 932).

add to Klopfenstein's detailed monograph, nor is it their aim to examine shame as a social or psychological phenomenon in particular contexts. In view of this, the dictionary entries are not directly relevant for my purposes.

*e. Bechtel Huber (1983, 1991, 1994 and 1995)*

Huber's PhD thesis of 1983 makes a strong case for the need to recognise the importance of shame in the Hebrew Bible and illustrates diverse ways in which shame vocabulary is used: such as in psychological warfare;<sup>50</sup> in the judicial system as a sanction on behaviour;<sup>51</sup> by the psalmists, to justify an entitlement to divine help<sup>52</sup> and with regard to God, in order to point out incongruities and elicit blessing.<sup>53</sup> She begins by reviewing the two prominent approaches to biblical shame, which she calls the cultural (as represented by Pedersen and Daube) and the philological (as represented by Klopfenstein and Seebaß), as well as the data of psychoanalytic and anthropological shame studies.

Huber argues for a pronounced shame/guilt distinction (*pace* Klopfenstein), which is borne out, she believes, by the findings of modern psychoanalysis and supported linguistically in the Hebrew Bible. Shame-proneness, she continues, is closely connected to group cohesion and operates as a means of social control. This finds support, she claims, in the anthropological studies conducted in shame-prone cultures and is likely to have relevance for the social contexts of the Hebrew Bible where shame as opposed to guilt vocabulary is considerably more prominent. As regards

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<sup>50</sup> E.g. the Assyrians' humiliating public parades of naked captives which are especially effective because such shaming 'makes it possible to dominate and control others (particularly defeated warriors) because it is restrictive and psychologically repressive' (1983: 93).

<sup>51</sup> Huber points out that punishment-shaming is circumscribed in order that, while keenly felt, it does not strip the person of their human dignity (cf. Deut. 25:3: וְנִקְלָה אֶחָיִךְ לְעֵינֶיךָ (1983: 101).

<sup>52</sup> 'So, when helplessness and shame are emphasized by the shamed individual, it helps take the sting out of those feelings by giving them value in the appeal. It also puts the psalmist more in control of his shaming when he emphasizes it. When he is in control, then no one else can shame him. Consequently shame, rather than [sic] causing the psalmist to be rejected by God, can open him up to God's compassion' (1983: 163).

<sup>53</sup> Huber argues that Yhwh, too, is susceptible to shame and that Psalm 74 calls him to account by juxtaposing former acts of honour/creation with the present shameful condition: '... shaming is often aroused by incongruity. So when there is incongruity between what God has promised and what he is actually doing, this implies a failure to achieve an ideal (a promise in this case). In that failure, shame is aroused' (1983: 172f.).

guilt, she writes:

Most psychoanalysts and social scientists would agree that the majority of people in Western society function with much more pronounced guilt sensitivity than shame sensitivity, which makes it difficult to be aware of shame (1983: 1).

Accepting Piers' historical reason that the Reformation represents the climax of the Western emphasis on guilt rather than shame, with Luther's pronouncements on self-responsibility ('Freiheit eines Christenmenschen'), putting immanent conscience first and foremost, being symptomatic of this trend, Huber proposes that Western guilt assumptions have led to a lack of understanding regarding the subtle but important differences between guilt and shame (1983: 2ff.). In the Hebrew Bible, she continues, shame is central and that therefore a reorientation is required.<sup>54</sup>

Huber's criteria for distinguishing between guilt and shame are those discussed above: she regards guilt as an emotion associated with internalised societal demands and prohibitions, which is triggered when these are transgressed and shame as an emotion associated with an idealised picture of the self, which is triggered when one fails to sustain valued personal assets or to live up to ideals (1983: 4). Huber concedes that guilt and shame can overlap: one can lead to or conceal the other; both can be reactions to one stimulus; both are socially conditioned; and both can be stimulated by either internal pressure (self-sanctioning) and/or external pressure (group or personal sanctioning). In spite of such connections, Huber insists: 'as interrelated as shame and guilt are at times, they are, in our view and in the view of psychoanalytic and social anthropological theory, separate emotional reactions' (1983: 29).<sup>55</sup>

Huber is careful to avoid references to shame or guilt cultures. Recognising the implicit value judgment bound up with these categories (that is, characterising 'guilt cultures' as 'moral and progressive' and 'shame cultures' as 'backward and lacking

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<sup>54</sup> Huber criticises Klopfenstein thus: '... Klopfenstein's monograph on biblical shame is shaped by a strong guilt-orientation in his interpretation; throughout he sees shame as a manifestation of guilt and of a guilty conscience' (1983: 203).

<sup>55</sup> I have explained my reservations concerning such a claim in I.ii.

in moral standards'), she avoids describing ancient Israelite societies as shame cultures (*pace* Daube).<sup>56</sup> Instead, she claims that all cultures 'contain both shame and guilt in varying degrees and the presence or absence of either sanction has nothing to do with its moral standards' (1983: 35). She does, however, argue that the societies which are reflected in and by texts of the Hebrew Bible indicate shame-proneness.<sup>57</sup>

Huber justifies her insistent claim that shame and guilt are regarded as separate phenomena in the Hebrew Bible, with shame being the more prevalent of the two, with recourse to philology. First of all she draws attention to the fact that there are a number of Hebrew terms translated 'shame' (חַרָּף, קִלְיָה, חֶפֶר, כָּלֵם, בּוֹשׁ) but considerably fewer translated 'guilt' (אָשָׁם, עֲוֹן), adding that 'none of the shame words has a meaning "guilt"' (1983: 45). Further, guilt words are not linked or parallel with shame words: 'In fact linguistically [sic] there seems to be no connection in Hebrew between shame and guilt' (1983: 55). Huber continues:

In contrast to shame, in biblical society guilt relates to culpability, to deserving blame for having violated a moral or penal law, and it relates to actions or facts of culpability, not feelings (1983: 53).

In consequence, guilt terminology is found when people have done something

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. also Jemielty, who accepts the notion of a shame culture in the background of the literature of the Hebrew Bible (1992: 26ff.).

<sup>57</sup> Appendix 2 (1983: 245ff.) draws parallels with other shame-prone cultures. Surprisingly, Huber refers to none of the Mediterranean honour and shame studies - which strikes me as a glaring omission. Her comparisons are instead with geographically distant societies: she refers to studies conducted in China and Japan (1983: 248ff.) and several others among the Navaho, Hopi, Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island, Zuni Indians of New Mexico and Dakotas of the Tetons (1983: 256f.). Her conclusion is that in spite of the 'great differences' between all these cultures, they have in common that each 'adheres to strong behavioral ideals which are maintained and enforced through group or personal pressure (in particular, shaming) and through internal pressure of self-sanctioning (in particular, the fear of being shamed)' (1983: 270). Huber claims that in shame-prone societies pronounced group-cohesiveness accentuates the individual's sense of responsibility regarding the maintenance of group values, because the individual relies on the group for support, validation and identity. Such behaviour could also, conceivably, be observed in Western, industrial societies. After all, even in a society which, using Huber's criteria, might be regarded as guilt-prone, individuals generally live and function within sub-communities (e.g. the nuclear family; boarding school etc.) to which they, too, turn for support, validation and identity. The extent of group or personal pressure might indeed constitute a key variable within different societies but I do want to stress both the difficulties in determining this 'extent' and my belief that there is no 'pure' or 'ideal' type (see Introduction, note 2).

specifically wrong (Gen. 26:10; 42:21; Judg. 21:22; Prov. 30:10; Ezek. 22:4) - even when this is unwitting (Lev. 4:3, 22, 27: 5:2; Num. 5:6-7; Ezra 10:19). Having thus tailored her definition, Huber claims that guilt-terminology in the Hebrew Bible is not linked with 'feelings of guilt or anxiety or internal wrestling with the conscience' (1983: 53).<sup>58</sup> As a result, she concludes: 'there is a good linguistic case for pursuing shame as a separate, distinctive emotional experience and as a separate means of social control, although we will again note that shame and guilt are sometimes interrelated' (1983: 56).

On the one hand, Huber distinguishes between guilt and shame on the basis of internal/external sanctions and deems the cultures in the background of the texts of the Hebrew Bible to be more more shame-prone (while not going so far as labelling them 'shame cultures'); on the other, she argues that guilt-words in these texts pertain to wrongful actions, shame-words to an emotion of distress. In practice the interrelatedness of shame and guilt Huber is prepared to admit to is so pronounced that once again the distinction begins to fade.<sup>59</sup> The idea that shame constitutes the sense of failure when one fails to fulfil one's ideals does explain why shame terminology is applied to barren women and farmers confronting drought. As Huber points out, drought brings about a man's failure to produce food, barrenness a woman's to produce children - both of which represent failures to live up to ideals (1983: 128). Only too frequently, however, by Huber's implicit admission, shame

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<sup>58</sup> Huber links feelings (of shortcoming or anxiety) with shame terminology. Guilt terminology, meanwhile, is descriptive of wrongful activity only and not of the psychological response to such actions. In the definition of psychoanalysis, however, as we have seen, guilt is depicted as *an emotion* affecting one's conscience, which is *triggered* by an act that is perceived to be wrongful. What Huber appears to have done is to apply the emotional factor of guilt to the shame terminology of the Hebrew Bible. Guilt terminology, meanwhile, is confined to depicting deliberate or inadvertent illegal action. There is some confusion here: Huber describes guilt as a separate emotional reaction from shame (1983: 29, cited above) but Hebrew guilt-terminology as pertaining not to emotion but to transgression alone. As far as the inadvertent transgressions which Huber associates with guilt are concerned (see her examples from Leviticus, above), Frymer-Kensky's (1983) distinction between guilt and impurity is worth noting. As Frymer-Kensky points out, these words sometimes translated 'guilt' pertain not to moral failing but to onus-free pollution; whereby the transgressor is culpable and required to become purified but not condemned on any ethical grounds.

<sup>59</sup> I am in agreement with Cairns (I.ii.) and Klopfenstein (III.ii.c.) that in practice both the 'self as agent versus self as a whole' and 'internal versus external sanctions' distinctions are difficult to sustain.

terminology is linked to wrongful action: the shame David confers on his victorious warriors (2 Sam. 19:3-7), for instance, is the result of his action of mourning for his rebellious son instead of honouring the warriors (1983: 74). With reference to Jeremiah's use of both shame and guilt words,<sup>60</sup> Huber writes that:

Jeremiah feels Israel should demonstrate her shame because she has failed or been inadequate in living up to the ideals of her covenant with God. He suggests that Israel's sinful behavior should violate her pride, which should then cause feelings of shame. Yes, she is culpable for blame for her sin and thus is guilty, but Jeremiah wants Israel to feel inadequate or inferior for her sins. He wants her pride in her obedience to God to be violated, so he stresses her "failure of being" more than her "failure of doing" (1983: 117).

It seems unclear how Israel might have failed in living up to the ideals of the covenant other than by wrongful actions (or wrongful inactions), that is by incurring guilt. Also, it does not seem unreasonable that culpability, if wrongful action is deliberate<sup>61</sup> (which appears to be the case here, as Israel, envisaged as a partner in the covenant relationship, was, presumably, aware of her responsibility and commitment) should be accompanied by an emotion entailing negative self-evaluation.

In her articles of 1991 and 1994 Bechtel<sup>62</sup> still maintains that shame and guilt should be clearly distinguished and that the social dynamics of ancient Israelite society lend themselves to shame-sanctioning (1991: 47f.; 1994: 24). She writes of the Levirate law of Deuteronomy 25, for instance, that 'the fact that guilt and legal punishment for having violated a policy of the community was not involved indicated that shaming was often the more powerful sanction because of the group-orientation of the community' (1991: 61). While it is plausible that the brother-in-law in the scenario described felt the public nature of the ritual to be expressly humiliating and while his refusal to impregnate a deceased brother's widow may represent the failure to fulfil a

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<sup>60</sup> Huber points out that Jeremiah uses shame words extensively but words of the root **חָשַׁם** only twice (2:3; 50:7) (1983: 117).

<sup>61</sup> Where wrongful action is inadvertent it may be more appropriate to speak of pollution (which is generally onus-free and removed by means of purification rites) rather than guilt (cf. Frymer-Kensky 1983).

<sup>62</sup> Publications post-dating her PhD appear under the name of Lyn M. Bechtel; the name, too, under which these articles are cited in my bibliography.

societal ideal, guilt cannot be eliminated from the equation. The brother-in-law, after all, has ‘violated a moral or penal law’ (cf. Huber 1983: 53) and he is considered culpable. Bechtel’s explanation of the differences between the two sanctions--‘Shame relies predominantly on external or group pressure and is reinforced by the internal pressure of fear of being shamed. Guilt relies predominantly on internal pressure from the conscience and is reinforced by the external pressure from the society’ (1991: 51)--in fact indicates that guilt and shame are in practice different only in terms of tendency. Generally speaking, drawing too sharp a distinction between the two remains, I believe, unhelpful.

Bechtel is notable among interpreters of shame language in biblical literature for accentuating a psychological dimension. With regard to the usage of **לָנָה**, for example, she explains that her translation ‘to humiliate/shame’ is justified in the light of the psychological make-up of the ancient Israelite, whose group-orientation made him or her particularly susceptible to shame, which works on a fear of contempt leading to rejection, abandonment or expulsion (1994: 24). The word **לָנָה**, she argues, reflects the process of status manipulation inherent in shaming and, with regard to women, refers to shameful sexual relations which threaten the ‘well-articulated and highly valued boundaries’ of group-oriented societies, namely those violating existing marital, family or community bonds, or those with no prospect of leading to marital or family bonds (1994: 21). The word can, she claims, but does not necessarily pertain to rape.

At Deuteronomy 22:28-29, Bechtel argues, the sexual relations described by the verb **שָׁכַב** are quite possibly between a consenting unmarried man and woman and the **לָנָה** refers, therefore, not to rape but to the fact that the man’s penetration of an unmarried woman has violated the obligations she owes to her father and family and therewith conferred shame. At Deuteronomy 22:25-27, however, where rape *is* at issue (**שָׁכַב** + **חֵזֶק**), there is no mention of **לָנָה** because the woman, unable to alert help, is not shamed. Bechtel continues that Tamar (2 Sam. 13), on the other

hand, *is* shamed (ענה + חרפה) after Amnon rapes her (חזק), because he, being a member of her family, is a person with whom there exists a bond that is violated (1994: 27). Shechem, Bechtel proposes, does not rape Dinah: she stresses the expressions used of his feelings for Dinah ('speaking to her heart' and לבק), as well as his desire to marry her and that 'sociological studies reveal that rapists feel hostility and hatred toward their victims, not love' (1994: 29). The expression ענה, therefore, refers not to an act of aggression but to the Jacobite perception of an outsider, a foreigner, violating the boundaries of the kinship unit. Dinah, she argues, has the capacity to ensure the continuation of her group by marrying within it; marriage to a Canaanite would, however, be perceived as defiling or otherwise threatening the group by violating its boundaries.

While I agree with Bechtel that it is likely that there existed communities in ancient Israel where a strong emphasis was placed on group cohesion and that this might have manifested itself in suspicion of, or outright aversion to members outside of the group (there is at any rate evidence for an ideological cast that is pronouncedly xenophobic),<sup>63</sup> I find her cultural reconstruction somewhat problematic. For instance, although the word ענה is not used in Deuteronomy 22:25-27, I do not think it can therefore be argued that the woman is not shamed. The text only says that she has not committed a sin deserving death (אין לנער[ה] חטא מות, 22:26): while she may have been regarded as exonerated from blame, this would not automatically allow us to assume that she was immune to the perception of being defiled, humiliated or socially denigrated. With Tamar it seems to me to be the rape, constituting in this context the forced penetration by a male to whom she is not, nor will be, married, which brings about her חרפה, not the specification that the rape is carried out by a member of Tamar's family with whom there is bonding and an obligation that precludes sexual activity, as Bechtel claims (1994: 27). It seems that Amnon and Tamar's degree of relatedness does not exclude the possibility of marriage at any rate (2 Sam. 13:13). Tamar, like the woman in the field, is forced;

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<sup>63</sup> See below V.ii.

both are depicted as not culpable for what befalls them. Tamar suffers **חַרְפָּה** and I do not think it unlikely that the woman raped in the field did too. Neither is regarded by the author of the respective texts as responsible for her predicament but shame, as we have seen, is not confined to causal responsibility but may be incited by passive experiences, even physical characteristics (I.ii.).<sup>64</sup>

Bechtel's interpretation of Genesis 2:4-3:24 reads the garden story as recounting the process of human maturation, with 2:7-9 describing infancy, 2:16-25 early and middle childhood and 3:1-19, adolescence. Male-female bonding, she claims, is critical in a group-oriented society and the becoming 'one flesh' (2:24), mentioned in the childhood-stage, a significant preparation for adult life. The role Bechtel ascribes to shame in this process is reminiscent of the psychological literature and could apply to human maturation universally.<sup>65</sup> The following, for instance, is compatible with Freud's description of the latency period, before shame activates a repression of exhibitionist drives (I.ii.):

... the reader is reminded that the human and the woman are now naked (*'arûmmîm*) and not ashamed of themselves (*bws*). This statement is pivotal. When in the course of human life would a person be publicly naked and not ashamed of public nakedness? Because they have not matured enough to be self-conscious (indicated by the use of *bws* in the Hithpalel with its reflexive quality) and not yet socialized enough to be aware of the social implications of public nakedness (1995: 17).

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<sup>64</sup> Washington's following comments also have some validity: 'Whatever light Bechtel's interpretation may shed on interactions among social groups with closely guarded corporate identities, this reading is not adequate to the brute fact of what happens to Dinah when she goes out, not to meet Shechem, but "to visit the women of the region" (Gen. 34:1)' (1997: 357); and: 'Bechtel's reading seems to amount to the view that because Shechem loves Dinah ... and forms a bond with her ... and since Jacob and Hamor, the male heads of households, are willing to let Shechem keep Dinah, his action should not be regarded as rape' (1997: 357, note 127). He also concedes that rape in the context of biblical writing is understood not so much as a crime against women as against the possession of fathers or husbands (1997: 353).

<sup>65</sup> Halperin, applying a psychoanalytical approach to biblical literature, mentions (but does not develop) that, '[a]ll humans ... are likely to have had the infantile experiences that lie behind the Eden story' (1993: 223, note 5). Perhaps he is referring here to the exceeding bliss of the preverbal infant, which might be called Edenic and which, according to some psychoanalysts, is first checked by the onset of shame (I.ii.). This would support the interpretation that Genesis 2-3 is a story of universal relevance describing human maturation and the argument that the experience of shame is crucial to this process.

As with the word ענה, Bechtel prefers a translation for ארר that pertains to shaming and argues that a clever wordplay stresses the snake's role of representing both the potential and limitations of life. Thus, the snake is ערום 'cleverly wise' (from ערם, 'be shrewd, crafty'), and causes awareness of being ערם 'naked' (from עור II, 'be exposed, bare'), which signifies the consciousness of shame and therefore maturation. Through mature eyes, the snake is perceived as ערום and ארר: shamed. Bechtel explains, 'I have purposely chosen to translate 'arûr as "shamed" in regard to the snake because the snake's body position is the same as a position found in shaming techniques' (1995: 21). She refers to the image elsewhere of humiliated persons being made to crawl and eat dust (Isa. 49:23; Micah 7:17).

Bechtel's belief that shame, as both emotional response and social sanction of undesirable behaviour, is a central feature of the Israelite psyche and culture that is reflected throughout the Hebrew Bible, has influenced her translation. In the case of ארר, while shaming might be the *result* of a curse and while shaming and cursing are both means of social control, I find the equating of the two problematic. At Genesis 3:17 the ground is cursed, which has repercussions for the man. Here the interpretation of ארר as 'shamed' would not fit at all - not even in the sense of the earth being withered, which is elsewhere exploited in a בוש/יבש play on words: the earth is fertile but it produces not only crops but also thorns and thistles (3:18). As with Hanson, who renders הוי 'shame!' (III.i.f.), the premiss that shame is central to the culture that produced the texts and ubiquitously in evidence has affected and distorted translation. I find the notion that shame and guilt are emotional phenomena widely represented in human communities and probably also in those which produced the texts of the Hebrew Bible, entirely plausible, and I see some merit in Bechtel's attention to the psychological dimension of how shame makes one feel. I am, however, wary of her reconstruction of a culture and mindset behind the texts which is fundamentally based on the centrality and ever-presence of shame.

First, I consider biblical texts inadequate for such a reconstruction<sup>66</sup> and secondly, in spite of the claims of Neyrey, Malina and Pilch (III.i.b. and c.), the view that any culture can be more fully understood by examining it through the perimeters of a single alleged pivotal value, strikes me as simplistic.<sup>67</sup>

*f. Odell (1992)*

Odell's focus is on Ezekiel 16:59-63 where, intriguingly, Jerusalem feels shame only after Yhwh forgives and, furthermore, is commanded to feel shame because Yhwh forgives. This reverse sequence, with consciousness of sin following rather than preceding forgiveness, has sometimes, she explains, been considered a theological problem; ignored by some commentators, explained as a classic paradox of the workings of divine grace in the midst of the human feeling of unworthiness by others (1992: 102). The problem, according to Odell, stems not only from the fact that contemporary readers find the residue of self-loathing after forgiveness unpalatable, but also from a lack of understanding regarding the emotion of shame (1992: 103).<sup>68</sup> Like the majority of commentators describing honour and shame from the perspective of anthropological studies (to which she, however, makes no reference), Odell argues that shame in the Hebrew Bible has less to do with an internal experience of unworthiness than with a loss of status. The references to shame in 16:62-63, she continues, allude to the reduced status of the exiles' condition, which is envisaged as a sign of Yhwh's abandonment; the chapter, however, refutes the complaint that it is Yhwh's neglect that has produced their predicament.

Shame, Odell elaborates, is more frequently associated with a relationship that has failed than with the result of one's actions. While Miriam's disgrace *is* the result of an action, namely her failed risk in challenging the authority of Moses (cf. Num. 12:14),

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<sup>66</sup> This will be developed in the ensuing chapters.

<sup>67</sup> Given the complexities of social organisation, I am in agreement with Herzfeld (II.iii) and Gottwald's (III.ii.a, note 35) calls for particularisation.

<sup>68</sup> Odell points out that self-loathing following forgiveness is evident also in Ezekiel 20:42-44 and 36:29-32. Huber considers that self-abasement, with a view to eliciting pity/preventing further shaming by bringing it about oneself/taking control of the shaming process, is a characteristic response to shaming (the other being revenge or 'face saving' in an effort to restore wounded pride) (1991: 50).

disgrace is more often the consequence of disappointed loyalty (1992: 104). Thus, when a relationship fails to provide protection and security in return for loyalty one is left vulnerable to shame. This would explain why David's men (2 Sam. 19:3-7) are ashamed in spite of their actual success: their loyalty has been unacknowledged.<sup>69</sup> Analogously, the psalmists' pleas not to be put to shame are sometimes combined with a statement that they have put their trust in Yhwh (25:2, 20; 31:2): 'The plea, "I have trusted in you; let me not be put to shame", appeals to God to honor the petitioner's dependence' (1992: 104). The emotion of shame felt by David's men and the psalmists, furthermore, is attended not so much by feelings of unworthiness as by outrage or disappointment because their claims have not been acknowledged (1992: 105).

The book of Ezekiel, Odell explains, is marked by the limitations of divine-human communication. Hence, Ezekiel may speak only when Yhwh speaks to him: he may not relay the people's complaints (3:25-27) until after Jerusalem's fall when his mouth is opened (24:26-27; 33:21-22). At 16:63, Odell continues, dumbness is a consequence of shame: there will not be again פִּתְחוֹן פֶּה, literally 'an opening of the mouth'. This expression (which occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible, both times in Ezekiel) in Mishnaic Hebrew pertains to an occasion for complaint. Adopting this meaning here, Odell translates, 'you will no longer have complaints ('mouth openings') that are necessitated by your shame (מִפְּנֵי כְלִמְתְּךָ)' (1992: 106). The context she envisages, then, is one where a particular type of formal petition is made to Yhwh, wherein the people complain on account of their experience of humiliation and failure (i.e. the exile).<sup>70</sup> While the specific complaint is not supplied in the text, such a situation would be consistent with 18:25 and 33:17, where the people are described as criticising their God for his injustice. The image of the foundling child in chapter 16, furthermore, recounting a family relationship gone wrong, evokes a suitable framework for exploring the context in which shame is, according to Odell,

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<sup>69</sup> Hobbs (1997) discusses such shame language in the context of disappointed loyalty from the perspective of another anthropological model: the patron-client model (see below, III.ii.k.).

<sup>70</sup> While in 16:59-63 shame is a future event, it was, Odell explains, already present experience among exiles (cf. the recurrent theme of the reproach of the nations 5:14-15; 16:57; 22:4-5; 34:29; 36:6, 15, 30).

most frequently experienced: namely a situation where loyalty, expectation of protection and trust have been disappointed (1992: 107).

Here, as in Psalm 22, Odell argues, the people are complaining at the shame they are experiencing which they perceive as unfair treatment in return for their loyalty. The foundling story, however, makes it clear that Yhwh *did* take care of and bless the infant (16:14). The accusation of abandonment is also countered with his willingness to re-establish the covenant (16:62). In consequence, the conclusion of the chapter may thus be an invitation to the people to reexamine their situation and look for the cause of shame in themselves. Their experience of shame, resulting from divine abandonment, may then be seen as deriving not from failure on Yhwh's part (he was initially committed to the abandoned infant) but to Jerusalem's unfaithfulness: she had, in fact, *not* put her loyalty in Yhwh but in her own beauty, idols and unreliable alliances with Egypt, Assyria and Babylon.

Odell's point that shame vocabulary (which, as philological studies have established, occurs with striking frequency in prophetic literature in particular) may be used to force people into deeper insights concerning their relationship with Yhwh is, I think, relevant and important. As Klopfenstein has pointed out with regard to words of the root בִּיִּשׁ especially, shame is prominent in relational contexts. Odell's comment that 'the command to be ashamed turns the claims and complaints of the people back on themselves and forces them to examine their role in the failure of the divine-human relationship' (1992: 111), further, alludes to the fact that shame is an emotion entailing negative self-evaluation.<sup>71</sup> Odell implies but does not develop the idea that shame is in the Prophets often connected with the inculcation of proper conduct. This is a point I will be returning to below.

#### ***g. Yee (1992)***

Yee's contribution on Hosea in *The Women's Bible Commentary* states that the patrilineal, patrilocal kinship structure and honour/shame value system are the two primary features underlying Hosea and Gomer's marriage (1992: 197). She agrees with the findings of Mediterranean anthropologists that honour and shame are

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<sup>71</sup> See I.i. I will be returning to Odell's article in chapter VI.

particularly divided along gender lines and that in the patrilineal kinship structure a large measure of a man's honour depends on women's sexual behaviour (1992: 198). Strategies that prevent women from conferring dishonour through sexual misconduct, she continues, include veiling, segregation and other restrictions on women's social interactions. Arguing for a degree of continuity between ancient and modern culture, Yee considers Hosea's separating Gomer from her lovers (2:6-7a) typical behaviour.

Yee does not mention that there are also passages which (perhaps deliberately) defy the idea of a classic honour/shame culture, as depicted in anthropological texts. A man valuing his honour would, for instance, under no circumstances marry an adulteress (1:3), or take her back following a sexual misdemeanour (3:2). It may be, however, that the story of Hosea and Gomer is calculatedly audacious (Sherwood 1996: 323f.), or that Gomer, rather than signifying a 'fallen woman', may represent a subversive counter-voice: she suckles and weans (1:8) the children Hosea rejects and intimates a certain lack in Yhwh/Hosea which prompts her to desert him for other lovers (Sherwood 1996: 254). While this counter-voice might be challenging a patrilineal, patrilocal, honour/shame system such as described by Yee, thereby affirming the probability of its existence, its functioning in practice might none the less be undermined by the existence of the text. Once again, the idea that social reality can be readily discerned from a biblical text, is called into question.

#### ***h. Matthews and Benjamin (1993)***

Matthews and Benjamin, writing of the social world of ancient Israel (1250-587BCE), like Plevnik, Pilch, Malina and Neyrey, accept that honour and shame emerge as the central social values underlying the material under investigation. Similarly to Pilch and Malina's core and means values, they, too, propose that these labels can be facilitated and reinforced by related paradigms: 'Life-giving behavior was labeled "wise" or "clean." Destructive or anti-social behavior was "foolish" or "unclean." To be wise or clean was a generic label for honor. To be a fool or unclean was a generic label for shame' (1993: 143). Again, the range of meanings attributed to the words 'honour' and 'shame' is wide and again the writers are relatively unconcerned about where honour and shame vocabulary actually occurs, appealing

instead to what they consider attendant values. Like Davis (II.ii.d.), Matthews and Benjamin argue strongly for a material/economic dimension existing alongside the social one:

Honor was the ability of a household to care for its members and ... "[c]lean" was the label for the household in good standing, licenced to make a living in the village... Only the clean were entitled to buy, sell, trade, marry, arrange marriages, serve in assemblies, and send warriors to the tribe. ... Shame was the inability of a household to fulfill its responsibilities to its own members or its covenant partners. Shame was the loss of land and children (1993: 143f.).

Purity and pollution are understood by Matthews and Benjamin not so much as separate phenomena but as elucidating the social and economic values of honour and shame:

Rules of purity and the labels clean and unclean in the world of the Bible had little to do with hygiene ... They were analogous to credit ratings and distinguished households in good social and economic standing from those who were not. Labels of shame like "fool" and "unclean" downgraded the status ... of a household, until it demonstrated that it was once again contributing to the village ... (1993:144).

As Frymer-Kensky (1983) has demonstrated, however,<sup>72</sup> shame and pollution can be distinguished in that some forms of pollution, having no onus attached to them, do not affect reputation adversely. In fact, some matters labelled unclean are recognised as necessary and even, ultimately, a source of blessing - such as the situation of childbirth. Matthews and Benjamin's depiction of honour and shame, then, is on occasion comprehensive at the expense of accuracy.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Cf VI.i., below.

<sup>73</sup> Bal argues that the notion of defilement often has a primarily symbolic quality: 'The memory of the other man is what makes the postvirginal woman unmarriageable [Judg. 21:10-12]. In the equally symbolic context of Levitical law, defilement is related to the loss of body liquid, of blood, for example, which represents a beginning of death. Hence, it is the loss of semen, the male body liquid, that defiles the virgin at least as much as the one-time loss of blood at defloration, as indeed Leviticus 15:16-18 explicitly states' (1988a: 72). Also, O'Connor writes that in Lamentations the perception that menstruation is defiling becomes 'a metaphor for shame and humiliation' (1992: 180). This might suggest the presence of a variety of symbolic paradigm discourses (e.g. purity/pollution, honour/shame, holy/unholy, folly/wisdom, blessing/curse) which reinforce each other.

Like Pitt-Rivers (1977), Matthews and Benjamin regard sexual activity 'in the world of the Bible' (1993: 176) as primarily an expression of political power. The designation of virgin, they propose, therefore has a predominantly political connotation: '... households guarded their virgins until they could be married so that their own political status would remain intact' (1993: 178). A household's women are described as the 'living symbols of its honor' (1993: 176):

The virginity of an unmarried woman was indicative of the political integrity of the household of her father. The village rated a father's fulfillment of his responsibility to feed and protect his household on the basis of how well he cared for and protected its marriageable members. If he left them in harm's way then he was impeached and someone else took over the land and children of his household (1993: 178).

Women are mostly depicted as mediators of honour and shame (chiefly through sexual contact), while men seem to be the ones who experience both more directly.<sup>74</sup> Matthews and Benjamin do not associate shame primarily with women, honour primarily with men, claiming that these values are not gender specific (1993: 180).

When imposing their ideas on biblical texts, Matthews and Benjamin again strike me as somewhat careless in terms of attention to particulars. For instance, they regard Amnon's rape of Tamar (2 Sam. 13) as a politically coercive bid for honour: 'To force David to name him heir, Amnon rapes Tamar hoping that his actions will assure him the right of becoming monarch' (1993: 181). While defilement of a man's daughter may be said to harm his reputation and while Adonijah's request for Abishag may indeed be a barely covert challenge to Solomon's monarchical power (1 Kings 2:13ff.), it cannot be assumed that Amnon is motivated by aspirations to the throne. The text states that Amnon son of David loved Tamar the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David (13:1), that he became ill as a result and that her virginity prevented him from acting (13:2). Following the suggestion of Jonadab, Amnon

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<sup>74</sup> The idea that women are depicted as constituting an extension of the men to whom they are related and the means by which they can be harmed on a social, political and economic level is underscored by Bal from a symbolical angle: '... the daughter is bound to the father as an ontological property: she is part of him, his synecdoche. Severed from him, she is no longer a virgin daughter, he is no longer a father. This leads to the last, and in today's culture the first, property of virginity: property as integrity, bodily wholeness, purity, cleanliness' (1988a: 72).

tricks David into sending Tamar (described as *his* sister in v.6 and v.11) and rapes her (13:14). David is enraged (v.21) and Absalom hates Amnon (v.22) but years pass (v.23) and there is no mention of Amnon's actions having achieved anything that might procure him rights to the kingship. The only one who is described as having been disgraced, furthermore, is not David but Tamar (v.22).

The case of Amnon is problematic. In the so-called honour/shame cultures depicted in anthropological literature brothers are generally expected fiercely to guard their sisters' virginity prior to marriage. While Tamar may be regarded as Absalom's sister first and foremost (cf. 13:1) (possibly because they shared not only the same father but the same mother)<sup>75</sup> and while this may imply a political motivation on the part of Amnon (i.e. to humiliate his popular brother through his sister) and account for Absalom's desire for revenge (13:32),<sup>76</sup> the story none the less fails to fit as easily into the pattern as Matthews and Benjamin would have us believe. While they may generally-speaking be correct in claiming that '[i]n contrast with the way contemporary western cultures use ... "virgin" to describe sexual activity, the Bible focuses on the political connotations of the word' and that '[s]exual activity in the world of the Bible was not as much an aspect of personal relationships as an expression of the political power of households' (1993: 176), 2 Samuel 13 may be an exception. Amnon may indeed be motivated primarily by lust. This could account for the inclusion of the details that Tamar is beautiful (13:1) and that Amnon's extreme frustration has physical manifestations (13:2) - which is more likely to be a side-effect of sexual passion than of political calculation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> According to 2 Samuel 3 and 1 Chronicles 3 Absalom's mother was Maacah daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, while Amnon's mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel. Tamar is mentioned as the sister of the sons of David at 1 Chronicles 3:9 but her mother is not named.

<sup>76</sup> Revenge or 'face saving' in an effort to restore wounded pride and honour is cited by Huber alongside self-abasement as a typical response to being shamed (1991: 50). Whereas Absalom appears to adopt the former response, Tamar's action of removing her ornate robe and performing mourning actions (2 Sam. 13:19) could be seen to conform to the latter.

<sup>77</sup> See also III.ii.j. below, for Stone's discussion of this narrative.

Matthews and Benjamin also maintain that when men seek honour by gaining access to marriageable women or virgins through rape, then:

[t]he rape must take place in the context of some activity connected with fertility such as harvesting (Gen 34:1-2; Judg 21:17-23), sheep-shearing (2 Sam 13:23-28), eating (2 Sam 13:5-6), or menstruating (2 Sam 11:4). Otherwise, it was treated like any other crime (Deut 22:23-27). The basis for this criterion was the concern over a household's ability to supply food and children to its members. Tying the aggressive act to an event associated with fertility clearly identified the intention of the aggressor (1993: 181).

There are several problems with this statement. First, the rape scenarios described in Deuteronomy 22 do not exclude settings connected with fertility. Whether a woman is betrothed or not, rape is depicted as a crime (22:23-29). She does have a duty to scream and resist if, in the setting of a town as opposed to the open country, she is capable of alerting someone who may rescue her. Rape is not, however, depicted as somehow less criminal should it happen to occur at harvest time. Secondly, a 'context of some activity connected with fertility' is not clear at Genesis 34. Dinah's brothers *are* in the fields with the livestock when Jacob hears of her rape (v.5) but there is no suggestion of harvest or breeding time. The case for Judges 21 is stronger: a festival at Shiloh that may be celebrating harvest provides an opportune occasion for snatching women. As at 2 Samuel 13:23-28, however, where Amnon, celebrating after the sheep-shearing, is drunk and vulnerable to attack, distraction seems more at issue than fertility. (Quite how sheep-shearing and fertility are connected eludes me...) Also, no rape occurs at 2 Samuel 13:23-28 but rather the revenge for rape. Thirdly, eating, which Matthews and Benjamin link with fertility, does not actually take place at 13:5ff. Lastly, the uncleanness from which Bathsheba is purifying herself at 2 Samuel 11 may not necessarily be that associated with menstruation and menstruation should not automatically be assumed to indicate fertility.<sup>78</sup> A promise of fertility, then, does not appear to have a mitigating or potentially honour-conferring

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<sup>78</sup> Be'er has demonstrated that the biblical narratives generally depict menstruation positively. Sarah calls herself worn out and past 'the manner of women' (Gen. 18:11-12), thereby linking menstruation with fertility and youth; and Rachel, not rising before her father because she claims to be with 'the manner of women' (Gen. 31:35), is not avoided by Laban but kissed upon his departure (Gen. 32:1, HB). In contrast, Be'er explains, the Priestly Code attaches very negative connotations to menstrual blood, deeming it a major source of both defilement and shame (1994: 162ff.).

impact on rape. Matthews and Benjamin's arguments, therefore, are sometimes misleadingly vague, even inaccurate.

*i. Domeris (1995)*

Domeris' article takes issue with the attempts of biblical scholars to project the so-called Mediterranean values of honour and shame upon biblical values. Focusing his discussion on the book of Proverbs,<sup>79</sup> he argues that the understanding of honour and shame reflected here is distinctive and free from some of the features described in the anthropological studies, which he attributes to the impact of Christianity and Islam.

Domeris points out that in Proverbs shame terminology pertains to the dishonour of fools, the proud, the poor and the wicked, the bad son and the rapist, as well as the glutton, those who lose a court case and those who speak unwisely (1995: 94). While Mediterranean culture identifies shame most closely with women's sexuality, Proverbs associates a wife with shame just once (12:4). Male shame, meanwhile, is considerably more prominent. Domeris concludes from this that,

the category of shame of a wife is a minor one, and that the whole understanding of shame was far less sexually orientated than in the studies of the modern Mediterranean culture. For example, no attention is given to the need to guard one's wife against possible temptation. Although the idea of adultery as a crime against the honour of the husband is taken for granted, the underlying reason for the prohibition on adultery probably had more to do with the issue of the paternity of the children and potential heirs... We may contrast this with the modern Mediterranean societies which saw the protection as intrinsically bound up in the image of the masculinity of the husband. Similarly, one might contrast the biblical concern with pollution as related to menstruation and child-bearing with the Mediterranean concern with sin and the

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<sup>79</sup> Domeris approves of Herzfeld's argument for particularisation (1995: 88). While he admits that Proverbs is of diverse origins, he claims that it is none the less particularly suitable for his discussion because it 'reflects a reasonably uniform picture of honour and shame' due to its 'inherent conservatism'. Furthermore, it provides a forum for examining these values in a culture not coloured by some later Christian perspective. Domeris argues that its primary purpose is the communication of religious values and that it stems from the post-exilic era, from a period testifying the changing role of women and the restrictive context of the nuclear family (1995: 93).

woman's sexuality... Here lies one of the most important distinctions between the biblical world and the world of the modern Mediterranean--purity/impurity versus sin/guilt (1995: 94f.).<sup>80</sup>

The Hebrew Bible, Domeris continues, attributes honour to Yhwh and it is Yhwh, too, who bestows and removes it. One of the characteristics of Proverbs is its connection between honour and wisdom (4:18). A connection with wealth also exists (8:18) (1995: 95). The emphasis of Proverbs gives precedence to wisdom, with wealth taking second place and honour third:

This relative depreciation of honour in favour of wealth or possessions is particularly marked in 12:9 when the person of honour, who is also poor, takes second place to the person who is without honour and yet has a servant (i.e. some wealth) (1995: 96).

This, Domeris concludes, is quite different to the precedence accorded to honour in the Mediterranean studies. Another un-Mediterranean feature, he points out, is the priority of humility over honour (15:33) 'which would seem to be in contradiction to Mediterranean evaluations' (cf. 13:18, where those who accept reproof are honoured) (1995: 96).<sup>81</sup> Domeris argues of honour in Proverbs that, '[t]he absence of the typical Mediterranean aspect of honour and shame, like the competition among equals and the elevation of honour over wealth and power, is striking' (1995: 96).

When examining the roles of women in Proverbs, Domeris continues, the differences with the Mediterranean type depicted in anthropological literature, becomes especially pronounced. The woman of the final chapter of Proverbs is firmly located in the framework of a society which values women whose concerns are always unselfish and family-oriented: her reward lies in being called 'blessed' by her husband and

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<sup>80</sup> On the centrality of purity concerns and their distinction from shame concerns in that they do not have any onus attached to them cf. Frymer-Kensky 1983.

<sup>81</sup> A case can, however, be made for the pertinence of humility with regard to someone envisaged as possessing more honour than oneself in the Mediterranean context too. Pitt-Rivers writes: 'Respect and precedence are paid to those who claim it and are sufficiently powerful to enforce their claim ... The payment of honour in daily life is accorded through the offering of precedence (so often expressed through an analogy with the head) and through the demonstrations of respect which are commonly associated with the head; whether it is bowed, touched, uncovered or covered ...' (1977: 4). In the context of Proverbs it might be said that humility is appropriate with regard to those who have more honour, such as God and the sages.

children;<sup>82</sup> but she is also ‘far more outgoing than her later Mediterranean counterpart’: a trader, manufacturer of linen garments and a teacher of wisdom (1995: 97). This woman, then, moves easily in the geographical, economic and educational domains which were later to become masculine zones. Further, while the Mediterranean woman is described as ruled by an acute sense of shame, this woman is ruled by wisdom.

The woman of shame in Proverbs, meanwhile, is framed in the context of a foolish young man and his actions (7:7) and counterbalanced with the feminine Wisdom. While this woman is clearly depicted pejoratively--she is likened to a hunter (7:23) and brings doom upon the young man--it is primarily the man who is condemned (7:26-27):

The woman is a danger to fools, but not to the wise ... The real danger is the lust of the man. She is a temptress, but not a demon, a seducer but not a satan. Sadly, it would take a religion like Christianity to make those connections (1995: 98).<sup>83</sup>

The story of the adulteress, further, is un-Mediterranean in the sense that the honour of ‘the man’ (presumably her husband) is ignored entirely:

In the Mediterranean story his figure would have featured strongly either as the cuckolded husband or the wrecker of vengeance. Here he features only in passing in an assurance to the young man that he may enjoy his lovemaking without fear of interruption - “the man” is in a foreign land (1995: 98).

The women of Proverbs, then, even the women of shame, are free from many of the negative constructs that appear to bind their later Mediterranean sisters. Further, the dominant value of the book appears to be wisdom, its contrasting object folly. It is wisdom and folly, Domeris concludes, which define other values, including shame and honour (1995: 97). This is what one would expect of wisdom literature and negates the claim that honour and shame were core values from ancient times (*pace*

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<sup>82</sup> The phrase is: קָמוּ בְנֵיהּ וַיֵּאשְׁרוּהָ. As we have seen Hanson (cf. III.i.f. above) has argued for a translation of ‘how honoured’ for אֲשֶׁרִי. I do not find this translation preferable.

<sup>83</sup> Camp already finds traces of such notions in Ben Sira (see above III.i.a.). She admits, furthermore, that Ben Sira’s focus on concerns of honour and shame is not prominent in Proverbs (1991: 5, note 17) and that Proverbs generally balances positive and negative female imagery (1985: 115-33).

Pilch and Malina). Domeris is cautious regarding the value of the honour-shame dichotomy for modern studies and rejects it entirely for the purposes of distinguishing the core values of Proverbs. His arguments provide strong reasons for delineating the context of a text under investigation as much as possible, taking special note of the relevant vocabulary, and for letting the text speak for itself rather than imposing modern models upon it.

*j. Stone (1996)*

Stone's examination of the representations of sexual activity in the Deuteronomistic history uses anthropological studies in an attempt to decode the network of cultural and symbolic meanings which the texts might presuppose. He takes great pains to stress that a continuity between biblical perspectives on sexual matters and beliefs about sexual activity which have emerged among Jewish and Christian communities cannot be assumed (1996: 12) but maintains that 'a productive interdisciplinary conversation' (1996: 27) can expose links between literature and its social and cultural context. Following Bal, Stone argues that the events depicted in biblical narratives can be used as evidence for what was 'thinkable' in ancient Israel and that anthropological concepts,

can help us to construct and continually reassess our reading frames--that is to say, our ideas about the possible context of symbols and beliefs in terms of which the texts seem to make sense--in a way that at least mitigates our tendency to interpret biblical texts in terms of our own assumptions (1996: 35).

Stone is careful to point out that while biblical texts may be 'informants' about the beliefs and assumptions held by ancient Israelites, they are none the less deeply imperfect sources of ethnographic data. They are not so much transparent windows into an ancient world as glimpses of a world deemed possible or desirable by those individuals and groups amongst whom they originated; the result being, 'that much of the Hebrew Bible contains mainly ideology rather than a historically accurate picture of Israelite behavior in the periods which it claims to represent' (1996: 34). For all his cautionary comments, Stone, citing Gilmore's studies, still recognises some merit in the honour/shame model, because the relation between a competitive notion of male

sexuality and an emphasis upon female chastity in his opinion illuminates the depictions of sexual activity in the narratives under discussion. This relation, he argues, frequently capitalises on 'the potential for sexual acts to impact the honor, power and prestige of men', a potential which is 'known to us especially (but not exclusively) from the anthropological literature on the Mediterranean basin and parts of the Middle East' (1996: 137).

Next, Stone uses findings from anthropology in his analysis of various narratives. Concerning Judges 19, for instance, he writes:

Several anthropologists have indicated that in those cultures manifesting the dynamics of honor and shame, male homosexuality is often viewed with particular distaste ... [which] is associated with the rigid differentiation between male and female gender roles, but also with the hierarchical nature of this differentiation (1996: 75f.).

One of the men in the homosexual act, Stone explains, is perceived as assuming a role that is, culturally speaking, allotted to the female alone (of sexual object rather than subject) thereby becoming 'feminised' and dishonoured. One reason for this is that masculinity is considered not only different but also superior to femininity:

Within a culture marked by rigid gender differentiation and hierarchy, a man who assumes the role allotted by convention to a woman is moving, socially, *downward*. If this role is forced upon him by another male, as is the case in homosexual rape, then the effect is both a challenge to his masculinity and a challenge to his honor (1996: 79).

The men of Gibeah, then, according to Stone, wish to express their power over the Levite by bringing shame upon him (1996: 81). Deterred from raping him they achieve this aim by raping his concubine:

It must also be recalled, from the anthropological material, that not only a woman's conduct but also the conduct taken toward her may reflect upon the honor of the male(s) responsible for her. A sexual misconduct committed against a woman is, therefore, an attack upon the man under whose authority she falls. Thus, although the men of Gibeah did not dishonor the Levite directly by raping him *as if he were a woman*, they nevertheless challenge his honor in another way: *through his woman* (1996: 81).

This damage to his honour is then addressed, Stone continues, with a riposte that is

typical of an honour/shame culture (1996: 83). Typical, too, he argues, is the Levite's withholding of a number of points when rallying support; crucially, that he himself cast the concubine outside of the house, which might have diminished his claim to honour yet further. Stone comments that 'most of the Israelites would have responded to such a situation in precisely the same way' (1996: 83), which, in my view, is assuming too much.

From here Stone develops the idea that there exists a recurring pattern of male characters who by means of heterosexual contact dishonour other men. He calls these 'homosocial' conflicts (1996: 84). Thus, he argues, at 2 Samuel 3:6-11 Abner threatens Ishbaal's honour through Rizpah (1996: 85ff.). The sexual act is not recounted in its chronological place (prior to the conversation between the two men) indicating, according to Stone, that it is considered important primarily in relation to their quarrel (1996: 87). Ishbaal's indignation is again explained on the basis of anthropological literature as originating from an implication that he is not 'good at being a man' - since Abner has shown that he cannot maintain control over the women who, it is thought, ought to be under his supervision. Again, Rizpah, like the Levite's concubine, is the means by which a message of power is communicated between two men. Stone calls her the 'conduit of their relationship' (1996: 91).<sup>84</sup> Stone does not believe that the ideology at work here reflects a 'custom' about monarchical legitimacy: 'It is rather a complex bundle of premises about masculinity, sexual practice, and prestige which the anthropological literature helps to clarify' (1996: 92).

Other narratives, too, Stone maintains, are elucidated with recourse to anthropological findings. First, 2 Samuel 11-12, where the dishonourable nature of David's conduct might be explained in part as an abuse of his power in the context of a society where honour is hierarchical and competed for only between men who are social equals:

If two men are obviously contrasted in terms of some significant social differential,  
then the more powerful man [such as David] who chooses to provoke a weaker man

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<sup>84</sup> Stone discusses another instance of this pattern with regard to 2 Samuel 16:20-23, where David's concubines are the conduit between David and Absalom (1996: 120ff.).

[such as Uriah] risks dishonoring himself (1996: 103).

Another is 2 Samuel 13, where Tamar's request that Amnon, who has just raped her, marry her, might be explained by the emphasis on female chastity:

The fact of male dominance, the emphasis upon female sexual purity as a prerequisite for marriage, and the relative scarcity of positions available to unmarried women in the society which produced the text are all relevant considerations here. Where marriage is the primary avenue through which female prestige can be secured, and the loss of one's sexual purity can become an obstacle to marriage, it is not inconceivable that a woman would prefer to take advantage of the androcentric rationale which expresses itself in the Deuteronomic law and choose marriage over non-marriage. At any rate, the perspective from which the story is told seems to be based upon such logic (1996: 115f.).

With regard to the latter, Stone acknowledges that David is caught between two imperatives of masculine honour: to avenge the shaming of Tamar, his daughter, on the one hand and to honour the relations of kinship, including those with his firstborn son, on the other. Both Absalom and Simeon/Levi, Stone points out, seek revenge 'exactly as the anthropological literature would lead us to expect'. In both instances, however, the father of the raped woman apparently does not see this response as the most suitable way of addressing the crisis, leading Stone to ask whether it is possible that we have here a *rebuttal* of the protocols of honour and shame (1996: 118).<sup>85</sup>

Leaving this question unanswered, Stone raises several more interesting points which he does not have scope to develop. He muses, for instance, whether the metaphorical use of sexual activity in the Prophets, where Israel is sometimes depicted as an actively unfaithful wife, may rely upon a different ideological position with regard to gender and sexual practice than the narratives he discusses. In Hosea and Ezekiel, he proposes, it is suggested that female sexuality is active and insatiable whereas in the narratives the tendency is to regard female sexuality as passive and in need of male protection. Both perspectives, he believes, do, however, link male honour with an ability to prevent sexual relationships between another man and the women of one's household (1996: 143). With regard to the role of Yhwh, Stone believes that some

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<sup>85</sup> In opposition to Yee and taking into account Sherwood's analysis of subversive strategies in the early chapters of Hosea, I have suggested such a rebuttal with regard to Hosea (III.ii.g.).

archaeological evidence that might imply the existence of a female consort of Yhwh complicates matters:

If YHWH can be represented as a male deity with a female consort, then the gendered language applied to YHWH needs to be interpreted literally, at least insofar as literary, historical, and cultural matters are concerned. ... Hence, the imagery of Israel as YHWH's unfaithful wife may take on specific connotations in a context where the symbolic assumptions discussed in the present project exist. ... [I]t seems that YHWH may have been represented as a sort of vigilant husband concerned about his masculine honor, who for precisely this reason must prevent illicit sexual relationships between a woman under his authority (Israel) and other potential male sexual partners (such as Baal). Thus, an approach to the biblical texts which takes the ideology of sexual practice in its relation to gender as an explicit point of departure may finally impact our understanding of the characterisation of YHWH in the biblical texts, and so also our understanding of biblical theology (1996: 143f.).

Stone's study raises and examines many interesting points and his use of anthropological data is tempered by caution. While he uses the honour/shame model extensively, he makes no such claims as Neyrey, for instance, of having access to the native's perspective and he acknowledges that both the biblical texts themselves and their interpreters have biases. His suggestions for examining prophetic literature in the light of some of his findings, furthermore, are to me compelling.

***k. Olyan (1996) and Hobbs (1997)***

Olyan, using illustrations from the David narratives, seeks to illustrate a connection between covenant language and the values of honour and shame, both of which, he claims, are ubiquitous in the Hebrew Bible. Introducing his discussion with the statement that '[f]ew would dispute that covenant was a primary basis for social organisation in the West Asian cultural sphere in which Israel emerged as a distinct polity' (1996: 201f.), he adds that the vocabulary of honour and shame occurs in covenant-related discourse throughout the ancient Near East and that 'notions of honor and shame must therefore play a role in West Asian covenant relations, including those evidenced in Israelite sources' (1996: 202). Honour and shame, he

continues, had the social and political function of publicising the relative status of participants in ritual action and were 'common almost to the point of banality' (1996: 203).

Olyan accounts for the points of contact between covenant relations and the notions of honour and shame by pointing out that treaty partners must honour one another:

To honor a loyal treaty partner confirms publicly the strength of existing covenant bonds; to diminish or shame one who is loyal in covenant communicates at minimum a loss of status and may in fact constitute a covenant violation. The conferring of honor and the inscription of shame may function to externalize conformity or nonconformity to covenant stipulations or to communicate relative position in a status hierarchy (1996: 204f.).

This leads Olyan to claim that '[e]xpressions of honor in covenant settings abound' (1996: 206). His understanding of honour, moreover, is clearly influenced by that of the Mediterranean studies (1996: 202, note 4); thus he describes biblical honour as a phenomenon with an important public dimension (1996: 204) and an inbuilt hierarchy. An honour hierarchy is evident, for instance, he argues, in Yhwh's address to Eli (1 Sam. 2:29): 'Yhwh, as suzerain, is first in honor; the priests, his servants, cannot take what is by rights his. By allowing them to do so, Eli has upset the status hierarchy; he has accorded his own sons greater honor than he has Yhwh' (1996: 207).

Another passage which illustrates a covenant-honour/shame connection is, according to Olyan, 2 Samuel 19:1-9, where David, after Joab warns him that the shaming of his servants will result in disaster, ceases to mourn and appears enthroned at the city gate, in public view. David's mourning had not followed the prescribed pattern of ritual behaviour following victory in battle. Instead, rejoicing and public demonstrations confirming victory and the king's honour would have been appropriate. Olyan explains the covenant undertones he perceives in this excerpt in that David, here the suzerain, violates a treaty agreement by not rewarding covenant loyalty (1996: 210). 2 Samuel 10:1-6, where David sends emissaries to the court of Ammon to publicly honour the deceased, thereby confirming the covenant bond as

the throne of Ammon passes to a new ruler, is cited as further support. David's statement that he is practising **דָּוָה**, is interpreted by Olyan as a reference to covenant loyalty. When the Ammonites intentionally break the covenant by publicly shaming David's men only one course of action remains:

In the universe of reciprocal honor, David had little choice but to respond with military action; only through victory for Israel and defeat (and thus humiliation) for Ammon could David recover honor for himself and his people after such a devastating, public inscription of shame (1996: 213).

Olyan also believes that a case for the centrality of honour and shame in covenant contexts can be made where neither is mentioned explicitly (e.g. 1 Sam. 31-2 Sam. 1-2). The treatment of Saul's corpse is, he argues, shameful. The Gileadites, on the other hand, who burn Saul's corpse, bury the bones and practise mourning rituals, fulfil honourable actions befitting a sound vassal-suzerain covenant relationship. On the basis of this, Olyan claims:

... the Gileadite actions function to remove disgrace and to confer honor to the dead king by means of appropriate burial and mourning rites. ... Honor is once again tied to covenant loyalty, and in this case to the removal of a suzerain's--and by extension, the nation's--shame. ... That obligations to the suzerain last beyond his death is illustrated not only here but also by various West Asian inscriptions, including the Sefire corpus, where the vassal is obligated to avenge (**נָקַם**) the suzerain's blood from the hand of his "haters." The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, loyal to their lord Saul even after his death, act to provide him with an honorable burial; this in turn functions to efface shame and restore honor to Israel (1996: 214f.).

This extension of restoring honour *to Israel* by restoring honour to the house of Saul should not, I think, be assumed quite so glibly.

Olyan, then, is working from the assumption that prescriptive covenant relationships and the notions of honour and shame were so endemic that they can be discerned in public and ritualistic interactions throughout the Hebrew Bible<sup>86</sup> - even where they

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<sup>86</sup> His examples are from the books of Samuel and Lamentations but he asserts that evidence can be gathered throughout the Hebrew Bible and in other ancient West Asian texts too (1996: 202f.).

are not mentioned explicitly. While he cites numerous examples, the legitimacy of perceiving either complex of ideas must be questioned. Much of Olyan's argument depends on his interpretation of certain words as reflecting covenant language (e.g. **דָּוָר**) and his identification of honour and shame vocabulary in the Hebrew Bible with the notions labelled honour and shame in anthropological literature. The possibility that he is imposing a later construct of ideas that may very well not have existed in the definitive form he envisages, cannot be excluded.

Hobbs, in a response to Olyan's article, proposes that the patron-client rather than the vassal-suzerain covenant relationship is the dominant metaphor that gives meaning to the use of honour and shame language in the texts discussed. Hobbs does not question the alleged centrality of the notions of honour and shame in both the Mediterranean world and the cultural contexts of the narratives. He explains that the patron-client, like the honour-shame model, is an 'etic' one: 'that is ... a system fitted by modern ethnographers of the Mediterranean world over widely observed patterns of behavior for the purposes of understanding them and interpreting them' and that '[o]ne will therefore find no use of terms such as "patron" and "client" in the ancient literature itself' (1997: 503). This, he argues, does not, however, deprive the model of relevance. The existence of a relationship where a patron grants clients access to goods such as protection, honour and material benefits in a mutually beneficial and binding way can be recognised, Hobbs claims, in such diverse relationships as those between a wandering holy man and his followers and between a ruler and his entourage (1997: 502). This metaphor drawn from widespread social practice is, according to Hobbs, a more immediate social metaphor than that of the elitist covenant model drawn from political interactions between kings. The use of covenant in the ancient Near East is, he adds, at any rate 'but a wider application of [the patron-client] analogy' (1997: 502). Hobbs, like Olyan, then, presupposes that anthropological findings are significant with regard to biblical texts and that biblical texts accurately reflect cultural matrices and can be elucidated by etic models.

**1. *Semeia 68 (1996), Stansell, Simkins and Bergant***

Stansell's examination of the David narratives seeks to demonstrate 'a substantial interest in honor and shame' (1996: 56), reflecting a social world similar to that described in Mediterranean anthropological studies. David, a youth from the provinces, is anointed by Samuel in secret (1 Sam. 16:1-13), appointed as court musician and armour bearer (16:14-23) and then triumphs over Goliath (17:1-58), thereby rising from an insignificant position to one of relative status and prospect (1996: 56f.). David's response to Saul's subsequent offer of his daughter Michal's hand in marriage (18:23), according to Stansell, acquires a new meaning and significance when placed in the context of a world where honour and shame constitute core values (1996: 57). David refers to himself as a poor man (עני) of light esteem (נקה), which Stansell translates 'no honor' (1996: 57), concluding: 'With the term נקה, the verse clearly belongs in the realm of honor and shame language' (1996: 58). Stansell argues, further, that within the context of chapter 18 such a low estimation of his own honour and prestige takes on an ironic sense. He has, after all, been given his robe, armour and sword by Jonathan, the king's son (v. 4) and his mighty feats have been praised in the women's song (v. 7), which can be interpreted as enhancing his status. David's success is also alluded to once more in the concluding verse: מאד שמו ויקר ('his name was greatly valued/regarded'; NIV: 'his name became well known'), which Stansell again prefers to translate 'and his name was very honored' (1996: 59).

Stansell depicts David's rise through military victories as compatible with the challenge-response situation described in anthropological literature whereby honour is gained through competition and by depriving another of his share. David also links his lack of prestige with poverty and Davis among others (cf. II.ii.d.) has illustrated the connection between economic wealth and honour. Honour is also described as hierarchical, which could explain Saul's jealousy as deriving from the feeling that his supreme position in the honour ranking is being compromised by David. Stansell argues that there are many other such parallels. Saul's calling Jonathan a son of a perverse and rebellious woman (1 Sam. 20:30), for instance, is best clarified, in his

opinion, by the observation of Mediterranean anthropologists that a woman who has engaged in shameful activity infects her children with the taint of her dishonour and further, that the most powerful insults relate to the purity of one's mother (1996:60).<sup>87</sup> The situation of conflict with Nabal (1 Sam. 25), too, Stansell continues, can be best understood in the context of Mediterranean customs of challenge and response over claims for honour and precedence:

Nabal's words of insult provide the grounds for his non-acceptance of David's challenge to honor him with "whatever you have at hand" (v. 8). For while Nabal is rich and "lives like a king," David is rootless, unknown, a rebel "without genealogy." In an honor/shame society, only equals can strive with one another for honor .... Hence Nabal must reject David's claim that he has "protected" Nabal's flocks; he need not take David's challenge seriously, for David hardly seems to be a threat; he can easily be insulted and dismissed. But the reader knows what the narrator and Abigail know: David is the future king, and as such, he can hardly allow a rich shepherd to shame him. Thus he must at least do what a clan chieftain would in a similar situation - seek revenge (1996: 63f.).

While challenge-responses may be typical of an honour/shame society, the assertive conduct of Abigail is not.<sup>88</sup> Instead, the anthropological literature describes women's lives as focused around the home and their acute sense of shame as fostering shyness and an aversion of contact with persons outside the family unit (cf.II.ii.a.). The manner in which Abigail addresses David, a strange man, would be considered unthinkable and immodest. Stansell is at this point somewhat selective in his analysis.

Elsewhere, Stansell's arguments are more convincing. As described above,

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. II.i.

<sup>88</sup> Stansell claims that '[i]n the context of challenge and response, Abigail serves as *mediator* between the disputing parties. In Mediterranean culture, the office of mediator is a position of prestige, and thus Abigail accrues honor to herself, even if she is self-selected' (1996: 64). Mediators are not, to my knowledge, mentioned much in the anthropological literature. McKay argues that Abigail's self-lowering circumlocution "your handmaid" not only suggests service but hints at sexual possibilities and that she 'rubbishes her husband' (1998: 47). Such conduct may represent an inversion of social norms (1998: 50); certainly, it sits distinctly uneasily with everything that is described as typifying the Mediterranean woman.

Mediterranean notions of honour and shame, as described in cultural anthropological literature, frequently focus on defined gender roles and on publicly affirmed reputation which is earned by fulfilling these socially accepted roles. This could explain the poignancy of the public shaming in 2 Samuel 10, where David's men, sent to offer his condolences to Hanun, have their beards shaved and garments cut: 'The shaving of the beard is an assault on their masculinity, for the beard is a symbol of their honor' (1996: 69). The idea that the sexual purity of mother, wife, daughter and sister is embedded in the honour of the male, which Pitt-Rivers (1977) distinguishes as characteristically Mediterranean, is addressed, Stansell continues, in the story of Amnon and Tamar. Absalom is prepared to kill his own brother when he rapes and shames their virgin sister, which is, so Stansell, like the vengeance exacted after the sexual assault on Dinah and consonant with the values of an honour/shame society.<sup>89</sup> Further, the idea that women's sexuality is used for political purposes, as expounded by Pitt-Rivers (1977), finds eloquent expression in the account of Absalom consorting with his father's concubines (2 Sam. 16). This, according to Stansell, is a 'political act that establishes Absalom's claim to the throne, thus making a complete break with David' by utterly dishonouring him (1996: 72).

Pedersen, we remember, regarded the warrior-hero and strong women such as Tamar (of Gen. 38) and also Abigail as old types, possessors of an honour that is gained through valiant deeds. Stansell, meanwhile, argues that anthropological studies of Mediterranean societies clarify the David narratives, implying cultural continuity. Some incidents of the narratives are indeed compatible with the descriptions from these studies and there is scope for justifying the presence of the challenge-response pattern, revenge for insults and sexual purity of the female being bound up in the honour of the male. Again, however, the honour/shame model appears to be too rigorously applied - to the extent that Stansell first, sometimes harmonises his translations by using honour terminology and secondly, passes over aspects which are more difficult to accommodate, such as Abigail's un-Mediterranean behaviour of disobeying her husband (1 Sam. 25:19) and speaking of him disloyally (25:25), while seeking out David and talking assertively to a strange man, or the complicated

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. also Matthews and Benjamin, III.ii.h. and Stone, III.ii.j.

details of the Amnon-Tamar-Absalom narrative.

Simkins' article interprets Joel's call for the people to return to Yhwh (2:12-14) from the perspective of the anthropological honour/shame model, which, he believes, corresponds with both the vocabulary and emphasis of the text. Simkins rejects the idea that the passage is based on the so-called covenant model, which has been derived from biblical (especially deuteronomistic and prophetic) literature and characterised by a pattern of sin-judgment-repentance-blessing (1996: 42). According to this model, the natural catastrophe is interpreted as the sign of God's judgment for Judah's sin and the 'return to Yhwh' as repentance, while blessing is explicitly referred to in verse 14. As Simkins points out, though, there is no clue as to whether a specific act or sin has caused the devastation, nor does Joel delineate why the people should repent (1996: 42). Further, returning to Yhwh (2:13) does not necessarily pertain to repenting - Simkins cites Isaiah 44:21-23, where Yhwh's forgiveness is not conditional upon repentance. The covenant model, a scholarly fabrication at any rate,<sup>90</sup> is therefore deemed unsuitable. Simkins suggests, instead, that Joel's silence with regard to the people's sin should be simply accepted:

It is important to note that nowhere does Joel address the people from the perspective of Yahweh's wrath. Nowhere does he declare Yahweh's judgment on the people. ... Emphasis of the text instead is placed on the people's response to the catastrophe and Yahweh's promised redemption (1996: 44).

From here Simkins goes on to provide what he regards as a more suitable perspective from which to understand Joel's call. In the oracle of Joel 1:11-12 devastation is described as a source of shame, exemplified by ruined harvest. Simkins translates **הַבִּישׁ**, which could be a hifil of either the root **בִּישׁ** or **יִבֵּשׁ**, as 'put to shame' ('for joy has been put to shame by the nations'), because **יִבֵּשׁ** is never used with the

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<sup>90</sup> I believe that with regard to the Prophets this has been convincingly shown by Lothar Perlitt (*Bundestheologie im Alten Testament*. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969). As he points out, the bulk of prophetic literature is marked by 'Bundesschweigen' and such features as the so-called *rib*-pattern, or prophetic lawsuit, need not derive from covenant models but could also be drawn from established conventions of judicial practice (1969: 134).

preposition מִן, whereas בִּשְׂשׁוֹן is (cf. Isa. 1:29; Jer. 2:36 and 10:14 = 51:17) (*pace* NIV: ‘surely the joy of mankind is withered away’). Simkins goes on to explain that ‘joy has been put to shame’ is best understood if joy is regarded not as primarily emotional pleasure but as a term connoting the particular pleasures associated with the observation of specific rituals. In this sense joy stands in typological contrast to the observation of rituals of mourning (1996: 47). Simkins justifies his interpretation as follows:

Emotion and behavior have a reciprocal relationship in the world of the Bible and the ancient Near East in general. Emotion is the product of behavior; the ritual behavior elicits the appropriate emotion. Behavior in turn limits and defines emotion by externalizing and objectifying it. Moreover, Anderson demonstrates that the acts of joy and mourning have a correlation with the presence of God within the life of the individual and the community. In other words, acts of joy are the proper response to the presence of God, whereas God’s absence expects various acts of mourning (1996: 47).

In the context of Joel, joy is, according to Simkins, associated with the pleasures of offering the daily sacrifice. This ritual has been brought to a halt by the locust plague, hence the appropriate response is mourning. As this behaviour also indicates the perception that God is absent, Simkins considers the judgment of shame by the nations appropriate (cf. 2:27, where Yhwh’s *presence* is identified with the *absence* of shame) (1996: 48). The honour/shame language is here, however, applied not to individuals in small-scale, face-to-face settings, but to international relations. In consequence, Simkins understands the people’s honour as depending on their status in relation to their neighbours. The agricultural destruction, he continues, makes a mockery of Judah’s claim to be the people of Yhwh and to enjoy the benefits of loyalty to him:

If Yahweh was their God, and if the people had properly honored him through obedience to his commandments, then it was incumbent upon Yahweh to bless and protect them (compare Prov 3:9-10). The devastation caused by the locust plague, however, was public evidence against such a claim to honor. Thus, the people of Judah were shamed before the nations (1996: 51).

Simkins’ argument is that the mourning instructions accompanying the call to return

(2:13), summon the people to engage in acts appropriate to their plight, while also honouring Yhwh by demonstrating allegiance (1996: 51):

The ritual practice of the cult, having been a reminder of their shame, was easily abandoned [1:13]. To these people Joel addressed a message of hope: Return to Yahweh by honoring him with the appropriate acts of mourning, and Yahweh will restore your honor (1996: 52).

As Chance points out, Simkins' international focus presents some difficulties:

Shame, of course, depends on public opinion, and in order to fulfill its potential, the model ought to specify the values and opinions held by the community of reference. This is, of course, most difficult to do at the "international" level ... In this case the other "nations" are defined only by what they are not: those outside the community of Yahweh. This being the case, one could ask why they should be especially concerned if the people of Judah abandon a cult which the people of these other nations do not share? Conversely, why should the Judeans feel especially shamed in the eyes of other peoples who hold different religious beliefs? (1996: 144f.).

The characteristics of honour and shame, as depicted in anthropological studies conducted in small-scale societies and as summarised by Simkins (1996: 49ff.), indeed do not translate well into the larger situation. Simkins' argument is somewhat vague and instead of imposing the covenant model he has imposed the honour/shame model, applying the terms rather loosely so that 'honouring' consists of joyful activity, while 'shame' represents the inability to fulfil pleasurable activity and the need to fulfil mourning rituals. Joel 2:12-14 contains no honour/shame terminology and although these notions might be elucidated without employing such words, Simkins does appear to be reading the social values into the text with very little in the way of legitimation.

Stansell's argument that the David narratives contain incidents compatible with social phenomena described in Mediterranean studies has some credibility, while Simkins' attempt to apply the honour/shame model to the book of Joel strikes me as unconvincing. Both articles, however, indicate, I think, that it is not altogether propitious to apply a modern theoretical model too rigidly to an ancient text, as this is

liable to distort the text in question. Bergant, focusing on the Song of Songs, admits that the model can sometimes be ill-fitting. Bergant uses what she calls a 'thick description': a highly detailed analysis which seeks to include as far as is possible, the insider's perspective, by means of a process of radical empiricism known as 'participant observation' (1996: 24). This insider's perspective sounds suspiciously like Neyrey and Malina's 'native's perspective' (III.i.b.) and might again approach 'the referential fallacy which claims a direct insight into the ancient world' (Pippin 1996: 52).

Bergant describes the Shulammitte of the Song as 'quite independent of societal restraints' (1996: 28). Her voice is dominant throughout, she takes initiative, ventures outside alone at night and is not slow to speak erotically of her union with her lover, leading Bergant to assert that '[i]t is clear that the woman depicted in the Song is driven by love, not inhibited by social opinion or by some narrow sense of sexual propriety' (1996: 28). Bergant contrasts this with the Mediterranean anthropological studies which describe institutionalised conceptions of male power and status that have engendered the monitoring of women's sexual activity and, consequently, such practices as female seclusion and veiling (1996: 33).<sup>91</sup> She agrees that some features of the Song appear to conform to the gender-based delineation of honour and shame; such as the protective role of the brothers (1:6; 8:8), which could be regarded as reflecting the customs evident in societies where group cohesion is the primary concern and where male consanguines rather than affines are the protectors of female shame. The woman's spurning of her brothers' protectiveness, however, and the lack of censure regarding such an independent attitude 'is certainly not consistent with the protocol of honor and shame' (1996: 34). Similarly, reference to the house of the mother (3:4; 8:2) and the exchanges with the daughters of Jerusalem might be regarded as typical of a society where women's lives are circumscribed. Yet in other ways this circumscription does not seem far-reaching: the woman wanders the streets and speaks to the watchmen (3:3), meets her lover outdoors (7:12) and visits a wine house (2:4). Bergant therefore concludes that :

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. Domeris' conclusions concerning the comparative freedom enjoyed by the women of Proverbs when viewed in the light of the Mediterranean studies (III.ii.i.).

The general tenor of the Song of Songs throws into question most of the characteristics associated with the notions of honor and shame. There is no underlying concern for male power and status and, consequently, there is no interest in controlling what might threaten it. The sexual activity of the woman is neither suppressed nor supervised. The passionate union of the woman and man is sought for the mutual pleasure that it promises and not for the purposes of procreation and the heirs that it might yield. Furthermore, the lovers are not married, nor do they appear to be betrothed. In other words, the patriarchal concern of safeguarding the chastity of the woman for the sake of progeny is not evident here (1996: 36).

Bergant admits that the social relations in the Song are 'uncommon' and may reflect those of a particular stratum of society exempted from general norms (1996: 36). She continues that '[o]ne would expect that the overt sexual character of the Song of Songs would lend itself to an analysis according to the gender-defined categories of honor and shame. It does not. In fact, the contrary is true' (1996: 37). Bergant admits that the social relationships of the Song are 'anomalous if the honor/shame model is the norm' (1996: 37). This, she concludes, would suggest either the Song's idiosyncratic nature, or the inadequacy of the model. The Song's inclusion in the Hebrew Bible is in many ways surprising. It is indeed an anomaly. Its peculiarity and the probability, in the light of striking parallels with Egyptian love poetry,<sup>92</sup> that it is first and foremost a collection of lyrical poems, do not render it a particularly suitable candidate for an exploration of the actual social values of the community in which it may have come into being. The fact that it exists, however, none the less leaves an opening for the idea that a so-called honour/shame society may be more multi-layered than the anthropological literature and biblical interpreters using its findings often suggest. A close reading, such as that employed by Bergant may thus disclose the possibility of complex and diverse patterns of interactions between men and women.

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<sup>92</sup> The similarities are persuasively discussed by Michael V. Fox (*The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

*m. Others: Bal (1988), Galambush (1992) and Clines (1995)*

In addition to focused studies on honour and shame, the centrality of these social values, widely asserted in anthropological writings, is apparent, too, in the background of larger studies on a variety of texts from the Hebrew Bible. Clines, for example, qualifies that while the social reality of ancient Israel cannot be grasped on the basis of biblical writings, the implied social reality can (1995: 69) and he describes an honour-shame opposition underlying the text of Haggai (1995: 57). Galambush, meanwhile, explains the visceral sexual metaphors of Ezekiel with recourse to 'a world in which male honor is bound to sexual behavior' and cites the studies of Pitt-Rivers and Wikan (1992: 102 and note 31). Bal in her discussion of diegesis and focalization in the narrative of Judges recounting Sisera's death, assumes the relevance of the honour-shame opposition for the text's underlying gender code. Her argument is that the theme of Judges 4 is military honour. In an honour-shame society, she continues, the division of labour reserves the military domain for men and in this context honour represents existence and shame annihilation. Deborah and Jael, while prominent and active, are, Bal explains, figures in a narrative that is recounted by a narrator whom she supposes to be male. Also, the narrative is ultimately aimed at a male audience:

If Deborah speaks, Barak listens, and assimilates her words; if Jael acts, Barak sees and consummates his shame in that of the other man brought to ruin. If the women execute the scenario, Barak is the focalizer of the shame that is the just reward of the cowardly: of Jabin, of Sisera, of himself. The words of Deborah the woman are cited so that the male addressee can understand the message. The roles are reversed; the subjects of language acts are less important than their objects. The addressee of the word takes over and becomes the focalizer of the result (1988b: 118).

Honour, Bal continues, is crucial to existence itself and, from the masculine perspective, is threatened in this account by women. The episode of national war thus transpires in a struggle of one sex against the other and '[t]he ideologeme honor/shame effectively demonstrates to what extent the two themes go hand in hand' (1988b: 118). It appears, therefore, that the alleged centrality of honour and shame is widely accepted and used to elucidate the language of biblical texts.

### *iii. Summary*

Shame the emotion, as discussed in the literature of psychology (chapter I), does not feature prominently in analyses of biblical texts. Huber (1983) stands out for considering the findings of psychoanalysis alongside those of social anthropology (III.ii.e.)<sup>93</sup> but the emphasis in explorations of shame in biblical literature has been on responding to Mediterranean field studies and particularly the honour/shame value complex. In this context honour and shame are not so much concerned with internal experiences as with public loss of status.<sup>94</sup> Where shame is discussed independently of its alleged binary opposite honour, this bias is also evident. Odell thus argues that shame in Ezekiel is incited to a lesser extent by the people's feeling of unworthiness than by the reduced status of the exiles' condition and the mocking of the nations (III.ii.f.); and Klopfenstein, that shame terminology is most widely employed to evoke a forensic setting and sense of being publicly disapproved of and degraded (III.ii.c.).

Although the evaluation that the honour/shame value complex represents the core social values of the Mediterranean has not always been received uncritically by anthropologists (cf. Herzfeld; Wikan), its applicability to biblical literature is generally-speaking accepted. Commentators attempting to reconstruct the social contexts reflected in and by the New Testament and apocryphal texts in particular, have thus tended to agree that an awareness of such features as gender division, acute sensitivity to public opinion, emphasis on women's sexual purity or the challenge-riposte interaction, all of which are associated with this complex, is crucial for a fuller understanding (Camp; Neyrey and Malina; Pilch, Malina and Plevnik; McVann; deSilva; Hanson). Domeris argues that shame in its repressive form (especially with

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<sup>93</sup> The focus of anthropology is the observing and analysing of public-external experiences and interactions; whereas psychology, while based on observation of individuals or groups of individuals, probes the internal faculties of reason, emotion and perception: hence, their findings are naturally very different. As observable behaviour can have a psychological motivation, I do not, however, consider the two disciplines irreconcilable. I find Huber's interdisciplinary approach commendable and will go on to suggest that a variety of models might be suitable for contributing to a richer understanding of biblical texts (VI.ii.c).

<sup>94</sup> The shame culture/guilt culture classification popularised by Mead and accepted by Daube (III.ii.b.), which focuses its distinction on external versus internal sanctions, has a distinctly psychological dimension. Its deficiencies, however, have been shown to be considerable (II.i.).

regard to women) is more characteristic of modern Mediterranean societies than of much of the Hebrew Bible due to the impact of Christianity and Islam. Perhaps, then, the case for a degree of continuity between the later literature (e.g. Ben Sira; the New Testament)<sup>95</sup> and contemporary Mediterranean societies is indeed stronger. Nevertheless, the overall impression which emerges from these studies is that honour and shame vocabulary is very readily identified with the notions of honour and shame depicted in anthropological literature. Further, their presumed centrality has led to 'recognising' these notions in many other literary contexts where the vocabulary is not present at all (Olyan; Hanson). This has sometimes transpired in harmonising translations in order to reflect a preoccupation with honour and/or shame (Camp; Bechtel; Hanson) as well as sweeping simplifications (Malina; Neyrey).

Some commentators have claimed that an appreciation of the values of honour and shame permits us to view biblical texts from 'the native's perspective' (III.i.b.), while the problems of imposing a modern theoretical model on to ancient texts have often been understated or disregarded. Even in the context of cultural anthropology, where social dynamics within a community can at least be observed at first hand, valid criticisms regarding generalisations and simplifications have been voiced (Herzfeld). As for the contexts in which the literature of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament are embedded, attempting reconstructions is even more of a minefield. First of all, the 'evidence' provided by texts is, inevitably, selective and any picture we might derive from them, therefore, incomplete. With regard to biblical laws prescribing sexual behaviour, for instance, Frymer-Kensky has pointed out that while these may illustrate some concerns about sex--such as a fear of blurring boundaries, which might explain the aversion to male homosexuality not inherited from other Near Eastern laws (i.e. because it blurs the distinction between male and female) (1989: 96f.)--they do not show us how these laws were mediated, detoxified,

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<sup>95</sup> Torjesen's 'Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History', which focuses particularly on the writings attributed to Tertullian and Paul, also asserts the importance of understanding the honour/shame value system in attempting such a reconstruction. Following a definition of honour and shame, she claims: 'Since Christian writers viewed women's activities through the lens of their society's beliefs about gender, their accounts of women's activities and their polemic against women leaders must be interpreted critically in the light of the system of sexual politics current in the ancient Mediterranean' (1993: 291).

expressed and understood (1989: 99), thereby leaving a vacuum.

Connected to this is the notion that the texts cannot be assumed to be reflective of actual social practices. McKeating, for example, illustrates that while the sanctions forbidding adultery are very clear (Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:18) and there is repeated mention of the consequences of exclusion from the community (Lev. 18:20, 29) and the death penalty (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22), 'there is no recorded instance in the whole Jewish narrative literature of the biblical period, of anyone actually being put to death for adultery' (1979: 58). His argument is that if there is within the Hebrew Bible a discrepancy between laws and narratives, it is not unlikely that there was also a discrepancy between social reality and textual representation. He concludes that '[w]e cannot simply read off our assessment of a society's ethical values from the laws which it produced (or rather, from the laws which happen to have been preserved for us)' (1979: 65), because 'some "laws", at least in the Old Testament, are in any case not law as that word is generally understood, but statements of principle, or of ideals, and we confuse the issue badly if we do not recognise them as such' (1979: 66). While the articles of Olyan (III.ii.k.) and Stansell (III.ii.l.), for instance, may suggest otherwise, I will argue in the following chapters that interpreters of the Hebrew Bible are not social anthropologists executing field work but readers analysing ideological productions which do not conform to the thick/thin descriptions of Mediterranean anthropologists. This leads on to the third point: the probability that the biblical texts are agenda-oriented. After all, in Carroll's words:

Texts are not photographs of social reality, but complex social constructions generated by such a reality in conjunction with various ideological factors controlling their production (1991: 114, note 2).

Finally, social-sciences models are ill-suited to accommodating the figure or representation of Yhwh and interpretive literature embracing the value complex tends to ignore the issue of what Yhwh might be equated with in a social system constructed along the lines of honour and shame; or, alternatively, whether the notion of Yhwh deconstructs such social arrangements. Pedersen argues that honour is intimately connected with blessing, which presumably originates from Yhwh (e.g.

1926: 230); Domeris mentions that honour is a quality associated with and conferred by Yhwh (1995: 95); Huber that Yhwh is capable of feeling shame and that this propensity is played upon to bring about an end to such humiliations as the exile (1983: 166-75); while Stone muses whether the prophetic metaphors depicting Yhwh as a husband defending his honour have a literal dimension (1996: 143f.). The role of Yhwh within the allegedly central honour/shame matrix, however, receives no more than scant attention.<sup>96</sup>

As the cultural contexts in which the Hebrew Bible came into being are irrecoverable, a continuity with the social dynamics of modern Mediterranean communities cannot be assumed or overstated as it so often has. If we refrain from assuming first, that the literature of the Hebrew Bible has its provenance in social contexts where honour and shame were central and ever-present concerns and secondly, from regarding shame as invariably connected with honour, the legitimacy of discerning these notions throughout the biblical texts disappears. With regard to the Hebrew Bible (as opposed to the New Testament), the reception of honour and shame has indeed been more muted. Whereas some commentators have argued for their relevance and centrality (Olyan; Matthews and Benjamin), especially with regard to the narratives (Olyan; Stansell; Pedersen; Stone; Matthews and Benjamin), they have been shown to be ill-fitting with regard to the books of Proverbs (Domeris) and Song of Songs (Bergant). While shame studies have usually targeted the narratives, it is the Prophets where shame-vocabulary is actually clustered. This concentration is pointed out by both

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<sup>96</sup>I will be returning to this matter more fully (IV.i.b).

Klopfenstein and Seebaß<sup>97</sup> and requires some explanation. Any discussion of shame in the Prophets, however, has tended to be relatively peripheral.<sup>98</sup> Of the above studies only those of Yee, Odell and Simkins are specifically focused on prophetic literature; Simkins' on Joel, meanwhile, deals with a book containing very little in the way of shame language.

Let it be said that I do believe shame to be a phenomenon with both a psychological and social dimension. With regard to the former, I see no advantage in separating shame and guilt phenomenology (Cairns; Klopfenstein; *pace* Huber; Daube); further, while I consider psychoanalytical interpretation fascinating, I remain sceptical regarding its capacity to decode human complexities, let alone biblical texts,<sup>99</sup> because such notions as the id or superego are abstract constructs, the existence or nature of which remains putative. With regard to shame's social dimension, I believe that social-scientific perspectives can be illuminating but that caution must be exercised in imposing modern models on to ancient texts, or in assuming that texts faithfully reflect social reality. I certainly find it simplistic to argue that any culture is made more accessible by recognising and then bringing social interactions into line

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. Klopfenstein (1972: 58-89); and Seebaß: 'Es muß auffallen, daß die Wurzel **בוש** und ihre Derivate vor der großen Schriftprophetie des 8. Jh. praktisch keine Rolle spielen. ... [D]ie wenigen Ausnahmen können den Gesamteindruck nur bekräftigen und nicht beseitigen. ... **בוש** meint die ... menschliche Scham, den mißlungenen Entwurf eines Entwerfend-Seienden, das Scheitern eines ekstatischen Daseins. Und es sieht fast so aus, als sei diese Dimension des Menschseins auf breiterer Ebene, d.h. außerhalb der Psalmen-Sprache, erst in der Zeit der großen Propheten entdeckt worden. Allerdings wird dieser Befund dadurch erheblich eingeschränkt, daß die Wurzel samt ihren Derivaten außer in den Psalmen und bei Jer überhaupt nicht häufig vorkommt. Bei Amos, Nahum, Habakuk, Maleachi, Daniel sowie im Pentateuch und im dtr Geschichtswerk fehlt sie ganz' (1973: 570f.). At Exod. 32:2 the people realise that Moses is **בשש** (polel of the root **בוש** II), 'delayed (in coming down from the mountain)'. Daube argues that here and at Judges 5:28, where Sisera is late in returning, the word harks back to the 'original meaning' which, he claims, was 'to put a man to shame by keeping him waiting' (1969: 37). There may be some support for this at Judges 3:25, where Eglon's servants wait **עד-בוש** (NIV: 'to the point of embarrassment'). Holladay's lexicon lists Ezra 8:22, **כי בשחי לשאול מן-המלך**, under both **בוש** I and II (cf. NIV and RSV *ad loc*: 'I was ashamed to ask the king'), suggesting semantic ambiguity. The semantic difference between I and II is, however, clear and an attempt to connect the two unnecessary and artificial.

<sup>98</sup> This is less true of Klopfenstein and Huber, whose approach regarding the occurrences of shame terminology is comprehensive and who frequently cite from the Prophets.

<sup>99</sup> I will be returning to psychoanalytical criticism with regard to Ezekiel (VI.ii.a.)

with its two core values ... When anthropological observations are used less ambitiously, however, as a fillip for reflection (Winkler), or for deciding what a culture may deem 'thinkable' (Stone) they can be of value. There remains, however, considerable scope for analysing and understanding biblical shame discourses using alternative approaches to the Mediterranean honour/shame model.<sup>100</sup>

The two major shame studies in the context of the Hebrew Bible to date are those by Klopfenstein and Huber. Both supply a comprehensive survey of the occurrences and usages of shame vocabulary, which has greatly eased my task and stimulated my thoughts. Klopfenstein is primarily concerned with the semantic development of shame words over time, which is not an angle I choose to pursue.<sup>101</sup> Huber's study, while demonstrating an awareness of anthropological approaches, does not take into account the impact of Mediterranean fieldwork, which has been considerable. Further, her decisive separation of shame and guilt has sometimes obscured her argument (cf. III.ii.e.). Unlike either of these studies, I wish to concentrate on the major Prophets, where shame language is actually comparatively prominent. This strikes me as a valid starting point both for reevaluating foregone observations on shame and for exploring shame discourses from alternative perspectives, such as ideological and feminist criticism, and with regards to purity and pollution, bawdy

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<sup>100</sup> I consider Chalcraft's following caution against over-theorizing relevant to several applications of the honour/shame model: '... Old Testament materials are unable ... to fight back against the rigid models and courses of social development postulated in some apparently widely accepted social theory' (1997: 16). I agree with Chalcraft that it is advisable, instead, to balance 'science' and 'imagination' and to remember that 'social scientific criticism should not be restricted to the application of models and predictive theories in an effort to reconstruct the world "behind the texts"' (1997: 16f.). Instead, social scientific consciousness 'helps us appreciate the highly complex nature of the warp and woof not only of our materials and ancient Israelite worlds, but of our own worlds and productions as well' (1997: 17). A recognition of such complexities, he points out, in turn delimits making categorical or final interpretations (1997: 18).

<sup>101</sup> I have outlined my reservations as to the feasibility of realising such an aim above (III.ii.c.).

imagery and antilanguages.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> The experimental approaches explored below are by no means exhaustive. I am aware, too, that there remains scope for further analysis of the symbolic role of Yhwh (IV.i.b) and, indeed, for returning to anthropological or interdisciplinary models. Such directions cannot, however, be fully addressed in the confines of this thesis. I hope to indicate, however, that a richer vein to mine than historical methodology, or a positivistic use of socio-critical studies optimistic about the recovery of ancient Israelite social worlds, is an approach which concedes the limitations to our knowledge.

## IV. Shame and Isaiah

In the following three chapters I will be focusing in turn on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the books where shame vocabulary is most prominent. With each major prophet I will be examining the purposes of shame discourses and exploring a special angle. With regard to Isaiah, I will illustrate the deficiencies of the honour/shame model and discuss shame vocabulary in idolatry discourses; with Jeremiah, the probable existence and effects of ideological influences and with Ezekiel, the connections and distinctions between shame and impurity and the implications of the existence of shame terminology in the context of bawdy language.

### *i. The Unsuitability of the Honour/Shame Model*

#### *a. Honour, Shame and Isaiah*

Honour (כבוד) pertaining to humans, or men in particular, as depicted in the anthropological literature, is not well-attested in Isaiah and seldom contrasted with shame. As Domeris has pointed out with regard to honour in Proverbs, honour in Isaiah is attributed primarily to Yhwh. This is most memorably demonstrated in the vision of chapter 6, where the seraphim flying above Yhwh enthroned call to one another that the whole earth is filled with his כבוד. Where כבוד is alluded to in what might be regarded a context of shame, it is most often where human shortcoming is contrasted with Yhwh's glory. In chapter 3 the people's perverse behaviour, manifesting itself in an inversion of social standards, is described as a direct affront to Yhwh's כבוד (v.8)<sup>1</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Here there is no shame vocabulary as such but an account of deplorable human conduct that defies and is in sharp contrast to Yhwh's כבוד. At 40:5-6, too, where Yhwh's כבוד is revealed, any human equivalent is dismissed as mere 'grass'. In the Masoretic Text this equivalent is חסד (BDB 'goodness, kindness'). BHS, on the basis of 1 Peter 1:24, which has δόξα (Liddel and Scott, II 'the opinion which others have of one, reputation, honour, glory'), proposes הדר, which could be rendered 'honour' (BDB). הדר is another word describing Yhwh's splendour (2:10, 19, 21). When used of humans it is in a context which undercuts their claim to honour (cf. 5:14, where the splendid nobles are condemned to Sheol). It is also the quality the Servant of Yhwh is denied (53:2). The denial or taking of honour in the latter example cannot automatically be equated with an increase or presence of shame, as it is in the anthropological studies: at 50:7 the Servant is exempted from shame (see also below).

at 26:10-11 shame (בוש) is the emotion accompanying the realisation of Yhwh's majesty (גאון).<sup>2</sup> The image of 24:23, where even the moon and sun are abashed (חפר) and ashamed (בוש) in the proximity of Yhwh's כבוד, may also allude to the comparatively pathetic status of human honour: if even the celestial bodies are completely outshone by Yhwh, then humans infinitely more so. While כבוד is also used in Isaiah to convey the sense of a person's importance and influence (3:5)<sup>3</sup> this usage is secondary and human honour at any rate is derivative. Honour is depicted as a quality only Yhwh owns and bestows. This is evident at 42:8 where Yhwh reserves his honour for the Servant (וכבודי לא אחר לא-אחן, 'I will not give my honour to another') and also at 22:19ff. where he deposes Shebna and establishes a seat of honour (כסא כבוד) for Eliakim.

In Isaiah humans' כבוד, גאון and הדר are regarded negatively. These qualities are described as belonging rightfully to Yhwh alone. Neither status, nor wealth, both of which are associated with the notion of honour in the anthropological accounts and by

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<sup>2</sup> An analysis of the usage of words of the root גאון in Isaiah indicates that they (like words of the root כבוד) are used appropriately and approvingly of Yhwh. גאון/גאונה pertaining to Yhwh is, hence, translated 'majesty', 'glory' or 'splendour' (2:10, 19, 21; 13:3; 24:14; 26:10). Such words are also used in a positive sense when they refer to either Yhwh's deeds (12:5; also 60:15, where he confers גאון on Jerusalem) or something concrete associated directly with him (4:2). When גאון-words pertain to people or nations the sense is by far most often pejorative and usually translated 'pride', 'arrogance' or 'loftiness'. The consequence of humans' גאון/גאונה is usually a humbling punishment by Yhwh, the rightful holder of this attribute. Moab is criticised and 'dressed down' for her גאון (16:6ff.); as is Babylon (13:19; 14:11); Ephraim's pride (28:1, 3) is crushed by Yhwh (28:2) who emerges as the truly majestic one (28:5); the proud are threatened with being humbled (שפל) (2:12; 13:11) and dishonoured (חלל) (23:9). כבוד-words, I have argued, often function in a similar way: they are used in a positive sense when they qualify Yhwh and his acts (cf. 4:2, where כבוד is used alongside גאון in its positive sense) and pejoratively when they qualify a human claim that has no divine authority (cf. 23:9, where כבוד is used alongside גאון in its negative sense).

<sup>3</sup> Here the נכבד is contrasted with the נקלה. Presumably, the opposition is between a person of status or means and a person of little status or few resources.

Pedersen, are depicted as noble aspirations.<sup>4</sup> The social conduct negating shame which should be aspired to instead concerns not honour but knowledge of Yhwh, proper respect and humility. This evaluation of honour indicates quite a different set of principles to those espoused by the so-called Mediterranean personality. The priority of humility over honour,<sup>5</sup> is in contradiction to Mediterranean evaluations (Pitt-Rivers 1977: 43).

The competition for honour (the so-called challenge-riposte pattern), aimed at rising within the hierarchy of a highly stratified society, is also absent in Isaiah. Although Schneidau is not referring to such an interaction in particular, his comment that the Hebrew prophets do not attribute sacredness to the various systems of differences that constitute a culture's kinship and division-of-labour structures, because Yhwh obliterates preference, might go some way towards explaining this 'absence'. Schneidau states that, 'before [Yhwh], all men and their petty distinctions are as the undifferentiated dust of the desert. The privileged have no privilege, the achievers no achievement' (1976: 10). Yhwh's presence might thus be said to have rendered any existent challenge-riposte dynamic irrelevant<sup>6</sup> - (if perhaps not actually, at least within the literary context).

The gender-focus, attributing honour primarily to men and the capacity for conferring shame primarily to women, is not prominent in Isaiah either. There is horror expressed at the notion of women ruling (3:12), disapproval at female arrogance, lack of modesty and

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. the examples discussed in note 2 above and the condemnation of the self-aggrandising Shebna (22:15-19); of Tyre, noted for her revelry and riches (23:9) and of the Assyrians (37:26f.). Shame is pronounced on all three (22:18; 23:4; 37:27).

<sup>5</sup> Domeris also makes this observation with regard to Proverbs (1995: 96).

<sup>6</sup> Schneidau, while acknowledging that the Hebrew Bible can be viewed as culture-supporting myth, argues that this feature contributes to an unsettling effect that may be regarded as counter-cultural: 'The Bible insists that man is answerable not to his culture but to a being who transcends all culture. Even in his most nationalistic or tribal conceptions, the Old Testament God associates himself with the Children of Israel arbitrarily; he does not choose them because of their merits, nor does he embody their institutions as do other national gods. Instead of praising their culture, he insists that it be reformed; reproaches to Israel are interspersed even among the recountings of the triumphs of Gideon and David' (1976: 2). The Hebrew prophets, he continues, embrace alienation, in spite of fears of making themselves scapegoats, and then spread alienation among the people while showing 'a strange equanimity in contemplating the prospect of social disorder' (1976: 10). If Schneidau is correct, attempting to reconstruct actual social values from such 'socially disruptive' texts will clearly be problematic.

complacency (3:16ff; 32:9ff) and mention of the daughters of Zion's filth (which may be figurative of iniquity or shame) (4:4) but shame terminology appears in none of these contexts, nor is conduct that may be considered shameful associated in Isaiah with women in particular.<sup>7</sup> The sole exception may be 4:1 where dishonour (חֶרְפָּה) is associated explicitly with women.<sup>8</sup> Here seven women are seizing one man demanding that he take away their חֶרְפָּה. Klopfenstein argues that this word pertains to 'beschämt, scheu, verlegen, geniert sein', that is, to states tending to embarrassment.<sup>9</sup> It describes, he continues, 'die Wirkung einer peinlichen Situation auf die Gemüts- oder Bewußtseinslage des Betroffenen ... eine psychische Reaktion auf bestimmte Umstände ... die Unsicherheit im sozialen Verhalten bewirken' (1972: 182). Elucidations of 4:1 in the commentaries tend to accord with this explanation. Wildberger renders the word 'Schmach' and relates it to the women's fear of the socially-denigrating consequences of being single, such as childlessness and vulnerability to rape (1972: 149; also Watts 1985: 47). Oswalt relates it to a low legal and social identity (1986: 143); Clements to 'the social stigma' attaching to childlessness (1980: 52). The experience of dishonour here is one of feeling painfully embarrassed at the prospect of falling short of social ideals. There is not a connotation that the women are or have committed anything shameful.

In Isaiah shame words often pertain to dysfunctional relationships - usually between a disobedient person/people and the deity. Those who glorify or honour themselves instead of acknowledging that **יְהוָה** belongs to Yhwh are depicted as deserving shame; among them Shebna (22:18) and the arrogant Assyrians (37:27ff). Shame is also the consequence of other forms of misbehaviour that may be interpreted as indicating disrespect for Yhwh and therewith a fractured relationship. Putting trust in a foreign nation, such as Cush or Egypt, occasions shame (20:5; 30:3), as do putting trust in the

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<sup>7</sup> In chapter 3 the people of Judah, not just the women, are criticised: 3:14 singles out men. In chapter 32, again, not only complacent women but foolish and evil men are condemned (32:6-7).

<sup>8</sup> On shame language and the woman/city metaphor see below, IV.ii.a.

<sup>9</sup> See I.i. for the shame/embarrassment distinction.

Canaanite tree cults, which may be alluded to in 1:29,<sup>10</sup> or in idols (42:17; 44:9; 45:16), rebellion against Israel and her God (41:11; 45:24) and persistent wickedness (26:11; 66:5). Shame in Isaiah is not only the objective state of public disgrace resulting from improper conduct, but also an inner condition, a realisation of ignominy.<sup>11</sup> The sea (23:4), the sun and moon (24:23) and the proverbially lush Lebanon (33:9) feel shame alongside the כְּבוֹד of Yhwh - which is as it should be. It seems that if the people, through objective shaming, could come to feel this subjective shame, they might acquire a proper sense of humility, thereby redressing relational imbalances and becoming worthy of Yhwh's restoration (29:22; 61:7). Yhwh can and will redeem from shame in some circumstances (45:17-22; 54:4; 61:7) but those who are faithful and obedient to him will never incur shame (49:23; 50:6-7; 65:13).

The relational usages of shame-vocabulary in Isaiah, highlighting the failure to pay proper respect to Yhwh, fit in well with some of the book's other recurrent themes. Prominent is, for instance, the exposition of Yhwh's power; this is strikingly displayed

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<sup>10</sup> With regard to 1:29, most commentators identify the oaks and gardens as places for worshipping gods other than Yhwh (cf. Watts 1985: 25; Clements 1980: 37; Oswalt 1986: 111; Wildberger claims that the similarity between אֱלֹהִים 'goddess' and אֵיל/אֱלֹהִים 'tree' is significant and that here and at 57:5 fertility rites are alluded to, 1972: 71). Fohrer, however, points out that the text, while referring to oaks and gardens, does not specify their deification and also, that v.31 is concerned with the downfall of the mighty, not apostates: 'Daher handelt es sich um die Anklage der sozialen Starken, die Baumhaine und Gärten in ihren Besitz bringen' (1960: 49). Kaiser, while recognising some support for Fohrer's argument at 5:8, agrees with the mainstream opinion that the venues allude to cultic activity that is manifestly not connected with Yhwh (1983: 46). Whilst there is mention of disapproved of sacrifice in gardens at 65:3 and of deplorable conduct among oaks at 57:5, there is also support for Fohrer's argument in that chapter 1 appears to be directed at the socially exploitative rather than practitioners of foreign rites. 1:11ff. criticises the sacrifices not because they are for other gods but because they are elaborate (and presumably also costly) outward displays unsupported by the devotional and obedient inward condition of which they should be reflective. The people are urged to refrain from such rebelliousness (1:20) and at 1:17 and 23 reprimanded for their cruel actions in the social realm, where the poor and vulnerable are being neglected, which appears to be representative of this disobedience. At 1:29, then, social injustice rather than apostasy may be at issue.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance Elliger's summarising statement on shame in Isaiah: 'Die Kehrseite ist, daß man bei Verlust des Standes auch das Ansehen verliert sowohl bei den anderen als auch bei sich selbst. ... Praktisch gehört beides zusammen... Die Hauptsache aber bei alledem ist nicht der Zusammenhang von aktiver und passiver Reaktion, sondern das unauflösliche Ineinander von diesen subjektiven Reaktionen und jenem objektiven Bedeutungsverlust; die beiden Begriffe treten noch nicht auseinander, wie das bei unserem deutschen "sich schämen" und "beschämt werden" einerseits und "zu Schanden werden" ... andererseits der Fall ist' (1970: 134).

in the theophany of chapter 6 and constantly stressed in statements about his total control over the cosmos (34:4; 40:22ff; 42:5; 44:24; 50:2; 51:13ff), time (41:4; 48:3ff) and political events (42:24f), all of which may be said to justify his authority and the respect and proper humility which he demands from his people. Their stubborn refusal to 'know' Yhwh and respect his ordinances (1:3) is captured in the frequent use of inversion language: his people call evil good and good evil, mistake darkness for light and sweet for bitter (5:20) and the foolishness of their disobedience is compared to the absurdity of an axe raising itself above him who swings it (10:15), or a pot saying to its potter that he knows nothing (29:16). Such inversion is depicted as a direct affront to one's creator (45:9f). All of these images describe a lack of respect, obedience and knowledge.

Klopfenstein proposes that the Prophets are using shame vocabulary with a legal nuance (*gerichtstheologisch*). Throughout Isaiah, he suggests, much of the shame-vocabulary describes the painful exposure of iniquities in the context of a divine courtroom with Yhwh's role being primarily that of an executor of the Law. With regard to 1:29--'You will be ashamed (חַתָּבִשׁוּ) because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted; you will be disgraced (תִּחְפְּרוּ) because of the gardens that you have chosen'--for instance, Klopfenstein envisages the context of the divine court in which the disobedient are publicly disgraced for their apostasy (1972: 60f.). Klopfenstein's claim that most shame-vocabulary functions within a wider forensic context is, I think, too strong. Rather than identifying shame-language as legal language, both shame-language and language that may arguably be considered appropriate of or borrowed from judicial procedures are used

in Isaiah to inculcate a sense of proper social values<sup>12</sup> in a time when mores are perceived as having broken down, entailing calamity.

When one's inner condition is sound (which appears to be the aim of the inculcation of shame) one is, ultimately, preserved from being shamed which, when it reflects an unsound inner condition, is felt so keenly. The Servant of Yhwh, therefore, says that he has opened his ears to Yhwh and not been rebellious: an expression of proper faithfulness and obedience (50:5). He goes on to say that he has been beaten, had his beard pulled out, been mocked and spat at (50:6): all of which are public forms of humiliation.<sup>13</sup> In the following verse, however, the Servant says, 'because Adonai Yhwh helps me I will not be disgraced (לֹא נִכְלַמְתִּי), because I have set my face like flint and I know that I will not be put to shame (לֹא אֲבוֹשׁ)'. As Young points out, the idea that even public degradation does not truly shame the Servant can best be explained with recourse to his inner condition (1969: 233). Babylon's humiliation is depicted by means of the metaphor of a woman stripped of her veil (47:3) and her displayed nakedness as a fitting correlative of her shameful inner condition. The same might be said for the haughty women whose ornaments will be removed and scalps shaved and afflicted with sores, their ugliness thereby revealing an inner unwholesomeness (3:17). The men, too, will fare no better: Yhwh has commissioned the King of Assyria with shaming them by shaving the hair of their heads, bodies (or possibly genitals) and beards (7: 20). All these punishments are preceded by reasons as to their justification, all are the consequences of

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<sup>12</sup> 'Proper social values', that is, as labelled by the authors (cf. Chalcraft's comments, cited in II.i), who were seemingly struggling to make sense of contemporary upheavals and to find a way of attaining restoration. Klopfenstein's claim that shame-language is characteristic of a forensic context does not account for its paucity in the Torah, much of which concerns legal matters. The sole occurrences of words of the root בּוֹשׁ appear at Genesis 2:25 and Deuteronomy 25:11. The former is not a prescriptive text, while in the latter the word has the concrete sense of 'genitals'. Words of the root נִלְם occur at Numbers 12:14 and 25:3 and of the root קָלָה at Deuteronomy 27:16. At Deuteronomy 32:5a NIV translates, '[t]hey have acted corruptly towards him [Yhwh]; to their shame they are no longer his children ...'. The word here is מוֹנֶה . Words of the root מָאָה, in the Torah and elsewhere, usually refer to a physical defect (Lev. 21:17-23; 2 Sam. 14:25; Song of Songs 4:7). Here and at Job 11:15 (NIV again translates 'shame') the image, while drawing on the idea of stigma attached to physical imperfection, seems to have the figurative nuance of moral blemish (cf. Prov. 9:7, too, where מוֹם is in a parallel syntactic relationship with the abstract noun קִלְוִן). RSV has 'blemish' at Deuteronomy 32:5 and Job 11:15.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Huber's detailed discussion (1983: 58ff).

disobedience and in each public shaming exposes inner shamefulness. The Servant, who has been dutiful, on the other hand, is not shamed precisely because there is no such perverse inner condition to expose. It seems, then, that while painful experiences may befall even the righteous and obedient, shame is withheld from those whose conscience is clear.<sup>14</sup>

Shame entails a feeling of personal short-coming and negative self-evaluation, often with regard to moral culpability. The relative preponderance of shame vocabulary in Isaiah may be aimed at an inculcation of conduct that is less ritual and more conscience-driven. Whereas onus-free impurities and pollutions can be amended by rites of purification entailing separation for one day for minor, for seven days for major impurities, or by offering sacrifices (Frymer-Kensky 1983), shame resulting from onus-charged transgressions is only alleviated through Yhwh's mercy which may be elicited by restoring one's inner condition and exercising proper respect and obedience. This is entirely in line with the tenor of Yhwh's complaints at 1:11-17: clear from this is that Yhwh does not want mechanical ritual from his people but instead, commitment and inner, moral soundness. The emotion shame, characterised both by the self judging the self and finding it to be wanting (be it due to wrongdoing or a sense of inadequacy before a significant other) and by the construction of internal sanctions may be said to be particularly apt for inducing such behaviour.

In the context of Isaiah, then, shame is not particularly well elucidated in terms of its alleged relation to honour. Neither Pedersen's discussion, which resorts to defining shame as little more than the negative of honour without paying closer attention to where shame vocabulary actually occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures, nor the anthropological

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<sup>14</sup> The prime example is Job. Job loses status (19:9; chapter 29) and is justifiably outraged at the misfortunes which befall him and aggrieved at being publicly mocked and ridiculed (12:4; 17:6; 19:18; 30:1, 9-10) but he is not, I would argue, ashamed. While he complains of his miserable condition (קלון) at 10:15 and humiliation (חרפה) at 19:5, his inner condition (like the Servant's) is maintained. Job thus continually asserts his blamelessness (9:21; 12:4; 27:6; 31:1ff.), attributes his misfortune not to his own deeds but to Yhwh's superior power (6:4; 10:3, 7; 12:9; 17:6; 27:2) and accuses his comforters for tormenting and shaming him unfairly (19:3, NIV: '... shamelessly you attack me', תכלימוני לא-חבשו חזקו-לי). Dobbs-Allsopp describes Job as an archetypal tragic hero whose role it is to refuse to accept the tragic event: 'The hero must act with hubris and in defiance' (1997: 43).

studies of the Mediterranean, with their gender-political focus prove particularly fruitful for an examination of shame in Isaiah. If we understand honour as a primarily divine attribute and shame as a consequence of relational breakdown between humans and God, we can connect the two notions. Honour, however, is not the opposite of shame in so far that God's people should strive for honour as a means of overcoming shame. Honour is a quality Yhwh will give to whom he chooses (his Servant for instance). What he demands and seeks to inculcate through shame is that his people know and obey and respect him. The emphasis is on internal disposition rather than public enactment; although shaming public exposure can manifest inner shortcoming.

Honour/shame societies as described in anthropological studies are not reflected in Isaiah. Honour, represented by status (כבוד, הדר) or pride in one's claim to honour (גאון), is not depicted as a social value to be strived and competed for but as a quality to be humbly conceded to Yhwh. Wealth, sometimes regarded as an outward correlative of honour,<sup>15</sup> is condemned or devalued: those endowed enough to sacrifice fattened cattle are rebuked for giving effusive offerings in place of behaving charitably to the socially disadvantaged (1:11ff.); pursuing wealth is connected with corruption and cruelty (1:23) and riches are at any rate ephemeral (14:11). In the case of Shebna, furthermore, striving for social elevation is despised and brought to a swift end by Yhwh (22:15ff.). Shame, meanwhile, is not associated with or conferred by women's sexuality but, generally-speaking, generated by Yhwh or by a sense of ignominy alongside or of wrongly invested loyalty in someone or something other than him. It might, therefore, be said that if the texts of Isaiah were produced in honour/shame societies they promulgate a counter-cultural set of values where honour is no longer the social ideal. }

While it may be the case that the authors of Isaiah are reacting against social values considered normative, I would nevertheless reiterate that it remains impossible to reconstruct the societies in which the texts were embedded and stress that the anthropological model is defective with regard to Isaiah for two reasons. First, Yhwh is represented as the wielder of honour and shame. His control over giving and taking honour eliminates the notions of inter-human challenge-ripostes and the claiming and

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<sup>15</sup> At 10:3 the riches that cannot avert disaster are referred to as כבודם.

acknowledging of honour. Yhwh's presence, one might say, deconstructs the social arrangements advanced by interpreters using anthropological data. Secondly, in so far as social patterns are evident in Isaiah, they pertain not to ordinary day-to-day life in small face-to-face societies, such as are typical of the Mediterranean field studies, but to extreme conditions and turbulences of invasion and war (5:26ff.; 7:17; 8:7; 29:1-3; 36:1), destruction and siege (1:7-8; 3:25), violence, devastation, exile and starvation (3:1-5; 5:9-10, 13; 33:7-9; 42:24-25): to a world where social values are depicted as inverted (5:20-23; 10:15; 29:16; 32:5; 45:9-10). The rhetoric describing this context is often vivid and emotively charged. If these *are* accounts approximating a social reality, then it is a social reality in extreme circumstances where social values are more likely to have been compromised.

For instance, even if the societies in which the texts of Isaiah were produced were ordinarily societies in which, as in the communities of the modern anthropological studies, women behaved in public in a modest, restrained way and generally encouraged to be passive and submissive, what the text actually describes at 4:1 is a situation quite contrary to such conduct. The description of seven women seizing one man and demanding he marry them is likely to be atypical and reflective of unstable social conditions. While ultimately the verity of this can only be guessed at, it still seems unhelpful to me to project a social-sciences model on to, or attempt to discern the core social values of texts which not only feature Yhwh, the representation of whom has a crucial impact on the social dynamics portrayed, but which are at pains to stress a most untypical state of affairs. The rhetoric of Isaiah tries to make sense of a situation of extremity, described at 14:3 as one of suffering (עֲצָב), turmoil (רָגַז) and harsh servitude (הַעֲבָדָה הַקָּשָׁה). The shame discourses, I will argue, sometimes function within emotionally inciting referred metaphors. My focus in IV.ii. will be on why shame might be considered a particularly apt phenomenon for such metaphors.

### ***b. Excursus: Shame and the Role of Yhwh***

Yhwh's role in the context of the prophetic construction of shame is, we have seen, significant but not, to my knowledge, adequately discussed in the interpretive literature. Where the anthropological honour-shame model is applied to biblical texts, for instance, the issue of the representation of Yhwh is conspicuously absent. Perhaps, because in the field studies, where honour and shame are generally depicted as pertaining to competition among men who are relative equals, the notion or presence of Yhwh, an all-powerful, competition-eliminating super-force, may be regarded as sitting uneasily alongside such a social arrangement. Alternatively, Yhwh, like the monarch as described by Pitt-Rivers, may be above criticism (1977: 15); with the consequence, that the relevance of shame with regard to him falls away entirely. Yhwh's function in an alleged honour-shame dynamic or his connection with shame in particular, at any rate, rarely receives a mention.

Domeris has pointed out that in the book of Proverbs honour is depicted not as the social, status-conferring commodity disputed for among men but as a quality of Yhwh's alone, which he distributes as he pleases; shame, on the other hand, is associated with the foolish or godless, never with Yhwh (cf. III.ii.i.). DeSilva identifies honour with 'devout reason' as exemplified by fidelity to Yhwh and the Torah, whilst shame is a quality incurred when such fidelity is compromised (cf. III.i.e.). Honour thus belongs to Yhwh, whereas shame belongs to humanity.

Huber, however, argues that Yhwh is capable of a sense of shame and that this can be deduced in the Psalms. Yhwh, she claims, on the one hand *confers* shame on his people, usually by means of abandonment and consequent exposure to suffering (1983: 164); while on the other, incongruity is exploited with a view to *arousing* shame in Yhwh himself. When, for instance, there exists incongruity between what Yhwh has promised and what he is actually doing, his failure to achieve or fulfil an ideal or promise is implied and in that failure shame is aroused (1983: 172f.). In Psalm 74, Huber expands, an incongruity between Yhwh's promises and the present shameful condition which is perceived to be unjust is made more acute by a juxtaposition with former acts of honour and creation (1983: 170). Her conclusion is that Yhwh, too, is vulnerable to shaming. Whilst his worshippers have an obligation to honour him, their dishonour may reflect on

his honour, too, and may be appealed to in order to influence his behaviour (1983: 175). Sherwood's depiction of Yhwh in Hosea 1-3 could also be connected with Huber's comments. Sherwood describes Yhwh as being represented as an abusive figure who coerces his people into submission by humiliating them (1996: 212) but who is also susceptible to the competition of another God, such as Baal, next to whom he does not wish to appear deficient. Citing Ugaritic parallels, Sherwood illustrates that 'Yhwh not only competes with Baal for the role of provider, but competes using the same lexis' (1996: 233) and that he has 'responded to peer pressure' (1996: 225). This could be identified with a sense of shame: that is, the feeling incited by a perception of shortcoming, or of being seen to be inadequate alongside another.

Hobbs, too, implies that Yhwh can be shamed. Recognising a patron-client social pattern in the background of a significant portion of biblical literature, Hobbs explains that both parties are dependent on each other for honour:

The patron gains honor through the widespread knowledge that he can sustain a large body of clients or retainers through his "generosity," and clients gain honor by being associated with such a figure. The breaking of this bond by one or the other results in shaming the opposite partner (1997: 502).

The people of Israel/Judah through disobedience infringe on their bond with Yhwh and thus suffer the shaming punishments of exile and ridicule but, according to Hobbs, a further implication is that exile is also 'a result of their Patron *par excellence*, Yahweh, not being able to sustain his clients' (1997: 503). This incisive shame experience affecting both participants of the relationship, furthermore, culminated, Hobbs continues, in the creative theological activity of the exilic and postexilic prophets, where shame language is comparatively prominent.

None of these commentators addresses Yhwh's relationship with shame in any remotely detailed way. These excerpts do, however, suggest two alternative positions: 1) Yhwh is represented as the generator of shame but as exempt from it, with shame pertaining to humans only (Domeris); perhaps, his Torah can be seen as some kind of means to attaining honour and avoiding shame (deSilva), in which case he may have a role loosely equated with society's superego and 2) Yhwh is represented as conferring shame but also

as susceptible to it; he is rather like an extra-powerful human being (Sherwood; Huber; Hobbs). In Isaiah, as we have seen, the former position applies. Shame, hence, is primarily indicative of human conduct. In the following section I will explore one prominent theme of human shame in Isaiah: idolatry.

## *ii. Metaphor and Idolatry*

### *a. Women, Shame and Referred Metaphor*

Metaphor is a language device which gives rise to co-present thoughts.<sup>16</sup> Richards has referred to this co-presence as ‘two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction’ (1981: 51). Ricoeur, meanwhile, describes metaphorical meaning as a semantic clash effecting the collapse of the literal meaning and creation of a new meaning (1981: 232). Richards has introduced the names ‘tenor’ for the subject to which the metaphor is applied and ‘vehicle’ for the metaphorical term itself (1981: 53). Meaning, he argues, is achieved when the resemblance between tenor and vehicle is grasped. Richards by no means denies but Ricoeur is careful explicitly to stress ‘the semantic role of imagination (and by implication, feeling) in the establishment of metaphorical sense’ (1981: 229). Such an acknowledgement gives rise to admissions of subjective interpretation.<sup>17</sup>

In analysing the metaphors of the prophetic books, too, much will depend on personal estimation as to what metaphorical language is capable of suggesting. This is not to say that one should not as far as is possible attempt to restrain subjectivity by considering the ‘linguistic conventions and facets of the general culture’ of the communities which gave rise to the metaphors (Henle 1981: 95). Henle points out using a vivid example that such an attempt is vital especially when evaluation is the basis of the metaphorical parallel: ‘A popular song of some years ago praised a young lady by saying to her “You’re the cream in my coffee.” Entirely the wrong impression would be obtained in a community which

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<sup>16</sup> I found the articles in Johnson’s edition (1981) to provide both a useful introduction and an insight into the complexities of metaphor.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Davidson: ‘Metaphor is the dreamwork of language and, like all dreamwork, its interpretation reflects as much on the interpreter as on the originator. ... understanding a metaphor is as much creative endeavor as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules’ (1981: 200).

drank its coffee black' (1981: 95).<sup>18</sup>

One prominent prophetic metaphor which sometimes incorporates shame discourses is that of a city cast in the role of a woman.<sup>19</sup> Schmitt argues that speaking of a city as a **בתולה**, for instance, is part of 'traditional Israelite language' (1991: 587).<sup>20</sup> The word is not to be understood as 'virgin' in the modern English sense but primarily as 'woman': at Isaiah 47, as Schmitt points out, the city of Babylon is simultaneously **בתולה**, daughter (47:1), mother and widow (47:8) (1991: 586f.). It probably connotes a young woman under the protection of her father or husband, just as the capitals Samaria and Jerusalem were perceived as being under Yhwh's protection. In Amos 5:2 and Jeremiah 18:13, where the word occurs in a construct relationship with 'Israel', that protection is coming to an end. In Isaiah 47 the disempowerment of unprotected Babylon (**בתולה** **בה-בבל**, 47:1) is described as an uncovering of a woman's nakedness and a making visible of her shame (**חורפה**, 47:3). In Jeremiah and Ezekiel, too, where the city/woman metaphor is linked with shame discourses, such voyeuristic sexualised language is prominent.

Setel claims that '... the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve "shorter" prophets ... seem to be the first to use objectified female sexuality as a symbol of evil'

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<sup>18</sup> Sociological aspects of metaphor were explored by and came to prominence through the work of the American linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. Their hypothesis that the structure of a language partly determines a native speaker's categorisation of experience, while thought-provoking, is usefully considered in the light of Barr's cautionary comments regarding the pursuit of parallelism of language and thought into the realms of 'linguistic fantasy' (1961: 39ff.). On the dynamics between words and meanings in the context of biblical literature I found both Silva (1983: 22ff.) and Cotterell and Turner (1989) very useful. While I agree with Luzbetak that one should be sensitive to the cultural presuppositions of a text and to try to fathom its symbolic system and 'silent language' (1990: 115), I do not share his optimism that the original impact and message can then be correctly understood (1990: 110).

<sup>19</sup> Arguably, this metaphor permits some scope for illuminating the role of women in ancient Israel, with a view to comparing it to that described in the Mediterranean studies. While I would not deny this completely, such attempts are hampered by the metaphorical status of the 'woman'. I will develop this complication in VI.ii.b.

<sup>20</sup> This was argued in an earlier article by Fitzgerald (1972), who traces the image back to the Canaanite notion of representing capital cities as the consorts of patron deities.

(1985: 86). She also argues that they contain pornographic features (1985: 87). Ezekiel, I will argue in chapter VI, portrays women's sexuality as a symbol of sin and impurity; Isaiah, on the other hand, strikes me as decidedly less gratuitous and condemning. The degrading of women in Isaiah, further, may be aimed not at arousing voyeuristic titillation (as pornography does) but, as in Lamentations, shame and outrage. To digress briefly, I believe that in Lamentations the personification of Jerusalem as a desolate and weeping woman affects the tone considerably. While Yhwh is called righteous (1:18) and is humbly acquiesced to in expressions of repentance, he is a wrecker of fierce vengeance (1:5), sending fire, spreading a net and trampling on the Virgin Daughter of Judah (1:13-15); he is pitiless (2:2) and 'like an enemy' (2:4-5). I would say that this could justifiably be called emotive imagery which shows Yhwh in a less than edifying light. Alongside this brute the Virgin or Daughter of Zion, a title referred to insistently, appears as particularly vulnerable and an easy target. Though she is not guiltless, the punishment seems appallingly severe. The chorus describing her tearfulness and the plea for Yhwh to relent (2:20) only heighten the sense of victimisation. Whereas humans are instructed to restrict flogging so as not to deprive even a wrongdoer of human dignity (Deut. 25:3),<sup>21</sup> Yhwh seems here (and in the case of Job also) to be indulging in viciousness. This severity might be said to suggest an *excess* of humiliation, which might transpire in outrage rather than shame.

Dobbs-Allsopp, alternatively, describes the situation of the personified Zion of Lamentations as typical of the genre of tragedy:

the disaster that befalls the tragic protagonist may result from some sin or wrongdoing, a transgression deliberately pursued or innocently performed, a simple misjudgment, but in any case with the consequences out of proportion with the deed (1997: 35).

Ultimately, tragedy is a matter for the gods whose power 'is not questioned, but their

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<sup>21</sup> Weber points out that such attention to 'the ethical problems of the resentment of repressed and sublimated revenge' is even more in evidence in the Talmud: 'For nothing is more impressively emphasized than the commandment: not to will the "shaming" of others' (1952: 404). See also Maimonides (Mishneh Torah, Deot VI, 8): "If anyone shames his fellow man in public," declared the rabbis, "he forfeits his share in the next world." Consequently, one should be very careful not to humiliate another human being publicly, whether he is young or old' (from *Maimonides: His Wisdom For Our Time*, ed. by Gilbert S. Rosenthal. New York: Walker and Company, 1969, p.22). This, incidentally, represents a sentiment contrary to that of the Psalter, where shame is repeatedly wished upon the enemy (see appendix).

sense of justice and goodness certainly is' (1997: 35). Dobbs-Allsopp agrees that Zion is more sinned against than sinning, pointing out that the sin is referred to infrequently and imprecisely; in sharp contrast to the abundance of vivid images of suffering (1997: 37ff.). Even the note of hope in 3:19-39 does not achieve a counter-balance for 'the defiance, the hubris that emerges in Lamentations, demanding recognition of human integrity and expressing the anger and despair of a community that has suffered greatly' (1997: 53f.). It provides, rather, 'a choric frame of reference', of traditional sentiments, much like the words of Job's counsellors (1997: 49), that 'must ultimately be read ironically' (1997: 50). Westermann, alternatively, regards the *Anklage Gottes* a characteristic element of the lament genre and an expression of faith in adversity. Pointing to Lamentations, Psalm 13 and Job as examples, he refutes the existence of any criticism of the deity. The accusations in these texts are not, for instance, indictments of God in the legal sense, he argues, because the idea of a judicial forum before which God could be held accountable 'is impossible in the Biblical understanding' (1994: 92). The genre arises, Westermann argues, from suffering of such intensity that it can no longer be comprehended, or envisaged as resulting from a deliberate act of God. While one psychological response to catastrophe might be private and public denial of God, the lament and accusation of God actually integrate faith into suffering: 'In the place of turning away from God ... the Bible knows of another possibility: the one who holds up the incomprehensible against God manages still, in that very process, to hold firmly to God' (1994: 93). Both Dobbs-Allsopp and Westermann acknowledge that Lamentation's Zion is an object worthy of pity. Westermann denies that this depiction implicates and criticises Yhwh as perpetrator of shame and cruelty, whereas I am more inclined to agree with Dobbs-Allsopp that Yhwh's actions are met with a sense of shame so profound as to border on feelings of both outrage and abasement.

Returning now to Isaiah, the positive image of restored Zion (as opposed to the sinning and punished Zion of Lamentations), too, is a woman (54:1ff.): one who will not suffer shame, disgrace, humiliation or reproach (חַרָּה, חֶפֶז, כָּלֵם, בּוֹשׁ).<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere, female qualities, in particular maternal love, are extolled - again balancing an impression

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<sup>22</sup> With Ezekiel, female imagery is prominent in descriptions of sin and impurity but not in descriptions of restoration (VI.ii.b.).

that women might be regarded as somehow more prone to shamefulness.<sup>23</sup> The prophetic metaphor of military defeat as a woman stripped and humiliated (Isa. 47; Jer. 13:22-27; Ezek. 16:37ff.; 23:10, 26, 29; Nahum 3:5)<sup>24</sup> could possibly have resulted not from a value-system associating women with an inherent capacity for signifying and conferring shame but from a combination of the familiar notion of depicting cities as women, on the one hand, and the painful images of immediate experience on the other. Prostitution and violence against women, both of which feature in the feminised metaphors, are likely to have belonged to the ugly reality of warfare: they are described in passing in various prophetic texts (e.g. Amos 1:13; 7:17; Joel 3:3; Hos. 13:16; Lam. 5:11; Jer. 8:10) and such is the case to this day. The metaphor may thus be referred in the sense that it incorporates actual experience into the metaphor. In this context shame discourses, much like the so-called Janus paronomasia,<sup>25</sup> may be said sometimes to look back to concrete humiliating circumstances and forward to the inward experience of shame which is capable of effecting proper respect and preparing for a restoration where shame is eliminated.

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<sup>23</sup> Mollenkott points out that maternal imagery is used several times in Isaiah of Yhwh (42:14; 46:3; 49:15; 66:13) and suggests that '[c]learly the comparison of God's love with the love of a nursing mother [49:15] indicates that in the author's eyes, such motherlove is the *most* constant, *most* reliable, and *most* consistent of all forms of human caring' (1986: 20).

<sup>24</sup> In Hosea a parallel is drawn between Gomer and faithless Israel - in this instance, between a woman and a nation, rather than a city. Gomer, like the woman representing Babylon, is stripped publicly (2:12) and her נבלה revealed before the eyes of her lovers. The noun נבלה pertains elsewhere in a non-concrete sense to 'disgraceful folly' (BDB) of a sexual kind (Gen. 34:7; Deut. 22:21; Judges 19:23; 2 Sam. 13:12; Jer. 29:23), or to sacrilege (Roth 1960: 406). It seems to refer to churlishness in a more general sense at Isaiah 32:6. Whether the stripping of Gomer is also a metaphor for Israel's punishment through military defeat is less clear. Israel's sin here is apostasy and it is true that in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel also the worship of idols is a resonant theme and often cited as grounds for judgment through military conquest. Restoration in Hosea 2, further, is associated with a termination of battles (2:20). A link between stripping and military action, nevertheless, is not explicit and cannot be assumed.

<sup>25</sup> The designation 'Janus pun' is used by both Michael V. Fox (*The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) and John G. Snaith (*Song of Songs*. The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Marshall Pickering, W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), who attribute it to Cyrus H. Gordon. They give this name to an image which looks both back to an image occurring earlier in a text and forward to another occurring later. Janus puns often effect *double entendre*.

Washington has argued that both the biblical laws of war (Deut. 20:1-20; 21:10-14) and prophetic imagery inscribe 'the discursive positioning of the feminine as object of violence' (1997: 346) and that the character of ancient Israelite society is that of a rape culture. In such a culture, he explains, 'a relatively high incidence of sexual violence is supported by social mechanisms ranging from the tacit acceptance of sexual assault to the ritual celebration of rape' (1997: 352, note 108). Rape, furthermore, is understood not as a crime against women but against the possession of fathers and husbands, 'because the culture circulating through these texts does not grant to women their bodily integrity' (1997: 353). Washington concedes that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a cultural record such as might be gained from direct ethnographic observation but, instead, literary constructs. None the less, he claims, the prevalence of rape in biblical narrative might be said to indicate a rape culture.<sup>26</sup> Evidence of this may, he continues, also be found in the figurative depiction of the conquered city as a raped woman and the punishing God as vengeful rapist (1997: 354). Here, Washington claims, the reality of violence against women is erased through

facile images of redemption, such as the improbable restoration of the devastated woman to the status of a cherished virginal bride (Isa. 62:3-5), or the unproblematic renewal of relationship once the deity-husband's murderous sexual rage has been spent (Hos. 2:16-17) (1997: 356).

While I would agree that the image of the brutally punished woman inaugurating restoration in Ezekiel has disturbing implications,<sup>27</sup> it remains important, I think, to stress what Washington has admitted: namely, that neither the depiction of raped women in the narratives, nor the imagery of the prophets can be said to encapsulate social reality. While Washington's reflections on the focalisation of rape depictions in biblical texts do

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<sup>26</sup> He cites the depictions of Hagar, whose 'sexual subjugation to Abraham and Sarah can scarcely be regarded as consensual'; Dinah; the Midianite women (Num. 31:18); the Levite's wife (Judg. 19:25); the women of Jabesh-gilead and Shiloh (Judg. 21:12-14; 19-23); Rizpah; Bathsheba; Tamar; and David's wives who 'all make clear that sexual assault and coercion were considered commonplace in ancient Israel' (1997: 353 and note 110). This claim strikes me as too strong. Even if they were 'considered commonplace', it does not follow that they were not strongly condemned, or that the women were not regarded with compassion and empathy (as, according to the text, Tamar was).

<sup>27</sup> See below, VI.ii.a and b.

disclose a tendency to reify raped women, there exists scope, too, for a more moderate and compassionate regard. Washington's claims, for instance, that 'Tamar's desolation quickly fades from view' and that 'her memory as a delectable rape victim (in the masculinist mind's eye) is preserved in her niece and namesake, Absalom's daughter Tamar, "a beautiful woman" (2 Sam. 14:27)' (1997: 353) betray his personal slant on the story. I would argue that Tamar, whose direct speech and entreaties, wailing and desolation, are recounted in the story (2 Sam. 13:12ff.), who is referred to again later (13:32) and who may be regarded as living on in her namesake, Absalom's daughter, who was possibly named after her as a mark of affection, emerges as a vivid and emotionally affecting figure who is not easily forgotten. The reference to her niece's beauty, furthermore, seems to be harking back to the description of Tamar in 13:1. I do not see here an allusion to delectability for rape but a sense of hope that the young Tamar, so like her aunt, may go on to live a life that was denied her aunt through an act of unmitigated brutality.<sup>28</sup> In Lamentations, too, there is grief felt for the women of Jerusalem (3:51) and rape is cited in the catalogue of misfortunes preceding an entreaty to Yhwh to remember Jerusalem (5:11), which seems to indicate, or be aimed at inciting, compassion and perhaps, also, an identification with the woman as victim of violence, rather than as a man's defiled possession.

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<sup>28</sup> Washington accuses Bechtel (see III.ii.e.) of erasing the forced sexual subjugation of Dinah by focusing on Shechem's loving (אהב) and bonding with her (דבק, Gen. 34:3) and on Jacob and Hamor's willingness to arrange their marriage, rather than on Shechem's taking (לקח), sexually penetrating and humiliating her (שכב, ענה, Gen. 34:3) (1997: 357 and note 127). While I find Washington's comments valuable in this particular instance, I would argue that his insistence that rape is inscribed in biblical literature only insofar as it offends men, thereby entirely erasing the reality of violence against women (1997: 356) is too strong. The rape of Tamar and (though to a lesser extent) the personified Jerusalem of Lamentations, is vividly conveyed and identification with the victim is sympathetic. Washington's view that Tamar's niece and namesake is presented as a delectable rape victim is, I would argue, a figment of his own convictions regarding the 'masculinist mind's eye' filtering all biblical rape accounts (1997: 353), not an inevitability arising from the text.

The negative and sexualised depiction of sinning Jerusalem as a woman receives scant attention in Isaiah.<sup>29</sup> Described as having become impure (1:22), Jerusalem is likened to a city of faithfulness that has become a prostitute (1:21) (Galambush 1992: 52f.). This metaphor, which is considerably more elaborate in Ezekiel, is amply counterbalanced with positive feminine imagery pertaining to restoration (54:1ff.; 62:1-5). While Washington has dismissed prophetic rhetoric pertaining to women's sexuality as 'facile' and as perpetuating violence against women (1997: 356), I would say that this is less true of Isaiah than of Ezekiel. While rape may well have been in ancient Israel as it is nowadays, one of the brutal and widely practised consequences of military invasion and may therefore have infiltrated the figurative imagery of the prophets as a referred metaphor, its existence need not signify a rape culture which condones rape and regards women solely as vessels capable of containing or threatening male power and prestige.

### *b. Shame and Idolatry*

The sexualised woman metaphor and its association with apostasy and shame are more prominent in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In Isaiah shame is most often associated (in a non-feminised way) with idolatry. Foreign religious practices and extravagant idols are much lambasted. At 2:6 Israel is rebuked for being 'full of the East', for practising divination 'like the Philistines' and for having dealings with foreigners (נְכַרִּים).<sup>30</sup> The following verses describe that the land is full of silver, gold, treasures and idols. In the light of the announcement that a humbling of the arrogant and lofty will ensue (2:9, 11-17), bringing about abandonment of idols (2:18, 20), this abundance is indicative not of reward but of

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<sup>29</sup> This image is used of foreign cities: of Babylon, who is publicly stripped (47:3) and of Tyre, who is likened to a forgotten prostitute (23:15ff.). Babylon, unlike Jerusalem in Ezekiel, is not rebuked and put to shame for a crime depicted as adultery but for her pride. Galambush comments: 'Remarkably, Queen Babylon's sexual integrity is never impugned' (1992: 43). Sidon, too, is told to be ashamed (23:4) without any allusion to negatively evaluated sexual conduct. While foreign cities may thus occasionally be depicted as women who are sexually promiscuous (Tyre), proud (Babylon) and exulting (Sidon, 23:12), they are not, like Jerusalem in Ezekiel, accused of adultery. Galambush explains: 'Presumably Yahweh was not as concerned with the sexual conduct of other gods' wives as he was with that of his own wife' (1992: 27, note 5). In the background of these metaphors lies, she argues, the ancient Near Eastern conception of the city being not only mother to her inhabitants but consort of the patron deity (see Fitzgerald 1972).

<sup>30</sup> NIV translates the word 'pagans', whereas van der Toorn claims that נְכַרִּים can also pertain to Israelites who are considered outsiders (1989: 199). In this context of Eastern practices and Philistines נְכַרִּים probably refers to foreigners. The tone is pejorative.

something regarded pejoratively. In chapters 40-48 this topos is particularly prominent and here shame language appears repeatedly. As in chapter 2, the power and glory of Yhwh are stressed (2:10-21; 40:5ff.) and contrasted with the insignificance of idols (40:18f.). Israel is small and weak but Yhwh will help her (41:14), while shame (41:11: **יִבְשׁוּ וְכָל־מוֹ**) befalls all who oppose him. Elsewhere, shame is the consequence of trusting in idols (42:17: **יִבְשׁוּ בַשֶּׁה הַבַּטְחִים בַּפֶּסֶל**), making idols (44:9-11; 45:16), or of raging against Yhwh (44:24). The idols are again described as costly, decorated with gold and silver (40:19; 46:6), and as associated with foreigners from the East (41:2, 7). Babylon's religious practices cannot assist her (47:9, 12-13), nor can her wealth and she is shamed (47:3). Only Yhwh can preserve from shame (45:17, 24-25). In the latter chapters shame is only referred to in the context of being erased (54:4; 61:7). Yhwh's servants are exonerated from shame - unlike those who fail to honour him (65:13; 66:5).

At 30:22 the idols of silver and gold are also depicted as repulsive. Here the negative tone is struck not by an association with foreigners, excess and arrogance but with an unclean thing (**נִדָּה**).<sup>31</sup> The association of valuables with defilement and shame appears to be distinctly prophetic. In Ezekiel 7:14ff., too, an account of the panic during the siege of Jerusalem recounts how the people in their shame (**בְּיִשָּׁה**) throw their silver into the streets and consider their gold repulsive (**נִדָּה**). The reason given for this is that silver and gold were the stumbling block for their evil (**כִּשּׁוֹל עֹנֶם**, 7:19). Galambush likens the urgency and revulsion of the people's reaction, which presumably is contrary to their usual regard for money, to the treatment of a menstruating woman. Certainly, **נִדָּה** refers to a menstruating woman at Ezekiel 18:6 and 22:10, and perhaps also at 36:17. The role of silver and gold as the occasion for **עֹן**, however, is not immediately apparent: 'Although greed could have been the cause of dishonesty, or wealth a source of inordinate pride, these are never cited by Ezekiel as the cause of the city's destruction'

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. NIV 'menstrual cloth'. **נִדָּה** pertains to menstruation at Leviticus 15:33 and 20:18 and is regarded as defiling. On menstruation and impurity see also Be'er 1994. I will discuss this point more fully in the context of Ezekiel.

(1992: 132). The crux of the revulsion is, according to Galambush, that it is the silver and gold of the temple that are used for making idols (7:20).<sup>32</sup> Just as the woman Jerusalem, dressed in materials used elsewhere only of tabernacle coverings and cultic paraphernalia (1992: 95; Darr 1992b: 102), associating her with the temple, takes Yhwh's gold and silver and makes from them idols with which to be unfaithful (הַנִּזְנִי, 16:17), so the people being punished here have utterly profaned what they should have held sacred. The allusion to menstruation, here more explicitly than at Isaiah 30:22, is, Galambush argues, particularly poignant because:

[t]he temple was not only protected from contact with the unclean, but also was the place where blood was employed as a purifying agent. The image of the temple becoming "like a menstruant" is shocking, both because of its implied juxtaposition of holy with unclean and because of its juxtaposition of the most clean (holy) *blood* with the most unclean (1992: 133).

The people entering and profaning the treasured place at 7:21-22 are probably foreign. As there is mention of handing over plunder to strangers (7:21, זָרִים) and of the wicked of the nations seizing Jerusalem's houses (7:24), it is not unlikely that it is foreigners who defile Yhwh's אֶפְסֹן, a place which, according to Galambush, 'evokes both the holy of holies and its symbolic status as the womb of Yahweh's wife' (1992: 134). In Isaiah, then, which also contains an allusion linking idolatry and menstruation, the foreignness of the repugnant silver and gold is stressed particularly; in Ezekiel, instead, a cultic and metaphorically sexually-profaned nuance.

Whereas generally-speaking, gold and silver in the context of the Hebrew Bible have positive denotations of being valuable and desirable in both a concrete and figurative sense,<sup>33</sup> in prophetic rhetoric they are associated with things foreign, extravagant, repulsive and shameful. Israel stands in contrast to this, being small (41:14) and being

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<sup>32</sup> This interpretation, while not implausible, is not explicitly supported by the text. In Isaiah, too, the temple origins of the defiling silver and gold are not specified. At 7:24 there is, as in Isaiah, a foretelling of the fall of the proud and mighty (הַגִּבּוֹרִים עֲזָבוּ).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. BDB *ad loc.* Both are costly gifts at 1 Kings 15:18-19. Silver is contrasted with dross at Proverbs 25:4-5, where it is emblematic of righteousness; gold metaphorically describes Job's integrity (23:10).

encouraged to strive not for power, splendour and wealth but for humility and obedience to Yhwh. The experience of destruction and humiliation, furthermore, has effected not outrage or implicit accusations aimed at the deity<sup>34</sup> but, instead, shame. This shame looks back, on the one hand, to the cause of the humiliation--arrogance (claiming **כבוד**, **גאון** or **גודל**, instead of acknowledging that these rightfully belong to Yhwh), disobedience, apostasy, putting trust in earthly splendour and riches--all of which are linked, in what may be a polemical twist, to other nations and foreigners.<sup>35</sup> Yhwh is not indicted; instead, he is constantly extolled as all-powerful. Shaming punishment, it seems, is not perceived as excessive in the way it is in Job or Lamentations. This, in turn, effects (or is intended to effect) not outrage but a humbling self-evaluation. The restoration envisaged is one where shame is eliminated. Shame, then, seems to be a mechanism here which signifies punishment but which is also capable of looking forward to respite from punishment.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> As Dobbs-Allsopp illustrates, the opposite is true of Lamentations. Here the lack of specificity concerning Judah's sin is in sharp contrast to the vivid portraiture of suffering which 'effectively plays down the sin theme, which does not seize the reader with anything like the intensity of the images of suffering' (1997: 37). The gruesome images of children dying from starvation and being cannibalised by their mothers (2:11-12; 4:2-4, 10), for instance, 'stand as paradigms of innocent suffering for which there is no justification and for which Yahweh's actions are directly and indirectly responsible' (1997: 38). Further, imprecations aimed at the enemies implicate Yhwh who sent them and the invocations for Yhwh to see the injustice suffered by the community take on a tone of indictment against the background of 2:20-22 (1997: 38).

<sup>35</sup> This is developed below in the chapter on Jeremiah.

<sup>36</sup> The effectiveness of such a shame mechanism in the context of deploring idolatry could be illuminated with recourse to what in the discipline of sociology is referred to as 'deviance'. Chalcraft has discussed deviance with regard to the Book of Judges (1990) and has claimed more recently, too, that 'the areas of law and deviance (from the criminal to the stigmatized) seem a rich vein to mine' (1997). According to 'labelling theory', no act is 'naturally' right or wrong, deviant or normal; instead, acts are socially defined. Behaviour labelled 'deviant', therefore, is socially relative and constitutes that which in a circumscribed social context is considered unacceptable. The texts of Isaiah might thus be said to be using shame discourses with a view to labelling idolatrous conduct, for instance, as deviant and socially stigmatising behaviour. Further, it could be postulated that the prophetic adultery and impurity images pertaining to idolatry are examples of 'deviance amplification', whereby, 'the extent and seriousness of deviance is distorted and exaggerated, with the effect that social control agencies take a greater interest in the purported existence of the phenomenon and thus uncover, but actually "construct", more examples of it, giving the impression that the initial distortion was actually a true representation' (*Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, 2nd ed., by David and Julia Jary, Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1995, p.163f.). Lacking the necessary background in sociology, I have not at this stage, explored this idea more fully.

### ***iii. Summary***

While the Book of Isaiah contains a lot of honour and shame vocabulary, it is difficult to argue for its reflecting the social patterns of an honour/shame society. Honour is not associated primarily with men or actively sought and contested for but belongs to Yhwh; the value of humility, which emerges as an ideal, is at variance with the Mediterranean notion of honour; shame, furthermore, is depicted as belonging to humanity but not to women in particular. While the prophetic woman/city metaphor is used of Babylon to describe public shaming (chapter 47) and of Jerusalem to depict moral corruption (chapter 1), such negative feminised imagery is balanced with positive woman metaphors pertaining to restoration.

Neither the challenge-riposte interaction, nor a political gender-focus, then, features prominently in Isaiah. While this does not negate the provenance of this text in a culture where such features did affect social dynamics, discerning social structures in Isaiah is complicated by the dominant role of Yhwh and by the ostensibly extreme circumstances: Yhwh, being both source of honour and generator of shame, is difficult to accommodate in the honour/shame matrix; the upheaval in social conditions associated with the exile, while they may have had an impact on imagery in the form of referred metaphors, are likely to have subverted more usual social patterns.

When the shame vocabulary is examined apart from the anthropological model, it emerges that shame in Isaiah pertains to an unsound moral condition, to the disapproved of practice of idolatry and to a dysfunctional relationship between humanity and deity. It is inculcated in order to redress these shortfalls, facilitate self-examination and, eventually, procure restoration. Having both a subjective and objective dimension, shame is an apt emotion for such inculcation. On the one hand it looks out at the humiliating circumstances, on the other, inward to negative self-evaluation, which might transpire in restoration without shame. Idolatry is linked with both shame and foreignness, which may point to an anti-foreign polemic. This will be developed in the ensuing chapter.

## V. Shame and Jeremiah

### *i. Ideological Criticism*

Social-scientific criticism--be it the appropriating of concepts and models, or the interpreting of literature and history through categories borrowed from sociology or anthropology--can only be combined with biblical criticism with caution. As I have tried to illustrate in my review of interpretative articles appropriating the honour/shame model and in the preceding chapter with reference to Isaiah, projecting a carefully defined modern research practice or taxonomy on to an ancient text is often unsuccessful because the model may become less of a heuristic pattern for organising data than a means of filling in inconvenient gaps where evidence is lacking. The 'findings' are therefore often little more than imaginative reconstructions and likely to be anachronistic.

Neyrey may argue that using self-conscious models redeems anachronism<sup>1</sup> but I find his claims unconvincing and would argue that all we are left with is Neyrey's evaluation of ancient texts, reflecting his personal belief that they enable us to see into a social reality as ancient Mediterraneans saw it. All reading is interpretation and writing often inevitably carries the stamp of bias. An approach such as poststructuralist criticism, having absorbed such ideas as those, among others, of Kant (that it is impossible to know the 'thing itself' because the forms of our knowing are invariably shaped by the processes of thought themselves) and Hegel (who conceives spirit as unfolding in the history of the human *Geist*), as well as of Marx and Freud, who questioned surface-levels and probed the more subliminal power relations at the economic and psychological level respectively, acknowledges the elusiveness of 'meaning'.<sup>2</sup> A suspicion of the surface meaning of a text is, I think, essential. Rather than reading biblical texts at 'face value' and assuming

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. 'I take these models and test them. Do they apply to the first century? By and large I find that, yes, the honor and shame system described by anthropologists does apply to the ancient texts. This is not anachronistic, imposing a twentieth century phenomenon' (Neyrey, cited by Martin 1993: 108).

<sup>2</sup> I found both M. H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (5th ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1988: 203ff. and Beardslee's article (1993) useful and succinct introductions to the complex phenomenon of poststructuralism.

that they mirror social reality, it is important, I believe, to interrogate the evidence they do provide and to attempt to probe the operations of power they may reflect. This may loosely be called ideological criticism.

Such an approach by no means denies the influence of social forces on texts. One advantage of the poststructuralist ideological approach is that it questions texts and their gaps with a view to probing the machinations of social power, and that it admits to, even stresses, the impossibility of providing a clear-cut picture. A functionalist or close empirical approach, meanwhile, often tends to regard what is written as providing actual insight into a bygone social reality. It is not the case that interpreters using social-scientific methods are inevitably impervious to their problems or limitations<sup>3</sup> but rather, that poststructuralist criticism foregrounds them. Like source criticism a poststructuralist approach breaks up a text's pretensions to unity; it does not, however, unlike source criticism, pursue the reconstruction of coherence. Instead, the futility of reconstruction is explored, or, as Beardslee puts it: 'Its function is rather to lead readers to live without absolutes, in a world of process that is not directed to a goal' (1993: 225). While such a pursuit may be less 'satisfying' than the critical approaches that make definitive claims and purport to distil statements of fact, it is, I think, more honest. The texts comprising the Hebrew Bible are, I believe, enigmatic and in offering my interpretation of a selection of them, I acknowledge that my own biases will inevitably encroach, exacerbating rather than resolving the situation of unknowability.

Such an admission in the context of biblical criticism is, of course, far from novel (what is?). Penchansky's 'Up for Grabs: A Tentative Proposal for Doing Ideological Criticism', for instance, examines Judges 2:10-23 from the standpoint that both textual production and interpretative or critical analysis are 'a violent grabbing to obtain and maintain the privileged interpretive position' (1992: 35). He first examines the textual story of the biblical passage, trying in the process to infer the ideological activity of what he calls the Deuteronomic Template which is, he argues, attempting to compel readings in a certain direction. Next, he deals with the critical story by trying to establish his own ideological involvement with the passage. He explains that a modern interpreter's critical

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. the cautionary comments summarised in chapter II, note 12 and chapter III, note 100.

involvement with an ancient text is necessarily ideological because it is not disinterested but rather a concealed persuasive activity imposed on other readers. Of his own contribution he admits that he does not like the Deuteronomic Template and that his interpretation seeks to undermine its influence by focusing on and exposing ideological coercion and concealment. Lastly, Penchansky turns to the metacritical story which deals with the first two and develops an idea of making interpretative assertions 'under erasure', with an awareness of and an agreement to admit to one's double-dealing. Penchansky thus writes:

It is *my* selection and hierarchization of the material I encounter, influenced by the readings of others, that determine my reading. Although I might claim to be presenting "just the text," I am adding my connections, my clarification of ambiguities, and whether consciously or not, I am concealing or clouding over elements that don't fit my thesis (1992: 39).

His 'frightening observation' that his sins are those of the Deuteronomist and that he, too, has ideological and concealed intentions, using such weapons as abstraction to produce a new discourse that is rooted in the concerns of his culture and society is, I believe, impossible to avoid and important to be frank about. I agree that it is advisable to keep in mind that one can write only 'under erasure' - an expression of Derrida's to express the tension of recognition that interpretative discourse is necessary but philosophically impossible (Penchansky 1992: 40; Beardslee 1993).

Sometimes articles purporting to be ideological readings take much at face value and do not refer explicitly to the complexities of interpretation Penchansky describes as inevitable. Let me use Wessels' 'Jeremiah 22,24-30: A Proposed Ideological Reading' as an example of this, in order to 1) illustrate that 'ideological criticism' is a broad label and

2) indicate how I propose to use it. Wessels accepts that ideology<sup>4</sup> underlies all human activity and therefore all of the biblical texts and attempts to 'throw light on the relationship between reality (the situation in Jerusalem round about 597 before Christ) and knowledge (Jeremiah's judgment on Jehoiachin)' (1989: 233). He admits that this is daunting, that 'the coherence of [Jeremiah's] thought in the book as a whole' must be taken into consideration, that careful attention must be paid to a reconstruction of the society in which the prophet found himself and that this task is too great for a short article (though he does not claim that it should be impossible *per se*) (1989: 233). Wessels' first step in indicating ideological elements in the prophet's concept of kingship is 'to isolate the genuine Jeremianic words from the demarcated pericope [22:24-30]' (1989: 233). All these introductory comments disclose huge assumptions: for instance, that there was an original Jeremiah who was a prophet who lived at around 597 BCE and who composed some of the words contained in the book which bears his name; that his encounter with Jehoiachin really occurred and that his opinions and the environment which shaped him

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<sup>4</sup> Ideology in the context of biblical criticism is tricky to define. Wessels uses the definition of Deist from A *Concise Dictionary of Theological Terms*: 'The ideas of thinking characteristic of an individual or group, shaped by political, social, religious and other factors (conscious, unconscious and subconscious) and providing the frame of reference within which he or they judge and act (an ideology is true if the ideas in it are in accordance with reality, false if they are at variance with it)' (1989: 233). This is extremely wide and somewhat dependent on the nature of 'reality', which is notoriously difficult to determine. If we speak of a 'true' and a 'false' ideology we are again in the realm of absolutes which, I have argued, are best regarded guardedly. Pippin's elucidation admits to the word's elusiveness: 'Ideology is the political manifestation of the repressed/oppressed imagination of the biblical writer, narrator, character, ancient readers/hearers and/or contemporary readers. Or, ideology is false consciousness ... imposed on the masses by the dominant political or religious forces. Or, ideology is blindness. ... There is no neutral or objective place the reader can claim; degrees and types of privilege always linger--on the lips, the page, the political relationships. More often, ideology stands for the value system and cultural mores of a biblical writer or text. In brief here is how this language of ideology in biblical studies sounds: there is "the ideology of" the Chronicler and the Priestly writer(s), but also of the narrator and the characters. In sociological (and some literary) criticism, locating these ideologies can help reveal the historical context of the text. (These methods often slip into the referential fallacy which claims a direct insight into the ancient world ...)' (1996: 52). See also Carroll, who admits that the word can be confusing because it has various meanings, among them a pejorative Marxist one and a positive one pertaining to 'a system of ideas which is capable of motivating behaviour, can be used to criticize false ideas and practices within the community and is a method of analysing the social structures operating in any society' (1981: 17). Aware of 'the ambiguities and less than satisfactory aspects of the term', Carroll persists in using it because 'few other terms convey the possibility of the distortion inherent in all systems of thought used to impose political control on communities as well as it does' (1981: 17). With the qualifications of Pippin and Carroll in mind, it remains, I believe, a useful label.

can, in part at least, be inferred and reconstructed from these words.

Wessels, then, takes rather a lot at face value. In spite of his title ('... A Proposed Ideological Reading'), this tendency may be regarded as somewhat inconsistent with ideological criticism. As Carroll explains, such an approach is suspicious of reading the accounts in the book of Jeremiah as depicting historical facts and reporting the prophet Jeremiah's words (1996a: 126). While this might be considered non-conventional, such suspicion is attuned to the possibility of the existence of alternative agendas, such as the ideological contributions that are likely to have influenced the process of the book's construction. It is possible, for instance, that editors of the book of Jeremiah--the existence of whom Wessels in his search for 'genuine Jeremianic words, as opposed to a later edited copy' acknowledges (1989: 236, cf. also 245)--did not so much focus on reporting past events as on producing a representation of Jeremiah (Carroll 1996a: 126f.). Of the two camps--those preferring to read texts at 'face value' with some minor adjustments on the one hand and on the other, those preferring to read texts as if they have undergone major rewriting and reinterpretation--I would be more inclined to align myself with the latter. Unlike Wessels, who speaks of the book's coherence as a whole, I am more struck by the fragmented, confusing state of the text<sup>5</sup> and would say that such a text is less likely to have been substantially put together by one single author than by a series of authors and editors. This does not deny the one time existence of a prophet called Jeremiah *per se*, nor the possibility of one author using a huge diversity of images and voices, but it does allow for the likelihood that such an ancient text had a lengthy and complex process of production and editing behind it which may have muffled any original voice.

Wessels claims that Jeremiah had an ideological position on kingship - which, if he indeed lived at the time of Jehoiachin and contributed to the words recorded at 22:24-30, is extremely likely. It is, however, also the case that later contributors might have imposed *their* ideological views. Wessels, examining the 22:24-30 pericope in relation to its surrounding parts, concludes that on the basis of such points as the introductory

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<sup>5</sup> I have some sympathy for Meier, who is cited by Carroll: '[Jeremiah] is the most varied, unpredictable, and quite simply, chaotic of any book in the Hebrew Bible' (1996: 129).

formula, suffix changes and changes of theme, these verses constitute a discrete section of the *Gattung* of prophetic judgment announcement to the individual (1989: 234). He goes on to say that the 'crushing language' with which Jehoiachin is condemned and the fact that in the previous pericopes (Jer. 22:10-12, 13-19) the names of kings addressed were superimposed and 'only added up by a later editor' while that of Coniah (the biblical name for Jehoiachin) appears twice, demands explanation (1989: 245). It strikes me, first of all, that Wessels' (ultimately unverifiable) interpretative decision as to which parts constitute original words and which additions by a later editor plays a very large part in the argument. In his attempted reconstruction of the ideological background, furthermore, Wessels proposes that with the traumatic backdrop of the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 597 BCE, the remaining kings became the unavoidable objects of scorn and abuse, with Jehoiachin and his father representing the Egyptians' control of the state 'while a person like Jeremiah would be counted with the group who were more well-disposed to the Babylonians' (1989: 245). Wessels continues:

The pro-Babylonian elements reacted strongly against any trace of a pro-Egyptian presence in the city, and Jehoiachin was probably the focus of this aggressive opposition. It therefore looks as if the pro-Babylonian party used the rejection of Jehoiachin to endorse their own position with the help of an oracle (1989: 245).

This reconstruction can, however, be questioned, I think. A pro-Babylonian agenda has been discerned in numerous biblical passages and persuasively attributed to the Second Temple period - as opposed to c.597 BCE. It certainly seems that straight after the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar II and consequent exile, from which time Jeremiah's words, Wessels alleges, can still be heard, is not a likely time to be pro-Babylonian. The context of trauma, which is very likely to have accompanied invasion, destruction and deportation, does not, it strikes me, logically incite pro-Babylonian feeling... I find it more plausible, instead, that a form of pro-Babylonian sympathy was an ideological position of advantage to those returning to Judah and laying claim to land after the Persian Empire superseded the Babylonian. Depicted in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as returning to the land which had up until then been populated and farmed by the descendants of those who had not been deported, it seems likely that it was in their interest to advocate that returnees from Babylon had a special right to authority and land.

Carroll, examining Jeremiah 32, as well as Leviticus 25-27, 1 Kings 21 and 2 Kings 9:17-26, all of which, he argues, 'highlight certain features of the Second Temple period' (1991: 110), points out that such elements of Jeremiah 32 as the restoration of the land and Jerusalem being the object of divine wrath since its foundation, feature in other Second Temple literature which, taken together with other strands, such as the biblical polemic against inter-marriage with Canaanite people (Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:23-27), point to a particular ideology. This ideology appears to single out the people who have been dispersed by exile for the prospect of a brighter future (cf. Jer. 32:37ff.), while those who have remained behind belong to the 'desolate waste' identified with Yhwh's anger (Jer. 32:30ff., 43). It could be argued that they are polluted by, among other things, inter-marriage. Carroll's *Hinterfragen* of these texts gives rise to a gap: the silence regarding the offensiveness of the foreignness of Babylonian or Persian wives. In fact, they do not appear to be an obstacle to success at all. Carroll's question, 'Now who could possibly benefit from such an ideology of prohibited relations and permissible marriages?' leads on to the answer:

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah represent their eponymous protagonists (whether fictional, textual or historical is neither here nor there) as coming from Babylonia (Ezra 7.6) and Susa the Persian capital (Neh. 1.1). The chances of men from those areas having Canaanite wives did not apply to them or their like. I do not want to turn literature into history, so I will simply draw attention to the functions served by an ideology of negative and positive foreignness. Any pressure group in the Jerusalem of the Second Temple period whose roots were in Babylonia or Persia could control land and property there with an ideology which outlawed those with Canaanite wives and which exempted other kinds of foreign wives from such a control (1991: 123).<sup>6</sup>

Further to this, Carroll argues that 'the myth of the empty land' should be read as 'an ideological story controlling membership in the new community' (1992: 79). The text in

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<sup>6</sup> It is, as Carroll cautions, wiser not to turn literature into history. As Bourdieu points out, rules and ideologies cannot be assumed to depict what social reality is/was like in practice: 'I was very pleased one day to come across a text by Weber which said, in effect: "Social agents obey the rule when it is more in their interest to obey it than to disobey it." This good, healthy materialist formula is interesting because it reminds us that the rule is not automatically effective by itself and that it obliges us to ask under what conditions a rule can operate' (1990: 76).

Jeremiah recounting the event of the deportations is, he argues, much concerned with the ideological representation of the past as corrupt and corrupting (e.g. Jer. 2-25) (Carroll 1992: 81). Here the deportees associated with Jeconiah (traditionally dated as leaving Jerusalem in 597 BCE) are represented as 'good figs', the Jerusalem-Judah remnants associated with Zedekiah as 'bad figs'. Then, in chapter 29, those living in Babylon are represented as no longer under Yhwh's fierce anger: they are redeemable and will be brought back by Yhwh (1992: 82). The 'bad figs' of the Zedekiah deportation, meanwhile, belong to the past of divine anger not to the plans of restitution and prosperity. Such stories taken together, Carroll argues, in symbolic terms reflect,

an ideology of occupation and control of the temple community in the reconstructionist era of the Persian period. Not only are there exclusivistic claims to possession of and power in the land, but there is also such a denigration of all opposition that no rival claim has any legitimacy whatsoever. Where once deportation may have been a sign of divine anger and rejection, here it has become a foundational element in the warrants for empowerment in the land (cf. Ezek 11:14-21) (1992: 83).

One aspect of this, again evident in Ezra and Nehemiah, which are explicitly concerned with the return from Exile and the resettlement of Jerusalem by the returnees, he continues, is the avoidance of intermarriage with peoples of the land (cf. Ezra 10; Neh. 13:23-27):

Such avoidance could only be maintained by exclusivist relations within the community of the returning deportees (i.e. among the descendants of those who had been deported originally from the land with Jeconiah). Thus a sharp distinction was developed between those who had always lived in the land and those who had recently "returned" to the land (1992: 84).

Carroll's argument, then, is that much of the material in Jeremiah, too, can be understood as 'a legitimization claim retrojected to the beginning of the Persian empire rather than as necessarily a genuine historical fact' (1992: 88) and it is worthwhile to keep this probability in mind. Whereas Wessels speaks of his long-term aim to reconstruct 'the coherence of Jeremiah's thought' and 'the historical and socio-cultural context of his thought, as well as the ideological content of Jeremiah's concept of kingship' (1989: 247), I would tend to want to emphasise the possible effects of the text's development.

As Carroll mentions, texts as complex as Jeremiah are seldom found in the ancient world and hence, some account is necessary as to how it was produced, or how it evolved (1996: 127). In the course of this, the possibility, even probability, of infiltration of ideological features through the ages should not be disregarded.<sup>7</sup> It strikes me as less likely that in a book so complex the words of Jeremiah can be discerned on the basis of suffixes and ‘characteristic’ style, than that much was ‘written in’ over time, quite often either deliberately or unintentionally reflecting a particular agenda. Carroll’s claim that ‘[m]uch--in some sense perhaps *all*--of the literature of the Hebrew Bible must be regarded as the documentation of [the second temple community’s] claims to the land and as a reflection of their ideology’ (1992: 85) has a lot to recommend it - even if it only provokes one into a strategy of constant ‘hinterfragen’ (questioning what is behind the apparently transparent face value) and being on the lookout for how texts manipulate.

This is not to say, however, that the biblical texts reflect but one ideological mindset - that of the second temple community, for instance. Carroll, too, moves from the proposal that there is a discernible ideology encompassing claims to the land to questioning how this may have been received and whether there is evidence also of resistance:<sup>8</sup>

But what about all those who did not recognize the rebuilt temple as the focal point of the new age dawning under the aegis of imperial power? What about the people who lived in the “empty land” and who were denied their share in the temple cult? What about the many voices which can still just about be heard in the writings of the second temple period? Elements in Isaiah 40-66, especially 56-66, seem to oppose the temple or implicate those who serve the temple in practices of a dubious nature ... . What voices are these? A trawl of the biblical literature associated with the second temple period--and in a very real sense what in the Hebrew Bible cannot be associated with that period?--will reveal many different voices speaking out against the temple complex or representing an anti/non-temple set of attitudes (1992: 88f.).

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<sup>7</sup> The idea of infiltration does not presuppose an earlier pure (that is non-ideological) discourse but rather the possibility of textual evolution and change.

<sup>8</sup> LaCocque (1990) argues for a whole body of subversive literature dating from the second temple period, including the books of Ruth, Esther, Susanna and Judith.

Gottwald's 'Eagletonian reading' of Isaiah 40-55 is worth mentioning at this point (1992). In seeking to describe the ideological background, Gottwald argues that 40-55 is a coherent whole addressed to the descendants of the Jewish deportees in Babylonia at around 550-538 BCE, with the oppressed servant figure signifying 'Israel as mirrored and modeled in the author's own relationship to his audience' (1992: 44); its aim being to enlist the audience in a programme of return to Judah - which was attained at about the time of the text's completion. Gottwald believes that the text was not state-originated or approved and that it is 'highly probable that it was produced and consumed under clandestine and subversive conditions' (1992: 45). According to Gottwald's reconstruction, the dominant ideology of the deported Judahites (as deduced from what 40-55 says and implies, in conjunction with information from Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Deuteronomistic History) reflects that they saw themselves as privileged representatives of the cosmic-political order once established in Jerusalem, that they resisted the idea that Judah had forfeited her claims to statehood and perceived their present powerless position as unjust. The ideology of privilege in a context where it could find no public expression meant, Gottwald continues, that 'their religion existed in a kind of limbo, meaningful for sustaining honor in a dishonorable situation but without a hopeful future' (1992: 47). In such a setting of low morale the author's 'intense and fevered, almost hysterical, speech' (1992: 50) forms, according to Gottwald, 'a creative act to make the deliverance and restoration so palpable to the community's imagination that, believing it actual, the audience will join the author to make it happen' (1992: 50). The lack of mention of the Judahites of Judah, furthermore, is, Gottwald claims, noteworthy and might indicate the deportees' sense of having some kind of 'exilic privilege'; or, that they wanted to carry the stamp of Cyrus's approval and therefore assumed political superiority (1992: 51). The text, then, is considered subversive with regard to the Babylonian regime but it

could, taking Gottwald's comments into account, again be brought into line with second temple community interests, which appear to stress the legitimacy of the claims of those returning from Babylon.

The subtleties of subversiveness, however, cannot be underestimated. Bourdieu, for instance, who writes that the literary field exists within and reflects a field of power (1996: 214) also discusses a coexistent scope for subversion. He describes Berber poets, for example, who pass time appropriating sayings which everyone knows by making small displacements of sound and sense; and also such Pre-Socratics as Empedocles who would completely renew the meaning of a saying or a line of Homer by subtly making the meaning of *phôs* slide from its most common sense of 'light' or 'brilliance' to the less frequent, more archaic sense of 'the mortal'. Bourdieu explains that,

by appropriating the common meaning they ensured a power over the group that, by definition, recognised itself in this common meaning; and this, in certain circumstances, in time of war or in moments of acute crisis, could assure them power of a prophetic type over the group's present and future (1990: 97).

Such overturning of 'the ordinary hierarchy of meanings' (1990: 97), Bourdieu argues, can be capable of putting into action 'a symbolic revolution which may be at the root of political revolutions' (1990: 97).

While recognising prophetic literature as complex, as having evolved over an extended period of time, as well as infiltrated by ideological, agenda-driven features, 'Hinterfragen' should, I think, be open to the possible existence of such subversions of language that might counteract dominant ideologies.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, there is much of merit, I believe, in the argument of Sherwood that deconstruction is an approach suited to the Hebrew Bible because the texts within it so frequently work against themselves (1996: 190). As she explains, the punning and allusive language and overt sexual metaphors of Hosea 1-3, for instance, often seem to delight in inverting the text's precepts (1996: 203). Her concluding proposal is that the analogy between prophecy and postmodernism warrants a study in itself. Such a study, she suggests, would explore the

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<sup>9</sup> On the possible existence of antilanguage tendencies, see below VI.ii.c.

confusion of boundaries evident in the writings of prophetic and postmodern authors. Both, she argues, mix the 'world' outside with fiction by, for example, inserting real names into fantastic fiction; both distort temporal sequence and syntax for special effect and both employ 'lexically and sexually exhibitionistic' terms in order to 'get past the reader's hardworn armour' (Barthelme, cited in Sherwood 1996: 329 and note 32).

Before proceeding, let me stress once more my belief that it is impossible to be conclusive: all I can put forward is my own attempt of making 'my sense' of the texts from the perspective of my understanding. In focusing on shame in Jeremiah, or Isaiah, or Ezekiel, furthermore, I am aware that while there is a comparative preponderance of shame vocabulary in these books, it is not the case that they are preoccupied with shame. I have attempted to illustrate in the above section that prophetic texts are ideological productions. In the following section I will argue that shame language in Jeremiah functions, sometimes insidiously, in discourses suggesting, as in Isaiah, an anti-foreign ideological position. There exists, too, an association between deviant (in this case bestial) sexuality and shame.

## *ii. Shame Language and Its Implications*

### *a. Shame Language and Sexual Metaphor*

The dominant purpose of shame discourses in Jeremiah seems to be to draw attention to the people's misconduct that has transpired in a fractured relationship between them and Yhwh, and to inculcate a sense of shame with a view to redressing this situation. In Hebrew, as in English, then, there exist both a proper and an improper shame. Camp has distinguished between them as follows: 'the shame-by-which-one-must-be-bound in order to avoid the shame-that-destroys' (1991: 5). In Jeremiah the people incur (improper) shame (from **בוש**) as a consequence of transgression (e.g. 2:26) but they are rebuked, too, for not having (proper) shame (also from **בוש**) in the face of their loathsome conduct (e.g. 6:15).

The first occurrences of shame terminology are in chapter 2 of Jeremiah, which contains a caustic and prurient account of Jerusalem's transgressions. The **חַסֵּד** (NIV 'devotion';

BDB ‘goodness, kindness’) of her youth, when she was as a loving bride, following her lord even into an uncultivated land (2:2), as holy to Yhwh as the firstfruits of harvest and protected in return (2:3), has become wilful, brazen and persistent apostasy (2:17, 19, 23-25). There is mention of the forefathers turning from Yhwh (2:5); of priests, those concerned with the Torah, leaders and prophets straying (2:8) and of the land becoming defiled (טמא), detestable (תועבה) (2:7) and a plundered place (2:14), a wasteland of deserted towns where lions roar (2:15). This devastation cannot be rectified by either foreign gods (2:11), or nations (2:18, 36).

At 2:20 the Masoretic Text has: מעולם שברתי עלך נהקתי מוסרתיך, ‘long ago I broke your yoke; I tore away your bonds’. In the Septuagint the verbs are in the second person feminine singular.<sup>10</sup> As carrying a yoke is usually a sign of oppression (cf. Isa. 47:6) or punishment (Jer. 28:14) and removing it a metaphor of liberation (cf. Isa. 9:3; Yhwh removes Israel’s yoke at Hos. 11:4), can the people be reproved for ridding themselves of it? Perhaps, it is indeed, as in the Masoretic Text, Yhwh who removes the symbols of bondage and it is once Israel has more scope for choice that she abandons him and decides to serve no more (2:20). In the light of Jeremiah 5:5-6,<sup>11</sup> the bonds may symbolise some kind of ethical check (not unlike proper shame)<sup>12</sup> that may not always be comfortable and easy but which is perceived as maintaining social control and equilibrium.

In chapters 2 and 5 the abandonment of the yoke unleashes behaviour which is metaphorically depicted as an unabashed display of bestial sexual promiscuity. At 2:20 Israel lies down as a prostitute (זנה) on *every* high hill and under *every* spreading tree;<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> NIV and RSV follow the Septuagint.

<sup>11</sup> Here the leaders’ ignorance of Yhwh’s way and judgment is manifested in their breaking the yoke and bonds. This rebellion leaves them vulnerable to attack. The yoke, then, is depicted as having a positive function.

<sup>12</sup> Freud ascribes such a role to shame also (cf. chapter I, note 7).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Holladay (1961) who argues that Jeremiah standardised this phrase which he believes to be descended from Hosea (4:13) and descriptive of the location of fertility practices. The hyperbolic tone may constitute another instance of ‘deviance amplification’ (cf. chapter IV, note 36).

whereas at 5:7 the children of Jerusalem throng (hithpo. of **תָּבַן**) to the house of a prostitute. There are also vulgar comparisons with animals:

How can you say, 'I have not defiled myself! I have not pursued the Baals!?' Just look at how you behaved in the valley; acknowledge<sup>14</sup> what you have done. You are a swift she-camel of warped ways, a wild donkey accustomed to the wilderness: in accordance with its desire, panting, it sniffs the air. When in heat, who can restrain it? Those seeking it need not exhaust themselves, in the time of its oestrus<sup>15</sup> they will find it (2:23-24).<sup>16</sup>

They are greedily desirous<sup>17</sup> horses, each man neighing for his neighbour's wife (5:8).<sup>18</sup>

While the imagery of insatiable sexuality described in chapter 2 (and also chapter 3) is feminised,<sup>19</sup> and 2:33 adds that evil women can learn from Israel's depraved ways, the metaphor applies to the house of Israel, the kings, officials, priests and prophets (2:26). At chapter 5, meanwhile, the hyperbolic lustfulness is characterised as male.

As Carroll points out, the difficulty of determining whether this language, arising out of the involvement of the Israelite community in the fertility cults of Canaanite religion, is descriptive or metaphoric, should not distract attention from its essential bawdiness (1981: 61). In both examples from chapters 2 and 5 the language is, he explains,

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<sup>14</sup> Feminine singular imperative of **יָדַע**, usually translated 'to know'.

<sup>15</sup> The Masoretic Text has **בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַחֲדָשׁ**, very literally 'in her new moon'. The word **חֹדֶשׁ** can refer to a religious festival, such as at Hosea 2:13, where an end is put to the unfaithful woman's **חֹדֶשׁ** along with other festivities. Given the connectedness between fertility and lunar cycle, it is likely that a **חֹדֶשׁ**-festival celebrates fertility or harvest. In Hosea the word might be alluding to both Gomer's sexuality and to the apostasy of attributing fertility to Baal instead of Yhwh. In this passage the word describes heightened sex-drive at the fertile time of oestrus.

<sup>16</sup> Brenner has referred to this animalisation of the metaphorised woman as an 'original contribution to prophetic pornography' (1995b: 262).

<sup>17</sup> The words **מִיִּזְנֵי מַשְׁכִּים** are difficult. BDB suggests that the root **יָזַן** might mean 'to weigh' or 'furnished with weights'. Reading **מַשְׁכִּים** as **מַאֲשָׁכִים** (cf. **אֲשָׁךְ**, 'testicle', e.g. Lev. 21:20) this could refer to large testicles (cf. Ezek. 23:20). Alternatively, deriving the first word from **יָזַן** 'to feed', the horses may be sleek, or well-fed.

<sup>18</sup> My translations.

<sup>19</sup> As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the metaphoric description of a city or nation as a woman occurs in various prophetic texts. I will return to pejorative feminine imagery and its treatment in the context of feminist criticism in VI.ii.b.

tantalisngly ambiguous and it is not easy to discern whether the community is being berated for involvement in sexual activity or indulgence in the Canaanite cult:

The strong emotions behind the language are apparent, and the oracles share the same atmosphere of outrage, pain and jealousy as may be found in Hosea. The roots of the metaphoric language are probably to be found in the cult of the incomparable Yahweh, the jealous God, who did not permit other gods to be associated with his worship (cf. Ex. 20.3; Deut. 5.7). As a man did not permit his wife to take lovers or go off after other men, so the deity did not permit the community to go worship other gods. That is the force of the metaphors, but the precise interpretation of some of the metaphors is difficult (1981: 63).

The expression at 2:25--‘keep your feet from going unshod and your throat from thirst’ (RSV), or, ‘do not run until your feet are bare and your throat is dry’ (NIV)--for instance, is tricky. There may be a euphemistic allusion to sexual activity here (‘feet’ being a standard biblical euphemism for ‘genitals’) which is how Carmichael takes it (1977: 329 and note 27). As Carroll points out, however, ‘the strong language of the poems suggests that euphemistic terms would be out of place’ (1981: 296). The phrase ‘well-fed, lusty stallions’ (5:8, RSV and NIV) is also difficult. It may refer either to horses with large testicles (*kethib*), or to well-fed or sleek horses (*qere*). Carroll, acknowledges that the image raises questions:

It is a graphic image - but of what? Is the prophet (enviously?) abusing the citizens of the community who are handsomely equipped on their way to the brothel to participate in fertility rites? Or is he using bawdy images to ridicule their involvement in a heathen cult and describing the place of worship as a brothel? (1981: 63f.)<sup>20</sup>

In chapter 2 (but not chapter 5) the removal of the yoke and consequent revolting and unrestrained behaviour, depicted in sexual terms, culminates in shame. The text at 2:26 reads: כְּבִשָּׁה וְגַב כִּי יִמָּצָא כֵן הִבִּישׁוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, ‘like the shame of a thief when he is found out, so will the house of Israel be ashamed’. Following on from the imagery of very public, exhibitionist wantonness, of prostitution on *every* hill and under *every* tree, the simile of the thief’s *covert* activity seems a little surprising. Like thieving,

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<sup>20</sup> In a later article (1995) Carroll proposes that the notion of an antilanguage may hold some promise for analysing such strongly emotive and diffuse texts (cf. VI.ii.c.).

the sexual activity is criminal but with the latter the brazenness is dwelt upon.<sup>21</sup> The thief is disgraced when his activity is discovered - the sexual conduct (or better, the disapproved of conduct which is depicted using sexual imagery) does not seem to require discovery but occurs open to view. One of the primary impulses of proper shame is concealment of the genitals, attended by an acute concern to confine sexual practices to a private domain and demarcated conventions.<sup>22</sup> If this was also the case in the social contexts in which the texts of Jeremiah came into being (which I think is likely), the accusation that Israel is so debauched that even such a primary impulse has been perverted would be especially poignant.<sup>23</sup> While accusations of gross sexual impropriety would affect particularly the women of the societies described in the Mediterranean

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<sup>21</sup> Compared to this may be chapter 3, where Israel is described as having been ravished everywhere (3:2) (the word 'ravished' is from the root שׁוּל, which was considered too profane for articulation by the Masoretes and in the spoken tradition is replaced with the euphemistic שָׁכַב, 'to lie') and as sitting by the roadside 'like an Arab in the desert' (3:2). This is probably where prostitutes would wait for their clients (cf. Gen. 38:14). The allusion to the Arab is in this context less than complimentary. Again, the audacity of the public flaunting of the apostasy is rebuked: Israel is likened to a brazen prostitute (cf. NIV, 3:3), the text reads, 'and you have the brow of a prostitute woman'. What exactly this expression pertains to is unclear to me. The forehead is the place where leprosy becomes visibly apparent in 2 Chronicles 26:19-20 and also of other distinguishing marks (cf. Ezek. 9:4). Obstinacy can be 'seen' on the brow (Ezek. 3:7) and a 'brass forehead', too, seems to be an idiom for stubbornness. Possibly, then, the feature was not so much a visible trademark and the expression is rather an idiom, much like the German, 'man sieht es ihm/ihr an der Nase an' or 'es ist vom Gesicht abzulesen'. The undisclosed prostitution is also rebuked in terms of Israel's refusal to be ashamed (RSV): מֵאַנְחָה הַכֹּלָם (NIV has 'you refuse to blush with shame') (3:3).

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Freud's argument that shame functions to constrain such sexual impulses as exhibitionism in the young child (I.ii). As we have seen, the Eden story has also been interpreted in such a way that shame initiates and signifies maturation (e.g. Bechtel 1995, see III.ii.e.).

<sup>23</sup> Exposed nakedness usually encounters disapproval in biblical literature. Shem and Japheth's covering of the naked Noah is approved of (Gen. 9:23-27) and priests are instructed to wear a special garment to ensure that their genitals are not bared in the holy place (Exod. 28:42-43). In the Prophets shame and nakedness are linked repeatedly: e.g. Isaiah 20:4; 47:3; Ezekiel 23:29; Micah 1:11 (עֲרִיזָה-בִּשְׁחָת) and Jeremiah 13:26 (קִלְיוֹן). *The Community Rule* (1QS) stipulates: 'Whoever has gone naked before his companion, without having been obliged to do so, he shall do penance for six months. ... Whoever has been so poorly dressed that when drawing his hand from beneath his garment his nakedness has been seen, he shall do penance for thirty days' (VII, 12-15) (Vermes 1995: 79). 'Hand' may be a euphemism for male genitalia (cf. Delcor 1967). The Akkadian poems cited by Halperin (1993: 93-97) depict female genitalia as locus of danger but also as a place of honey (1993: 95); in the Hebrew Bible the only praise of the naked body is found in the Song of Songs. According to Pope (Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977: 617-20) and most explicitly Eslinger (1981) this extends to praise of the beloved's vulva.

studies, such an impulse is, of course, not exclusive to them. What seems to be at issue is that Israel does not recognise, or refuses to recognise, the wrongfulness of her apostasy. At 2:27-28 she is described as ignorantly and defiantly pursuing idols; in a state of denial (cf. also 5:21), she disputes her defilement and guilt (2:23, 35). The aim of the sexual imagery appears to be to startle Israel into the awareness that she is entirely morally depraved: without the yoke of Yhwh she is like an animal on heat, ignorant, misguidedly trustful of other nations and defiled. As Sherwood points out, sexually exhibitionist terms are capable of penetrating a reader's hard-worn armour (see above, V.i.): startled by the imagery and readily able to identify the sexual excesses as shameful behaviour, the reader might thus be inculcated to examine also the idolatrous conduct with which it is metaphorically linked.

While restoration is promised in Jeremiah (31:20, 23ff.; 33:8ff.), the need for inward purging is stressed. The point that a dispositional change rather than an outward state is at issue is clear from 2:2 where washing (כִּבֵּם), even with soda and soap, cannot remove the stain of guilt (עֲוֹן); as well as at 4:4, where the heart is called upon to be circumcised, suggesting a bond with Yhwh that consists of more than an outward display (cf. also 9:25f.) and at 4:14, where Jerusalem is implored to wash the evil from her heart. Self-reflection and the realisation of having committed shameful acts are depicted as preceding restoration. Alongside the explicit sexual imagery, other forms of humiliation also effect this sense. One of these is a loss of status: as a consequence of transgression, the people are threatened with losing wives and possessions (8:10), husbands (15:8-9), homes and children (10:20). At 6:15 and 8:12 humiliation is directly attributed to a lack of proper shame; at 22:22 the disgrace of exile brings about shame. The way to attaining restoration and reestablishing a relationship with Yhwh is by doing what he is depicted as ordering: the people must turn from evil (26:3), follow Yhwh's law and the words of his prophets (26:4-5) and admit to and confess their sense of shame. While confession cannot in itself avert the need for purging punishment (cf. 14:20-15:2) it is none the less depicted as an introduction to Yhwh's programme of resettlement. At 31:18-19 Ephraim's repenting and shame (נָחַם, בּוֹשָׁם, כָּלָם, חָרָף) elicit a statement of compassion from Yhwh (31:20) and are a prelude to restoration and a new covenant.

Repentance entailing shame is also prominent at chapter 3. The people are implored to acknowledge their guilt (3:13) and at 3:22ff. they admit their apostasy (3:23) and the shamefulness of idolatry (3:24) before determining to lie down in shame and let disgrace cover them: **נִשְׁכְּבָה בַּבִּשְׁחָנוֹ וְחִכְסָנוּ כָּל־מַחְנוֹ** (3:25).

To summarise, shameful conduct, apostasy in particular, is depicted using extended sexual metaphors in chapters 2, 3 and 5.<sup>24</sup> In chapters 2 and 3 this metaphor is associated with shame terminology; in chapters 2 and 5 with a discarded yoke, which might be an image of a broken down ethical check, resembling proper shame. The imagery of these chapters is graphic. The reason for this could be that sexual exhibitionism is particularly apt for arousing impulses of shame. Alongside the outward humiliations associated with the exile, vulgar language thus functions as a shock-tactic to inculcate shame. Shame is inculcated, it seems, because it entails negative self-evaluation, which is portrayed as a necessary prerequisite to restoration. Idolatry, condemned in the above examples by exploiting condemnation of sexual impropriety with which it is linked metaphorically, is widely linked to shame language. As I will go on to discuss, this may function as part of a wider anti-foreign polemic.

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<sup>24</sup> Aside from these chapters, apostasy is also metaphorically linked to prostitution (**זָנָה**) at 13:27; to adultery (**נִאֲוָה**) at 9:2, 13:27 and 23:10; and to unfaithfulness (**בִּגְדָה**) at 9:2.

### ***b. Shame and Anti-foreign Ideology***

In the course of reproof for immoral conduct the profound effect on the land as a whole is stressed repeatedly<sup>25</sup> (2:7; 3:2; 16:18; 44:22). Apostasy is prominent from chapter 1 onwards, where Jeremiah the prophet is depicted as commissioned to call the people to account for their wickedness (רעהם) of forsaking Yhwh and worshipping other gods (1:16). Idolatry renders Israel worthless (הבל; 2:5) and detestable (7:30; 32:34-35); idolatry also precipitates disaster (11:17) and because of it the people cannot remain in the land (25:5) but must leave it desolate (44:2-3). The gods Israel has turned to instead of being obedient to Yhwh are, of course, foreign and foreignness throughout is depicted in decidedly pejorative terms. The ערבי is mentioned in the context of prostitution (3:2) and loving foreigners or foreign gods (זרים) is linked to bestial lustfulness (2:25), neither of which is edifying. Further, the despicable qualities of idols are described in terms of being worthless and foreign (הבלי נכר, 8:19) and it may be telling that the root נור can mean either 'to be a stranger' or 'to be loathsome'.<sup>26</sup> Foreignness and improper shame are linked prominently, suggesting, I think, an anti-foreign polemic, such as has been associated with Second Temple period ideology (V.i.).

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<sup>25</sup> Forsaking Yhwh is decisive to the condemned conduct and mentioned frequently (2:17; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11-12, 18; 32:29-30, 34; 44:3-4,8). It is metaphorically linked to marital infidelity and is described in the proclamatory verse 17:13 as transpiring in shame: יהוה כל-עזביך יבשו. It is interesting to note Sherwood's observation regarding an extended metaphor linking adulterous woman and land in Hosea: 'Gomer gives birth in quick succession, and her fertility is emphasized, but conception is ascribed to her lovers, just as the land's fertility is accredited to Baal. Yhwh threatens to "strip her naked ... and set her like a parched land" (Hos. 2.3.), and equates the demise of the woman with terrestrial aridity. Threats to punish the oversexed female merge with threats to cut off material provision and to "lay waste her vines and her fig trees" (2.13), and in 9.14 the threat is repeated in terms of female sterility and miscarrying wombs and dry breasts' (1996: 206, note 253). Genesis 4 also links crime and lack of fertility: the land which absorbs Abel's blood is contaminated and withholds its crops (4:10-12). In Jeremiah 3:2-3, too, transgression transpires in a cessation of showers, that is, in infertility (cf. also 14:3; 23:10). The repercussions of disobedience to Yhwh are thus depicted as extremely far-reaching.

<sup>26</sup> BDB *ad loc* mentions that נור II 'be loathsome' is possibly derived from נור I 'be a stranger': i.e. 'become strange and so repugnant'.

In terms of how shame language is used in Jeremiah, 'shame' occasionally refers to a foreign god or idol in a concrete sense; such as at 3:24,<sup>27</sup> 11:13<sup>28</sup> and perhaps 7:19, where 'the shame before them' could pertain to an actual idol. Making an idol, by association, also occasions shame (10:14; 51:17). Disobedience usually pertains to worshipping other gods but can also involve political loyalty to a nation such as Egypt (42:18; 44:12) when loyalty to Yhwh alone is called for. Such misplaced loyalty also transpires in shame (2:36). A topos linking shame and the nations is most prominent in the late chapters of Jeremiah. Here there is mention of Egypt's irredeemable shame (46:11-12, 24) and of Moab's disgrace (48:1, 13, 18, 20, 26, 39), which is described in vivid and abject terms (48:26). Like Israel, however, (48:13 and 27 draw a comparison between the two) Moab will be restored (48:47). Edom is disgraced (49:13, 17), as is Damascus (49:23); Babylon is put to shame (50:2, 12; 51:47) but unlike with Israel and Judah (50:20) there is no forgiveness (50:35ff.) and no remnant (50:40).

Israel's apostasy and consequent punishment provide another context for shame language. Her incapacity to recognise her shamefulness (6:15; 8:12), which is so prevailing that even the wise are affected (8:9), brings about a state of shame that occasions departure from the land (9:19; 22:22). In one passage Israel's shame (בוש, חרפה, כלמה) is directly attributed to foreigners: 'because foreigners entered the holy places of Yhwh's house', כי באו זרים על-מקדשי בית יהוה, (51:51). Foreignness, then, is depicted as both shameful in itself and as occasioning shame. It is, furthermore, described as contaminating, as capable of polluting the whole land and affecting its fruitfulness (e.g. 23:10)<sup>29</sup> and as defiling the sanctuary. The associations of foreignness with pollution, punishment and infertility using shame language are distinctly

<sup>27</sup> BHS textual note *ad loc* suggests 'the Baal' in place of 'the shame' in order to stress this interpretation.

<sup>28</sup> Here the phrase מזבחות לבשת (absent in the Septuagint) appears to balance the phrase מזבחות לקטר לבעל. Maybe a tradition preserved in the Masoretic Text identified Baal as 'the shame(ful one)'.

<sup>29</sup> At 12:13 and 14:3 a lack of fertility occasions shame. The punishment of Babylon entails shaming, which is manifested by the dryness of the land (50:12). Yhwh alone is called the spring of life at 2:13 and 17:13 (the latter relates the forsaking of Yhwh to being put to shame) and as controlling the waters (10:13), something which other gods are incapable of (14:22). Yhwh's restoration, meanwhile, is associated with planting (31:28) - that is, a promise of fertility.

pejorative and appear to be aimed at inciting or enforcing anti-foreign feeling.

### *c. Shame and Word-Play*

Apostasy, infertility and shame are linked in a network of associations. On a subtle linguistic level, too, a connection between a lack of fertility, manifested in dryness, and shame is played upon and both seem to indicate the absence of or rejection by Yhwh, the spring of life. A pun on the similarity between the roots **בוש** and **יבש** has been discussed by Nielsen with regard to Isaiah 1:29-31 (1989: 210f.). She argues that **יבשו** at verse 29 should not be emended to **הבושו**<sup>30</sup> because the Masoretic Text's form may have been selected deliberately to evoke the connotations associated with both **בוש** 'to be ashamed' (correlating with **חפר** in the second half-verse) and **יבש** 'be dry' (correlating with verse 30 and its image of the withered tree and garden lacking water). Such a pun, she continues, may also be discerned at 2 Kings 19:26, Isaiah 19:5-9, 42:15-17, Psalm 129:5-6 and Joel 1:10-17 (cf. also Psalm 37:19).

In Jeremiah, too, a case can be made for the existence of such word-play.<sup>31</sup> In the rebuke of the prophets (23:9ff) the land is described as thoroughly defiled by the godless (**חנף**) prophet and priest who have practised wicked deeds (23:11, 15). It is said to be *full of* adulterers (23:10: **מנאפים מלאה הארץ**) and *entirely* contaminated (23:15: **יצאה חנפה לכל-הארץ**). The extremely polluted state is alluded to several times more: there is mention of repulsiveness (**תפלה**, 23:13; BDB: 'moral unseemliness'); of horridness (**שערורה**, 23:14), as well as similes likening Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah (23:14). This grandiloquent depiction of corruption might well be said to

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. BHS textual note *ad loc*: some Hebrew manuscripts and the Targum have the second person masculine plural of **בוש**. RSV and NIV follow this reading, not the Masoretic Text.

<sup>31</sup> I agree with Barr that two words of similar or even the same root need not suggest or evoke one another. Citing the example of **לחם** 'bread' and **מלחמה** 'war', he points out that it is fanciful to connect the two as being mutually suggestive, 'as if battles were normally for the sake of bread or bread a necessary provision for battles' (1961: 102). His qualification that words may be deliberately juxtaposed for assonance or semantic effect in special cases may, however, be relevant in this instance.

warrant shame. There is mention at any rate of a curse (אלה), with the vowel games under the first two consonants)<sup>32</sup> and of mourning or drought (the verb from אבל could reflect either meaning), shaming or dryness of the land (23:10). At 12:4, too, we have a context of persistent wickedness. The land is affected by the people's evil conduct (רע), leading bird and beast to perish and the land to mourn or dry up (אבל) and be shamed or withered (ייבש).<sup>33</sup> The idea of drought is the primary meaning here but the command to bear the shame of the failed harvest later in the same passage (12:13) seems to allow for the possibility that shame and mourning form an undertone in the theme of dryness. At 14:2-3, too, drought, mourning and shame are linked directly. The reason, possibly, is that the connection of cause and effect (shameful conduct transpiring in the shame of calamity) is reinforced through punning wordplay. Words from the root נבל may also have such a double-edged nuance (cf. Nielsen 1989: 272). A passage rebuking the people for their lack of shame is followed by the pronouncement of a withered (נבל) harvest (8:13). This root can also pertain to the action of dishonouring, such as at 14:21 (אל-חנבל כסא כבודך) and to a crime paralleled with adultery at 29:23.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> A few Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint and Syriac version reflect a reading translating as '(because of) these things'. The consonants are pointed with sere, then seghol and the medial consonant is doubled.

<sup>33</sup> While the Masoretic pointing and translation in the versions suggest that יבש and ייבש are from the root meaning 'to be dry', it is not unlikely that in this context of abhorrent conduct and alongside the ambiguous אבל the יבש/בוש wordplay familiar from other passages is being alluded to.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Roth (1960) and also Sherwood, who argues that the *hapax legomenon* נבלחה at Hosea 2:12 is derived from both the root נבל, 'to be foolish' and נבל, 'to wither', thereby alluding 'to her genitalia (her foolishness or shame) and her degeneration'. She claims that the meaning is not undecideable but rather ambiguous with both meanings colluding in the contrivance of a special nuance of destruction and humiliation (1996: 212 and note 267).

### *iii. Summary*

As with Isaiah, such a social-scientific model as the honour-shame matrix is unsuitable for examining shame discourses in Jeremiah. The various texts comprising this book are not field studies, reporting social interactions. They were shaped by and may reflect social factors but the reconstruction of these is impossible. Ideological criticism, I have argued, may be more suited to textual study. This approach challenges reading texts at face value, questions the idea of an absolute meaning and acknowledges that writers and editors may have agendas. It is an approach that need not exclude social-scientific methods but which tends to concede subjectivity rather than profess to aim for objectivity or 'facts'.

One agenda, which might be said to be discernible in Jeremiah (as well as in Ezra and Nehemiah, concerned with the return to Jerusalem from exile), is an anti-foreign polemic, asserting the returnees' claim to the land. The land, according to Jeremiah, had to be left due to pollution and infertility resulting from idolatry. As in Isaiah, shame and idolatry are linked repeatedly, but so are shame and infertility. The associations are often explicit but sometimes also take the form of more subtle word-play; they reinforce the perception that foreign contamination has dangerous, shameful, even life-threatening consequences. Again, too, sexual metaphor is a feature. Effusive and (notably in Jeremiah) bestial sexual activity is a vehicle for condemning apostasy and linked to foreign practices. It appears to be aimed at effecting revulsion and restraint in the form of proper shame. Jeremiah attests both a positive and a negative meaning of 'shame'.

## VI. Shame and Ezekiel

### *i. Impurity and Shame*

The themes of purity and holiness are central to the book of Ezekiel. Demarcation, scrupulously separating that which is holy from that which is defiled, is prominent especially in chapters 40–48 (cf. 40:45f.; 41:4; 42:13f., 20; 43:7, 12, 26; 44:17–19, 23; 45:3, 6; 48:11–14, 20). Elsewhere, too, however, such concerns are evident. Yhwh explains that his drastic punishments for Judah's sin and the subsequent restoration stem from a concern for his holy name which has been defiled (20:41, 44; 36:22–23; 43:7–8) and the strikingly hesitant descriptions of the prophet's divine visions, too, could be interpreted as reflecting a heightened regard for the deity's holiness. Isaiah also feared the consequences of setting eyes on the 'holy, holy, holy Yhwh of hosts' (Isa. 6:3ff.) but his account is none the less candidly direct: '*I saw Yhwh sitting on a throne, high and exalted, and his robes filled the temple*'. Ezekiel's description, in contrast, is considerably more oblique: 'above the firmament which was over their heads was something that appeared like a stone of lapis lazuli; something like a throne and on the apparent throne was something that appeared like a man. And I saw something like a spring of *hashmal* appearing like fire all around it. Emerging from what looked like his hips and upwards and below his hips I saw something appearing like fire and a gleam all around him. Like the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day so was the gleam around him. *That is the appearance of the likeness of Yhwh...*' (1:26ff.).<sup>1</sup>

In this context of holiness and purity the dazzling gleam around Yhwh's hips delicately circumvents any allusions to sexual organs. Isaiah 6, again less oblique, does mention the seraphim's genitals in the context of the divine vision (using the euphemism 'feet') but only in order to explain that these are covered in Yhwh's proximity (v. 2). Contrastingly, the dominant metaphor of Ezekiel which signifies Israel's sin and which procures divine punishment in the form of exile, focuses on sexuality and its attendant impurities in very graphic (far from euphemistic) terms. Israel's activities are

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<sup>1</sup> My italics. Cf. also 8:1ff.

characterised as defiling sexual infidelities and occasionally called **הוֹעֲבָה** (e.g. 6:9; 8:6; 16:51), which in the Torah designates something abominable and polluting in the extreme (cf. Lev. 18:22; Deut. 17:4f.). Further, Israel is clearly regarded as culpable and the need that she recognise and pay for her sin is stressed. Israel is described as rebellious (2:3) and as agent of detestable acts (8:6) and just as a wicked man who does not turn from his wrongful ways will die for his sin--if he has been warned and ignored the warning he will, furthermore, be held fully accountable (3:18-19)--so Israel, forewarned by the prophet and the recipient of a covenant (16:8) and laws enabling life (20:11-12), is inculcated to abstain from her rebelliousness (3:27f.). Yhwh's judgment will be in accordance with her conduct (7:3-4, 8; 9:9-10; 11:21; 21:24; 22:31; 36:19; 39:23-24).

Divine punishment is entirely the result of deliberate sinful conduct. Israel is metaphorically depicted as of highly impure provenance (16:3-6) but it is not this antecedent or inheritance which excludes her from blessing and a covenant relationship with Yhwh (16:8). In chapter 18, too, the onus of sinfulness is not inherited; instead, everyone is responsible for their own (mis)deeds. Hence, a wicked man will die for his own sin while his son, should he prove good and obedient, will be untainted by anything like an *Erbsünde* (18:17f.). An association between Israel's intentional sin (for which she is culpable) and impurity appears repeatedly: the guilt from which the Israelites expire (4:17) is traced back to and signified by the defilement incurred through eating unclean food (4:12ff.); rebellion and disobedience (5:6) are described as **הוֹעֲבָוֹת** (BDB, 'abominations') and an offence (**שִׁקָּץ**) against holiness (5:9-11); rejection of Yhwh's laws and desecration of the Sabbath entail defilement (20:26); the sins of Jerusalem, depicted as of an unethical nature (cf. 22:6ff.), render her impure (cf. 22:8-10, 15-16) and the priests are singled out because their acts of violence to the Torah consist of a failure to distinguish between holy and profane (22:26) (cf. also 24:13; 33:25f.; 36:17f.; 39:23-24). Elsewhere, Israel's defiling sin is memorably characterised as prostitution and adultery (6:9; 16:15ff.; chapter 23).

Frymer-Kensky (1983) describes two forms of pollution: one which could be eradicated by rituals of purification and another which could not. The former category is subdivided in the Levitical laws into major pollutions, rendering one contagiously impure for (usually) seven days and minor pollutions where contagion lasts a single day. If the contagiously impure person avoids the sacred realm, waits out the period of pollution, participates in a purification rite and readmission ritual, he or she is able to return to the community with no onus or guilt attached to the pollution. Many of the pollutions are indeed necessary (e.g. contact with corpses - if only to remove them from the proximity of living quarters), even prerequisites of blessing (e.g. emissions of sexual intercourse and childbirth), or at any rate inadvertent (e.g. menstrual bleeding, leprosy) (cf. Ezek. 45:20, for the necessity and possibility of atoning for unintentional sin). The second category, however, concerning pollution resulting from intentional sin, Frymer-Kensky explains, could not be purified by ritual but entailed instead catastrophic retribution and a 'purging' by destruction and exile.<sup>2</sup>

Milgrom distinguishes between physically generated impurity and morally generated iniquity, pointing out that when they are rectified different vocabulary is employed: physical pollution is purified (טָהַר), whilst moral shortcoming needs to be forgiven by Yhwh (נָסַח) (1989: 107). He stresses, however, that the two concepts are sometimes amalgamated:

... it should be noted that the holiness of God is associated with His moral attributes (cf. Exod 34:6-7). It therefore follows that the commandments, Israel's ladder to holiness, must contain moral rungs. It is then no wonder that the quintessential program for achieving holiness, Leviticus chapter 19, is a combination of moral as well as ritual injunctions. Conversely, impurity, the opposing doctrine to holiness, cannot be expected to consist solely of physical characteristics. It must *ipso facto* impinge on the moral realm (1989: 106).

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Be'er 1994: 156ff. on the features of curable and incurable impurities. She points out that while menstruation is considered a curable impurity, deliberate intercourse with a menstruating woman is depicted as an incurable pollution. Both sin and impurity damage the sought-after state of holiness and distance Israel from her God; deliberate sinning, however, is considerably more defiling and frequently irreparable.

<sup>3</sup> The verb נָסַח (like בָּרָא, 'to shape, create') is used only with a divine subject.

Milgrom's conclusion is that 'the concept of impurity was broadened to denote the violation of ... moral values' (1989: 108). Ultimately, then, he acknowledges a distinction between the concepts, whilst allowing for the possibility that the language and notions of holiness and purity may reinforce what he calls moral impurity.

In Ezekiel, the process of restoration for the sake of Yhwh's holiness following deliberate moral violations, is depicted as a purification ritual: a period of separation and purgation preceding reentry into the sanctuary and a resumption of the relationship with Yhwh.<sup>4</sup> As Israel's sin was clearly not inadvertent it cannot be repaired by a merely external purity ritual--in spite of the prominence of purity and holiness language. Due to its intentional quality, it conferred onus and guilt and the purging described is therefore of a quite different kind. Yhwh's restoration is unconditional and promised even amid catastrophe (11:16ff; 16:59ff.; 39:25ff.). The process of restoration requires, however, a cleansing of the inner condition and it is in this context that shame appears to function. While shame in its objective manifestation is incited by humiliating public exposure (German *Schande*) (cf. the recurring theme of the mocking of the nations, e.g. 5:14-15; 22:4; 36:3, 6, 15, 30), it has also a subjective, self-examining dimension. While shame is not necessarily presented as a prerequisite of restoration--it is a *consequence* of restoration at 16:59ff.--nor as an ongoing condition (cf. 39:26) it is none the less an important attendant factor. Recognition of wrongdoing and a feeling of self-loathing, which is characteristic of subjective shame, are thus prominent.

At 6:9 the people's experience of self-loathing (from קִנּוּי) is a case of 'too little too late' and punishment is not averted.<sup>5</sup> At 20:43 and 36:31, however, self-loathing follows restoration and seems to be an appropriate, inwardly-purging response and at 16:61, too, the people--already atoned for and recipients of a new covenant with Yhwh--experience shame (from כָּלִם). 39:26, while envisaging the people as eventually forgetting their

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. the cleansing language in the process of restoration at 20:38 where Yhwh 'purges' (בָּרַר); 36:24ff., where the people are sprinkled with water and purified (טָהַר) of all defilements (טִמְאֻת); 37:23; and 39:12ff. where the land is cleansed prior to utopian restoration.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also 7:18 where the people's experience of shame (בוֹשָׁה), while consonant with their deplorable sins, cannot turn back punishment.

shame (from כָּלִם), also implies a period of shame, possibly a kind of liminal purging phase prior to entering a restored condition. Subjective or internalised shame is connected with self-loathing (both signify intense negative self-evaluation) but neither actually effects restoration. Restoration is not bound to feelings or admissions of ignominy or to prior repentance. At 36:16-32, for instance, the people's impurity is likened to that of a menstruating woman (36:17) and they are described as idolatrous and profane (36:18). In spite of this (apparently, for the sake of his holy name), Yhwh brings the people back to their land, cleanses, feeds, renews and renders them obedient (36:24-29). It is only then, and although humiliating circumstances (חֲרָפָה) have been removed (36:30), that the people feel self-loathing (36:31) and are invited to express shame (בוֹשׁוּ וְהִכְלִמוּ) (36:32). These negative self-evaluations appear to be an important part of restoration; possibly an inward correlative of the external purging and cleansing.<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel, it appears, attempts to inculcate this necessary sense of shame and self-loathing by stressing a sense of personal responsibility (e.g. 3:16ff.; 9:10; chapter 18; 33:10-20) alongside pronouncedly repulsive, even grotesque sexual imagery that may be regarded as evoking strong disgust and justifying punishment (chapters 16 and 23).

## *ii. Woman Jerusalem in Ezekiel*

Sherwood comments on the 'disturbing and disorienting effect' of Hosea 1-3 and compares it to that of Shakespeare's problem plays which also 'shock and perplex the reader on a linguistic, generic, ethical and conceptual level' (1996: 12f.). The methods of Hosea might, she continues, be regarded as 'ethically questionable' (1996: 14). She points for support to the daring and resonant sexual image of the אִשְׁתֵּי זְנוּנִים, 'wife of harlots' (1996: 13), the catalogue of indignities to which the prophet is subjected (1996: 50), a 'bold disrespect for sanctity of logic and religion' (1996: 80) and a veritable delight in the inversion of signs and meanings (1996: 120f. and 203f.).

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. the pure inward condition of the Servant of Deutero Isaiah who cannot ultimately be shamed although outwardly he is mocked and degraded. In both of these texts the subjective and objective manifestations of shame are clearly distinguished.

Some of Sherwood's comments could be applied to Ezekiel. We have in Ezekiel 16 and 23, for instance, both of which use vulgar sexual imagery, an unprecedentedly lengthy and detailed feminised account of Jerusalem's abominable conduct, justifying, possibly even making inevitable, the need for feeling shame. The depiction of the personified cities and use of the marriage metaphor, furthermore, are altogether more shocking than Hosea 1-3 and I agree with Galambush's evaluation that these chapters have a 'visceral power' and 'particular intensity':

Ezekiel 16 is somehow more offensive than the same metaphor in Hosea and Jeremiah. The metaphor occurs in many forms in the Hebrew Bible, but only Ezekiel 16 was banned by the rabbis from public reading (*Meg.* 4:10). A key element in Ezekiel's uniquely visceral rendering of the marriage metaphor is his focus on the woman and especially on the female body as both defiled and defiling (1992: 102).

Two approaches which have attempted to account for this striking and disturbing depiction are first, the psychological and secondly, the feminist. Both have some applicability to the phenomenon of shame, as I will illustrate in the next two sections. Following on from this I will explore a third approach, that of an antilanguage.

### *a. The Psychological Approach*

Broome and Halperin have argued that the bizarre imagery of Ezekiel becomes meaningful when viewed from a psychoanalytic perspective. Both recognise clues in the text which, they believe, point to a disturbed personality. Broome identifies Ezekiel as a paranoid schizophrenic displaying symptoms typical of psychotic experience which has its origins 'in some kind of unconscious conflict involving narcissistic and masochistic tendencies' (1946: 277, note 1). Regarding female imagery, Broome describes Ezekiel as suffering a form of 'feminist masochism' in which he identifies himself as a woman (1946: 288f.). Eating the scroll (2:9-3:3) is, therefore, 'a crass sexual symbol' and the sharp sword (5:1) 'of course symbolic of the castration wish and fancy, while the beard and hair of the head [are] suggestive of genital hair growth' (1946: 289).<sup>7</sup> If Ezekiel felt alongside such masochistic desires for his emasculation a conflicting sense of shame, the

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<sup>7</sup> A symbolic connection between hair and male virility is argued for by Stone with regard to 2 Samuel 14:26-27, where mention of Absalom's profusion of hair precedes an account of the birth of sons and daughters (1996: 124). The shaving of the hair of the head, legs and beard by the king of Assyria, could also be said to signify a display of power of one group of men over another and, perhaps, an act of symbolic castration (Isa. 7:20).

horrific female images of chapters 16 and 23 could be regarded as projections of what he despises in himself and their abuse and killing as an expurgation of his shame.

Halperin's fascinating reconstruction of Ezekiel's biography depicts a profoundly disturbed man who was abused in early childhood and whose 'stylistic wilderness' points not to 'the piling up of editorial accretions, but to the ill-disciplined outpourings of a human being in nearly unbearable psychic pain' (1993: 157). The details of chapters 16 and 23, Halperin argues, while not entirely detached from the history they purport to represent, are neither controlled nor confined by that history because Ezekiel created these stories of wicked women from his own intense pain: 'He interpreted and justified his pain by projecting his experience outward, onto the history of Israel' (1993: 144). The origins of this pain are located by Halperin in the Oedipal conflict between male child and father over the love of the mother. The child Ezekiel, he explains, discovered that the woman who was his first and best love 'preferred to sleep with another male [and h]is rival's genitalia, compared with his own, will have seemed like those of a horse or of an ass [23:20]' (1993: 147).<sup>8</sup> His mother's preference for the father would have appeared as a stunning betrayal that could be explained only as a mark of heedless promiscuity (1993: 148). The intensity of Ezekiel's 'vindictive loathing [and] ... puritan pornography of revenge' (1993: 2) requires, however, Halperin continues, something more than this relatively standard Oedipal complex. One clue, he claims, may be Ezekiel's fixation on the repugnance of menstruation, which might be explained by a common element in the many societies with menstrual taboos:

In societies where women are kept from having sex for long periods after they give birth, they are apt to behave seductively toward their children. As a result, young boys "become sexually attracted to their mothers. This generates lasting fears and avoidances" ... . One such fear is the fear of castration; one such avoidance is the avoidance of sex with menstruating women. The link between the two is that "the sight or thought of a person who bleeds from the genitals ... is frightening to a person who has intense castration anxiety. It is a reminder of genital injury" (1993: 105f.).

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<sup>8</sup> In the light of Jeremiah 5:8 (see chapter V, note 17) a similar Oedipal conflict and inferiority complex could be claimed for the child Jeremiah also...

According to Halperin, then, the loathsome women of chapters 16 and 23 signify Ezekiel's mother who was for him a locus for feelings of both horror and desire. This is very clear, he argues, at 16:6ff.:

With the twice-pronounced *In your blood live!*, Ezekiel conveys the fullness of his mingled desire and loathing. The female is immeasurably appealing to him, with her firm breasts and flowing hair (verse 7), her jewelry and her lovely clothes (verses 10-13, 18). Yet beneath all these seductions, she is a creature of blood - wallowing in blood, growing in blood, spilling blood.

This enticing being is irresistibly powerful. She is the source of ominous and terrifying fluids. She can arouse the little boy. Yet she will abandon him to sleep with another male with whose genitalia he cannot hope to compete. In his rages he wants to slaughter her and gobble her up. Projecting his murderous feelings onto her, he imagines her doing the same to him (1993: 164).

The allusions to child sacrifice express, according to Halperin, Ezekiel's perception that his mother sacrificed him to her lover's appetite; in other words, that Ezekiel was sexually abused as a young child, probably by his own father, and that he believed his mother to have colluded in this (1993: 165). Abuse by a more powerful male also explains, Halperin claims, why Yhwh in the book of Ezekiel is such 'a monster of cruelty and hypocrisy' (1993: 170). Yhwh, not motivated by any genuine concern for his people's welfare, only restoring errant Jerusalem to humiliate her and make her perpetually miserable (16: 59-63), is identified with the abusive father: 'Ezekiel's childhood wounds were vastly more cruel than Jeremiah's. The image of the ideal adult male that he incorporated, therefore, could not be other than debased and vicious' (1993: 171). Halperin suspects that Ezekiel hated his father and his God, who bound and gagged him, made him prisoner and tried to force him to eat excrement (3:24-26; 4:4-8, 12-15)<sup>9</sup> but he could not allow himself to be consciously aware of his God as hateful being, nor could he hate his father:

In reality, the child must have envied and admired, even loved, the potent male who took his beloved woman and lovelessly used him. His hatred, unacknowledged, was split off and turned in other directions - toward pagan cults, toward foreign peoples, and most vigorously

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<sup>9</sup> Halperin argues that these passages echo Ezekiel's own 'dreadful infantile experience' (1993: 174).

toward Judah and her elders (1993: 172).

Ezekiel's inability to mourn for his wife, which would have been a 'healthy and appropriate response to loss' stems, according to Halperin, from Ezekiel's displacement of the longing and rage he originally felt for his mother on to his wife (1993: 177) and indicates perpetual entrapment in his unconscious pain (1993: 179). Ezekiel's keen sense of shame and guilt features prominently in Halperin's depiction of his tormented personality. His 'paralyzing ambivalence' in response to his wife's death, for instance, suggests, he claims, the contradictory emotions of real grief and unconscious glee and guilt:

However much he loved his wife as an individual, he cannot have failed to transfer to her his ancient and powerful image of the female as seductive monster, with all the murderous fury that image aroused in him. His eager expectation of the gruesome deaths of Oholah and Oholibah thus became a wish for his wife's death as well (1999: 181).

The mutism affecting Ezekiel, Halperin speculates, could have resulted from fear or shame (1993: 202), while the experience of captivity would have affected him acutely, as he

could not have failed to contrast his own impotent misery and shame with the power and splendor of his captors. The sexual humiliation of the child became fused with the physical humiliation of the adult (1993: 148).

Halperin counters the criticism that psychoanalytical interpretation offers only abstruse or farfetched explanations for phenomena which can be accounted for in more straightforward ways, by arguing that in the case of Ezekiel 'straightforward ways' lead to confusion (1993: 3). Ezekiel's loathing for female sexuality, then, is attributed to Oedipal drives, his mother's sexually ambiguous disposition towards him and to sexual abuse by her lover, which the child regarded as taking place with her consent. Ambivalence toward dominating male figures is attributed to a combination of admiration and envy for the sexually successful father, coupled with the pain of abuse. Female figures, the metaphorical women of chapters 16 and 23 as well as Ezekiel's wife, reveal Ezekiel's complex feelings of love and loathing for his mother; the uncared for infant, kicking in its blood and not attended to by Yhwh until he becomes sexually interested in it

is Ezekiel, abused in childhood (1993: 173); the violent punishment by both Yhwh and the mob of angry men constitute Ezekiel's 'barely repressed fantasy' of revenge on his mother (1993: 158).

Halperin's vivid portrait of Ezekiel as deeply wronged and tormented by rage and shame offers a compelling explanation for the disturbing images of chapters 16 and 23. As alluded to in chapter I, however, the psychoanalytical provenance of shame, while fascinating, is entirely unverifiable. Due to its inherent complexities, psychoanalytical criticism can account for all manner of contradictions. In Broome's definition, for instance, either one of the two conflicting drives of narcissism or masochism can explain both Ezekiel's grandiose statements and his self-abasements. Halperin, meanwhile, speaks of the co-existence of love and loathing for the mother, wife, father and God, which again account for the entire range of images. For the purposes of underlining the argument, Ezekiel's wife can thus become a projection of his mother, or Yhwh a projection of both Ezekiel's father and himself. When there arises a gap, such as an experience of the infant's ambiguous desire and fear compelling him to consume his mother, that too is accounted for by resorting to projection: hence it becomes the mother who wishes to consume her child. The psychoanalytical approach, therefore, is somewhat unsatisfactory, as it requires of its reader to accept the existence of such unprovable and abstract constructs as the Oedipus complex and latent infantile sexuality.

### ***b. The Feminist Approach***

Halperin proposes that the imagery of Ezekiel has 'effected the subjection and humiliation of the female half of our species' (1993: 5) and it is such an evaluation which has shaped feminist readings of the female imagery of Ezekiel. The imagery tends not, however, to be regarded as the product of a single damaged individual but as reflecting a societal ethos which has (had) a decidedly negative influence on women. In terms of shame, shame is not the private experience of one abused person but something that is attributed to women with a view to effecting their subjugation.

Galambush describes several ways in which the marriage metaphor of Ezekiel functions to stress the woman-city's thoroughgoing defilement and shamefulness. This, in turn, is

considered reflective of misogyny. First, the metaphor which in the ancient Near East depicted the city as goddess-consort of the patron deity (Fitzgerald 1972)<sup>10</sup> has been demoted from divine to mortal status. The personified city, consequently, conveys not a positive image of a goddess ruling with wisdom and power; instead she is a condemned woman.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the unfaithful city is portrayed very negatively not just as a prostitute but as adulteress. Galambush explains that the verb **הָזַן** refers to illicit sexual activity and, at the second metaphoric level, to violations of the obligation of exclusive fidelity to Yhwh, thereby linking idolatry (tenor) and adultery (vehicle) (1992: 31). Prostitution as a profession, as reflected in the Hebrew Bible, she comments, has relatively little stigma attached to it:

While priests are forbidden to marry prostitutes (Lev 21:7), there is no prohibition against such marriages for lay Israelites. The lack of overt condemnation of prostitution may reflect a relative lack of concern as to the sexual conduct of the (rare) woman who was not under male authority. When, however, the root *znh* is used of anyone to whom it does not apply literally (sexually disobedient females or idolatrous males), it describes a violation of authority, and is a term of strong opprobrium. Thus, males are forbidden (Lev 19:29) from making their own daughters prostitutes, and the sons of Jacob consider Shechem's act of treating their sister "like a prostitute" (Gen 34:31) sufficient justification for murder (1992: 31, note 19).

Galambush alludes to the social background which may have fuelled the sense of horror at the image of the adulteress in terms reminiscent from the Mediterranean studies:

Although adultery did not defile the name of the husband, the shame created by Yahweh's failure to keep his subjects "at home" would have found powerful expression in the image of

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<sup>10</sup> Fitzgerald's link between personified cities and female deities has been challenged, particularly with regard to their having common titles (cf. Franzmann 1995: 3) but as Galambush postulates, the metaphor may have been so deeply embedded as to be virtually invisible but nevertheless the source of everyday assumptions and speech about capital cities (1992: 20).

<sup>11</sup> Galambush notes that at Isaiah 47:1f. Babylon is called a queen, while Jerusalem at Ezekiel 16:13 is said to be fit to be queen. Nowhere, however, does the Hebrew Bible refer to a city, Israelite or otherwise, as a goddess. Further, condemnation of apostasy is virtually the only reason for the existence of the woman/city marriage metaphor in depicting cities of Israel and '2 Sam. 20:19 is probably the only instance where a fully personified Israelite city is not said to have committed adultery' (1992: 26f. and note 5).

the god as a cuckolded and therefore shamed husband. The intense emotional and cultural sanction surrounding female adultery would have provided an appropriate vehicle for venting the powerful rage and shame of the humiliated god (1992: 34f.).

... [I]n a world in which male honor is bound to female sexual behavior, female infidelity is both socially and personally threatening to the male. ... [B]ecause the cuckolded husband of the metaphor is no mortal, but Israel's male, warrior god, the entire male community is threatened by its god's loss of honor (1992: 102).

Rage at marital infidelity is not confined to societies where male honour is bound to female continence. Within the context of the root metaphor of marriage, however, adultery is a necessary image for expressing betrayal and indignation. This metaphor depicts a situation between land/city/people and deity but the shamefulness and defilement of the former tends to be associated in Ezekiel with female images in particular. This is conveyed not only in the vulgar feminised imagery of chapters 16 and 23<sup>12</sup> but in the use of hypothetical women as examples of defilement (18:6, 11, 15; 22:10-11). As Galambush points out, women symbolise *male* defilement in these passages:

Ezekiel describes male sexual transgression exclusively in terms of *female* uncleanness.

Thus the evil man approaches "a woman who is a *nddh*" or he "pollutes" his neighbor's wife (rather than himself!) through intercourse. ... The woman's uncleanness symbolizes the male's transgression (1992: 144).

Men, too, are accused of harlotry and infidelity and the image of Jerusalem as a defiled and shameful woman is intended to be inclusive. The intention of inclusivity can occasionally, though, be lost sight of. As Darr points out, 23:48, for instance--'thus I will put an end to lewdness in the land, *so that all women may take warning and not commit lewdness as you have done*'--admonishes women but not men to refrain from illicit sexual behaviour (1992a: 189; 1992b: 115). Furthermore, female imagery, while used extensively in Ezekiel to illustrate Jerusalem's transgressions and punishment, is virtually abandoned with regard to the (positive) state of restoration. Whereas in Isaiah

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<sup>12</sup> Carroll points out that while the women fulfil a metaphorical role, figuratively depicting Jerusalem's transgressions, real women also enter the discourse in a few places: at 16:38, 23:44-45, 48 and perhaps also 23:10, displaying a shift from the allegorical to the social (1996b: 76). This might indicate that the author is not just using a relatively commonplace woman/city metaphor but justifying it with recourse to his observations from the social context. All these observations reflect negatively on women.

(54:2ff.), Jeremiah<sup>13</sup> and Hosea (2:19ff.), restoration is likened to Yhwh's reconciliation with his wife, Ezekiel only obliquely alludes to female imagery in the context of restoration. Galambush argues that the earlier prophets 'overlooked or did not notice the marriage metaphor's implicit tendency to jeopardize Yahweh's purity and honor' (1992: 150f.). Envisaging the author of Ezekiel as concerned primarily with the purity of the temple, Galambush claims that once the dynamics of temple pollution had been fully explicated in terms of female sexual pollution, with its attendant danger of defiling the male, no personification of the restored temple as a woman could be tolerated. As the requisite purity of the new city does not permit the explicit personification as a woman, the metaphor depicting Jerusalem as Yhwh's wife is abandoned almost entirely. Only symbolically-speaking does the renewed city fulfil a feminine role:

a walled, protecting and protected space, from which defiling elements (specifically, foreign men) are excluded, but within which the mysterious power of life resides and from which fertile streams flow out to produce fruitbearing trees. The pure, safe, and fertile city is a fitting consort for the male god. Unlike the personified woman Jerusalem, this city performs the function of the "eternal feminine" without the attendant risks of pollution (1992: 156).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In Jeremiah the image of Jerusalem as wife of Yhwh is not as developed as in Ezekiel. In chapter 31, however, the Virgin Israel is beckoned to return (v.21) and later on there is mention of a time when Yhwh was husband (or master) of his people (v.32) and of the need for a new covenant that will never again be broken (v.33ff.). This image of restoration is compatible with a marriage.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Darr: 'Within Ezekiel's great vision of restored Israel (chaps. 40-48), female imagery and women have little role to play. Unlike his anonymous prophetic successors, the so-called Second and Third Isaiahs, he does not adopt wife/mother metaphors to depict Jerusalem's future restoration. Such imagery suited Ezekiel perfectly when he was lambasting Jerusalem and Samaria for their abominations and shamelessness' (1992a: 189). Female imagery in the context of restoration is by no means explicit and limited, she continues, to the waters of life (47:1-12): '... ground water is an image of female fertility (see Song 4:15; Psalm 87; Jer. 31:12; Isa. 51:1-3). ... Did the amniotic fluid that bursts forth just prior to birth suggest the imagery's appropriateness? Ezekiel did not choose to develop female dimensions of the life-giving ... they remain, as it were, an undercurrent, part of water imagery's network of cultural connotations' (1992a: 190).

Most vivid, however, in terms of sustained pejorative female imagery, are chapters 16 and 23. Here Jerusalem is given a detailed biography<sup>15</sup> and depicted as defiled from her youth. While Hosea is able to appeal to an ideal past when the relationship between Israel and her God was 'pure and reciprocal' (Sherwood 1996: 208), Ezekiel depicts Israel's entire history as marked by defilement; a treatment which, according to Galambush, is consistent with the book's depiction of Jerusalem as inherently other, unclean and unworthy and of the marriage as an act of Yhwh's supreme kindness (1992: 82). The woman/city begins her life in the land of the Canaanites and is of Amorite and Hittite parentage (16:3); that is, she was not only homeless but descended from races that feature in some biblical literature and possibly in the public consciousness as traditional opponents of Israel (Exod. 33:2; Deut. 7:1) who introduced her to evil practices (Judg. 3:5ff.). Israel is, furthermore, described as unclean (16:4), neglected (16:5) and as defiling herself in blood (16:6). Blood reappears as pejorative signifier of pollution at 16:9, where Yhwh washes the blood from the matured Jerusalem's body,<sup>16</sup> and of blood-guilt at 16:36, where she is accused of child-sacrifice. Despite her inauspicious beginning she grows up under Yhwh's protection richly blessed. While Ezekiel deletes the idea of a honeymoon stage of initial fidelity, Yhwh is proud of his wife (16:14). She, however, neither responds (cf. Hos. 2:17), nor follows (cf. Jer. 2:2). Instead, she is first passive, then actively and excessively rebellious, repaying Yhwh's gifts with lewd conduct (of the root זנא) (16:15),<sup>17</sup> and child sacrifice. Here the 'uncontrollably perverse' nature of the woman/city is stressed:

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<sup>15</sup> Galambush notes that Ezekiel's usage of the marriage metaphor differs from previous treatments in length, coherence and degree of detail. Ezekiel devotes 112 verses to the depictions of the unfaithful wife. Hosea, by comparison has 39, if all of chapters 1-3 are included and Jeremiah, though it is more difficult to determine what should count as personification, no more than 60 (1992: 79 and notes 8 and 9).

<sup>16</sup> The word is in the plural (דַּמִּיִּם) and may refer to birth blood, or menstrual blood, or both: there is no mention of the birth blood being cleansed off (cf. 16:6) (Galambush 1992: 94, note 16). Shields proposes that 'the hymenal blood associated with her marriage to Yahweh' is also being alluded to (1998: 9).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Bird 1989a and b. She explains that זנא describes illicit or criminal activity, usually of a sexually promiscuous rather than a cultic kind, which is capable of tainting honour. Bird describes that in Hosea 4:11-14 men are accused of cultic, women of sexual impurity: men dishonour Yhwh and זנא is used metaphorically (v. 12b), while women dishonour their lords and זנא is used literally (v. 13b). Galambush points out, further, that the verb is never used of a זונה 'because the sexual activity of the prostitute, while outside formal bonds, is in fact, licit' (1992: 28, note 9).

At the level of the tenor, literal *fathers* would in fact have offered their children as sacrifices. The metaphorical transfer of the act to “mother” increases the horror of the act in several ways. First, the image works against the commonplace of mother as a nurturer. Second the metaphor depicts the mother usurping the prerogative of the father; the woman is taking the fruits of her sexual obligation [from] her husband and transferring them to idols, who as “lovers” at the level of the vehicle, are the husband’s sexual competitors (Galambush 1992: 84, note 24).

Ironically, Jerusalem’s obscene behaviour offends even the Philistine daughters (16:27). Presumably, the Philistines were considered proverbially uncouth. In much of the biblical literature they are depicted as traditional enemies and God’s tool for chastisement (e.g. Judg. 3:2-4; 10:6-8). The Philistine women feel shame (from כָּלָם) - the very response Ezekiel appears to want to elicit among the Israelites. Instead, Israel’s offensiveness is spelt out in yet more appalling detail. She is insatiably promiscuous and brazenly public with it (16:28ff.). Worse than a prostitute (זִנָּיִת), furthermore, who was, presumably, an ostracised but tolerated woman whose sexual activity violated no man’s right, Israel is accused of adultery (from נִאָּץ) (Bird 1989b: 77), an offence depicted in biblical literature as unequivocally intolerable and punishable by death (Lev. 20:10).<sup>18</sup> Highlighting the unnaturalness of her conduct, she does not act promiscuously in return for payment but actually gives payment to her lovers (16:34). Jerusalem’s perversity and unnaturalness are stressed also in chapter 23, where transgression is signified in terms of sexual depravity, particularly in the active pursuit of foreign lovers (23:5, 12).

While not singular in employing the metaphor personifying Jerusalem as an unfaithful wife, Ezekiel’s usage is especially vivid and compelling. Jeremiah 3:20 draws a parallel between a deceitful woman and the conduct of Israel, which Hosea 1-3 develops more fully. Ezekiel 16 and 23, however, are considerably more detailed and sustained. Both are lengthy accounts outlining Jerusalem’s abominations and predicting and justifying her punishment. Galambush argues that here the full emotional implications of the cuckolding of Yhwh, the metaphorical husband of the city Jerusalem, are played out (1992: 57, note

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<sup>18</sup> But see McKeating (1979) on how and whether biblical law was practically applied in antiquity.

96) and that the adultery theme has been recast to focus on the pollution that precipitates Yhwh's abandonment of the temple (1992: 78). To a much greater extent than in Isaiah, I would argue, women's sexuality is metaphorically linked with shame and impurity.

Also, the pathos which I have argued is detectable in Lamentations, for instance (cf. IV.ii.a.), is entirely absent in Ezekiel. In Lamentations, too, there is no question of Jerusalem's having sinned. Again personified as a woman in chapters 1-2, she admits to her rebelliousness (from **פֶּשַׁע**, 1:14, 22) and stubborn action (from **מָרָה**, 1:18). The narrator confirms that her sinful conduct (**רַב-פְּשָׁעֶיהָ**, 1:5; **חַטָּא חַטָּאָה**, 1:8) has brought about pollution--she is called a **נִידָה** and **נִדָּה** (both are nominal) (1:8, 17) and described as afflicted by **טִמְאָה** 'uncleanness' (1:9)--and possibly shame (literally **עֲרוּתָהּ** 'nakedness', 1:8).<sup>19</sup> Nakedness is used to elucidate shame elsewhere (cf. Isa. 47:3). None the less, as Dobbs-Allsopp illustrates, Jerusalem's sin in Lamentations is referred to relatively infrequently and imprecisely when compared to the abundance of images of punishment and torment. This effectively plays down the sin theme and produces the impression that whatever the sin might have been, it 'in no way can justify the extent and degree of suffering she has experienced' (1997: 37).

In Lamentations even such gruesome acts as child-murder and cannibalism are presented in terms which incite pathos (4:10). Here the mothers eating their own children are called tender-hearted (from **רַחֵם**), because in the atrocious conditions death is preferable to living with hunger, violence and deprivation (4:9). I agree with Dobbs-Allsopp that these women 'stand as paradigms of innocent suffering for which there is no justification and for which Yahweh's actions are directly and indirectly responsible' (1997: 38). In Ezekiel, by contrast, the woman-city's sin is depicted in hyperbolic images and her promiscuity and act of child-murder (16:21; 23:37) epitomise her perversity and

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<sup>19</sup> Galambush claims that '[t]he nakedness of Jerusalem metonymically signifies her shame ... Jerusalem gives away her clothing along with the honor it represents' (1992: 105).

irredeemable corruptedness.<sup>20</sup> The depravity and unnaturalness of the woman-city in Ezekiel, is presented as fully justifying the extravagant violence with which Yhwh, who initially cared for and who will eventually restore her, threatens her.<sup>21</sup> In Lamentations, however, the punishment of Jerusalem is not only presented as excessive but Yhwh emerges here as somewhat sinister: he has sent fire into the woman/city's bones and spread out a net for her (1:13), put a yoke upon her neck and trampled on the Virgin Daughter of Judah (1:14-15). These descriptions are recounted by the woman-city in the first person, which appears to give us direct insight into the suffering she endures. The punishment of the woman/city in Ezekiel, on the other hand, is in the third person, allowing no possibility of insight into either her motivations, or her pain. She is only an 'other' and therefore regarded with more detachment, which makes condemning her considerably easier than is the case with the woman-Jerusalem of Lamentations.<sup>22</sup> The contrast, furthermore, between the powerful deity and the trampled upon virgin daughter, weeping profusely with no one to comfort her is, I would say, emotive and intended to provoke sympathy. A virgin daughter might be said to be entitled to protection; instead she is brutalised by Yhwh who is said to be without pity (חַמַּל, 2:2) and who is likened to a murdering enemy (כָּצֵר, כְּאֹיֵב, 2:4). Yhwh is even asked directly to reevaluate his treatment of Jerusalem, with the rhetorical questions 'should women eat their offspring, the children they have cared for? Should priest and prophet be killed in the

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<sup>20</sup> At Ezekiel 5:10 fathers and sons are described as practising cannibalism. It is unclear whether this is one of the 'detestable practices' (חֲוִיעֲבוֹת, 5:11) being rebuked, or a desperate consequence of famine and hunger (5:12).

<sup>21</sup> Galambush mentions that '[t]he city's situation as described in Lamentations is remarkably like that *predicted* in Ezekiel' but she does not provide a more detailed comparison because she considers the book to post-date Ezekiel. Her comment in passing that '[t]he city [in Lamentations] is depicted as a "widow," abandoned by her lovers, betrayed by her friends (1:1-2), and deprived of children taken (1:5)', using such emotively charged words as 'abandoned', 'betrayed' and 'deprived', might be interpreted as alluding to a recognition that the woman/city of Lamentations is regarded and depicted in terms arousing pity rather than criticism (1992: 58).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. van Dijk-Hemmes' comments on Hosea: 'A comparison between Hosea 2 and similar passages from the Song of Songs reveals what difference it makes when the woman-in-the-text is presented not as the focalizer but, on the contrary, as the object of focalization. A woman who, like the woman in the Song of Songs, expresses her desire for her lover is, in the Hosean context--where she is presented through his eyes and where her words are "quoted" by him--transformed into a harlot who shamelessly goes after her lovers (in the plural!)' (1995: 245f.).

sanctuary of the Lord?' which imply, I would say, criticism; or at any rate, resistance to the extent of suffering endured.

O'Connor interprets Jerusalem's uncleanness in Lamentations as originating from adultery and menstruation. She goes on from this to claim that 'a natural condition of the female body becomes a metaphor for shame and humiliation' and further, that the consequence of using feminised imagery to depict human sinning generally,

symbolically blames women alone for the destruction of the city, and ... teaches disdain for women and for their bodies. Most disturbing of all, chap. 1 indirectly justifies abuse of women by portraying God as abuser (1992: 180).

I find these comments considerably more apt for the depiction of the woman/city in Ezekiel than of that in Lamentations. As Dobbs-Allsopp comments, the role of woman-Jerusalem in Lamentations is much like that of a tragic heroine: she is partly responsible for her suffering and there *is* guilt but the consequences are depicted as out of proportion to the deed and the context of suffering must ultimately be laid at the feet of the deity, whose power cannot be questioned but whose sense of justice and goodness is (1997: 35). While woman-Jerusalem's transgression and uncleanness are mentioned, the prominent impression is not, I believe, of women's shamefulness and the text not focused on teaching disdain for, or blaming women, as O'Connor suggests. The image of the city as a young, grieving, agonised woman, who is speaking in the first person and recounting her violent fate, is aimed, rather, at inciting sympathy and pathos. Yhwh's actions, furthermore, while definitely depicted as abusive, are far from justified. I would argue, instead, in agreement with Dobbs-Allsopp, that Yhwh is being criticised for the harsh treatment of Jerusalem in various ways. Yhwh not only sent the enemy (1:5; 1:12), he is compared to the enemy (2:4-5) and imprecations at one (the enemy), implicate the other (Yhwh); invocations uttered by the personified city (1:9, 11) and later by the poet (3:59, 60; 5:1) for Yhwh to acknowledge the suffering of his people, furthermore, take on a note of indictment when read against the background of 2:20-22, describing suffering of a scale for which there is no justification (1997: 38f.).

Not so in Ezekiel. Here punishment is also virulent and violent but it is presented as appropriate and proportionate. Still drawing on the woman/city metaphor which served to

illustrate transgression, Yhwh's punishment entails public stripping (16:37), destruction of property (16:39; 23:46-47), murder of offspring (23:47), stoning (16:40; 23:47) and dismemberment (16:40; 23:47). In the light of the preceding catalogue of the city's sinning, juxtaposed with Yhwh's extravagant care and the statement that her treatment is deserved due to breach of covenant (16:59), this brutality is depicted as entirely in order. Ezekiel presents the coming destruction of Jerusalem not as capricious act but as fitting consequence on account of human culpability. As the punishment anticipated is extreme, so the sin is depicted as suitably gruesome (cf. Darr 1992b: 111). Yhwh, meanwhile, emerges as just.<sup>23</sup>

The punishment of Jerusalem described in Ezekiel is brutal but, unlike with Lamentations, the disturbing nature of this does not receive acknowledgement. Lamentations, like Job, challenges a deity who could treat his people thus; Ezekiel, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, vindicates Yhwh's action. Perhaps because of the disturbing potential of the divine sanctioning of and tacit agreement with such brutality, some feminist commentators have sprung to the defence of the woman-city of Ezekiel. Just as O'Connor, in the citation above, discerns in the feminised metaphor of Lamentations a blaming of actual women, others have argued for nuances in the Prophets which they label misogynistic and pornographic. These are also regarded as containing negative and damaging implications for real women. Setel (1985) has referred to female sexual imagery in Hosea as pornographic. Agreeing with her, Brenner has claimed that '[i]t is difficult for any reader, even a resisting or suspicious reader, not to be affected by the recurrent, negative images of woman which are coded into the religio-political propaganda' (1995a: 34). Graetz, more fully and emotively, links the imagery of Hosea

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<sup>23</sup> Franzmann describes the depiction of Yhwh as warrior-rapist as a scandal and argues that it supports men in their victimisation of women by the authority of the metaphor (1995: 17ff.; see also Shields 1998:9, 16f.). Washington points out that punishment depicted as rape of the woman/city by 'God as vengeful rapist' is a resonant and disturbing motif of prophetic literature, directed both at foreign cities (Isa. 47:1-4; Nah. 3:5-6) and at Israel-Judah. With regard to the latter, he cites Jeremiah 13:33, Lamentations 1:8-10 and 4:21-22, Ezekiel 16:35-39, 23:9-10, 26-29, Hosea 2:3-17 and Zechariah 14:2 (1997: 354f.). Of these Jeremiah 13 has some similarity with Lamentations: weeping is a theme in this poetic passage also (v.17) and the city is depicted as a woman who is punished for sinning (v.22) and who is unclean (v.27). Unlike Lamentations and according more with the tenor of Jeremiah 2 and 5 and Ezekiel 16 and 23, Jeremiah alludes to the sexual depravity which justifies the punishment (v.27). Lamentations may have avoided the metaphor depicting Jerusalem's transgressions as sexual excesses so as not to dilute the tragic pathos.

with real-life domestic violence:

I argue, along with other feminist commentators, that the language of Hosea and the other prophets and rabbis who use “objectified female sexuality as a symbol of evil” has had damaging effects on women. Women who read of God’s relationship with Israel through the prism of a misogynist male prophet ... and have religious sensibilities, are forced to identify against themselves (1995: 138).

Israel has to *suffer* in order to be entitled to this new betrothal. “She” has to be battered into submission in order to kiss and make up at the end. ... The premise is that a woman has no other choice but to remain in such a marriage. True, God is very generous to Israel. ... But despite the potential for a new model of a relationship between God and Israel, it is not a model of reciprocity. It is based on suffering and the assumption that Israel will submit to God’s will. Hosea, however, rejoices in this transformation and in the “ordeal [which] has fit the woman for a new, enhanced relationship with God”.

The reader who is caught up in this joyous new betrothal and renewed covenant overlooks the fact that this joyous reconciliation between God and Israel follows the exact pattern that battered wives know so well. Israel is physically punished, abused and then seduced into remaining in the covenant by tender words and caresses (1995: 141).<sup>24</sup>

A similar leap from metaphoric depiction to real women (oftentimes modern-day women) is made with regard to the imagery in Ezekiel. Darr expresses her uneasiness at the woman/city’s degradation, public humiliation, battery and murder constituting a means towards *healing* a broken relationship and has sympathy for her woman student who rejected chapters 16 and 23 (1992b: 115). Galambush argues that these two chapters qualify as pornography in the literal (*pornographos* = writings of/about prostitutes), as well as the modern sense, as defined by Dworkin and MacKinnon--‘the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and or words’ (1992: 125). Both seem to be affected by the text as woman reader, identifying or empathising to an extent with

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<sup>24</sup> Washington argues along similar lines, drawing together diverse strands of biblical literature: ‘As foundational texts of Western culture [the Deuteronomic laws] authenticate the role of violence in the cultural construction of gender up to the present day’ (1997: 344). These laws and also much of prophetic literature, are, he argues, ‘problematic for a female-identified reader, who soon finds herself aligned with the object of violence’ (1997: 346). Shields agrees that Ezekiel 16:35-43 ‘is easily passed over, until one realizes that it uncannily resembles the cycle of spousal abuse that is only now, in our time, being discussed openly’ (1998: 15).

the woman of the metaphor.<sup>25</sup> This tendency is particularly clear with van Dijk-Hemmes. Agreeing with Setel that pornography is often characterised by misnaming female experience, she designates 23.3 an example of pornographic writing demonstrating this, before attempting to liberate the woman of the text. In the NIV this verse reads, '[Samaria and Jerusalem] became prostitutes in Egypt, engaging in prostitution from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled and their virgin bosoms caressed'. Van Dijk-Hemmes points out that this event is one not of activity but of receptivity, which has for her particular implications:

As an F [Female/Feminine] reader I have some difficulties in naming such a being-acted-upon situation as "playing the harlot", so I suggest ... [i]t would have been more adequate to describe the events during the sisters' youth in the following manner: "They were sexually molested in Egypt, in their youth they were sexually abused". This way, justice would have been done to the fate of these metaphorical women, and the audience would not have been seduced into viewing women or girls as responsible for and even guilty of their own violation. In short, there would have been no question of "blaming the victim" (1995: 250f.).

She accuses the text, furthermore, of not only misnaming but distorting female experience. The image of Oholibah's desire for stallion-like males with animal-like members, she argues, '[i]nstead of reflecting female desire, ... betrays male obsession', the intention being 'to stress that [women's] sexuality is and ought to be an object of male possession and control' (1995: 253).

I have some affinity with the feminist commentators cited above, insofar that I would agree that the images of Ezekiel 16 and 23 when they are visualised, do trigger unpleasant and unsettling responses. Also, it may be true, as Graetz argues, that 'it is no longer possible to argue that a metaphor is less for being a metaphor' (1995: 135). Certainly, metaphors if they are to be uncoded by their audience and effective, rely on certain

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<sup>25</sup> An emphasis on the perspective of woman-reader sometimes adopts a personal, almost confessional tone. Brenner, for instance, writes in her article on Jeremiah, 'I am a woman, white, Western, Jewish, and Israeli, middle class, heterosexual, divorced, a mother, with an academic education' (1995b: 272). While I agree that one's background and experiences are bound to have an impact on the reading and interpreting process, I think it is fair to say that from this distancation in terms of time and space the images of Ezekiel 16 and 23 would strike most modern readers, male and female, as offensive, strange, even deranged.

presuppositions, or knowledge. A cliché metaphor such as 'Mother Earth', for instance, depends on the recognition of qualities which are stereotypically associated with motherhood (such as fertility, nurture and nourishment) which are then transposed on to the earth. This is not to say, however, that such a metaphor actively facilitates such a perception of motherhood, or that it is capable of blinding those who understand how it functions to the fact that mothers can be anything but nurturing and caring - for instance, neurotic or neglectful. The feminised metaphor of Ezekiel is very evocative and gives rise to vivid mental pictures but whether it reflects and perpetuates a misogynist reality is difficult to establish. On the one hand an effective language device, a metaphor is on the other 'just a metaphor' (*pace* Graetz 1995: 135; Brenner 1995: 264; Franzmann 1995: 18)<sup>26</sup> and it should not be forgotten that the, admittedly often repellent, feminised metaphors are aimed at the entire community.

The effusive, vulgar and violent rhetoric does require some explanation but this may not necessarily be best sought for by reading the figurative layer in a literal manner and applying it to real women. This, after all, is not the purpose of figurative language: 'Mother Earth' does not signify that the earth is like a human mother, with a literal womb and the capacity to breast-feed. Carroll's comments, in response to articles by van Dijk-Hemmes and Brenner, who argue for pornographic and misogynist features in Ezekiel and Jeremiah respectively, provide some balance to the somewhat emotive responses to

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<sup>26</sup> Wicker claims that metaphor is capable of 'organic development' and that theological metaphor goes further than this in that it is capable of 'doctrinal development'. It is rooted, he argues, in cultural tradition and has 'a certain preordained validity' for its author: 'Theological metaphors are not chosen; they choose us. They come from the web of the language itself ... and its stock of available ideas' (1975: 88). I do not disagree with this position or wish to dispute the idea that metaphors are dependent on certain cultural suppositions and knowledge in order to be understood. What I am resisting is the argument that they reflect social reality rather than stereotypical perception, or that their power inevitably exceeds the generation of vivid mental pictures and emotional arousal to the extent of shaping social conduct.

sexualised female imagery in the Prophets.<sup>27</sup> Carroll stresses that the representations of Oholah and Oholibah are metaphoric and that their referential force is therefore symbolic as opposed to concrete:

The images may well be drawn from male perceptions of female behaviour (whether actual or male fantasy must be left for the social historian to determine), but they are applied to the community as city and not to real women in the community. That is how metaphors work. What the Ezekiel text denounces is the behaviour of male society throughout its history. The notion that the narrative is seeking to reinforce male dominance over actual women is imposed on the text by certain forms of contemporary radical feminist ideology (1995: 283).

Carroll attributes the extrapolation of misogynistic messages from such texts as Hosea 1-3, Jeremiah 2,3 and 5 and Ezekiel 16, 20 and 23 to feminist ideology which refuses 'to treat metaphor *as* metaphor when it suits a predetermined argument' (1995: 288). Unsurprised by Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes' outrage at such texts--he describes the 'fantasies' of Ezekiel 16 and 23, for instance, as 'bizarre and incoherent ... like the ravings of a drug-crazed fanatic' (1995: 300)--Carroll prefers not to read them as reflecting the actions of real people, calculated to oppress and control real women but as literary discourses:

Real people do not appear in these fantasies and the stereotypical nature of the abuse confirms this non-appearance of the real.<sup>28</sup> There are no real women ... only metaphorized

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<sup>27</sup> I am referring here especially to the connections made by Graetz, Yee and Shields between prophetic imagery and wife-beating and to van Dijk-Hemmes' rewriting of the sexual history of the sisters Samaria and Jerusalem, as one of suffering sexual abuse in early adolescence (see above). As regards the label of 'pornographic', Kuhn, writing of the tensions between feminism and the representation of female sexuality in the cinema, acknowledges the capacity of pornography 'to provoke gut reactions - of distaste, horror, sexual arousal, fear - [which] makes it peculiarly difficult to deal with analytically. ... [T]he intellectual distance necessary for analysis becomes hard to sustain: and also feminist ... politics around pornography tend to acquire a degree of emotionalism that can make the enterprise quite explosive' (1985: 21).

<sup>28</sup> Halperin has taken issue with this stance. He cites Carroll's similar statement elsewhere, '[i]f the language were not so stereotypical (cf. Hosea and Ezekiel), its verisimilitude would suggest that it is derived from the timeless quarrels of husbands and wives', claiming that it is preferable to say '*[p]recisely because the language is so stereotypical ... its verisimilitude will suggest that it is derived from the timeless quarrels of husbands and wives*'. Halperin's argument is: 'Endless recurrent human situations - "timeless quarrels," sexual yearning and betrayal, loss of a beloved object - are the stuff of which stereotypes, and stereotypic language, are made' (1993: 180, note 46).

descriptions and representations of imaginary communities and imagined past histories. It is all in the imagination, in the metaphors and in the ideology (1995: 303).

It is indisputable, I would say, that the imagery of Ezekiel which inculcates shame portrays women in a negative light. Female imagery is vividly and insistently associated with defilement and immorality and it is legitimate to describe particularly the metaphors of chapters 16 and 23 as disturbing and offensive. This should neither detract from the fact that the metaphor calls all Israel to account, nor should such extremist language be regarded as necessarily reflecting a more generalised extremist misogyny which uses a form of pornography to oppress real women. Carroll, pointing out that pornography, while being *one* form of representation of sexual existence is by no means the sole one (1995: 297), has proposed instead that Ezekiel might be employing an antilanguage (1995: 297; 1996b: 81).<sup>29</sup>

### *c. Ezekiel 16, Shame and Antilanguage*

Antilanguages, the languages of antisocieties seeking self-consciously to create a different kind of society from that which has been or is dominant, are often characterised by extremity.<sup>30</sup> As Carroll points out:

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<sup>29</sup> Antilanguages are discussed by Halliday (1978: 164-182) with particular reference to 'pelting', the tongue of the counterculture of vagabonds in Elizabethan England; the language of an antisociety of modern Calcutta and 'grypserka', the language of the subculture of Polish prisons and reform schools. All three are spoken by antisocieties existing within other societies and as conscious alternatives to them and all represent modes of resistance. An antilanguage, furthermore, not only realises and expresses an alternative subjective reality but actively creates and maintains it. They are often but not inevitably symptomatic of social resistance and protest: the 'arcane languages' of sorcery and mysticism also qualify, according to Halliday.

<sup>30</sup> Gubar, alluding to the features of pornographic visual art which render it subversive, postulates that pornography is in part a revolt against authority, aimed at psychic disorientation and a step " ... in the dialectic of outrage" so as to speak about the forbidden, be it the extinction of the self associated with physical death, with mystical attempts to transcend the personal, or with rebellious efforts to transgress the boundaries of conventional consciousness' (1987: 727). Such features are not entirely dissimilar to those of antilanguages. It remains, however, preferable to examine Ezekiel in terms of an antilanguage than in terms of pornography because the latter is not only notoriously difficult to define (one person's erotica is another's pornography) but also because pornography is concerned ostensibly with sex and sexual titillation, whereas antilanguage is primarily concerned with subversion and establishing a counter-reality, which, I think, may be closer to the agenda of Ezekiel.

The attempt radically to alter everything inevitably involves violent language, overcharged rhetoric and grotesque parodies of reality. It is not difficult to recognize such features in the Ezekiel material (1995: 302).

Tendencies of antilanguages, as described by Halliday, are vulgarity and cunningly subversive word play<sup>31</sup> and such exaggerations as overlexicalization.<sup>32</sup> These 'larger than life', somewhat ostentatious characteristics of antilanguages arise, Halliday explains, from a response to the cumulative pressure of the dominant society which threatens to disintegrate the alternative-reality-generating system of the antilanguage (1978: 168).<sup>33</sup> Certainly, I would agree that the hyperbolic imagery of Ezekiel's invectives is unlikely to be referring to real women or social reality. Such language may indeed be more suited to a radical reevaluation of norms or to generating or maintaining a counter-reality.

Another typical feature of antilanguages is the phenomenon of metaphor. Halliday is quick to mention that metaphor is a feature of *languages*, not just antilanguages but prefers to specify that it signifies the very element of antilanguages that is present in all languages. Antilanguages, he explains, are themselves metaphorical entities and hence metaphorical modes of expression are the norm: 'we should *expect* metaphorical compounding, metatheses, rhyming alternations and the like to be among its regular

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<sup>31</sup> Halliday describes antilanguages as 'inherently comic' (1978: 182). The classic antilanguage Rotwelsch (which Halliday does not refer to), once spoken by the criminal fraternity of Germany and Austria, for instance, used the word 'mezuzah' rather blasphemously, to signify a prostitute: because prostitutes could be found lingering in doorways waiting for clients. Commentators have recognised various sexual witticisms in prophetic writing, too. Magdalene, to name one, speaks of the rape language in Isaiah 3:17 and 26: "Opening", פתח, typically translated "secret parts", is a word play on the word for "gate", פתח, or the opening of a city. Thus the metaphor operates to equate both the city with the person of the female and the gate of the city with the vaginal opening of the female body. Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is the military metaphor of the ravaged city as ravished female seen more clearly' (1995: 333). Antilanguage word-play may be regarded as 'warped' but its quirkiness and wit are often striking.

<sup>32</sup> Halliday explains overlexicalization by pointing out that the antilanguage of the Calcutta underworld has not just one word for 'bomb' but twenty-one, as well as forty-one for 'police' (1978: 165). The hyperbolic catalogues of crime in Ezekiel, citing a wide range of deviant behaviour, might be considered as having some affinity with such a phenomenon.

<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu, while not referring to antilanguages as such, describes a similar process which attends political resistance, whereby pressure groups attach their self-interest to one or other possible meaning of a word. He compares this to the inversion of a chord in music and explains that such an activity can overturn the hierarchy of meaning and trigger a symbolic revolution (1990: 97).

patterns of realization' (1978: 177). Ezekiel 16 and 23 with their violent and vulgar metaphors may indeed hold some promise for the existence of antilanguage features. These 'lengthy harangues' (Carroll 1995: 302), after all, could well be described, in Halliday's words, as appearing 'oblique, diffuse, metaphorical' (1978: 181). He explains this effect of antilanguages on the angle from which they are viewed, arguing that on their own terms they are directed constructors of counter-reality. Further validation for our purposes of viewing Ezekiel as an antilanguage discourse, or text, is Halliday's following concession:

The languages of literature are in a certain sense antilanguages - or rather, literature is both language and antilanguage at the same time. It is typical of a poetic genre that one or other mode of meaning is foregrounded. At times the effect comes close to that of an antilanguage in the social sense, for example in competitive genres such as the Elizabethan sonnet ... . A work of literature is its author's contribution to the reality-generating conversation of society - irrespective of whether it offers an alternative reality or reinforces the received model - and its language reflects this status that it has in the sociosemiotic scheme (1978: 182).

One of the most surprising twists in the metaphor-laden text of Ezekiel 16 in particular concerns the role of shame. Brenner argues as follows concerning prophetic sexual imagery generally and that of Jeremiah in particular:

... how does the erotic metaphor work beyond securing the audience's attention? It certainly stimulates sexual fantasy. It does something else as well. The eager presentation of deviant female sexuality--and details are liberally supplied--can have one purpose only: to *shame the audience*. The more blatant the presentation, the more shocking and shameful its referent, namely the people's fickleness in forming alliances. The result of this strategy is a contrast between the metaphor and its designated purpose: pornography is expected to promote religious and political reform. ... Indeed, male sexuality is attacked too; however, the description of male adultery and animalistic desire in 5.7-8 is a single occurrence. All other passages which belong to the divine husband-adulterous wife metaphor are resolutely devoted to inducing shame by reference to female sexual behaviour (1995b: 259f.).

According to Brenner, then, the sexualised metaphor is used in the Prophets for ideological purposes<sup>34</sup> and aimed at shaming the audience, which, presumably, consists of both men and women. Shame is aroused, however, she continues, by singling out women. In the background of this claim, though this is not stated explicitly, may be the argument prominent in much of the anthropological literature, that women's sexuality is especially closely identified with shame. Certainly, Brenner implies a connection between the text and social reality. She argues, therefore, that the woman-metaphors in Jeremiah are pornographic and capable of having adverse effects on actual women:

Disgust and shame will not be produced unless the listeners recognize the validity of the description for female sexual behaviour in general. That is imperative if they are to dissociate themselves from similar behaviour outside the sexual sphere. ... A recognition that women are (like) animals will make the metaphor work. This recognition need not be conscious. It will be as effective, perhaps more so, if it stimulates desire unconsciously. ... Does this new development express fear of the female and misogyny? If we readers feel that the textual voice disapproves of women as wild and (un)natural animals; that the target audience is drawn into sharing this disapproval; that the pornographic fantasy feeds on the view that female sexuality is uncontrollable--then, yes, misogyny underscores this dehumanized, animalized depiction. This is *not* "just a metaphor" (1995b: 263f.).

I disagree with Brenner that either the animal imagery of Jeremiah 2, or the metaphor of the sexually depraved woman-cities in Ezekiel is referring to or exclusively aimed at real women.<sup>35</sup> Both are vivid and shocking and quite probably, I think, written to incite shame and subsequently self-examination and to instil particular behaviour in the audience.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the author *was* a disturbed individual; perhaps male fantasy is in the

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<sup>34</sup> Brenner stresses this explicitly at the outset of her article: 'Let us agree that the Hebrew Bible is a political document. It contains ideologies of specific interest groups. It is used for achieving political ends' (1995b: 256).

<sup>35</sup> Jeremiah 2:26 makes it quite clear who is being addressed, criticised and singled out for shame: not women but the 'house of Israel' (the Septuagint and Syriac versions reflect בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'sons/children of Israel'), the kings, officers, priests and prophets.

<sup>36</sup> Davis argues that this is achieved by an ironic inversion of the *Heilsgeschichte*, which 'forces the people's attention away from the immediate and calls them to a task of self-evaluation on a scale never previously undertaken' (1989: 117).

background of the imagery - this must remain conjectural - but the women portrayed do not bear any realistic features: they are the stuff of hyperbole and stereotype, stock-characters of vice.<sup>37</sup> While an interpretation or assumption that such a portrayal typifies women could, potentially, be damaging to real women this is not an inevitable conclusion. Although images of prostitution and women's sexuality are abundantly present in Ezekiel 16, I do not think real women, their subjugation and the incitement of sexual titillation are the primary concerns here. Exploring the shame discourse of Ezekiel 16, instead, from the perspective of an antilanguage, strikes me as more promising because antilanguages, as we have seen, are concerned with promoting a counter-reality, have affinities with literary language and are characterised by extensive use of metaphor and somewhat extreme and seemingly disjointed language - all of which strike a chord with this chapter.

The closing verses of Ezekiel 16, where shame attends atonement, are enigmatic. Darr points out that '[t]his is a miraculous restoration and reconciliation, to be sure, particularly considering the extent and varieties of violence inflicted upon the city' (1992: 106). She considers the presence of dumbness and shame amidst restoration as contributing a muted note: Yhwh is merciful and just but the people have acted despicably and this is not forgotten. Odell, meanwhile, explains that the 'theological problem' of 16:59-63, where Jerusalem feels shame only after God forgives and is, furthermore, commanded to feel shame *because* God forgives, is often entirely overlooked in commentaries. Where it is addressed, she continues, it is explained variously, as illustrating the author's inferior understanding of divine grace, as a classic

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<sup>37</sup> This could suggest some similarity with the grotesque, not unlike the depiction of the seven deadly sins, for instance, in mediaeval literature. Bakhtin claims that the grotesque mode has prevailed in art and creative forms for thousands of years (1965: 318) and Boyarin argues for its presence in Talmudic literature (1993: 200ff.). Among the attributes of the grotesque style are exaggeration, hyperbolism and excessiveness which are focused especially on the body and bodily life. This focus, however, conceals a cosmic dimension, often a catastrophe, the terror of which is made bearable through the degraded, humanised and transformed characteristics of the grotesque (Bakhtin 1965: 336). The excessive and sexualised depiction of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16 and of Oholah and Oholibah in chapter 23 might be said to have some affinity with the grotesque. Also, these metaphors describe a situation of catastrophe: destruction, violence and exile. The essentially comic quality of the grotesque, however, is, I would say, lacking. Whilst in the grotesque terror is conquered by laughter, laughter is absent in Ezekiel. I would agree that humour in Ezekiel is 'a contradiction in terms' (Carroll 1990: 186).

paradox of the workings of divine grace in the midst of human feelings of unworthiness, or as ‘one of the most profound biblical insights into the affective logic of reconciliation’ (1992: 102).

The shame language appears in the final twelve verses of the chapter, following the biographical account of the woman-city’s unprecedented transgressions<sup>38</sup> and punishment. I have translated these verses below.

(V.52) Yes, bear your humiliation<sup>39</sup> because<sup>40</sup> you mediated for your sisters through your own sins, which you performed so abominably. They appear downright righteous compared to you. Yes, be ashamed, you, and bear your humiliation at having made your sisters look righteous. (V.53) But I shall restore their fortunes, the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and of Samaria and her daughters - and your fortunes along with theirs (v.54) in order that you bear your humiliation and feel humiliated at all you have done in consoling them.<sup>41</sup> (V.55) Your sisters, both Sodom and her daughters and Samaria and her daughters, will be restored to their former state and you and your daughters will also be restored to your former state. (V.56) Sodom, your sister, was not mentioned by you in your proud days.<sup>42</sup> (V.57) This

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<sup>38</sup> Samaria and Sodom are called the sisters of Jerusalem (16:46). Although they are depraved, Jerusalem is considerably more so (16:47, 51).

<sup>39</sup> The phrase is שְׁאֵי כְלָמָהּ. I have translated כְּלָמָהּ as ‘humiliation’, verbs of the root כָּלַם as ‘to be humiliated’ and of בּוֹשׁ ‘to be ashamed’.

<sup>40</sup> I have translated אֲשֶׁר in a causal sense (cf. Ronald J. Williams. *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*. 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986, p.77, par. 468).

<sup>41</sup> This action (בְּנַחֵם אֶחָן), as it is conducted by Jerusalem, who is being rebuked, appears to be viewed pejoratively. Elsewhere in Ezekiel נָחַם applies to positive human emotions, such as comfort or relief: at 14:22-23 it conveys the consolation felt in response to Yhwh’s sparing some people from disaster.

<sup>42</sup> Or, following BHS and reading the verse in the interrogative, ‘was not your sister Sodom talked of by you (literally ‘to be heard in your mouth’) in your proud days?’ The word for ‘pride’, גִּאווֹן, used not of Yhwh but of Jerusalem, is likely to be pejorative. Either Jerusalem is rebuked for neglecting her sister Sodom by not so much as mentioning her, or she may have slandered her whilst being yet more sinful herself. Cf. Galambush who translates ‘was not your sister Sodom the object of your gossip...?’ (1992: 68).

was before your own evil ways were disclosed.<sup>43</sup> At this time the daughters of Aram and all who were around her abused you<sup>44</sup> and the daughters of the Philistines scorned you from all around. (V.58) Your infamy and your abominations you yourself shall bear, declares Yhwh. (V.59) For this is what the Lord Yhwh says, 'I will do to you as you did, when you despised a curse and broke the covenant. (V.60) But I will remember my covenant (and) you<sup>45</sup> in the days of your youth and I will establish an eternal covenant for you. (V.61) And you will remember your ways and feel humiliated when you take in<sup>46</sup> your sisters, those older than you along with<sup>47</sup> those younger than you. And I will give them to you as daughters - but not on the basis of your covenant.<sup>48</sup> (V.62) And I will establish my covenant with you and you will know that I am Yhwh. (V.63) On account of this you will remember and be ashamed and there will not again be for you, in the light of your humiliation, a

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<sup>43</sup> Some Hebrew manuscripts have עֲרוֹתֶךָ, 'your nakedness', which could be a signifier of shame. Cf. Landy who describes the uncovering of the body as the uncovering of something 'anarchic and subversive' (1995: 148) and Bassett, who argues that the phrase 'to uncover nakedness' may pertain to the disclosure of major transgressions, such as incest (1971: 232).

<sup>44</sup> The word for 'abuse' is the construct of חָרַפָּה, which is sometimes translated 'disgrace'.

<sup>45</sup> Or, 'I will remember my covenant with you', as the editors of BHS propose.

<sup>46</sup> From the root לָקַח. NIV has 'when you receive your sisters'. Perhaps this verb, which most often means 'to take', has a menacing nuance here.

<sup>47</sup> I am interpreting the preposition אִל as expressing accompaniment.

<sup>48</sup> The phrase is וְלֹא מִבְרִיתֶךָ. Galambush points out that this could refer to either Jerusalem's broken covenant (16:59 and see 17:13), or to Yhwh's covenant with her (16:8, 60, 62). 'Your covenant' may be Jerusalem's subversion of the covenant with Yhwh.

mouth opening<sup>49</sup> when I make amends for you for all that you have done,  
declares the Lord Yhwh.'

I find it far from clear what is actually going on in this passage. My overall impression is that it is somewhat disjointed with no internal logic. Are Jerusalem's actions of consoling and taking in condemned because she is so corrupt that even her apparent goodness is wicked? Is Yhwh's reestablishment of the covenant and making amends not indicative of restoration at all but the final straw, with Jerusalem's humiliation and shame constituting the climax of the litany of punishments? What is meant by Jerusalem's covenant: her subversion of the covenant with Yhwh, or something entirely different? What is meant by the deprivation of a mouth opening: is Jerusalem silenced by awe and gratitude and a sense of unworthiness, or battered into total submission and unable to speak? Why are Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem restored prior to any intimations of reparation? Why is Yhwh resurrecting the covenant? Satisfactory answers to such questions are difficult to discern from the text itself and, as Carroll has pointed out, the restoration of Sodom stands as one of the most peculiar and subversive of intertextualities: 'Sister Sodom is saved by sister Whorusalamin's whorings!' (1996b: 81).

Odell explains the expression פתחון פה, which occurs but twice in the Hebrew Bible, on the basis of Mishnaic Hebrew, as 'an occasion for complaint, a pretext for accusation' (1992: 106). At 16:63 the allusion is, she argues, to a public complaint questioning

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<sup>49</sup> This renders פתחון פה very literally. The phrase may hark back to v.56 where Jerusalem's פה could be referring to slander, i.e. 'you will never again slander/gossip'. Given the wider context, there may be a sexual allusion here, such as was claimed for פה and פתח by Magdalene with regard to Isaiah 3:17, 26 (1995: 332f. and note 31, above). If the cessation of a פתחון פה is alluding to an end to sexual promiscuity (cf. Shields 1998:12, note 27), this could be said to be entirely in line with what Halliday has described as the inherently comic quality of antilanguages, which often wittily and bawdily subvert the surface meaning of words. Bakhtin comments that the mouth features prominently in imagery of the grotesque and that the nose sometimes signifies the phallus (1965: 316f.). The mouth, then, could possibly signify the vagina. Broome's argument that Ezekiel is identifying as a woman and that his swallowing of the scroll constitutes receiving a phallus (1946: 288) could also imply an association of mouth and vagina. Most commentators interpret this as Jerusalem being struck dumb; Odell, as the cessation of a complaint ritual (see below). In another Ezekiel passage (29:21) Yhwh gives פתחון פה to Israel along with a horn (which generally symbolises strength) so that she may know that he is Yhwh. In the context of restoration in chapter 16, the reward of 29:21 seems to be withheld.

Yhwh's reliability. While a specific complaint does not occur within the chapter itself, Odell proposes that it would be consistent with those quoted at 18:25 and 33:17, where the people protest that Yhwh's way is unfair (לֹא יֶחֱכֵן). The premise of this complaint is refuted at 16:63 because the people are recipients of Yhwh's grace: any complaint that he abandoned his people is countered by the reestablishment of the covenant. Instead, Jerusalem is encouraged to feel shame, which Odell interprets as a process of intense self-examination. This in turn will transpire in the realisation that 'none of her behavior exhibits the kind of trust on which she could have made any kind of appeal to God' (1992: 108). Odell's conclusion is that the commands to feel ashamed are best understood in the context of complaint rituals which incorporate confessions of trust and appeals to Yhwh to live up to his promises and which remove shame by examining and addressing the reasons for failure of the divine-human relationship. Any complaint with regard to the exile is undercut in chapter 16 by vindicating Yhwh's action and asserting the people's extreme shortcomings. Their complaint, therefore, is met by a counter-challenge which forces them to examine their own role in bringing about their situation of failure. This gives rise to a recognition of responsibility: shame, formerly the basis for blame and accusation, is thus transformed into self-recognition. The primary significance of Jerusalem having no mouth opening on account of her shame, then, is, according to Odell, that there will be no basis for her complaint against God.

If Odell is correct it must nevertheless be said that the existence of a complaint ritual in the background of these verses has been obscured. Why should Jerusalem even consider voicing a complaint *after* she has entered into an eternal covenant with Yhwh and been atoned for? Also, Odell inadequately addresses the fact that the only other time a פְּהִחוֹן is mentioned the translation of 'an occasion for complaint' is entirely inappropriate. She does refer to 29:21 in a footnote, explaining that the context of this expression is one of proclaiming salvation to exiles and that this indicates that several types of mouth-openings were performed in the cult. The one in 29:21 is distinct from that in 16:63 which pertains to occasions of shame; the latter meaning, she argues, survives in Mishnaic Hebrew while the meaning of 29:21 recedes (1992: 107, note 19). The expression occurs only twice and it seems peculiar (though it is of course not impossible)

that it would have such disparate meanings. I find it more likely that the expression pertains not to a formal complaint ritual on the one hand and a formal proclamation of salvation on the other but, simply, to speech - possibly with the more specific slant of speech which has divine sanctioning. The denial of a mouth opening in 16:63 would thus be indicative of divine silencing. Speaking, perhaps even vaunting, is also one appropriate response to being in a position of strength (29:21), while hiding or keeping silent is an appropriate response to feeling shame (16:63). I agree that the chapter, vividly contrasting Jerusalem's sins with Yhwh's generosity and capacity for forgiveness, could be said to vindicate Yhwh<sup>50</sup> and also that shame may be aimed at inciting self-examination and fulfilling a preparatory role for restoration. Shame is here primarily, I think, however, along with the aphonia, a form of divine coercion and punishment.<sup>51</sup>

The author of this passage appears to be of the view that Jerusalem deserves her fate, cruel as it may be, and that Yhwh is fully in control and justified in his actions. There is no indication that the deity is in any way criticised or accused, as is discernible in the wisdom literature, for instance. Perhaps this *is* a response to the complaints of the citizens of Jerusalem who are bemoaning their plight. Perhaps it was composed in the second Temple Period at a time when a complete break with the past was felt to be necessary before a 'better way' could be embarked upon. The precise context, however, has been obscured. Furthermore, what we are left with is obscure too and difficult to account for. I am in agreement with Carroll that such writing is less likely to be 'the quiet, controlled, articulated and highly structured literary [discourse] of a sedate ideologue' (1995: 300).

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<sup>50</sup> It is important, however, to remember also Yhwh's cruelty (cf. Halperin 1993; Shields 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Aphonia is a theme elsewhere in Ezekiel, where it signifies not divine punishment but divine control. Cf. Ezekiel 3:26-27 where Yhwh prevents the prophet from speaking until he chooses to give him back his voice: **אֶפְתָּח אֶח-פִּי וְאָמַרְח** (also 24:27, **וַיִּפְתָּח אֶח-פִּי**; 33:22, **וַיִּפְתָּח אֶח-פִּי**). Wilson explains these passages as glosses: '... in order to explain the prophet's failure to plead with Yahweh for the salvation of Jerusalem, the editor added the notes on Ezekiel's dumbness. He thus indicated that immediately after the prophet's call he was forbidden to plead for the city. The destruction of the city was already decided by Yahweh, and the judgment inevitable. So the prophet could be absolved of any laxity in performing his office' (1972: 104). Whether editorial or authorial the silencing is depicted as brought about by divine force.

It would be going too far to call the writings of Ezekiel examples of a fully-fledged antilanguage. I am not suggesting, for instance, that the authors of Ezekiel have entirely relexicalised the Hebrew language, or that their language represents a fission from the established language. The antilanguages pelting, grypserka and that of the Calcutta underworld, discussed by Halliday, are considerably more evolved and sophisticated than what might be described as the antilanguage-tendencies of Ezekiel 16. The features I am referring to are first, the insistent use of metaphor; in the passage cited and throughout the chapter, Jerusalem is depicted as a reprehensible female person, with much emphasis on her sexual misdemeanours. Secondly, hyperbole: Jerusalem is described as even worse than her sister Sodom, the sinner *par excellence*. Thirdly, an inexplicable development from Jerusalem being deplored and commanded to bear her humiliation, to a reestablishment of the covenant and her subsequent feelings of humiliation. Further, Jerusalem is given her sisters as daughters: is this a reward? Does it signify Jerusalem's overlordship of Samaria? If this is a reward why is she also silenced? Is she, perhaps, 'punished with kindness', as in the ritual of *abutu*, described by the anthropologist Epstein, whereby an opponent is shamed by presenting him with food of such abandon that he cannot make return (I. ii.)?

This bizarre, disjointed and exaggerated language is not intended, I think, to recount social reality - the medium strikes me as entirely inappropriate. The images of promiscuous women are not, furthermore, I believe, drawn from assumptions about female behaviour and then distorted a little with a view to justifying the control over real women - this would be taking the metaphor at face value. The authorial intention remains puzzling to me. While it is not an answer to the questions arising from the text, the notion that the language of Ezekiel has affinities with an antilanguage may explain at least its lack of perspicuity. Antilanguages, after all, are insiders' languages and therefore, from the standpoint of established language, diffuse, oblique and somewhat impenetrable (Halliday 1978: 180f.). The idea that there are antilanguage tendencies behind the enigmatic text of Ezekiel 16 while not clarifying the text, may account for its lack of clarity.

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### *iii. Summary*

One prominent theme of the book of Ezekiel is purity. In the context of the Hebrew Bible impurity is usually depicted as a state that is incurred invariably, rectified by means of a ritual and with no onus attached to it. In Ezekiel, however, as it is linked with deliberate transgression, impurity has an ethical dimension. Restoration is granted by Yhwh and entails not only outward cleansing but acknowledgement of guilt and inward purging. The inculcation of shame appears to be central in bringing about this internal purging process.

As in the book of Jeremiah, vulgar sexual imagery is used to evoke the realisation of defilement and shame. As sexual discharges are linked to impurity and nakedness to shame, such imagery is particularly suitable for this dual aim. Whereas Jeremiah has bestial sexual images pertaining to men as well as women and Isaiah prominent positive female imagery, the book of Ezekiel is characterised by a thoroughly negative depiction of both actual and metaphorical women. Particularly memorable, vivid and insistent are the woman/city metaphors of chapters 16 and 23. Various explanations have been proposed for accounting for these extreme and bizarre metaphors. Feminist critics, often taking them at face value, have argued that women are being labelled as shameful by misogynist writers. The sexual images are interpreted as titillating for the male audience and oppressive and damaging for women, which justifies their claim that Ezekiel contains pornographic writing. The accusation of pornography, however, is anachronistic and sexual imagery may well have a purpose different to that of pornography. Furthermore, a preoccupation with the surface meaning of the feminised metaphors has sometimes ignored that they are aimed at all Jerusalem.

The psychoanalytical approach has attributed the vile sexual imagery to Ezekiel's abnormal personality which may have been shaped by childhood trauma. Halperin has argued that Ezekiel was sexually abused and held his mother responsible. Consequently, his profound psychic pain manifested itself in a loathing for female sexuality. As this loathing coexisted with a conflicting desire, however, Ezekiel was burdened with a constant sense of guilt and shame which effected mutism and self-punishment. While the prominent presence of blood, of excrement and such (arguably) phallic objects as the

scroll which the prophet must swallow are reminiscent of Freudian symbols, the entire argument is based on the acceptance of the universal and timeless existence of the Oedipus complex, id and oral phase - all of which are unverifiable.

Sexual imagery is prominent not only in pornography and Freudian symbolism but in the realm of the grotesque and in such extreme deviations from language as antilanguages. The grotesque, focused on bawdy depictions of bodily life, has a comic dimension which is not evident in Ezekiel. Antilanguages, however, have some affinity with Ezekiel's harangues, in that both are characterised by metaphor, extremity and impenetrability. Shame, in the context of an antilanguage, would constitute neither the repressed sexual drive of a damaged individual (psychoanalytical), nor would it be inculcated by misogynist ideologues with a view to subjugating women (feminist); instead, it would be inculcated to subvert and resist the values of a ruined culture and to construct an alternative counter-reality. Like the grotesque mode, with which antilanguages have some affinity, this would suit a situation of catastrophe, such as the time after the exile when a complete rejection of the past might have been considered necessary to inaugurate a new beginning. Ultimately, however, this is just another proposal in attempting to explain extreme and perplexing prophetic sexual imagery which remains difficult to account for satisfactorily.

## Conclusion

It emerges from the review of critical literature in chapter III that in the context of biblical studies discussions on shame have tended to focus particularly on its alleged binary opposite honour. The honour/shame matrix, further, has been regarded as representing pivotal social values in accordance with which the societies reflected in and by biblical texts were constructed. This development can be attributed above all to the absorption of anthropological models which are associated primarily with a series of field studies conducted in small, face-to-face, agricultural communities of the circum-Mediterranean, some of which are described in chapter II. The anthropologist Pitt-Rivers' essay of 1977, in which he proposes that the book of Genesis contains stories which recount the emergence of the honour/shame value system, was decisive in facilitating this absorption. Certainly in the 1990s the relevance and pertinence of this model for biblical studies has generally-speaking been accepted and cautioning voices like that of Domeris have been few.

I have tried to show that shame in the Hebrew Bible is not well elucidated from the parameters of the honour/shame model. The reasons for this are various. The texts of the Hebrew Bible are not field studies, their provenance is often difficult to establish, the events described are removed from and strange to us and recounted in a language not our own. All of these factors exacerbate the valid reservations already raised within the discipline of anthropology itself (where societies are at least observed at first hand), as regards the capacity for understanding other cultures as an outsider, or for modern models to illuminate ancient societies. The fact that the majority of shame language occurs in the wider context of tumultuous social conditions in the wake of the exile, where more usual social patterns are likely to have been disrupted, makes the application of observations from 'static' societies inappropriate.<sup>1</sup> Not to be disregarded, too, is the probability that the texts of the Hebrew Bible evolved over time and may reflect not (only) actual occurrences but ideology, even flourishes of fantasy or subversive rhetoric.

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps sociological studies focused on millenarian eruptions or on social revolt (cf. Gottwald 1979: 210-19) might provide more suitable models. As far as I am aware, such models have not been used in attempts to elucidate shame in the context of the Hebrew Bible. An exploration of their suitability may hold promise for future study.

Further, the figure of Yhwh complicates matters as his presence renders social processes much more opaque than transparent. A prominent figure in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is difficult to determine what Yhwh represents in socio-anthropological terms. Is he, for instance, another player, an ideological sweep or distortion, or a value system? Commentators using the honour/shame model rarely allude to this matter, let alone supply answers.

While observations from modern Mediterranean settings or the honour/shame model may provide a fillip for reflection as we attempt to understand unfamiliar cultures and while the social dynamics recounted in the narratives of Genesis or the Deuteronomistic history have some affinity with those described in the anthropological studies, the limitations, or better impossibility, of reconstructing social reality on the basis of biblical texts must be kept in mind. The claims of some commentators that the anthropological studies have provided us with a 'native's perspective' must be dispelled. Further, even though anthropologists have justified their claim that honour and shame are central Mediterranean social values by pointing to the frequency with which they are mentioned (a frequency which Peristiany has characterised as a constant preoccupation), few biblical interpreters have chosen to focus on the texts where such vocabulary actually occurs. Camp's article focusing on the Wisdom of Ben Sira (1991) is a notable exception here. The majority of interpreters, however, have tended to assume the centrality of honour and shame, more often examining texts where such vocabulary does not occur prominently and sometimes adopting unconventional translations which reflect the language and notions of the anthropological studies.

Honour and shame do not emerge as a useful binary pairing for the purposes of examining human interactions in biblical literature. As Domeris has pointed out, honour is primarily a divine quality and shame is associated not so much with women in particular as with disobedient humanity more generally. Shame, as was already indicated long ago by those studies with a philological focus, such as the dictionary entry by Seebaß and Klopfenstein's monograph, is, moreover, strikingly prominent in the literature of the Prophets and the Psalter. In spite of this indisputable prominence, shame studies focusing on either have been few in number. The reason for this is probably that

other features of the honour/shame value complex, concerning kinship issues and exchanges of women for political purposes, are not as much in evidence here as in Genesis or Samuel, for instance. My aim has been to redress the paucity of shame discussions on the Prophets and, as the anthropological honour/shame model is inadequate, to propose alternative approaches for doing so.

Aside from social anthropology, the other subject area where shame is widely discussed is psychology. Psychological shame studies have made much less of an impact on biblical interpretation than anthropological shame studies. To my knowledge, Bechtel-Huber alone offers anything approaching in-depth attention to both psychological and anthropological research on shame.<sup>2</sup> Of interest concerning the psychological description of the emotion is the observation that shame is a universal, self-conscious human emotion, often triggered by an awareness of being seen to fall short of personal and/or societal standards or ideals but with negative *self*-evaluation being the crucial defining factor. Negative self-evaluation is also integral to guilt. Guilt is sometimes characterised as generated by the conscience rather than external sanctions, by tensions between ego and superego rather than ego and ego-ideal, or as related to agency as opposed to states of being. While there is, conceivably, a 'pure' case of shame or guilt, in practice the two are difficult to distinguish and I have sided with Cairns and Klopfenstein in stressing the overlap and phenomenological similarity between the two emotions. Biblical texts are no more case studies than field studies and in probing the psychological aspects of shame I have tended to veer away from psychoanalytical interpretation (as explored by Halperin, for example). I regard such theories as those of Freud, Schore, Nathanson or Kristeva (summarised in chapter I), which locate the origins of shame in infantile or early childhood experience, with some reservation, due to the fact that any claims concerning the burgeoning of the ego, or the infant's perception of its mother and father, are unverifiable.

I have steered away from the possible origins of shame and rejected a rigorous distinction between shame and guilt (*pace* Bechtel-Huber). Further, while accepting that there are

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<sup>2</sup> Her overview of anthropological shame-studies (1983), however, neglects to mention any Mediterranean ones.

differences between traditional and modern industrial societies, I have rejected, too, such psycho-anthropological classifications as shame or guilt culture (*pace* Daube and Jemielty). Instead, I have used the psychological definition to explore what shame is, how it makes one feel and how and for what purposes prophetic literature employs shame vocabulary. Shame pertains on the one hand to a reprehensible thing or act and on the other to an ethical check, a regard for propriety or decency, a restraint on behaviour. In other words, there exists both a shame which offends and a shame by which one must be bound in order to evaluate and avert what is offensive. Incidentally, this is also true of shame phenomenology as reflected in English language usage. The expression 'child of shame' would be an instance of the former, 's/he has no shame' of the latter usage. In the Prophets the shame which offends is vividly described, often employing sexual imagery, while the shame occasioning restraint is inculcated. Shame has both subjective/self-evaluating and objective/outwardly imposed features, an inherent ambiguity recognised by several commentators.<sup>3</sup> The situation of the exile forms the background to the majority of prophetic shame language;<sup>4</sup> possibly because it was an event perceived as acutely humiliating, which also gave rise to soul-searching. As regards objective factors, circumstances depicted as contributing to a sense of humiliation and disgrace are the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, dispossession of the land, deportation, stripping, raping of women and the topos of the mocking nations. Rape and public stripping, very probably gruesome realities of warfare, may have contributed in a referred sense to the prominent sexualised metaphors signifying transgression. Subjectively, shame also has an internalised, conscientising dimension. While sometimes described in terms suggesting analogy with impurity, shame clearly has an onus attached to it - which is not necessarily the case with pollution. A sound inward condition, as exemplified by

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<sup>3</sup> See especially Klopfenstein (III.ii.c.) and Elliger (IV.i., note 11).

<sup>4</sup> While the exile was one major catalyst for shame, giving rise to a literature where shame language is singularly prominent within the transmitted writings which have since been termed biblical, it is probably the case that much prophetic literature was written or edited not during or immediately after the exile but later, possibly in the Second Temple period. The fact that a substantial portion of prophetic shame language pertains to foreigners, foreign nations or their religious beliefs, for instance, has some affinity with the anti-foreign polemical cast of the post-exilic book of Ezra.

humility and obedience to Yhwh,<sup>5</sup> rather than the fulfilment of rituals or pursuit of material wealth and social rank, meanwhile, while it may not confer immunity to humiliation, is depicted as protecting against shame in this conscience-affecting sense. This is evident in the example of the Servant of Yhwh in Isaiah: though mocked and degraded, it is said that he is not ultimately shamed.

Circumstances concurrent with the exile are one context for shame language and sexual imagery, which is also particularly associated with the Prophets, often features prominently. Several reasons for this prominence have been suggested. Klopfenstein argues that the original semantic context of the verbal root בּוֹשׁ is the sexual realm and that this can still be discerned in its earliest occurrence in the Yahwist's (J) creation story of Genesis 2. Undertones of this Ur-meaning are, he claims, still evident in the writings of the Prophets by which time, however, the root has acquired a distinctly forensic nuance. I find Klopfenstein's case for a gradual semantic development of shame terminology over time, the thread of which can be followed through various literary strands, unconvincing. It may be so that shame is initially aroused by an awareness of one's sexuality which is experienced negatively<sup>6</sup> and that this primal association is sometimes reflected in prophetic imagery. Like Halperin's intriguing proposal that the especially virulent sexual imagery of Ezekiel stems from the prophet's personal childhood trauma, this is, however, impossible to establish.

Sexual imagery is associated, too, with both the grotesque/burlesque and pornography. The animal metaphors of Jeremiah and particularly the effusive, vulgar accounts of Woman Jerusalem and the sisters Oholah and Oholibah in Ezekiel 16 and 23, might be said to have affinity with the former, which is typified by hyperbolised depictions of bodily functions. Its purpose is to make traumatic circumstances bearable by humanising and 'jollifying' them, so that terror may be conquered by laughter. While the destruction

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<sup>5</sup> Yhwh's role in the scheme of shame is complicated. He is generator of shame and also not entirely unlike a superego: while his law may be considered an external sanction and while sensitivity to the scolding or disapproval of others exists within it as a mechanism exacerbating feelings of humiliation, Yhwh's capacity for gauging his people's inward condition and motivation seems to play on the internalised sanctions identified with the conscience.

<sup>6</sup> This might be inferred from the Genesis story (cf. Bechtel 1995).

of Jerusalem and the exile would certainly qualify as traumatic events, laughter is not, I would say a ready response to such chapters as Ezekiel 23 and nor is titillation, the desired aim of pornography: shocked surprise or revulsion seem more apt responses.

As described in chapter VI, feminist interpreters have considered the imagery of Jeremiah and especially Ezekiel as witness to an ideology that is damaging to women. This could be considered as having some affinity with the Mediterranean studies in which men are described as regarding women as incontinent and thereby potent conduits of shame. I am in agreement with the idea that prophetic literature is infiltrated by ideological agendas (as discussed in chapter V) and also concur that Ezekiel is much more negative in its depiction of women, metaphorical or otherwise, than Isaiah, for instance. I do, however, find these interpretations prone to applying modern ideas on pornography to ancient writings in anachronistic fashion, or to be reading the metaphorical layer very literally and selectively.

Certainly, psychologically-speaking, shame and matters sexual seem to be closely associated. Possibly, because demonstrative display of sexuality was condemned and readily recognised as shameful, metaphors of sexual promiscuity, which most commonly pertain to apostasy and idolatry, were a particularly effective vehicle for depicting the tenor as reprehensible. Shame, moreover, having a subjective as well as an objective dimension, lent itself very well for inculcating a realisation of despicable conduct. Shame discourses describe not only shameful actions and states but point to the inward sense of shame required for eventual restoration. While it is sometimes implied that Yhwh grants restoration without condition, and while, in the case of Ezekiel 16, shame is still present after restoration, shame generally-speaking does have a role to play in bringing restoration about. It may be understood as something of an inward correlative to purification. The notion that purity of land and temple attends restoration is integral to much of prophetic literature, as is a sound inward condition and shame may be an appropriate emotion for effecting internal purity.

Being a poignantly felt, self-reflecting and evaluating emotion, shame might be considered particularly appropriate for inculcating disgust and self-reproach at matters

central to the prophetic agenda. The psychological dimension of shame is therefore important when probing the ideological purpose of shame discourses. In some of the prophetic literature foreigners and also the people who remained in the polluted land at the time of exile are depicted in a very negative light and as defiling. The extent of this is vividly conveyed by the image of rejecting even the gold that was once of the highest value, after it has become associated with foreigners. Shame discourses seem to work within all three major Prophets in ideological contexts characterised by xenophobic polemic and advocating the precedence of returning exiles.

In the Prophets where shame language occurs with relative frequency, shame emerges as a complex phenomenon. On the one hand a mechanism of social control, exploiting sensitivity to humiliating exposure, it has also an internalised self-reproaching and an ethical self-restraining dimension. In prophetic literature which, ostensibly, seeks to address a situation of unprecedented calamity, the aim appears to be to ensure social stability, in the course of which shame is evoked. While I would maintain that it is impossible to reconstruct social reality from these texts, a trawl of shame discourses has none the less disclosed what might be called implications about ideological agendas, perceptions of sexuality and possibly, subversive uses of language.

Following on from these observations, I have tried to argue that explanations for the sexual imagery characteristic of prophetic literature, in the context of which shame language regularly occurs, might be better illuminated by approaches which focus not as much on social or personal reality as on literary/ideological-critical methods. The vulgar and startling tirades of Ezekiel above all are puzzling. They are not really convincing depictions of social reality. Shame is, rather, inculcated here in a context of distorted and exaggerated rhetoric. One explanation which could account for their sexual preoccupation and also for such features as disjointedness, metaphorical effusion and impenetrability, is to consider them in the light of the notion of what is called 'antilanguage'. Antilanguages are the spoken languages found in some counter-cultures and characteristic, too, of subversive literary modes of discourse. Ezekiel 16, for instance, may arguably contain antilanguage tendencies which could have arisen in response to and protest against the society considered responsible for the exile. It could also be the case, as alluded to above,

that elements of social reality infiltrated the language: in a time of war and consequent poverty, prostitution is likely to have been more prevalent and more public, which could have influenced figurative language in a referred sense. As discussed with regard to the application of the honour/shame model, it is again extremely difficult to speculate about any contours of social reality on the basis of such texts.

As regards the way forward for shame studies on the Prophets, an insistence on treating social anthropological field studies and the reading of texts as quite separate activities should be maintained and the ideological influences on biblical writing accentuated. Antilanguages, as I have tried to show, offer some potential as they are particularly associated with both politicised rhetoric and literary modes of discourse. On a related tangent, some of the extreme, even offensive, prophetic imagery might also be profitably explored from the perspective of what in the discipline of sociology is called 'deviance amplification'. Deviance is delineated by specific contexts and therefore a socially relative phenomenon, much like purity and pollution, which are also defined within the context of a total structure of thought and which have already been discussed with regard to biblical literature (cf. Douglas 1966; Houston 1993). Dirt, or everything unclean, is a matter out of place (e.g. earth in the kitchen); it cannot occur as a unique, isolated event but only within a system characterised by the ordering and classification of matter. The same is true of deviance.

With deviance amplification a social group wishing to promote and enforce its agenda will distort and exaggerate that which it labels deviant with a view to justifying and bringing about its containment. The resulting 'amplification spiral' is described as follows:

For whatever reason, some issue is taken up by the mass media of communication - this may be glue sniffing, football hooliganism, the activities of 'lager louts', child abuse, or anything else which makes 'news'. The sensationalized representation of the event makes it appear that there is a new and dangerous problem which must be taken seriously. In practice, the problem, however dangerous or socially threatening, will not be new, but some dramatic example will have caught the attention of the media. Their distorted and sensationalized coverage creates a moral panic which also leads to increased police action and to more arrests

of offenders. The higher arrest rate is seen as a confirmation of the growth of the problem. Judges and magistrates give exemplary sentences, to show 'society's' disapproval of this supposedly new problem. The sentences make news in themselves, and serve to keep the issue public. The police respond to this evidence of public concern with yet more arrests, and so on.<sup>7</sup>

Conceivably, such texts as Ezekiel 16 and 23 are early examples of such deviance amplifying, inflammatory literature, labelling and exaggerating the offensiveness and allegedly dangerous consequences of idolatry. Shame language could be regarded as facilitating the impression that certain conduct should incite feelings of disgust, or that such conduct might stigmatise an individual within his or her social group. The behaviour which is labelled 'normal', that is, socially acceptable or 'right and proper' seems to be associated particularly with Yhwh and his Torah. Certainly, the role of Yhwh requires more attention in analyses of shame language in the Hebrew Bible.

As shame in the Hebrew Prophets has not yet received much focused attention in academic literature, I have tried in this overview of shame discourses in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to highlight the need for considering the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon of shame. This complexity necessitates, I think, a variety of approaches for elucidation. While I cannot make such claims as some biblical commentators appropriating anthropological models have made, that an understanding of shame propels us to understand social constructions of the time when these texts were produced, I hope to have shown that shame in ancient times was understood as a complex and somewhat ambiguous emotion. It is described as such, too, in modern psychological literature and I have drawn attention to the psychological definition, which has tended in interpretative writing to be neglected in favour of definitions from social anthropology. This definition suggests, on the one hand a degree of universality. The universal grain is, however, on the other, enmeshed in and cannot be separated from social, ethical, theological and ideological factors. There remains (more is the shame) too much which separates us from the societies in which these texts were written and too much which the texts themselves withhold ultimately to claim more than plausible reconstruction.

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<sup>7</sup> From *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, (2nd ed.), by David and Julia Jary (ed.). Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995, p.164.

## ***Appendix: Shame and the Psalter***

Shame language is relatively prevalent in the Psalms and a comprehensive discussion would require a separate study. Summarily, it can be said that shame in the Psalter is generally an outward condition: a state of humiliation, rather than the self-conscious, subjective emotion of personal shortcoming. As emerged, too, in the discussion of shame discourses in the Prophets, shame is generated by Yhwh but pertains to humanity. It stands in contrast to Yhwh's honour (4:3, **כבוד/כלמה**)<sup>1</sup> and appears most frequently in requests for his punishment on the wicked (6:11; 31:18; 40:15; 44:8; 53:6; 70:3; 71:13, 24; 83:17-18; 86:17; 97:7; 109:28-29; 119:78; 129:5; 132:18). Further, shame is linked to losing face in public (127:5)<sup>2</sup> and to idolatry (97:7) and **בוש** is used in a punning allusion to **יבש** (37:19).<sup>3</sup> Shame language in the context of sexual imagery is absent in the Psalter.

Faithfulness to and dependence upon Yhwh are appealed to to avert shame (22:6; 25:2, 20; 31:2, 18; 71:1) and obedience is described as protecting from shame (22:6; 25:3; 34:6; 119:5-6, 31, 46, 80). The mocking and scorning of enemies, sometimes citing their inference that the psalmists' lowly condition can be attributed to Yhwh, (22:7-9; 71:11; 74:10, 18, 22; 109:25ff.) and steadfast adherence to Yhwh in adversity (69:1, 14-20), often from youth, (22:10-11; 71:5-6) are recurrent themes. Where shame afflicts the

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<sup>1</sup> The **כלמה** appears to be identified with vanity (**ריק**) and falsehood (**כזב**) and the way to overcoming it is through introspection: **אמרו בלבבכם על-משכבכם ודמו**, 'speak to your heart when at rest and be silent' (4:5). There is too little to go on, but this may be an exhortation to examine one's conduct and find it to be wanting (i.e. cultivate proper shame) as a means to recognising and eliminating shameful conduct. This would have some similarity with prophetic inculcation. Shame in its objective guise, however, is considerably more prominent in the Psalms.

<sup>2</sup> Here a man who has many sons is described as blessed, because they will not be shamed when they debate with (or drive out) enemies in the gate. The context is possibly forensic but above all public. Shame in the Psalter is predominantly a visible, ignominious condition, which is sometimes exacerbated by the mocking of adversaries. In this psalm the outward display of strength prevents such shame.

<sup>3</sup> In the Masoretic Text the verb of the first half-verse (**לא-יבשו בעת רעה**) is pointed as a third person masculine plural imperfect *qal* of the root **בוש**, suggesting a rendering of 'they will not be ashamed in the time of disaster'. The second half-verse (**ובימי רעבון ישבעו**, 'and in the days of famine they will be sated') might also suggest survival in spite of a bad harvest and withering crops. The NIV translates the first verb as though it was from the root **יבש**: 'In times of disaster they will not wither ...'. The KJV follows the Masoretic Text. It is likely that the verb captures both meanings.

faithful this is perceived as unjust (Psalms 44, 74 and 89).

Psalm 44 opens with a concession that all past military conquests are Yhwh's (44:2-10) and that he put to shame adversaries (44:8). This is contrasted with the present condition where the psalmist's community is humbled by Yhwh (וְהַכִּלִּימָנוּ, 44:10), defeated, scattered and scorned. This has transpired in shame: 'all day my disgrace is before me and my face is covered with shame', (כָּל-יוֹם כְּלָמָתִי נֹגְדִי וּבִשָּׁה פָנַי כַּסְהֲנִי), (44:16). The injustice of this is expressed in a statement of steadfast obedience (44:18-19) which is juxtaposed with Yhwh's infliction of an oppressive situation (44:20). The psalmist denies worshipping foreign gods (44:21), which would have justified punishment, before appealing to Yhwh's חֶסֶד with a view to redressing matters.

In Psalm 74 the present situation is also one of adversity and again the psalmist is maintaining faithfulness. Yhwh is implored to act against the enemy who is destroying and defiling his sanctuary (74:3-8) and reviling his name (74:10, 18, 22). Alongside the question why Yhwh has rejected his people, which could imply desperation or reproof, Yhwh's deeds from of old (74:2), in creation (74:13-15) and time (74:16-17) are recounted, and there is a statement of faith in his capacity to crush the enemy (74:11, 22-23) and remove the disgrace (נִכְלָם) of the oppressed (74:21). In Psalm 89, meanwhile, a proclamation of Yhwh's glory (89:6-9), power over creation (89:10-14), justice and faithfulness (89:15-38) precedes the accusation that he has rejected his anointed in contravention with his promise to David (89:39). There follows a description of the anointed's humiliations which are summarised as: הֶעֱטִיתָ עָלָיו בּוֹשָׁה, 'you have enveloped him in shame' (89:46). Shame is here understood as generated by Yhwh and as difficult to comprehend in the light of both its severity and the broken promise.

To generalise, the Psalms are expressions of faith in and praise for Yhwh. Yhwh is understood as all-powerful and therefore as the creator and wielder of shame. Shame is associated with mocking and humiliation and regarded as an appropriate punishment for adversaries. The identification of shame with punishment suggests that the faithful and

obedient should be exonerated from shame and, in the case of Psalm 69, that the shame of one should not affect others seeking Yhwh (69:6-7). Where Yhwh's worshippers describe their dismal condition alongside expressions of supplication, the implication is that Yhwh should evaluate the situation as unjust and provide relief from shame for his obedient servants. He alone is depicted as capable of doing so. Where the shame of the faithful is mentioned alongside the mocking of enemies, who sometimes revile Yhwh's name too, there may be an indication of an appeal to Yhwh's sense of obligation to his people. This could be read in analogy with a vassal-suzerain/patron-client relationship (protection in exchange for loyalty), or imply that Yhwh himself is capable of feeling shame in the light of shortcoming or incongruity.

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