THE GHOSTLY PRELUDE TO DEUTERO-ISAIAH

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I

Isaiah 40.1-11 is commonly identified as the prologue to Deutero-Isaiah, and as result its interpretation concerns both its function as a prologue and its relationship to the past, to Proto-Isaiah or other texts.[1] These questions are especially pertinent to the current debates on the unity of Isaiah.[2] Isa. 40:1-11 has been seen by several scholars as a structural key to the book, corresponding, in particular, to the inaugural vision in chapter 6.[3] The renewed focus on the unity of the book has been accompanied by a certain decomposition of the integrity of the constituent parts. In part this is the consequence of redactional critical analysis, which finds, for instance, several literary strata in Deutero-Isaiah; in part it reflects the establishment of connections between the various components. Isaiah can no longer be neatly divided into three.

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[1] Prelude or Prologue? Isa. 40:1-11 is universally called the prologue, as it is, conventionally, throughout this essay. Prologue suggests an emphasis on the word, the word that lasts forever, and Deutero-Isaiah's function as text, and as that which transmits the logos. But Prelude evokes play and music, the Ghost Sonata perhaps, which is more in keeping with what I am doing. An earlier version of this paper was published online in SBL Seminar Papers 2004, as "Does Isaiah 40:1-11 Answer to Isaiah 6? Spectrality and Autonomy in Deutero-Isaiah," and presented in summary fashion at the Formation of Isaiah seminar at the AAR/SBL Meeting in San Antonio. It was facilitated by an award from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am grateful too for the comments of a critical anonymous reviewer.

[2] The unity of the book of Isaiah has been the subject of much recent scholarship, and is accompanied by a shift of emphasis from the true words of the prophet to the ultimate editorial processes.

[3] See Cross (1973: 184-86), Melugin (1976: 82-84), Williamson, (1994: 37-38), Seitz (1990), Rendtorff, (1989: 79-81; 1993: 177-179), and Carr (1993: 68-69). See also Holter (1996). Zapff (2003: 358-365) conducts a thoroughgoing comparison of the two texts, and argues that 40:1-11 was composed as a bridge between First and Second Isaiah, with the exception of 6b-8, which were added later.

The same issues affect the internal analysis of the prologue. On the one hand, it exhibits manifold relations to texts outside it; on the other, it consists of four fragments, whose coherence is unclear, and which redactional critics assign to different compositional strata.

In this article, I do not primarily deal with unity. Deutero-Isaiah has always been the part of the book most resistant to holistic interpretations; the stylistic, contextual and ideational differences between it and Proto-Isaiah are too great to be ignored. Instead, I will be concerned with how the prologue constructs the past and the future. As a prologue, it introduces a new poetic voice and vision; at the same time, it cannot but be infused by the voices of the past. This is what I mean by "spectrality": the voice of Deutero-Isaiah, and the prologue with it, is haunted by the past, as is all post-catastrophe literature. The excitement of the return is thus doubled by an absence, a silence, and a grieving, despite the voices of consolation.

This is a work of close reading. My primary questions are literary-critical: how does the text work as a literary and imaginative artifact? What are the implications of its words? What is the function of metaphors, word plays, symbols? How do the four parts of the prologue interrelate? What emotions are evoked? What accounts for the beauty of the text? I assume that a poetic text is very dense, and that analysis must do justice to the intensity of thought and feeling that went into it. Isa. 40:1-11 responds to the most profound trauma of Israelite history, and by extension, of the human history of which it is part. Only through close attention to the text, on every level, can one become aware of its hidden dimensions, its tensions, and its hopes.

Two points need to be made at this juncture. The first is the importance of indeterminacy. The reader may be surprised at the frequency of qualifiers such as "perhaps" or "maybe" in this essay. At every point innumerable possibilities open out, and one has to be receptive to, and avoid foreclosing, any of them. This is one of the elements that is responsible for ambiguity in the poem.

The second point is deconstruction, a much used and abused term. By deconstruction I mean the centrifugal aspect of the poem, its disruption of any preestablished unity or ideological position. The work of the poet in making sense of a fractured world is the more urgent, and the more impossible, the greater the fracture. When the poet is dealing with the ultimate catastrophe, the

intensity of effort of comprehension and adequate expression is in proportion to the ineffability of the trauma.[4] Construction and deconstruction go together. Metaphor, for instance, is both a constructive instrument, wherewith the poetic world is united, and a deconstructive one, in that it crosses normal conceptual boundaries. Moreover, we can never quite know what a poem or a metaphor means. This is especially so in our case when what is being imagined is a new and utterly transformed world.

Deconstruction and indeterminacy collaborate, in that ambiguity and mystery defer indefinitely the achievement of poetic unity. A good example occurs at the end of our passage, in which the goal is also the journey, both fixed and mobile. Polysemy will result in multiple interpretations, which may be complementary or contradictory, and hence in numerous constructions of the poem.

The problem is compounded by the relationship of Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 40. There are several verbal correlations, and likewise non-correlations.[5] Isaiah 40 may correspond to Isaiah 6 as a scene in a heavenly court, replete with angelic voices, but if so, the contrast between the two scenes is decisive: Isaiah 6 is a vision, Isaiah 40 an audition; Isaiah 6 takes place in the heavenly and earthly Temple, while in Isaiah 40 the voices are dislocated, associated with exile and the desert.[6] The real issue is whether the commission in chapter 6 to speak so as not to be understood still applies in chapter 40. In that case all the words of the prologue, and hence of Deutero-Isaiah, including the words of consolation, are a trap and a lure, that will only lead to our destruction. Every word is hedged by a lethal double meaning.

On the other hand, Isaiah 40 may be a revocation of Isaiah 6, substituting an age of clarity for one of obfuscation. Its post-catastrophe setting, its promise of return, and the allusions to Isaiah 6

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[4] Important examples of the relationship between literature and catastrophe are Maurice Blanchot, *L'Écriture du disaster* (1980) and the oeuvre of Dominick LaCapra (e.g. 2001).

[5] The most inclusive list of correspondences is provided by Zapff (2003: 359-362). Non-corresponding terms include, in the case of Isaiah 6, the vision, the Temple scene, the seraphim, the initation ritual, the commission, and the metaphor of the tree. Many of the basic images of Isaiah 40, like the wilderness, the way of YHWH, and grass, do not occur in Isaiah 6.

[6] There are other contrasts, too: the prophet's eager response in Isaiah 6 is countered by the hesitation of Isaiah 40; the plenitude of divine glory will only be realised in the future, according to Isaiah 40.

throughout Deutero-Isaiah support this interpretation. However, Isaiah 6 ends ambiguously, in that the survivors of the disaster are subjected to repeated destruction; the threshold is crossed and recrossed, and indefinitely postponed. The catastrophe may not be the ultimate catastrophe. In that sense, survival is unreal; the living are haunted by the past, are representatives of the dead, and are also, despite all appearances, incipient ghosts. In that sense, too, the poem is spectral.

II

נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אלהיכם:
דברו על לב ירושלם וקראו אליה כי מלאה צבאה כי נרצה עונה כי
לקחה מיד יהוה כפלים בכל חטאתיה: ס

> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her, for she has fulfilled her service, for her punishment/iniquity has been accepted, for she has received from the hand of YHWH twicefold for all her sins (40:1-2)

Who speaks? Who comforts? In a sense it is God who comforts, but at one remove. Or it is the prophet who comforts, his voice subsumed in that of God or vice versa, the prophet whose own identity is absorbed into the textual persona of First Isaiah and irreducible to it, not so much or only because of the obvious contextual and stylistic differences, but because of his own struggle to establish a separate textual identity, as is evident most clearly in the so-called servant songs. Is נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אלהיכם a new beginning or a renewal, a reversion to the old? Does it respond to חזון ישעיהו, the vision of Isaiah, as suggested by Jewish liturgical tradition[7] and much modern commentary?[8] Is it an

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[7] In the Jewish lectionary, Isaiah 1 is the Haftarah for the Sabbath before the 9th of Av, and Isaiah 40 for the Sabbath following it.

[8] A dialectical relationship between the First and Second Isaiah is posited by many scholars e.g. Childs (2001), Goldingay (2001:80), Brueggemann (1984), and is inseparable from the question of the unity of the book. A very thorough structural analysis and discussion of the entire book is provided by Sweeney (1996: 39-62); comparably, Laato (1998) treats the book as an ideological unity. See also Conrad (1991) and Sommer's cautionary comments (1996:156-187 and 1998) as well as those of Willey (1997) who also provides a valuable review of scholarship (35-43). Both posit a closer relationship with Jeremiah, as does Kratz (1994).

initiation, equivalent to or paired with Isaiah 6, and, if so, what is the direction of the relationship? With Williamson, one may think of Deutero-Isaiah as primary, as the author of First Isaiah, the past constructed on the basis of the future. But apart from muddling literary and historical considerations, no bad thing in itself, one cannot avoid the immense caesura between chapters 39 and 40, no matter how much it has been retrojected into the text of First Isaiah. In the space between chapters 39 and 40 is the catastrophe. Chapter 40, and Deutero-Isaiah generally, is a post-catastrophe text. It is thus a work of mourning, and as such spectral. It speaks for the past in the future, the past as having a future, but only as past. The doubleness of the voice of Deutero-Isaiah, suggested by its very name, is compounded by the ambiguity of speaker and addressee. God comforts, but distances himself from comforting. The prophet speaks and comforts, his identity anonymous, diffused, dissembled with and as that of God.

נחם is ambiguous, in that it refers to a change of mind or mood. To comfort is to induce a change, to leave behind the past, to forget. But God is precisely the one who cannot forget, as Deutero-Isaiah insistently reminds us (40:27, 49:15). It is because God cannot forget that we can forget, traverse the catastrophe, step beyond the abyss. God, however, is notoriously characterised by his changes of mind, denoted by the same verb נחם. God regrets (נחם) his creation of humanity in the Flood Story,[9] with which the catastrophe in Deutero-Isaiah is compared (Isa. 54:9). Here the verb signals a transformation in God, from judgement to compassion. But as such it is unstable, since it can always be reversed.

For the moment, though, we are comforted, a comfort doubled by the repetition נחמו נחמו,[10] as if we can have no end to the comforting. As the initial words, the title, they launch Deutero-Isaiah

[9] Gen. 6:6, 7. Another notorious instance is God's retraction of sovereignty from Saul (I Sam. 15:11, 35). The two meanings intersect in Hos. 13:14.

[10] Blenkinsopp (2000: 183) comments on the "emotional weight"of the repetition, and the frequency of the device in Deutero-Isaiah. Similarly, Westermann (1969: 6, 34) notes Deutero-Isaiah's propensity for piling on "imperative on imperative," as an expression of urgency. Fokkelman (1981: 75) suggests that the doubling of נחמו is the "motor" that shapes the entire poem and is reflected in the doubling of punishment in v.2. Krinetzki (1972: 59-60) argues that there is an interchange of double and triple constructions: the former express the divine point of view, the latter the creaturely one.

as the book or enterprise of consolation,[11] which is either equal to the fissure that precedes it, doubles it, or vastly exceeds it, as 54:8 suggests. Comfort, however, is a maternal function, cross-culturally and within the text of Deutero-Isaiah. As a comforter, God is a super-mother, as Isaiah 49 claims (49:15).[12] God and prophet evoke between them an encompassing maternity, a womb within which Israel can be reborn. One may note, in passing, the correspondence between נחם and רחם, "compassion/womb," and the euphony of guttural and nasal continuants that redirects our attention from the concept to the sound of consolation. But then why does God eschew, for the moment, the voice of comfort, as if he cannot commit himself to the poetic/prophetic venture?

The voice urges unnamed others to comfort: נחמו נחמו עמי. They may be divine beings, comparable to the seraphim of Isaiah 6, or prophets, or even ordinary people, comforting each other.[13] The indeterminacy introduces the passage as something vague, a gesture outwards inviting and requiring a response, as if only through reciprocity, ultimately from us, can the poetic movement be accomplished. We are then the surrogate authors of the book, or at least responsible for its effectiveness.

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[11] Many authors observe that the initial words introduce the major theme of Deutero-Isaiah e.g. Elliger (1989: 13), Blenkinsopp (2000:179), Baltzer (2001: 49), who writes: "This sentence sums up everything that DtIsa has to proclaim." Elliger (1989:10) suggests that an initial קול קורא may have been suppressed to highlight the theme.

[12] An excellent discussion of maternal imagery applied to God in Deutero-Isaiah is Brettler (1998: 115-119).

[13] Many modern commentators opt for the first possibility, initially proposed by Cross (1953: 275-277), usually without question. Blenkinsopp (2000: 180), however, adopts the second position, that it refers to a plurality of prophets, while Baltzer (2001: 51) approvingly cites Duhm's suggestion that it is addressed to "everyone who is able to comfort." Fokkelman (1981: 72-73) interestingly considers that the audience, as in 8:16-18, are the prophet's disciples, who are urged to comfort the wider community. Kratz (1994: 260) proposes that it is directed to members of the Golah elite, who are urged to lead the community back from exile. Albertz (2003: 373 n.7) thinks that Deutero-Isaiah is a group composition. Berges (1998: 381-383) proposes that the objects of the appeal are the watchmen of Jerusalem of 52:8 (and 62:6); the imperative is thus a framing device, deriving from what he identifies as the first Jerusalem redaction. It also corresponds to the "we" group in 1:9 and thereafter (257). See also Van Oorschot (1993: 115). Redaction critics tend to dismiss interpretations of the sequence as a call-vision or a scene in a heavenly council as resulting from secondary additions. The most inclusive view is that of Freedman (1997: 248-255), who holds that it refers to "all flesh" in v.5, urged to comfort "my people" and lead them back to their homeland, as in 49:22-23. Kiesow (1979: 26) warns against premature foreclosure of the question.

דברו על לב ירושלם וקראו אליה, "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and call to her." The heart of Jerusalem is parallel to "my people" in v.1, as the object of speech and consolation, but are they the same or different?[14] Is Jerusalem the destroyed city or its surviving inhabitants, wherever they might be? To speak to the heart may be an idiom for sexual seduction or reconciliation, as in Hos. 2:16, and anticipate bridal imagery later in the book,[15] but only through or as a result of completed mourning. Such implications are for the moment displaced, disavowed; the collective indistinct others are adduced, to speak to the heart, the affective centre, of the female subject. The imperative, which is also the prophetic imperative, sets the discourse in motion, while not yet impelling the prophet, as if the silence of the catastrophe cannot yet be broken. The voice(s) then address(es) the heart of the prophet, and perhaps of God, as well as of Jerusalem, and, once again, we cannot be sure that these are separate entities.

Before being a lover, Jerusalem is the mother, whose death is the ultimate loss. The maternal ambiance of comfort then consoles one for the death of the mother. Mother Jerusalem and Mother God are opposed, in that God gives life to the dead, or they cannot be distinguished. God maintains his (her) silence, in the wilderness recalled in v.3, while bidding others to speak on his behalf, and on that of Jerusalem.

The vision of Isaiah, in chapter 1, begins with an address, in the imperative, to the heavens and earth, שמעו שמים והאזיני ארץ, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth." Perhaps they may be intimated too by the plural imperative here.[16] There heavens and

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[14] Elliger (1989: 15-16) correctly notes the fluidity of the conception of Jerusalem in Deutero-Isaiah, which refers both to the place and its population. Goldingay (1997: 241) rejects the idea that it may refer to the exiles as implausible and unnecessary, since everywhere else Jerusalem refers to the locality or its population, and the audience may have been Jerusalemite. This, however, is to beg the question. As Goldingay himself says, the overt audience "includes both the Jerusalem community and that in Babylon" (242). For this reason, Kiesow (1979: 56) assumes a later redactional context. Milbank (1992: 64) interestingly proposes that because of the collapse of Judah, Zion is "nowhere and everywhere." He elaborates that she is nowhere because she is present in the "nothingness, the negativity of suffering," and everywhere since she is identified through "exile and self-exile."

[15] Geller (1984: 417) points out "the almost sexual connotation," and suggests that it is reinforced by the feminine suffixes in the rest of the verse.

[16] Rendtorff (1989: 81 n.28; 1993: 79 n.28) notes the connection.

earth witness human incapacity. Here they evoke creation, and the continuing creative impulse, despite the silence of God and prophet, and anticipate God's rhetorical appeal to his creation of the universe in vv. 12 ff.

The voices speak of the end of service (צבא) and punishment or iniquity (עון), or perhaps their message is more general, and the access of comfort coincides with the end of tribulation.[17] The incrementation, from "service" (צבא), through the Janus-parallelism of עון, which may mean both "punishment" and "iniquity", to "all her sins" (כל חטאתיה) recalls the condemnation of Jerusalem in the first part of the book, and is matched by the doubling of the penalty in the last clause.[18] Correspondingly, one may expect the return to divine favour to equal or exceed the retribution. Double the sin = double the compensation. However, the sums are incalculable (Stoebe 1984: 110). What is the appropriate penalty for all her sins? According to First Isaiah, it is death or deportation.[19] What is double that? And what is the reparation that can equal or surpass it?

Chapter 40 is preoccupied with measure, for instance in the description of creation in 40:12-13. But the measure is imposed on that which is immeasurable. Similarly, the verse through the succession of parallel clauses asserts the reestablishment of cosmic order, the order of justice, which is also poetic order, over the incommensurability of the disaster.

The terms עון and חטאת may suggest cultic as well as ethical transgression,[20] and indeed the two are interfused in the rhetoric

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[17] Commentators differ whether 2b is the content of the call or justifies it. Elliger (1989: 6-7) denies that it can refer to the content, largely on the grounds of a structural parallel with vs. 3-4. See also Freedman (1997: 236-237). For the alternative view, see Koole (1997: 56). Geller (1984: 416) suggests that "the phrase is an artful hinge."

[18] Djikstra (1999: 240-245) argues that the double price is not a penalty, but the compensation that YHWH, as *go'el*, pays for Israel's redemption. This seems to me to accord ill with the emphasis on Israel's sins.

[19] Blenkinsopp (2000: 181) and Baltzer (2001: 53) suggest a correlation with Jerusalem's double disaster, according to Isa. 51:19. Baltzer notes also Babylon's double bereavement in 47:9.

[20] Elliger (1989:15) thinks that עון refers consistently in Deutero-Isaiah to moral guilt, conforming to the tradition, especially in Protestant scholarship, that ascribes a primarily ethical and anti-cultic stance to the prophets. However, there are pervasive *metaphorical* transfers between these realms, cf. e.g. 43:24, 53:5-6.

of First Isaiah, especially chapter 1. That Jerusalem's "iniquity" (עון) has been "accepted"(נרצה), in particular, has sacrificial connotations, since elsewhere the verb רצה is used in connection with atonement (cf. Lev. 1:4).[21] The iniquity/punishment of Jerusalem conforms to and satisfies God's will, and corresponds to its status as the symbolic capital of the world. If Jerusalem is equivalent to the people, and to the prophet as the representative of the people, never quite distinct from God, then its destruction, and divine self-destruction, succeeds where Lebanon and its wild beasts fail in 40:16, and anticipates the representative suffering of the prophet in chapter 53.[22]

III

קול קורא במדבר פנו דרך יהוה ישרו בערבה מסלה לאלהינו׃
כל גיא ינשא וכל הר וגבעה ישפלו והיה העקב למישור והרכסים לבקעה׃
ונגלה כבוד יהוה וראו כל בשר יחדו כי פי יהוה דבר

> A voice calling, "In the wilderness open up the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a paved road for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill laid low; the crooked shall be straight, and the rough places a dale. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (40:3-5)

The voice pauses, resumes, reports another voice, a herald of God. Whether it is one of the voices that is urged to comfort, and, if so, whether it is a divine or prophetic voice, we do not know.[23] The voice, at any rate, is detached from the prophet and from God, it is as yet an intimation. The voice, however, identifies with "us," it displays a certain solidarity, in contrast to the distance

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[21] See, in particular, Geller (1984:417). Many commentators reject any cultic connotation, identifying the verb as רצה II, "pay, discharge," and citing Lev. 26:41, 43. However, it is improbable that the latter lack all ritual or cultic connotations. See also Stoebe (1984:106), who also assigns a sacred sense to צבא.

[22] For this reason Stoebe (1984:109) argues that the Prologue, in which v.2 is linked to vs.9-10, anticipates the "servant songs."

[23] Again, opinions differ as to the identity of this voice. Elliger (1989:7) thinks that it belongs to one of the heavenly beings addressed in vs.1-2; this accounts for the contrast between "our God" and "your God." Blenkinsopp (2000:181) considers it to be "a prophetic proclamation." Berges (1998: 381) thinks that the phrase was secondarily introduced by the composers of Isa. 40:6-8, so as to turn the prologue into a dialogue and thus create the rapport with Isaiah 6 (387). See also Kiesow (1979: 30) and van Oorschot (1993: 114-115).

implied by אלהיכם, "your God," in v.1. Between the voice, the prophet and people there is community, under the dominion of God, who acknowledges that Israel is his people, עמי, in v.1. עמי, "my people," recollects the description of Israel as "my people," unaware of their relationship with God, in 1:3, and their repudiation as "this people" in 6:8 and 8:6.[24] Whereas in chapter 1 God's paternal claim is unreciprocated by filial consciousness, and the people are "heavy with iniquity"(כבד עון) in v.4, here the voice crosses the gap through a movement of comfort, of maternal solicitude, irrespective of the children's recognition, and the "iniquity" has been absolved.

A way in the wilderness—to us, especially if we are identified with Jerusalem—but it also of course our return to ourselves and to our God (אלהינו), even to the acknowledgement of God as our God. There is thus a switching and overlapping of roles, since both of us are undertaking this journey, and for both the other is the destination, and for both it is a return from exile, in other words self-estrangement. God is returning to God, Israel to Israel.

The voice speaks of or for a way in the wilderness, recalling the Exodus tradition,[25] but also the passage from silence to speech, death to life. [26] We, however, are supposed to clear the path, make straight the highway. Or is it divine beings, or prophets?[27] It sug-

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[24] The relationship between Isa. 1 and 40 is noted by several scholars. See Vermeylen (1989: 45-46), Rendtorff (1993:149, 155), Melugin (1976: 177-78). Berges (1998: 382) thinks that Isa. 40:1-11 is a conscious inversion of Isaiah 1, as part of the general composition of the book.

[25] Childs (2001: 299), Carr (1993: 66). The importance of the Exodus traditions for Deutero-Isaiah is stressed by many authors and is the subject of Kiesow's monograph (1979). See especially Watts (1983: 81) and Clifford (1993: 3-5, 1984: 41-47). Clifford (1984: 21-23) also stresses the cosmogonic aspect of the wilderness, as God's antagonist. Steck (1982: 219) comparably argues that the Exodus is subsumed under the thematic of God as creator. A rather similar argument is made by Simian-Yofre (1980, 1981), largely on the grounds of the lack of specific reference to the Exodus. Berges (1998: 259-260) denies that the primary reference is to the Exodus, but to the recovery of Eden; the desert symbolises the sinful condition of Jerusalem.

[26] Milbank (1992:66) suggests that the way in the wilderness aligns the exiles with a nomadic order that systematically undoes the symbols of Babylonian imperialism.

[27] Various critics regard vs. 3-5 as addressed to members of the divine council, cf. Elliger (1989:7), Baltzer (2001:53). There is no real evidence for this, as Blenkinsopp (2000: 179) remarks; see also the form-critical argument of Kiesow (1979: 50-51). Fokkelman (1981: 77) notes the indeterminacy.

gests, nonetheless, a task to be undertaken by us (or/as divine beings, prophets), a preparation within us.[28] In v.4 the implications are developed: every vale shall be raised up, every mountain and hill laid low. In chapter 2 it is God who raises and judges mountains, just as he weighs them in v.12. Mountains are paradigmatic of primary creative elements.[29] It is not clear whether our preliminary task is levelling mountains and filling valleys, but in any case our making straight the highway corresponds to the crooked becoming straight (למישור)[30] and the smoothing of the wrinkles (רכסים)[31] into a plain. In chapter 2, the judgement against the mountains accompanies the day of the Lord, in which God terrifies the earth, and is the obverse of Zion's exaltation and the establishment of universal peace. Here it eases the way of the exiles, and is a sign of reconciliation.

As in v.2, parallelism suggests poetic and cosmic order, which is at the same time a transformation. The alternation of high and low, rough and smooth, is familiar, simple, and may have political or social implications.[32] It is, however, complicated by the circularity whereby the verse begins and ends with synonyms for valley (... בקעה גיא), the metathesis of עקב, "crooked," and בקע, "dale,"[33] and the association of עקב with Jacob, and of מישור, "straight"or perhaps "even," with the poetic term Jeshurun (ישרון) which we find also in Isa. 44:2.[34] The verse is enclosed too between compact lines, each with two stresses, round more protracted three stress ones. Between intimations of depth and height, divagation and direct-

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[28] Elliger (1989: 19) rejects any allegorical dimension to the way, and provides an abundance of examples of ancient Near Eastern processional routes. However, note Baltzer's (2001: 55) stress on the ethical dimension of the passage, and Berges's insistence that the "way of the Lord" is primarily ethical (1998: 382-83). On the basis of the parallelism, Kiesow (1979: 48) argues that לאלהינו is not dative but genitive. God does not necessarily use this road. See, however, van Oorschot (1993: 118-120). As Fokkelman (1981: 78) remarks, the question of whether the images should be taken literally or symbolically is not productive, and suggests a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of poetry.

[29] The motif is all pervasive. See, for example, Ps. 90:2, Prov. 8:24.

[30] The parallelism is often noted; cf. Koole (1997: 61).

[31] רכסים is a hapax legomenon, whose meaning is relatively clear.

[32] Sommers (1998: 251 n.54) summarizes the evidence. See also Baltzer (2001: 54).

[33] On this, see Fokkelman (1981: 78), who adds the inversion of מישור in רכסים, which seems much more doubtful to me.

[34] Baltzer (2001: 55). See also Polliack (2002: 105).

ness, past and future, expansion and ellipsis, the verse sketches a complete world through which, presumably, the way of the Lord passes, and which is upside down because of it, or in anticipation of it. The fulfilment of chapter 2 leads us to expect an eschatological or perhaps apocalyptic context.

For what is revealed? The glory of the Lord, in tandem with all flesh seeing, and the mouth of the Lord speaking. Whether these phrases are equivalent or not is unclear; in particular, the syntactic function of *kî* in כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר. Does all flesh see *that* the mouth of the Lord has spoken, or *because* it has done so, or is the phrase just a formula of divine authentication? The disjointedness of the syntax and the indeterminacy of reference need not be prematurely foreclosed, e.g. by combining the first two phrases. Perhaps "all flesh"does see the glory of the Lord revealed, but it is also left inexplicit what exactly they do see, so that between the vision and the revelation there remains a certain difference. What is clear, nonetheless, is that what was formerly concealed has been exposed, that the topographical features of the previous verse, emphasized by the repeated "every," have been collapsed into the totality of "all flesh," sharing a single experience, and that this corresponds to divine speech. "Flesh" (בָּשָׂר) is frail, as the next verses tell us, yet it is capable of seeing. What effect does the sight have on the flesh? We do not as yet know, but there is nonetheless a transference or transposition between our verse and the previous one. "Seeing" is the crooked being made straight, the mountains diminished, the lowly exalted, and Jacob rectified.

"For the mouth of YHWH has spoken" obviously corresponds to "a voice calling": the passage, like its central verse, is circular. The voice concludes by reflecting back on itself, withdrawing into itself, or withdrawing the world it evokes back into itself. In chapter 1, between the initial כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר, "for YHWH has spoken," to which heaven and earth are summoned to listen, in v.2, and כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר, "for the mouth of YHWH has spoken," in v.20, the world of First Isaiah is introduced in its dereliction, and with its choices between good and evil, survival and disaster. Here the identical phrase, כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר, summarizes the trajectory of Second Isaiah, from comfort to consolation. It may be a response to First Isaiah, a new word that revokes the old, or a recollection of it: the truth of First Isaiah is vindicated.

Brevard Childs has suggested a connection between Isa. 40 and 28, for instance through the description of Samaria as being at the

top of the גיא שמנים, "the valley of fat things" (28:1).[35] Equally close is the epithet גיא חזיון, "the valley of vision," attributed to Jerusalem in 22:1. There it satirically portrays Jerusalem's failure of vision and impending fall. Here, the word גיא ,"valley", may specifically evoke Jerusalem, which is raised above the mountains in 2:1, in its prophetic function.

IV

קול אמר קול ואמר מה אקרא כל הבשר חציר וכל חסדו כציץ
השדה:
יבש חציר נבל ציץ כי רוח יהוה נשבה בו אכן חציר העם:
יבש חציר נבל ציץ ודבר אלהינו יקום לעולם: ס

> A voice says, "Cry." And I/one said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its loyalty/love as the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the wind/spirit of YHWH blows upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, and the word of our God lasts forever! (40:6-8)

קול אמר קרא, "A voice says, 'Cry'." The same voice or different?[36] Would its message be the same as in the previous five verses, or does it look forward to the rest of Deutero-Isaiah, or some other message, or is it entirely open?[37] The imperative seems to be parallel to the injunction to comfort in v.1 and to open the way in v.3, as if this were a particular instance of comforting and opening the way. Why does the voice need an interlocutor to cry on its behalf? And what is the role and responsibility of that interlocutor? Here we come to a central issue of Deutero-Isaiah, as of prophetic literature generally. But we also come to a famous crux, whether we should read, "And I said" with IQIsa[a] etc., or "And one said" with MT, whether the prophet is listening in to disembodied voices, or whether he is summoned on his own account.[38] The first per-

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[35] Childs (2001: 296, 300). Childs, like Seitz (1990: 242), emphasizes the parallel with ציץ נבל, "the fading flower," but overlooks the additional correspondence with גיא. See also the rather full discussion in Williamson (1994: 76-78), who does make this connection.

[36] Freedman (1997: 244-246) provides an engaging discussion of the possibilities.

[37] Some critics attribute vs. 6-8 to a later redactional stratum e.g. Kratz (1993: 406-407), Labahn (1999a: 97-103), van Oorschot (1993: 114), arguing largely on the basis of the inconsistency of vs. 6-8 with the other sections of the prologue.

[38] Critics are divided on the issue; cf. Baltzer (2001: 56). It should be noted

son, "And I said," is simpler and more effective; it also enables a parallel with the opening of the second half of Deutero-Isaiah in 49:1-6. In that case, the prophet speaks on behalf of "all flesh" and its incapacity to speak. The other possibility suggests perhaps a celestial hesitation, or an interplay of voices within the prophet or in God, and the divine as an internal voice of the prophet.

"What should I cry?" may refer to the content of the speech or to the inability to find an appropriate message.[39] Correspondingly, "all flesh is grass" may be the message, culminating in "the word of our God lasts for ever," or it may explicate the problem. At any rate, "What should I cry?" focuses on the speaker on the verge of speech, not knowing what to say or how to say it. The speaker identifies with "all flesh": the prophet, as human, shares its transience. Or, as a divine voice, with the prophet listening in, it perhaps empathises with human mortality or, on the contrary, feels the insignificance of humans before God and the impossibility of any communication, as, for instance, in 40:15. The "comfort" of v.1 has apparently met with an inescapable objection. The grief of "my people" and "the heart of Jerusalem" is an example of the general human condition and its inconsolability. The pathos is emphasised by the continuation: וכל חסדו כציץ השדה, "and all its *hesed* like the flower of the field." *Hesed* refers to the affective ties that bind human beings, and hence to the capacity for generosity and loyalty, the opposite of the lack of social solidarity for which Israel was condemned in First Isaiah, and of which v.2 reminds us. *Hesed* exceeds justice; coupled most frequently with *'emet*, "truth," it points to a truth about human commitment and human potential.[40]

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that Melugin (1976: 84) also considers the addressee to be ambiguous. Fokkelman (1981:79 n.26) goes further and insists that it cannot be the prophet, because it does not accord with his "strong faith and glorious optimism." This attributes an uncomplicated personality to the prophet, which I think would be difficult to sustain. A similar assumption, however, underlies redactional approaches.

[39] Freedman (1997: 146), for instance, thinks that vs. 6-8 logically precede the other parts of the prologue, and the content of the message is to be found in vs. 3-4. Krinetzki (1972: 66) considers it to be the message, however. For a good account of the complexities of reading the passage, see Geller (1983: 215).

[40] Geller (1983: 216) valuably defines *hesed* as "a mixture of love and law beyond any narrow legalism." However, he interprets our phrase negatively as referring to Israel's infirm loyalty, like Hos. 6:4. In the context of human mortality, a positive evaluation of its *hesed* would make its passing more grievous. See further Baltzer (2001: 57 n.66) on proposals to translate חסד as "strength" or "beauty."

Hesed is strikingly absent from most of First Isaiah,[41] and only here in the book is it used with reference to humanity. That even *hesed* is evanescent indicates a despair, not over human evil, but goodness. It is not that it is not good enough, but that it is not durable. The comparison with the flower of the field is one of beauty as well as fragility. Beauty is an ethical quality; "flesh," however, suggests physical desire, dependence, and intimacy. What do we really long for and grieve for? The lament has a long erotic history.[42] With the introduction of *hesed*, a complex metaphorical transfer between ethics and aesthetics is intimated, typical of the prophets. The transfer, nonetheless, does not displace the corporeal loss; it focuses on the body as the site from which *hesed* arises, as well as beauty, and as that which preeminently dies.

However, "all flesh" sees the glory of the Lord, and/or that the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Will they survive the vision? What will it do to the flesh? Is there a disjunction between the sight and the rest of the body, between present and future? These questions are not easily answerable, but in the gap between v.5 and v.6 is invested the hope that "all flesh" may traverse it.[43]

The images of grass and flower are highly conventional, and their iterability is emphasised by the repetition of יבש חציר נבל ציץ, "the grass withers, the flower fades," in each of the next two verses. The repetition underwrites the truth of human mortality; it is a song that comes back to haunt us. But it is also there for the sake of the sequel:

יבש חציר נבל ציץ כי רוח יהוה נשבה בו
יבש חציר נבל ציץ ודבר אלהינו יקום לעולם

> The grass withers, the flower fades/ for the spirit/wind of YHWH blows upon it;
> The grass withers, the flower fades/ and the word of our God lasts forever.

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[41] It only occurs in 16:5, in the context of the Oracles Against the Nations. Elsewhere in Deutero-Isaiah the referent is God (54:8, 10; 55:3).

[42] The interfusion of death and eros is evident in the laments for Tammuz and in classical Pastoral. Westermann (1969: 24, 41-42 and throughout) rightly stresses the impress of the lament on Deutero-Isaiah.

[43] Freedman (1997:138) regards v.5 as the centrepiece and climax of the whole poem, and v. 6 as its logical beginning. In contrast, Labahn (1999a: 106-7) considers "for the mouth of YHWH has spoken" a Deuteronomistic supplement.

There is an obvious parallelism between the "spirit/wind of YHWH" and the "word of our God," but are they equivalent or contrasted? The spirit/wind of YHWH (רוח יהוה) would perhaps be the same as the word, so that the message, anticipating Ecclesiastes, is that only the spirit, the wind, and the word are everlasting. Or, anticipating and reversing Paul, they are opposed, and the spirit kills, while the letter gives life. And this depends on a further, foundational, ambiguity: which word of our God lasts forever? How does it relate to the previous discourse, and all previous discourse, encapsulated in כי פי יהוה דבר, "for/that the mouth of YHWH has spoken" in v.5? Is this a new word, or the old word in new clothing? How secondary is Deutero-Isaiah?

The "spirit of YHWH" (רוח יהוה) is associated with creation, for instance in Gen. 1:2,[44] as well as in 40:13. The spirit/wind here is responsible for the dessication of the grass and the death it figures. So the God of creation is the God of death, and the despair the prophet enunciates is inherent in the structure of creation. The voices of comfort in v.1, and that which instigates the opening of the way in v.3, are linked through repetition to a voice whose message to proclaim is foiled by the absence of any significant message, because of the transitoriness it itself mandates.

The verb נשב, "blow," is a byform of נשף and נשם.[45] Both of these occur in the immediate vicinity in Deutero-Isaiah, in contexts similar to ours and that suggest radical transformation.[46] Both are correlated with terms for the animating spirit: נפש and נשמה. נשבה, moreover, partially duplicates שוב, "turn, return," paradigmatically associated in the prophets with repentance and change. The wind that blows and brings death may become that which gives life. Like עקב and בקע, יבש and נשבה are linked through metathesis.[47] As there, metathesis suggests the possibility of reversal. The wind

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[44] Görg (1998:150) argues that 40:1-11 was modelled on the priestly creation narrative, and that the mention of the רוח יהוה, in particular, recalls Gen. 1:2. Geller (1983: 217) interestingly suggests that ambiguity is bestowed on the phrase by its association with prophetic inspiration, and in particular the call vision.

[45] KBL *ad loc.*

[46] נשף appears in 40:24, in the context of the uprooting and dessication of earthly potentates; in 42:14 נשם is part of a series of verbs depicting God's laboured respiration, manifest in cosmic drought and a new Exodus.

[47] Krinetzki (1972: 69) notes the inversion without further comment; Fokkelman (1981: 80) also notes the connection formed through alliteration.

dries the grass, but it may also be responsible for its revival, for the restoration of נפש and נשמה. This is especially clear in the last verse of the section.

Before that, however, there is a little appendage, אכן חציר העם, "Surely the people is grass," which is conventionally regarded as a gloss. Against this, Görg has argued that it communicates focus, paralleling "all flesh" in v.6.[48] The repetition adds plangency. It also recalls עמי,"my people," in v.1 (Freedman 1997: 248). The people may be grass, evanescent, suffering, like all humanity, but they belong to God, a bond emphasised by the substitution of "our God" for YHWH in v.8.[49] It also recalls the context of comfort. The wind that blows is the wind, spirit and message of consolation; at the very least, we cannot forget that the people who are but grass are the very same to whom the whole address is delivered: "What can I cry?" is answered in the very saying.

In the last verse, the "word of our God" subsists despite the impermanence of everything. Perhaps, however, one can read the vav of ודבר as a conjunction rather than an adversative. The "word of our God" belongs to us, it speaks to us and in us. Then the word of our God is the condition for our permanence; it becomes a metaphor for the grass and flower. This brings us to the ambiguity of these images. Grass and flower fade, but they may also flourish.

Goldingay, in a beautiful deconstructive reading of Deutero-Isaiah, has pointed out that the word can only survive in writing, that in itself, quoting Stephen Moore, it is the "most ephemeral of substances."[50] I wonder whether the word can be so easily translated, whether, for instance, it is coterminous with our book of Isaiah. The focus on the *mouth* of YHWH, however we understand it,[51] would suggest a process of cogitation, articulation and expression, which may be physical or psychic, but in any case is not fixed

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[48] Görg (1998: 146). See also Freedman (1997: 248), and the sober discussion in Baltzer (2001:57-58). The introduction of the clause by אכן, "Surely," seems to me to be a clear parallel with אכן משפטי את יהוה, "my judgement is with YHWH," in 49:4, in an autobiographical passage that is widely regarded as corresponding to ours (cf. Stassen 1997:129).

[49] Freedman (1997: 235-236) notes the parallel with the sequence YHWH/ 'elohenu in v. 3.

[50] Goldingay (1997: 229). Goldingay is quoting from Moore (1992: 26).

[51] For a discussion of its place in Deuteronomic traditions, see Labahn (1999a:106). Labahn is rather dismissive of its importance in prophetic writings.

in a book. The word corresponds to the wind and perhaps also to *hesed*, as a series of immaterial entities which prove more durable than the solidity of flesh and all it represents. It thus encapsulates a fundamental motif of Deutero-Isaiah, and perhaps of prophetic writings generally, whereby the powerless are vindicated and power is illusory (Blenkinsopp 2000: 183).

In vv. 3-5 the orientation is to the future, when all flesh sees the glory of YHWH, at the culmination of a way through a violently levelled landscape. Here in vv. 6-8 the repetition evokes the seasons and rhythms of life and death. The repetition recalls that of נחמו in v.1, and hence the theme of consolation. There comfort restores maternal care, both of God and the dead, bereaved, or captive heart of Jerusalem; it is both a recovery of the past and a new beginning. Here the rhythm of the seasons transcends and opens a possibility beyond the immediate human disaster. The maternal presence is inferred metonymically from the grass and flower; it is the fecund and inhuming earth, as well as the wind/spirit, which is the only feminine subject, and which is associated with the nurturing of Gen. 1:2. Both of these are ethereal, disembodied or implicit; the maternal comfort is entrusted to the wind, or in abeyance, germinating, in the earth.

On the one hand, Deutero-Isaiah asserts tirelessly that redemption is inherent in the structure and narrative of creation; on the other, it is unforeseen and unforeshadowed. There is no apparent way of bridging this contradiction, which it nonetheless attempts to convince us is no contradiction.[52] It is this that accounts for the spectrality, the doubleness of the vision, since that which is revealed, the glory of YHWH, the word of our God, is primordial and everlasting.

V

על הר גבה עלי לך מבשרת ציון הרימי בכח קולך מבשרת ירושלם
הרימי אל תיראי אמרי לערי יהודה הנה אלהיכם:
הנה אדני יהוה בחזק יבוא וזרעו משלה לו הנה שברו אתו ופעלתו לפניו:
כרעה עדרו ירעה בזרעו יקבץ טלאים ובחיקו ישא עלות ינהל:

[52] On this tension, see especially Willey (1997).

> On a high mountain go up, O herald of Zion; lift up your voice in strength, O herald of Jerusalem; lift up, do not be afraid; say to the cities of Judah, behold your God. Behold, my Lord YHWH comes in power, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, his recompense before him. As a shepherd grazes his flock, with his right arm he gathers the lambs, and in his bosom he carries, he leads the nursing ewes (40:9-11).

So finally we, and he, come back home: that which is spoken to the heart of Jerusalem in v.2 is completed in the announcement of the herald, the way of YHWH in v.3 has reached its destination.[53] One mountain, it seems, escapes the diminution of v.4, corresponding to the exaltation of Zion above all the mountains in 2:2. The mysterious voices have disappeared, as have the doubts of vv. 6-8;[54] the prophet speaks for himself, and through the posited herald of Zion and Jerusalem.

But who is this herald? And why is she feminine? She is clearly a complement to the male herald (מבשר) in 52:7, and thus cannot be identified in any simple sense with Zion/Jerusalem.[55] But she also cannot be separated from other female figures associated with Zion: the "daughter of Zion"of 1:9, the "inhabitant of Zion" (ציון יושבת) of 12:6 etc, and hence the motif of Zion as the spouse of God.[56] The "herald of Zion"may then be an aspect of Zion that is returning to itself, just as God is in v.3. But the voice of the prophet is also summoning, or claiming, a female counterpart to itself, as if it cannot speak, at least for the moment, except in this disguise.[57]

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[53] A number of scholars limit the Prologue to vs. 1-8, e.g. Elliger (1989: 34). Others posit an especially close relationship between vs. 1-2 and 9-11, and hence see the latter as being integral to the prologue. A detailed comparison is provided by Freedman (1997: 234-243) and Fokkelman (1981: 83ff). There are a variety of mediating positions, e.g. Melugin (1976:84-85), Carr (1995: 62-63), Kratz (1993: 404-410).

[54] Westermann (1969:43), however, suggests that the voice may be the same as in v. 6. There is no evidence for this; Freedman (1997: 237) argues that here the message initiated in v. 1 finally reaches its destination.

[55] Most critics, nonetheless, make precisely this identification (Blenkinsopp 2000: 184, 185; Childs 2001: 301; Baltzer 2001: 61; Elliger 1989: 31, 35, are a representative sample). In contrast, McEvenue (1997: 218-221) considers the herald to be the prophetess responsible for Deutero-Isaiah. As will become clear, my view is that the figure is ambiguous.

[56] These are also frequently regarded as appositional. There is little reason, however, to reject the objective genitive, and in practice it makes little difference (cf. McEvenue 1997: 219; Landy 2002: 272-273).

[57] If McEvenue is right, there is no dissimulation; the prophet is female. However, he would have to account for the masculine gender used for the protagonist elsewhere in Deutero-Isaiah.

The prophet is an emissary, perhaps the emissary, from God to Zion, except that his voice is absorbed in that of the multitude of ewes whose ascent, as those who "go up" (עלות),[58] completes the circular structure of vv. 9-11. We began with an anonymous plurality of voices (נחמו נחמו), and so we end, as with the transition from male to female.

The herald of Zion/Jerusalem (מבשרת ציון/ ירושלם) is presumably human as well as female, in contrast to the ambiguously divine voices in the first part of the passage; at any rate, she is not disembodied. The human quality of the voice is emphasized through the transposition of בשר to מבשרת.[59] That which is flesh will communicate the advent of God. The voice anticipates and announces the vision that all flesh will see in v.5,[60] and articulates the word which lasts for ever in v.8, especially if that word is in some sense the return of YHWH. מבשרת, "herald," mediates between the prior and ultimate condition of all flesh. But it also marks the transformation of flesh into word. Humans speak, and thus become more than flesh. At the same time they speak for and in the flesh, with the full vocal apparatus, at maximum volume, and with an excitement that cannot contain the news, which soars above the mountain and spreads from Zion/Jerusalem to the cities of Judah. The voice is permeated, however, with the divine imminence. הנה אלהיכם, "Behold your God!" opens a space in the human voice for God to enter, for the supersession of the messenger by the content of the message, which is not a signifying discourse, but the subject of speech, that which the words signify.[61] הנה אלהיכם , "Behold your God!" recollects, as some have

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[58] There is an evident wordplay between עֲלוּת, "nursing," and עלות, "ascending."

[59] For the verbal connection, see Blenkinsopp (2000: 185) and Koole (1997: 70).

[60] Some critics think that there is a contradiction between v. 5 and vs. 9-11, and hence attribute the latter to a later redactional layer; cf. Kratz (1993: 404). Vermeylen (1989: 38-39, 46), on the contrary, proposes that vs. 1-3, 5 were modelled on vs. 9-11. However, van Oorschot (1991: 119 n.88) argues that we should not presuppose a chronological sequence to the passage. See also Freedman (1997: 255-257).

[61] For Carr (1995: 63), the prologue is divided into two parts: vs. 1-8, which is concerned with authorization, and vs. 9-11, which is the authorized message. However, the distinction is subverted by the identity of the message with the authorizing subject.

noted, יאמר אלהיכם, "says your God," in v.1.[62] The structure of the passage is circular; we return to our initial point, just as God returns to Jerusalem. However, whereas in v.1 God speaks so as to displace the function of speaking and comforting onto unnamed others, while he himself remains enigmatically or ambivalently in the background, here God is no longer quoted in parentheses, no longer absents himself from the task of comforting, which is not a consequence of verbal communication, but of that which precedes and validates every communication, the presence of the speaker. Up to this point, God has been apprehended metonymically, through his word, spirit, way, and most of all through voices; now, he is divested of qualifying accoutrements.

The herald is hurrying towards Zion/Jerusalem, climbing up the high mountain, spurred on and imagined by the prophetic spectator, a figure of desire as well as of reunification. The herald (מבשרת) will become the inhabitant of Zion, and anticipates its repopulation, as the one who awaits her divine lover. The entrance of God into Zion is the culmination of the process. All three events, however, are one and the same. Zion, for instance, takes on the role of the herald, just as the latter restores to it its task of imparting Torah.[63] The herald is absorbed in and becomes one with Zion, but also disappears, effaces herself, in her message; she is the vanishing intermediary, that which measures the distance between the entities whose loss and longing for each other has so far constituted the poem just before it collapses. But of course that collapse never happens.

It does not happen because two figures intervene: the warrior and the shepherd. The advent is deferred and elaborated through metaphors, which both intensify anticipation and take us to a different world or era. As several critics remark, v.10 derives from the divine warrior tradition,[64] and hence from the context of YHWH's

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[62] Freedman (1997: 237), Fokkelman (1981:83).

[63] Most critics assume that Zion is the subject of the address to the cities of Judah in the second half of the verse, and therefore identify it with the herald. It may be, as Brassey (2001: 184) remarks, included among the cities of Judah. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are obviously complementary (cf. 44:26), and one can easily imagine the function of the herald being transferred to Jerusalem. Holter (1996: 120) suggests that the cities of Judah are introduced here to announce the reversal of their devastation predicted in Isaiah's commissioning scene in 6:11.

[64] See especially Mettinger (1997: 150-151), who argues that it anticipates

paradigmatic victories over Canaan or chaos; the metaphor of the divine and royal shepherd likewise draws on ancient liturgical and narrative resources. We are returning to a poetic as well as ancestral home. Nostalgia risks disappointment, since home is not as it used to be. The figure of Zion/Jerusalem as lover, herald, and purveyor of Torah encounters that of the devastated city. As in v.2, to which v.9 corresponds, Jerusalem is addressed over and despite its desolation and death. The word, and even more the presence, of God, as in v.8, is that which gives life to the dead. The abandoned city awaits its population, its dead children represented by the survivors or their successors, who see in it an image of the irrecoverable past. The return is imminent, but we do not know to what we will return.

The images of vv. 10-11 detain us, and add their own problems of interpretation and resolution. The divine warrior returns, as, for instance, in Ps. 24, but where has he been? If he is returning from Babylon, his victory, which may subsequently be decoded as that of Cyrus, is the obverse of apparent defeat, the captivity of Zion and thus of God, and of the motif of impotence which recurs repeatedly in Deutero-Isaiah. He comes "in strength"[65] from the scene of the disaster, for which he too is responsible. Hence the parallelism between the "hand of YHWH" in v.2 and his "arm" (זרעו) in v.10.[66] God then moves from the position of adversary to that of protagonist, or perhaps he destroys for the sake of restitution. The oscillation points not only to an ambivalence on the part of God, an ability to change sides, to the other meaning of נחם as "changing one's mind," but to the background of imperial domination against which the ideology of divine conquest is reasserted. Divine authorisation of Cyrus, to give the most proximate instance, will perpetuate Jerusalem's servitude, and is the antithesis of the rhetoric of Israel's independence and possession of the Promised Land.

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the acclamation of YHWH as king in 52:7, and the discussion of Mettinger in Brettler (1998: 106-108). Brettler points out that both warrior and shepherd are sub-metaphors of YHWH as king, though for some reason he does not think the metaphor of the shepherd is so in this instance (1998: 119).

[65] There is a minor problem of the pointing of בחזק which need not detain us here.

[66] Farfan Navarro (1992: 188) points out that "hand" and "arm" are not simply equivalent in Deutero-Isaiah. Nonetheless they do seem to be parallel here.

He comes with his "reward" and the "recompense" for his labour (הנה שכרו אתו ופעלתו לפניו), corresponding to the penalty Israel pays in v.2.[67] The reward and recompense are perhaps Israel; the detail that his פעלה, "labour," is before him foreshadows the image of the flock in the next verse. If so, God has earned something, his people, among the foreign powers, and has experienced a servitude approximating theirs. Divine identification with and participation in Israel's suffering, for instance in accounts of his parturition, accompanies the insistence on his power.

In the last verse the metaphor of the victorious hero returning home is replaced by the pastoral one of the shepherd. The hero appears indirectly or implicitly, preceded by his attribute of strength (בחזק יבוא) and his governing arm (זרעו משלה לו); virile aggrandizement is intensified in preparation for the arrival, with its intimations of sexual union. Here the metaphor is displaced as a simile—כרעה, "like a shepherd"—so as to preempt premature identification. As with the simile of the "flower of the field" in v.6, it suggests a dialectic of identity and non-identity, it insists on its difference, perhaps as a prelude to the advent of God as creator in v.12.

Matters are complicated by the relationship of the figures of the warrior and the shepherd. They may form a composite metaphor; warrior and shepherd are both features of divine sovereignty, and hence presage the declaration that YHWH reigns in the parallel passage in 52:7.[68] They may, however, be successive: YHWH is *first* imagined as a warrior and *then* as a shepherd, so as to substitute a peaceful, utopian paradigm for the immediate political context. The alternatives are not exclusive: the reader may or should integrate the metaphors in one comprehensive image, and perceive them as separate impressions or revisions.

The shepherd presides over a flock of nursing ewes and lambs, a proliferating maternal economy. He himself, with his capacious bosom, has a maternal function. The fecundity of Zion has been transferred to the children and to God himself. Various critics

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[67] Stoebe (1984: 108-109) suggests that the reward may be Israel's (and cf. Blenkinsopp 2000: 186). But the metaphor of the shepherd in the next verse makes it more probable that YHWH is the recipient.

[68] Brettler (1998: 118-119). Kiesow (1979: 33-34) finds the tension between vs. 10 and 11 sufficiently acute to attribute them to different redactional strata.

have perceived in these verses a recollection of Jacob's return from Laban.[69] Not only has the crooked been made straight; God identifies with the transformation and escape of Jacob. Jacob and God, and hence Zion and God, are united. Jacob's miraculous multiplication of sheep, accomplished through the mounting (עלים) of the rams (Gen. 31:10) is transformed into their nursing (Gen. 33:3) on the ascent to Zion.

God leads (ינהל) the ewes; the verb נהל is associated, in particular, with pasture and with water.[70] In Exod. 15:13, the guidance is precisely to the divine pasture of Zion. If, in Isa. 51:18, mother Jerusalem has no one to guide (מנהל) her among all the children, now it is precisely her children, replications of her maternity, who are led. The ascent may suggest a pilgrimage, a journey to a cosmic mountain; it may be metaphorical as well as literal. But the guidance, like the carrying of the lambs in God's bosom, takes us back to the way of YHWH in v.3. The way replaces Zion as the site of communion. The peaceful idyll on the way is imagined from the perspective of Zion, the prophet and perhaps God, and is their meeting point. The journey may be interminably protracted, indefinitely forestalling the destination. Or the journey, on which God cares for his flock, is a moving Zion, Zion returning to itself.

The verse begins with a remarkable alliterative sequence: כרעה עדרו ירעה בזרעו, "As a shepherd grazes his flock, with his arm..." The sequence may suggest an identification between shepherd and flock, and, more important, a sense of enclosure, since the word for "flock"is encircled by those for "shepherd" and "shepherding."[71] The maternal care elaborated in the rest of the verse is implicated in its inception. But the containment is expansive; the arm (זרע) comes forth to gather in more lambs, a reach that is presumably uncircumscribed (Zapff 2003: 362). The word זרע, "arm," is recollected from the previous verse, where it is a conventional figure for God's domination. God's power, exercised over the nations,

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[69] Elliger (1989: 37-38), Baltzer (2001: 62), Zapff (2001: 231-232) are representative examples. Polliack (2002: 108-110) suggests the hidden presence of Rachel in these verses. However, she overlooks the possible connection between Rachel's name and the metaphor of the ewes, and strangely identifies Rachel with Zion.

[70] For the etymology of נהל, see Koole (1997: 79), Elliger (1989: 38), and KBL.

[71] Fokkelman (1981: 84). The alliterative sequence is also noted by Gitay (1997: 62-63).

is preliminary to, or is exhausted in, his care for Israel. The sideslip between vv. 10 and 11, and between the two usages of זרע, "arm,"couples them together, and ensures that the simile of v.11, the pastoral interlude whose illustrative range perhaps covers the whole sequence from v.1 on, is potentially disarming, and has unlimited consequences.

There is always the possibility of subversion, especially in the wider context. The word עדר recurs, with the opposite meaning, in v.26: איש לא נעדר, "none is lacking." There the subject is the host of heaven, who may be associated with the nations and their gods. Israel, as God's flock, is an exemplification of God's universal care and dominion, just as in vv. 6-7, its transitoriness as a "people" represents the plight of "all flesh."

VI

It is evident from the above that Isa. 40:1-11, like Deutero-Isaiah generally, is haunted by literary as well as historical ghosts, on many levels. We have found echoes of Isaiah 1, 2, 6, and 28, and if we looked we could find others.[72] Its background includes the whole of former prophecy, in particular Jeremiah; it evokes archetypal narratives, namely the Creation, the Flood, the Exodus, and the Jacob traditions.[73] All of these will be developed as Deutero-Isaiah continues. Sacrificial and juridical imagery inform v.2. More pervasively, the past is suggested through the use of traditional metaphors, such as YHWH as warrior and shepherd, and genres, like the lament and the liturgy of holy war. Most directly and profoundly, the past appears through the citation of previous language, as in "for/that the mouth of YHWH has spoken"(v.5) and "the word of our God lasts forever" (v.8). This speech is the continuation or fulfilment of previous speech; in a sense, it is not a new speech at all.

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[72] In particular, the relationship between Isaiah 35 and 40:1-11 has been the subject of detailed study by Steck (1985) and Mathews (1995). Correlations are irrespective of the actual sequence of composition e.g. Isaiah 1 is generally considered to have been composed as an introduction to the book rather late in its development.

[73] Kratz (1993, 1994) suggests the end of the Joseph story in Gen. 50 and Jer. 50-51 as additional significant intertexts.

On the other hand, Isa. 40:1-11 insists on its newness; the past is over, the sentence is completed, it is a new creation and a new exodus, once again we go to our homeland, like Jacob our ancestor, led by our victorious God. Once again, despite the years of estrangement, husband and wife are united; in the anticipation of consummation, the gap between past, present and future, God and humanity, spirit and flesh, closes, only to be held open again through deferment and metaphor.[74] Moreover, the gap between signifier and signified also closes; what is announced is precisely the presence of God, which speaks for itself, for a transcendence of language. Whatever God is here, whatever its relations to the glory of YHWH in v.5, for instance, it is that for which the language of the book, the mouth/word of our God, speaks, and into which it is reabsorbed.

The Freudian uncanny is defined by its double aspect: it is familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. We come back home and find the ghosts of the past, not least the surviving inhabitants.[75] Homecoming is to a world which has become strange, and in which the expectation of a marvellously transformed reality is thwarted by the ordinariness and impoverishment of life in the restoration community, partisan politics, and the failure of the prophetic message.[76] Yet it does reverberate, with its message of comfort and hope; the word, though it may not last forever, has lasted at least until now.

Isaiah 6 and Isa. 40:1-11 do correspond, insofar as each is a programmatic key to their part of the book. Isaiah 6 describes a trajectory from the fullness of the divine glory to the desolation of the land and the survival of the holy seed; it is a microcosm of the experience of Israel in the book. It is a narrative, recounting the prophet's initiation, whereby he is purified from his sins and

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[74] Owen (1989: 150) discusses the function of metaphor in preventing closure, in particular the ultimate closure of death. "The grotesque gap between our humanity and this thing—the body killed, damaged, wounded—is held open by metaphors."

[75] Pardes (2000: 109-116) argues that in the narrative of the wilderness and conquest Canaan is both a land of maternal sweetness and of danger, both because of the indigenous inhabitants and the ghosts of the patriarchs. It thus exemplifies the Freudian uncanny.

[76] See Robert Carroll's classic study of cognitive dissonance in the prophetic traditions (1979).

becomes a divine emissary. We do not know whether Isa. 40:1-11 is a narrative, whether its four parts are in chronological sequence, and whether it introduces a prophetic vocation, depending on how one reads v.6. Its fragmentariness and indeterminacy are symptomatic of a world that has fallen to pieces, of an absence of the political and sacerdotal order of chapter 6. All we have are voices off-stage, traces of the past and the divine hierarchy, the court in exile, which are also disembodied, not yet owned, parts of the prophetic self. They speak of the opening of the way, the perdurance of the divine word, the end of an era, but from the perspective, the experience, of the desert, despair, transience, death and silence. They call the dead mother to awaken, to receive her spouse, the mother whose death is not quite distinguishable from the eclipse of God.

It is hard to avoid questions of historicity, despite the fact that this has so far been an entirely literary and poetic study, in which such questions are carefully put to one side. They do, however, preoccupy much of the scholarly discussion. Was the text composed in Jerusalem or Babylon?[77] In several redactional stages or in one burst of poetic inspiration? Do they represent a relatively unmediated poetic and prophetic experience, or a scribal imaginary construction? In this essay, too, there have been implicit and explicit historical assumptions: the context of exile, the hope for return, the historical-literary tradition. There is an assumption, too, of the priority of Proto-Isaiah over Deutero-Isaiah, even though this is as much a matter of literary priority—the decision to assign texts to different parts of the book—as of historical anteriority.

What we can say is that the text does bear the imprint of an imaginative, poetic/prophetic experience, and an attempt to rethink reality, in other words ideology, in its light. One can assume a condition of trauma, which may be personal as well as historical and institutional. We may assume also a profound relationship to language, to the Judean historical and literary tradition, and a context conducive to prophetic poetry and its perpetuation through writing, copying, declamation and interpretation. I also assume,

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[77] The assumption that Deutero-Isaiah originated in Babylon has been challenged by Barstad (1997). Redactional critical approaches assume that most of the later stages of composition of Deutero-Isaiah and of the editing of the original prophecy were conducted in Jerusalem.

finally, that the poet belongs to what Hélène Cixous (1993: 63) calls the "dying-clairvoyant" kind, prepared to ask the ultimate questions.

I do not know the material, psychic and social conditions out of which poetry of this beauty and intensity arises, and to some extent there is no answer to this question. We do not have exhaustive knowledge about the lives of Judeans in Babylon and in Judah. Nonetheless, the question has to be addressed if there is to be a serious rapprochement of history and literature.[78] That day may not be the Messianic parousia imagined in our text, but at least it may permit a healthier interaction between the fractured subsets of our discipline.

ABSTRACT

The article is a close reading of Isa. 40:1-11, which focuses on its function as a prologue to Deutero-Isaiah, and hence distinguished by its promise of a new beginning, and on its dependence on, and reversal of, the past, the spectral voices it seeks to repatriate. It is concerned with the secondariness of Deutero-Isaiah, and the consequent ambiguity of its messages. The voice of the poet/prophet is refracted through disembodied voices, which themselves cite other voices, before finally adopting that of the female herald, through whom the advent of God becomes manifest, only to be indefinitely deferred through metaphor and simile. In the background there is the frequently asserted relationship with Isaiah 6 as a metapoetic key to the book. Does its purview extend to Isaiah 40, and is the message of comfort conveyed by Deutero-Isaiah subverted by the incomprehensibility mandated by it? The complexities of the passage, and hence of the book as a whole, require attention to the detail of each its parts, but also to its fragmentariness, as it seeks to reconstruct a fractured reality. This is achieved in part through the emphasis on the materiality of the voice, as flesh (*basar*) and sonority, and as the matrix (*mebasseret*) of the future. The analysis proceeds from the voice of maternal comfort in vv. 1-2, to the announcement of the way and the universal theophany in vv. 3-5, to the pathos of transience in vv. 6-8, and finally to the deferred resolution in vv. 9-11. In the conclusion I discuss the relation of the text to the Freudian uncanny, the correspondence and non-correspondence with chapter 6, and the question of the relationship between historical and literary approaches.

[78] What I am thinking of is the cultural poetics projected by New Historicism. For New Historicism and the Bible, see the wonderful special issue of *BibInt* on New Historicism, *BibInt* 5,4 (guest ed. Stephen Moore), and the abrasive and fascinating response to it by Aram Veeser, one that I confess I do not understand, but which perhaps I am not meant to understand, since he critiques the essays in the volume for being too Hegelian, in spite of themselves.

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