

## Daughter Zion as a Gendered Space in the Book of Isaiah

by

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Space and gender have become key words in the contemporary sociological and geographical feminist discourse. A common assumption of the various geographical and sociological approaches is that space is a “social product” – a term coined by the French Marxist philosopher Henry Lefebvre in his book *The Production of Space*, originally published in 1974, and translated into English in 1991.<sup>1</sup>

The Constructions of Ancient Space Seminar has been discussing spatial theory for several years now, especially the work of geographer Edward W. Soja.<sup>2</sup> My contribution to this discourse is an attempt to apply his critical spatial theory to biblical texts. My current topic of research is the portrait of Zion/Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible and I am interested in a social-historical approach to the texts as well as in a feminist perspective. I think that critical spatial theory allows us to better understand the interrelationship between perceiving Jerusalem as a place to live, conceiving its importance by theological tradition, and living with changing concepts and experience in that same place. With this paper I would like to discuss with the members of the seminar to what extent Soja’s theory is applicable to the concept of the “sacred space” of Jerusalem as it is offered in the book of Isaiah. This will not only present results but will also address questions for further discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> For this reason, there is no need to introduce the theory of Edward W. Soja again. See e.g. James W. Flanagan, “Ancient Perceptions of Space/Perceptions of Ancient Space,” *Semeia* 87: 15-43; and “Space,” in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (ed. A.K.M. Adam; St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 323-327; Jon L. Berquist, “Critical Spatiality and the Construction of the Ancient World,” in *‘Imagining’ Biblical Worlds: Studies in Spatial, Social and Historical Constructs in Honor of James W. Flanagan* (ed. David M. Gunn and Paula M. McNutt, JSOT.Sup 359; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 14-29; Paula McNutt, “‘Fathers of the Empty Spaces’ and ‘Strangers Forever’: Social Marginality and the Construction of Space,” in Gunn and McNutt, *‘Imagining’ Biblical Worlds*, 30-50.

At first, I would like to name some points which are important for my research and might explain why I chose Soja's theory as a starting point.

1) Soja's critical theory, in my opinion, helps to overcome a binary separation of so-called 'real' space from symbolic or mythological space. Both Soja's and Lefebvre's trialectic epistemology of spatiality indicate different representations or perspectives, not realities of space.<sup>3</sup> Although from Soja's definitions of First-, Second-, and Thirdspace one would perceive a clear differentiation of these spatial modalities, Claudia Camp has brilliantly shown that they collapse if applied to biblical texts such as the book of Sirach.<sup>4</sup> My focus on texts imagining Zion/Jerusalem will support Camp's thesis that narrative texts (and I would include poetic texts as well) are not solely classifiable as Secondspace but may supply "both a *model* for thinking Thirdspatially and a *site* of Thirdspace from which lived First- and Secondspatial possibilities can be abstracted and analyzed."<sup>5</sup>

2) Soja refers to conceived spaces as spaces of domination, "representations of power and ideology, of control and surveillance."<sup>6</sup> Soja defines Thirdspace as a strategic reopening and rethinking of new possibilities out of the perspective of the peripheries, the margins and the marginalized, as "the chosen spaces for struggle, liberation, emancipation."<sup>7</sup> Like Lefebvre, he argues for "a temporary strategic privileging" of Thirdspace "to break the hammerlock of binarist logic."<sup>8</sup> This rather clear distinction and evaluation of power structures may be understood as an analogy to the feminist effort to deconstruct dominant discourses of

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<sup>3</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journey to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell 1996), 65-69.

<sup>4</sup> Claudia V. Camp, "Storied Space, Or, Ben Sira 'Tells' a Temple," in Gunn and McNutt, *'Imagining' Biblical Worlds*, 64-80, esp. 66-69.

<sup>5</sup> Camp, "Storied Space," 68.

<sup>6</sup> Soja, *Thirdspace*, 67.

<sup>7</sup> Soja, *Thirdspace*, 68.

<sup>8</sup> Soja, *Thirdspace*, 65.

kyriarchy<sup>9</sup> and to seek liberation of the so-called “others.” In the discipline of geography, feminist scholars first discussed the gendered accessibility to space, especially city space as well as the public/private space dichotomy. But, as the feminist discourse on spatiality along the female/male distinction has shown, such a notion of power distribution runs the risk of becoming just another binary concept. Soja tries to escape this duality by quoting extensively from post-modern womanist and feminist scholars who opt for a deconstructive approach to existing dichotomies.<sup>10</sup> He sees their critical work and their theorizing from the margin as an analogy to what he calls Thirdspace – a lived alternative of space. Thus, in taking Soja’s Thirdspace as a critical starting point, feminist spatial studies are key works for my inquiry. Commenting on the production of space, geographer Linda McDowell gives a definition of space now accepted in her field, that “spatial patterns are the outcome of social processes” but also “spatial differentiation, patterns of uneven development themselves ... have a constitutive effect on social processes.”<sup>11</sup> Rendered in Soja’s perspective, this means that conflicting secondspatial notions are not a more or less sophisticated play of ideas but possibly due to a change in Firstspace or in the power structure of Thirdspace. Here, perceived and lived spaces are already collapsing.<sup>12</sup>

As in the book of Isaiah, Jerusalem’s spatial portrait is gendered by a female personification of the city, the feminist discourse on the relationship of bodies and cities is equally important for this paper.<sup>13</sup> For example, Barbara Hooper

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<sup>9</sup> The term was coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza instead of the feminist keyword “patriarchy.” For a detailed definition see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001), 118-122.

<sup>10</sup> Soja, *Thirdspace*, 83-125. He quotes bell hooks, Cornel West, Gillian Rose, Diana Fuss, and others.

<sup>11</sup> Linda McDowell, “Spatializing Feminism: Geographic perspective,” in *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* (ed. Nancy Duncan, London: Routledge, 1996), 29.

<sup>12</sup> See also Camp’s objection to Soja’s focus on Thirdspace as the only ‘lived’ space in Camp, “Storied Space,” 68.

<sup>13</sup> There is already abundant literature on bodily metaphors for cities and the intersection of body and city. See e.g. Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism* (London: Routledge, 1995). For a feminist review of such essays see Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 34-70. Even Henri Lefebvre uses the female body to denote his concept of neocapitalist space, see Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 355-356.

comments on this relationship with respect to the concept of the Athenian polis: “Body and city are the persistent subjects of a social/civic discourse, of an imaginary obsessed with the fear of unruly and dangerous elements and the equally obsessive desire to bring them under control.”<sup>14</sup> There is a body politic in the Hebrew Bible that parallels the Athenian model described by Hooper, namely the “practice of using the individual body as a metaphor for the social body, of deploying it as a sign of the health or disease of the social body.”<sup>15</sup>

3) By choosing the topic of Zion/Jerusalem in the Book of Isaiah I would like to explore the relationship of the city’s materiality, its inherent symbolism, and the possible experience<sup>16</sup> of its inhabitants. Although most people would think of space as a non-gendered phenomenon, feminist theory has shown that space is often defined in gendered terms. The most cited examples are the home, perceived as the women’s realm, and the industrial workplace, seen as the place of men – often against better knowledge.<sup>17</sup> When I use the term “gendered” space in this paper, I do not mean a gender-distinctive access to a certain space.<sup>18</sup> Instead, I apply the term to denote the female personification of a space.<sup>19</sup> In the book of Isaiah, Zion is featured as a place and as a woman and in most of the texts the female and spatial concepts are intertwined. The female image carries a lot of assumptions and its metaphorical value creates a multi-faceted relationship between the place, its inhabitants, and God as the perceived creator of the space’s holiness.

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<sup>14</sup> Since Barbara Hooper’s work is not yet published the quotes are from an unpublished manuscript referred to by Soja in Soja, *Thirdspace*, 114.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> This would only be an abstraction, not a clear-cut reconstruction of the ancient world. Cf. Camp, “Storied Space,” 68.

<sup>17</sup> Linda McDowell presents detailed studies on the second- and thirdspatial perspectives of the home and the workplace in her book *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 71-95 and 123-147.

<sup>18</sup> For this rendering of “gendered” space, see Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> In order to clarify my terminology, I would argue that the personification causes a gendered image, thus there might be also a male gendering of Zion which is, however, not implemented by the texts’ authors.

I would like to address two questions in this paper: First, if space is socially produced what are the implications of its conception as a social entity, and – even more complex – as a female collective? Second, when analyzing texts about Zion/Jerusalem as a place using critical spatial theory, what kind of power structure may be revealed with regard to second- and thirdspatial perspectives? Working with texts from 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.E., it might be difficult to figure out the spaces of the margins and the marginalized which Soja's definition of Thirdspace requires. To be honest, we do not know how male and female inhabitants of Jerusalem in antiquity experienced their lived space as either female or male. However, as Claudia Camp has pointed out, the texts 'create a world', "a space in which the reader as well as the characters 'live'."<sup>20</sup> Thus, we might use the texts in social-historical reconstruction.

#### Zion/Jerusalem in the book of Isaiah

In contrast to the often used redaction-critical differentiation of layers in the book of Isaiah, I would like to interpret the texts in their present shape and context using only the quite obvious distinction between Isa 1-39 and Isa 40-66 which is also supported by a distinct presentation of Zion/Jerusalem. I will focus on motifs surrounding the Zion topic and their setting within the framework of the book. In order to understand the ideology, experience, and emotions within a given text, it is equally important to evaluate its form and rhetoric. This does not mean that dating is not an issue, especially as thirdspatial perspectives are sought and Jerusalem's firstspatial materiality is certainly subject to major changes in time. However, I will only roughly comment on a possible pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic dating of a given text as a more detailed dating would require analyses that exceed the present study. My main focus is on the intersection of spatial and gendered depictions in the portrait of Zion.

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<sup>20</sup> Camp, *Storied Space*, 68.

## The coherence of the Zion topic

Texts mentioning Zion/Jerusalem mark a thread through the book of Isaiah.<sup>21</sup> A quick glance to the concordance may testify the distinctive usage of Zion/Jerusalem in the book: approximately one third of the 154 instances of the word 'Zion' in the Hebrew Bible occur in Isaiah (49 times). Of the 660 occurrences of the word 'Jerusalem', the book of Isaiah contains only 49.<sup>22</sup> But it is in this book, that Zion and Jerusalem are often named in parallelism to each other (17 times<sup>23</sup>). Given that Isaiah is the only major prophetic book to use the terms Zion and Jerusalem in equal amounts and without a difference in usage, it is justified to understand both terms as substitutes here. Besides, there are quite a number of texts addressing a single female figure (2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine singular) without directly naming her as either Zion or Jerusalem.

However, not every text mentioning either Jerusalem or Zion draws a personified and thus gendered spatiality. In order to be able to present the large number of renderings in a reader-friendly way, I will comment first on the concept of Zion/Jerusalem as a mountain, and then, on its gendered presentation as a female city. A comparison of both concepts will follow.

### Zion as a mountain

In the book of Isaiah, we count by far the most renderings of Zion described as a mountain compared to other books in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>24</sup> This motif, however, receives no extended reflection, but is only mentioned in single verses.

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<sup>21</sup> There are already several studies showing the coherence of the Zion topic in the book. See Ronald E. Clements, "Zion as Symbol and Political Reality: A Central Isaianic Quest" in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A.M. Beuken* (J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne, eds., BETL 82'; Leuven: University Press, 1997), 3-17; Ben D. Ollenburger, *Zion – The City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (JSOTSup. 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> The numbers are taken from ThWAT III, 931.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Isa 2:3; 4:3,4; 10:12,32; 24:23; 30:19; 31:9; 33:20; 37:22,32; 40:9; 41:27; 52:1,2; 62:1; 64:9.

<sup>24</sup> The term *!wyc rh* is mentioned ten times in Isaiah, four times in Psalms (Ps 48:3,12; 74:2; 78:68), and once in Joel 3:5; Obad 1:21; Mic 4:7; Lam 5:18 and 2 Kgs 19:31 par. Isa 37:32.

The closing verse of the so-called Isaian Memoir (Isa 8:18) explicitly states that YHWH himself dwells on Mount Zion.<sup>25</sup> Isa 24:23, a liturgy-like oracle about the last days of the earth, also concludes by noting that Israel's God will reign as king on this exalted place. Israel's enemies are described as waging war against the mountain (29:8), and the Assyrian king shakes his fist at it (Isa 10:32). Isa 31:4-5 announces that YHWH will come down to the mountain to fight the nations. The passage contrasts a sample of woes addressed to Israel.

In a number of salvation oracles, Mount Zion features prominently as the place of the sanctuary where Israel and the nations should bring their offerings (4:5, 16:1) or as the place where YHWH will complete his work (10:12). Lastly, Isa 37:32 announces that a remnant will go out from this exalted place.

From Isa 40 onwards, "Mount Zion" is no longer mentioned, and after Isa 55, it is replaced by the term *yvdq rh* "my holy mountain," literally "the mountain of my holiness," (56:7; 57:13; 65:11,25; 66:20)<sup>26</sup>. All of these texts visualize a bright, yet distant future: on the holy mountain of God there will be no evil or harm (65:25 cf. 11:9), and those who turn to YHWH and take refuge in him will be gathered on it (56:7) and even inherit it (57:13 cf. 65:9-12).

At first glance, there is a common theme among the texts which mention Zion as a mountain, namely that YHWH protects this place by his presence. The motif of a God dwelling on a mountain is a Canaanite pattern especially represented in Ugarit.<sup>27</sup> This mountain comprises the vertical axis of the world as we can see from the most elaborate description of YHWH's appearance in his temple in the vision of Isa 6. Here, the prophet sees YHWH on his throne overarching the temple with the train of his robe filling the

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<sup>25</sup> Isa 18:7 mentions that YHWH's name dwells on Mount Zion.

<sup>26</sup> The term is used only once in the first part of the book (Isa 11:9).

<sup>27</sup> See Friedhelm Hartenstein, *Die Unzugänglichkeit Gottes im Heiligtum: Jesaja 6 und der Wohnort JHWHs in der Jerusalemer Kulttradition* (WMANT 75; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1997), 52-54. For the Hurrian/Hittite and Ugaritic tradition of Zaphon as a mountain of divine abode see Herbert Niehr, "Zaphon" in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 927-929.

whole temple building. YHWH thus reaches heaven but is not situated in it.<sup>28</sup> Without mentioning that the sanctuary is located on a mountain, Isa 6:1 draws on this concept by naming YHWH's throne as "high and exalted" (aF'nIw> ~r' aSeKi-l[; bveyO yn"doa])).

The idea of a divine abode exalted above the earth draws on Zion's Firstspace as a hill, but at the same time exceeds it by far with secondspatial elements. Topographically Zion is not the most elevated hill in the region. Already in pre-exilic times, its significance is enhanced by an ideology borrowed from the Canaanite tradition. Thirdspatially, Israel's worship on Mount Zion produced a system of rituals and offerings as a means of communication with God thus enacting the space as a divine and sacred space. Therefore, texts as Isa 6, 8:18, and 6:16 not only reveal a Secondspace but a site of Thirdspace that draws on Firstspace.

But, there is yet another possible Thirdspace. The literary genre of some of the texts discussed so far is noteworthy in that it is mainly a salvation oracle (Isa 4:5; 10:12; 31:4; 37:32; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11,25; 66:20). The rhetoric of these glorious visions reveals what is probably lacking at the time of their production: the nations are subdued and eager to send offerings to YHWH's temple mount, YHWH's people inherit this space and no evil can access it. As a lived space, the holy mountain is probably in a precarious state. This might be one of the reasons for the shift of perspective within the book. In Isa 1-39, Mount Zion is mentioned as a divine realm by the prophet; from Isa 40 onwards it is YHWH himself who claims the mountain as his dwelling-place and here, the idea of holiness is explicitly mentioned. Thus, in the narrative structure of the book, YHWH is introduced as a protagonist in the text to strengthen the traditional secondspatial perspective of Zion as a sacred space. Does this represent a thirdspatial view in Soja's

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<sup>28</sup> See Hartenstein, *ibid.* This concept is probably pre-exilic and also attested in the Zion songs Ps 46 and 48. After the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the so-called Deuteronomists situated the residence of YHWH in heaven; cf. the redaction of 1 Kgs 8:12-13 in 1 Kgs 8:27.30. Post-exilic texts also think of YHWH's throne being in heaven (cf. Ps 33:13-19; 102:20; 103:19-22; 113; Isa 63:15; 66:1-2). Cf. the detailed analysis of Beate Ego, "Der Herr blickt herab von der Höhe seines Heiligtums": Zur Vorstellung von Gottes himmlischen Thronen in exilisch-nachexilischer Zeit," *ZAW* 110 (1998): 556-569.

sense, a voice from the margin, an effort of a small group of YHWH-worshippers to live with a house of prayer on Zion whose importance has not been acknowledged by the nations? I will come back to this question after discussing the notion of Jerusalem as a gendered space.

#### Zion as a female city

The female personification of Jerusalem stems from a West-Semitic tradition depicting a city as female both grammatically and symbolically.<sup>29</sup> It is attested by the use of female verbal forms and suffixes as well as female titles **tb** ‘daughter’ und **hlwtb** ‘marriageable woman.’<sup>30</sup> Whereas Mark E. Biddle speaks of a “deification”<sup>31</sup> of these entitled cities, I assume that titles alone are not sufficient for claiming a divine status of the city, especially as the title **tb** for a city is not attested apart from biblical texts.<sup>32</sup>

The concept of Zion as a female figure provides a gendered space by depicting the relationship of the city and its inhabitants as female roles: in relation to its ruler Jerusalem would be possessed like a woman; in relation to its inhabitants she would provide shelter and food like a mother for her children; and in relation to God, the title “daughter” would imply her need for protection. A distinctive characteristic of an Israelite city compared to a village is the city wall designed as a protection against enemies. Each city in the Levant normally has its ‘hinterland,’ an agricultural area which provides its food and sells it on the city’s markets. A city is by definition a walled space occupied by palaces, temple, storage and other public buildings, and residences for court

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Christl Maier, “Die Klage der Tochter Zion: Ein Beitrag zur Weiblichkeitsmetaphorik im Jeremiabuch,” *BTZ* 15 (1998): 176-189.

<sup>30</sup> For a fuller discussion see A. Fitzgerald, “The Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the Old Testament,” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 403-416; “BTWLT and BT as Titles for Capital Cities,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 167-183. An overview of the titles in the Hebrew Bible is provided by Marc Wischnowsky, *Tochter Zion: Aufnahme und Überwindung der Stadtklage in den Prophetenschriften des Alten Testaments* (WMANT 89; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 2001), 15-18.

<sup>31</sup> Mark E. Biddle, “The Figure of Lady Jerusalem: Identification, Deification and Personification of Cities in the Ancient Near East,” in *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective* (ed K.L. Younger et al.; Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen, 1991), 173-194, esp. 181.

<sup>32</sup> For a parallel depiction of Athens as daughter of a God (without using titles) cf. Elaine R. Follis, “The Holy City as Daughter,” in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (ed. Elaine R. Follis; JSOTSup 40; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 173-184, esp. 182-183.

and temple personnel, merchants, craftsmen, and others, namely, a space of people with different origins and professions.<sup>33</sup> Thus, living with shelter and food – a city as a lived space and the mere materiality of it – probably influenced the secondspatial traits of the female personification as a mother whereas the religious concept of a city depending on its male city-God to protect her against enemies led to Zion’s title “daughter” and her depiction as a bride dependant on her male counterpart. Given the range of female roles in a woman’s life, the female concept of space likewise offers a variety of traits. Within these relationships, Second- and Thirdspace cannot easily be distinguished as the gendered image may be the result of living experience as well as of ideology.

*a) Isaiah 1-2 as an introduction to the topic of female Zion*

The opening chapters of the book of Isaiah immediately present the female image of Zion.<sup>34</sup> In the book’s title, Jerusalem is mentioned after Judah as an addressee of Isaiah’s words. In the first chapter she figures twice in a female role. Isa 1:7-8 describes the result of a hostile military attack: the country lies desolate and the Judean cities are burned with fire. Daughter Zion is left alone in a tenuous condition. She is called “a booth in the vineyard” and “a shelter in a cucumber field.” Both are tiny and ephemeral places designed to offer a short-time shelter but not protection for military assault. They underline what the title “daughter” refers to in a sociological sense, namely that Zion needs protection and cannot shelter her inhabitants.

Whereas 1:8 views the city from an outside perspective, 1:21-23 denotes her inner situation. The once faithful city is called a whore and associated with a milieu of darkness and crime: the place where justice once lodged is now where murderers live, where

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Cityscape to Landscape: The ‘Back to Nature’ Theme in Isaiah 1-35,” in *Every City shall be Forsaken’: Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak; JSOTSup 330; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 35-44, esp. 37-38. However, I do not consent in Blenkinsopp’s depiction of the city as a mere consumer city which exploits its countryside.

<sup>34</sup> This paper is greatly indebted to a study by Ulrich Berges focusing on the centrality of Zion’s personification in the book of Isaiah, “Personifications and Prophetic Voices of Zion in Isaiah and Beyond,” in *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist* (ed. Johannes C. de Moor; OTS 45; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 54-82. However, Berges does not discuss the spatial concepts inherent in the gendered image.

bribery is an all-day experience, and where the marginalized – widows and orphans – are further neglected. The deterioration of society leading to the decline of a place is a phenomenon of urban areas. In the biblical text this causality is reversed. The text focuses on the city and accuses her for their wrongdoings of her inhabitants. The personification of the place makes possible the accusation of collective blame while allowing for further differentiation within the collective. Rhetorically, the mother is insulted for the evils done by her children. According to the dominant voice of God mediated through the prophet, the city is held responsible (1:22) for the wrongdoings of her leaders and high society, but she is left without a voice to defend herself. Her sentence is described as a purification process, a smelting of dross, and a heavy washing with lye (1:25). These motifs perceive a harsh treatment of the city but they assume that the impurity may be washed away and that there is a remnant, a sort of kernel not afflicted with evil that may be restored to its former justice.

The image of Jerusalem as a loose woman in Isa 1:21-23 functions as a window to the social criticism of the following chapters (cf. 5:11-30, 10:1-11). But in Isa 2:1-5 this negative image is contrasted with a total reversal of things in a salvation oracle which names the sacred place “the mountain of God” and “Zion” and thus renders it un-gendered. The oracle depicts YHWH’s sanctuary as a mountain, where Torah and instruction emerge like waters from a living well. Zion may become the eschatological Sinai, the mountain of God’s law from which he will send his peace to the whole world. A deeper contrast than that between Isa 1:8,21-23 and 2:1-5 is not easily imaginable, and we readers are left with these competing spatialities. What can we make of this?

A common approach is to separate the texts by ascribing them to different sources and to understand Isa 1:8 as a reflection of the Assyrian military attack on Judah,<sup>35</sup> Isa 1:21-23 as a summary of the prophet’s social critique,<sup>36</sup> and Isa 2:1-5 as a post-exilic

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. J.A. Emerton, “The Historical Background of Isaiah 1:4-9,” *Eretz Israel* 24 (1993): 34-40.

<sup>36</sup> Isa 1:21-26 is often seen as an authentic passage which was put into its context by exilic redactors. Cf. Ulrich Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja. Komposition und Endgestalt* (HBS 16; Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 68-70; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39* (Anchor Bible; Doubleday: New York, 2000), 185-187.

insertion.<sup>37</sup> Informed by Soja's theory we may see them as renderings of a different materiality of space which effect different secondspatial concepts. We know that Jerusalem's Firstspace was subject to destruction and re-construction in the course of history.

But could the different texts also be perceived as representations of different Thirdspaces, i.e. as different experiences of lived space? In a time of social and political pressure, the lament of Isa 1:8 may express the sigh of a community who is rescued from destruction in the very last moment.<sup>38</sup> Putting the blame on the city as a female body (Isa 1:21-23) may express a warning and argue for a reversed way of living. And the positive image of Jerusalem as center of the universe may be the constructive counterpart to this rather negative image of Jerusalem (Isa 2:1-5). However, it seems difficult to relate the negative and the positive statements to the same prophet or even the same group. It is more convincing to assume that the vision of the future in Isa 2:1-5 indicates a change in Firstspace and presupposes the destruction of the city and probably its poor restoration. But does it represent a thirdspatial view in Soja's definition such as Isa 1:8 and 1:21-23? With reference to the question of power and ideology, the vision of a glorious future of Mount Zion seems to be pure ideology, an attempt to re-establish its pre-exilic secondspatial conception and thus, a wishful thinking by the leading groups in post-exilic Jerusalem who imagine their city as the starting point of a world-wide peace thus giving it an importance it never had. But assuming a production of the text within the context of Persian Period Judah, we may also see it as a voice from the margins, a thirdspatial view of Judeans who live in a city that has lost its former reputation and who face a Persian occupation. Hoping for a re-installment of the Torah, i.e. the justice of Israel's God, they call: "let us walk in the light of YHWH" (Isa 2:5), thus proposing an alternative way of living. With these contradictory assumptions the borders between Second- and Thirdspace become blurred as well as the definition of the periphery or margin.

*b) Female Zion in Isaiah 1-39.*

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 72-76.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the citation in Isa 1:9.

Since Isa 1-2 function as an introduction into the topics of Isa 1-39, I will briefly comment on the other representations of Zion, and in order to gain the whole picture, will also mention the texts which use the mountain image.

Following Isa 2:1-5 the next mention of Zion occurs in Isa 3:16-4:1. After insulting the daughters of Zion as idle and haughty women fond of adorning themselves with jewellery of all kind, the prophet's voice announces an opposite situation, sackcloth instead of adorning, shame instead of beauty. So far the text would not count to the list of Zion texts. But in vv.25-26 there is a sudden turn to a feminine singular addressee, obviously Zion herself as a female. The text announces the death of her men and warriors while Zion sits ravaged and her gates mourn. The text then presents a picture of the city's women who will fall short of husbands and thus offspring (4:1). In this passage, the portraits of Zion's women and Zion as a woman are intertwined and the city stripped of men represents the fate of its female inhabitants. Again, as in Isa 1:8 the situation after a military assault is embodied by a female role, this time the role of a mourning widow. This desolate situation is once again contrasted with an oracle of salvation in Isa 4:2-6 that speaks of a remnant in Zion and of a restoration of the space by God whose presence in the form of a cloud by day and a flame by night will shelter the mountain. The shift from a feminine space to a non-gendered mountain site is even more explicit than in Isa 1-2: God's action is seen as cleaning and purging by fire (v.4) the filth of the daughters of Zion and the bloodstains of Jerusalem. The result of that process is a space of glory but void of female embodiment.

Although Mount Zion is a non-gendered spatial model, the next rendering in Isa 10:32 combines space and gender speaking of the "mountain of the daughter Zion" (**rh !wyc-tb**).<sup>39</sup> It is of no wonder that this could happen as the text describes the Assyrian campaign against the Judean cities. As in Isa 1:8, Jerusalem is left intact but shattered by fear. The event is named as the shaking of the Assyrian ruler's fist against the mountain.

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<sup>39</sup> So with the Qere that is supported by the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriaca as well as the 1QIs<sup>a</sup>. The Ketib reads **tyb** "house."

The title “daughter Zion” once again implies the unsheltered and unsafe position of the city.

In contrast, the song in Isa 12:1-6 renders the thanksgiving of the rescued community to its glorious God. Here, Zion as a female is directly addressed and called to worship the holy God in her midst. The same restored state is visualized in Isa 16:1 calling an unnamed audience to send animal offerings to the mountain of daughter Zion.<sup>40</sup>

Although Jerusalem’s name is not mentioned in Isa 22:1-14, the female personification of the space is obvious. Quite similar to Isa 1:21-23 but in more detail, the oracle renders the city as noisy, tumultuous, without rulers, feasting, and denying to seek her God in mourning although the enemy is near. Although the city here is not depicted as a whore, her inner status is similar to the description in 1:22-23. What the city lacks in this announcement of judgement is begged for in the prayer of Isa 33:5-6, namely that God might fill Zion with justice and righteousness. Here, we find the hope of a people menaced by war and deportation: that God might be Zion’s saviour and restore the once righteous city (cf. 1:21). It is this ideological outlook that differentiates the portrait of Zion from other prophetic books. Ulrich Berges has shown that at the very point of the drama where one expects the burning of the city to take place, one reads about the destruction of Edom as a symbol of all hostile forces (Isa 34) announced as a day of vengeance by Zion’s cause (Isa 34:8) and about the salvation of Zion (Isa 35:10).<sup>41</sup>

In this vein, the last notion of Zion in Isa 1-39 may be called a climax. Within the narrative of Hezekiah’s struggle with the Assyrian army (chs. 36-39) a word of the prophet Isaiah against the Assyrian ruler is delivered. It depicts Daughter Zion as a proud and powerful young woman who despises and scorns her enemy. Naming her a *betulah* (**hlwtb**) refers to her status as a marriageable woman. In the moment of utmost threat while the enemy stands at her gates, she is presented as boasting in pride knowing that God will not forsake but rescue her. Thus, the overall message of Isa 1-39 is that God may well punish his bride but will never let her be utterly destroyed by others. There is

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<sup>40</sup> The whole setting of the oracle in Isa 16:1ff. is not clear and the dating thus controversial. George B. Gray, *The Book of Isaiah I-XXVII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 276-278 offers a range of possible dating.

<sup>41</sup> See Berges, “Personifications,” 63.

but one condition for this protection, namely that the inhabitants of the city submit to God's will and worship him only - as does their male representative, the pious king Hezekiah, in Isa 37:14-20.<sup>42</sup>

In sum, the portrait of Jerusalem as a female city in Isa 1-39 is very different from the one offered in the books of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Lamentations, where Jerusalem's destruction is described and evaluated as a divine punishment. The sharp contrast of punishment and restoration in subsequent texts within Isa 1-39 is based on the concept of washing away her stains and smelting out her dross (1:22-23). These metaphors implicate that the woman is unclean and polluted, in need of purification.

Here, the question arises as to what the function of the place's feminization might be. What message do the gendered images provide which could not be expressed by the image of the mountain as sacred place? And what implications does the re-establishment of the mountain image in the oracles of salvation carry?

In surveying narratives about cities like Paris, New York, and Los Angeles, Art Historian Sue Best notifies that there is "a persistent desire to domesticate space, to bring it within a human horizon and, most importantly, to 'contain' it within this horizon."<sup>43</sup> Citing Mary Douglas who noted a parallel use of the body as model, Best concludes:

"Thus feminizing space seems to suggest, on the one hand, the production of a safe, familiar, clearly defined entity, which, because it is female, should be appropriately docile or able to be dominated. But, on the other hand, this very same production also underscores an anxiety about this 'entity' and the precariousness of its boundedness."<sup>44</sup>

Important for my topic is Best's notion that a feminization of space does not only aim at a domestication of space using the female body as a container for meaning. The female body also gives meaning to the space and produces space as an entity to be shared by men and women. From this perspective, the use of title "daughter" and the image of the city as a shaky shelter embody social insecurity and a threatened status. It is a

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<sup>42</sup> The idea of a remnant coming forth of Jerusalem is once again presented in Isa 37:32.

<sup>43</sup> Sue Best, "Sexualizing Space," in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism* (ed. Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn; London: Routledge, 1995), 183.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

secondspatial view informed by Thirdspace. In contrast to this, the metaphor of the whore or the tumultuous city is set out rhetorically as a competing secondspatial view that uses the female image to denounce the city's leading groups. Both feminizations of space may stem from the same Firstspace but different Thirdspaces. One group of people is worried about Jerusalem facing many enemies, while one is troubled by the city's corruption in late pre-exilic times. Both representations of the city space contradict the secondspatial view that Zion is the holy mountain of God and his safe dwelling-place presented in Isaiah as well as in the Zion songs in Ps 46 and 48.<sup>45</sup>

But are the feminine images according to Soja's definition of Thirdspace a "rethinking of new possibilities out of the perspective of the peripheries?" In my opinion, there are different answers with regard to different levels of reference. If we try to perceive the current discourse in Jerusalem at the prophet's time, the texts with female personifications contradict the common secondspatial view that Zion is protected by its God. We may then call the prophet's announcements or warnings a voice from the margin, a voice that argues for a different perception of the city. But, in the narrative as a whole, the prophet's view is presented as the dominant voice of the book of Isaiah and is legitimized by reference to God, i.e. a secondspatial ideology. This voice is not marginal at all. Furthermore, the development of thought in the book starts from the images of shaky shelter and whore and leads to Zion's presentation as boasting before her enemies in Isa 37. The latter seems to be the mainstream position of the late pre-exilic establishment and here, Isaiah supports the king Hezekiah after his humble prayer to YHWH. Thus, Isa 37 presumes that the prophet's former warning was heard and followed by Jerusalem's elite, and that Isaiah could pronounce a message of salvation in the event of the Assyrian campaign against Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, although the feminization of the space seems to present an alternative of lived space, it cannot be counted as a voice of marginal people or of a so far suppressed female experience. Or, to shift the argument around, Soja's effort to define Thirdspace as a political alternative to Secondspace seems not to be applicable to those biblical texts.

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<sup>45</sup> For the pre-exilic Zion tradition cf. Ollenburger, *Zion*, 66-80.

<sup>46</sup> Compare this to the book of Jeremiah which presents the prophet fighting somewhat hopelessly against this common assumption that Jerusalem is safe.

*c) The multiple roles of Zion in Isa 40-66.*

The second part of the Book of Isaiah shows an even stronger portrait of Zion as a female city with many texts addressing her directly. There is a striking incoherence between the image of fearless daughter Zion in Isa 37 and the following texts which announce that she will be comforted, brought up from the dust, reconstructed and re-established in her status as a queen. Although the exilic disaster clearly stands in the background of Isa 40-55, the destruction of the city is again not explicitly mentioned. However, in the process of restoration her femaleness plays an even more important role.

The opening convocation in Isa 40:1-2 aims at comforting Jerusalem and argues that the end of her punishment has come. She is asked to lift up her voice again and to proclaim her God's return and gathering of the dispersed people (40:9-11).

According to Isa 45:13, God commanded the Persian king Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and to let the exiles go free. The following passage in Isa 45:14-17 addresses the personified city and proclaims that the wealth of other countries will be brought to her. Isa 46:13 assures Zion that she will be rescued by her God. This verse highlights the central goal of God's actions and marks the center of chapters 46-47 which announce the fall of Babylon. Babylon is also personified and her dethronement and degradation directly correspond to Zion's elevation.<sup>47</sup>

Isa 49:14-50:3 presents Zion in a state of fear crying "YHWH has forsaken me, my lord has forgotten me," thus as a person not convinced by the message of salvation. Here, Zion is given a voice of her own and God portrayed as her begging husband who tries to regain her affection by arguing. The female figure still personifies the city, a spatial

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<sup>47</sup> See the correspondence of language and motifs in Isa 47 and Isa 54. Cf. Mark E. Biddle, "Lady Zion's alter Egos: Isaiah 47.1-15 and 57.6-13 as Structural Counterparts," in *New Visions of Isaiah* (ed. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney; JSOTSup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 124-139.

concept, as in 49:19 her ruins and desolated places are named in order to contrast her future overcrowding.

The city is also depicted as a mother who wonders how she could rear children, being bereaved and barren (49:20-21). Whereas the mother image is totally lacking in Isa 1-39, it is often used in the second part of the book (49:20-23, 50:1, 51:20, 54:1-3) denoting an even closer relationship between the city and her inhabitants. In parallel with the mother role, the city's relationship to God is portrayed with a marriage metaphor in Isa 54:5-8. Isa 62:4-5 speaks of God's rejoicing over her as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. A more implicit allusion to the idea of marriage is given in Isa 52:1-2. Zion is called here to stand up from the dust and clothe herself beautifully, implying that she should take over the position as queen. Thus, God and Jerusalem are a couple again (65:5), and his abandonment of her is explained as a short time of wrath (54:7-8).

However, it is noteworthy that no direct link is made between the mother and the spouse metaphor as if to avoid the connotation of sexual intercourse between the female city and God. Zion's children are not newly born but brought back to her (Isa 49:22). Only in Isa 66:7-9 does Zion give birth, but it is a birth without labour and God is not spoken of as the father but as the master of the womb able to open it at his own will.

The announcement in Isa 52:1 that the uncircumcised and the unclean shall not enter the city any longer implies that the space has been ritually defiled by an intrusion of strangers. The salvation oracle in Isa 54:11-12 foresees that God will re-establish the city out of the dust and rebuild it in precious stone. The presence of God – a secondspatial element – brings holiness back to the place. This idea is underlined by two verses in the last oracle in Isa 66 which announces a time of salvation in a distant future. The wealth of the foreign peoples will be brought to Jerusalem (66:12) and the dispersed Israelites will be brought back to God's holy mountain like offerings (66:20). Thus, in the closing vision of the book, the mountain image denoting the place of God's dwelling and sanctuary is re-established, thus corresponding to the vision of Isa 2:1-5.

The setting of all the scenes within Isa 40-66 indicates that Jerusalem did not move. The female city figures as a place once enlivened, at present abandoned and deserted, but at last inhabited again. The texts in Isa 40-66 which elaborate Zion's female image most

thoroughly (Isa 40:1-2, 49:14-50:3, 52:1-10, 54:1-17, and 62:1-12) reflect her deprived Firstspace and announce a shining future that is directly opposed to the authors' current situation. Where is Thirdspace here? Is it perceptible in the attempt to feminize the place and load it with feelings and positive emotions? Is this an alternative way of living with and in a destroyed city? Is it a perspective of marginalized people? If we accept the common thesis that at least Isa 40-55 were written in the Babylonian exile, we would rank this group as part of the former elite of Jerusalem. The poorer and less-trained people were not exiled (see Jer 39:10) and thus may have still lived in the vicinity of the city or even in its ruins. However, in their current position in Babylon, the authors of Isa 40-55 are probably marginalized. If Jerusalem is the focus of interest, they speak definitely from the margin. However, what do the margins mean, if the center is lost?

Thus, the mother and queen/spouse metaphors are powerful secondspatial ideologies that count on past experience, but are to some extent 'broken' by the experience of the loss of Firstspace. As in Isa 1-39, the feminization of the place in the second part of the book does not use the female images as a container for meaning but adds significant traits of female experience to the space. The elaborated personification of Zion brings emotion and sociality to the spatial concept. It aims at visualizing a triangle of relationship between the place, its inhabitants and God. Zion represents the relationship between her inhabitants and God in the image of a beloved woman punished because of her wrongdoings and then chosen to be queen again. Zion also represents the space God will provide for his people in the future, a motherly space full of shelter and food. Compared to other prophetic books, this is an alternative way of defining the relationship between Israel and its God. It is a representation of Zion which could not yet be 'lived,' but which furthered the reconstruction of the city out of the ruins, a new Firstspace, and thus expresses a countervoice to the exilic laments. Again, we see that texts are more than Secondspace.

#### The trialectic spatiality of Zion

It is time for a preliminary conclusion and more questions based on my reading of the Zion thread throughout the book of Isaiah. The concept of Zion as a space that has a social life and figures as a social collective at the same time challenges Soja's preference for and definition of Thirdspace. It also shows that 'lived' space is at least ambivalent if not multi-vocal, and that the center-periphery terminology for spatiality is more confusing than helpful. In late pre-exilic times, the feminization of this place may have been a thirdspatial view that visualized its firstspatial reality and challenged the current secondspatial ideology. Since it has been further elaborated as the dominant tradition in the book of Isaiah representing a powerful group within the post-exilic community, it cannot, however, be called a marginalized voice. Moreover, the power structures inherent in the texts do not support a second- and thirdspatial distinction but run through both perspectives of space. From a feminist point of view, the female gendering of the city may be positively evaluated as a representation of women's life which not simply uses the female imagery as a container of meaning. But does it pronounce an independent or authentic experience of women and thus represent the voice of the marginalized part of society? The fact that female Zion is subject in all of the texts to male governance or control and is given her own voice only randomly, speaks against this conclusion. If female Zion should be considered as an alternative to the pre-exilic concept of God's dwelling on a mountain, why is this metaphor re-established in the salvation oracles contrasting the laments and oracles of doom and in the end of the book? Finally, female Zion seems to be replaced by a divine throne in heaven (Isa 66:1-2) revealing that at least the editors of the book of Isaiah did not rely on the female image as a representation of a lived space.