

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is both a work of biblical scholarship, as well as a critical examination of how processes of canonization shape and – as is argued – sometimes distort such scholarship. The dissertation is a contribution to central feminist debates regarding the exclusion of women from the Western canons. By focusing on a case study from biblical studies – the home of the notion of canon – it shows how extra-textual and gender biased presuppositions in the process of canonization stabilize prevalent interpretative practices and their results, and so marginalize feminist perspectives.

The dissertation is composed of five chapters that are divided into two parts. In the first part (Chapters 1-3), the dissertation defends a novel interpretation of the notoriously disturbing text Hosea 2 of the Hebrew bible. The second part (Chapters 4-5) then critically investigates the interpretational practices that have led to the ‘standard’ reading of that text. It analyses the background assumptions that have brought forth the prevalent interpretation, and integrates its results in a reconsideration of the concept of *canon*.

The *first chapter* provides the first cornerstone of the interpretation of the text of Hosea 2. The chapter applies methods from cognitive linguistics (supplemented with archeological research) in order to defend a crucial and so far largely neglected distinction between the Hebrew roots *znh* and *nʿf*. These two roots, the chapter argues, refer to two mutually exclusive ancient concepts of a woman's socio-legal status.

The *second chapter* uses this analysis to show that the violence against the textual woman of Hosea 2 is, in contrast to the standard reading, in the ancient text not understood as a husband's just and deserved punishment of his adulterous wife. An alternative reading in terms of a relationship between an unaffiliated woman and her suitors is provided, and the function of this image in the text's rhetoric strategy is characterized by drawing on a cognitive linguistic theory of metaphor conventionally referred to as Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

The *third chapter* corroborates the plausibility of this reading of Hosea 2 in the ancient context by an analysis of other prophetic texts, also often described as applying the "prophetic marital metaphor": while it is doubtless that some of these texts do operate with the core image of an adulterous wife, these other texts uphold the distinction between the image of an unaffiliated (*znh*) and a transgressing affiliated woman (*nʿf*) that was crucial to the analysis of the previous chapters. Why then *is* Hosea 2 so often read in terms of ‘marriage’?

The *fourth chapter* shows the standard ‘marriage’ interpretation to be the result of the distorting influence of contemporary background beliefs brought to the text by its scholarly readers. While traditional biblical scholarship conceives of itself as concerned only with the historical material itself, and free of contemporary concerns (and as such often explicitly contrasts itself with feminist scholarship that is seen as precisely involved with such contemporary concerns and as such not ‘pure’ science), it is shown that the standard,

canonized, interpretation of the 'marriage metaphors' is guided both by theological assumptions as well by assumptions regarding the 'proper' gender roles.

The *fifth chapter*, finally, deepens the feminist critique of the hegemonic claims of androcentric and misogynist readings of biblical texts. The chapter draws on the work of feminist philosophers in the analytic tradition, and the findings of the preceding chapters, to argue that the phenomenon of canon – which shows up in the canonical interpretations discussed earlier – is best understood in terms of the social canonization processes that stabilize widely shared background beliefs as unquestionable norms. By demonstrating that it is possible to make those backgrounds transparent and to critically evaluate their legitimacy it is thus shown how the issue of contextuality can be elevated from the margins of scholarly discourses to an integral part of both scientifically and ethical responsible knowledge production in biblical scholarship and beyond.