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**Kelle, Brad E.**

***Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective***

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Kelle's work is a distillation of his dissertation taken at Emory University under the mentorship of John H. Hayes. At issue in *Hosea 2* is the idea of metaphor and the rhetoric used to employ the varied motifs. The author is concerned with understanding how Hosea employs the major metaphors (e.g., marriage, wife/mother, fornication, adultery, lovers, and Baals). This work appears in a series that has consistently given scholarship excellent works that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. Currently there have been twenty-two works published in the Academia Biblica series under the capable editorial assistance of Steven McKenzie and Sharon Ringe.

The author opens his work with a broad introduction, then divides the bulk of his research into two major categories: "the metaphors of Hosea 2," and "the rhetoric of Hosea 2." The work closes with a helpful section on summary, implications, and conclusions. In the introduction Kelle structures his thesis based upon the guild's unsatisfactory resolution of the passage's literary, rhetorical, and historical elements. He argues that the "rhetorical-historical situation(s) that gave rise to the text; the extent of the rhetorical unit(s) in Hosea 2; the basic form(s) presupposed by and reflected in the text; and the meaning and background of the chapter's major metaphors" all call for a further examination of the text (2). A brief overview of the major issues in the history of interpretation is presented,

along with “possible rhetorical-historical situations, rhetorical units/compositions, and form and image base.” The strongest impetus for Kelle seems to be the major metaphors present in Hos 2. He notes that generally scholars identify the referents of metaphors such as wife/mother (generally with Israel), lovers (with Baal), fornication, and adultery (with religious apostasy and syncretism, respectively). At the end of the introduction Kelle states his new proposal for the study of Hos 2. I found the author’s proposal to be carefully crafted and well researched. His arguments of an integrated absence of “the rhetorical situation and image-base” are refreshing for a newer reading of Hosea.

A dispassionate overview of rhetoric is presented in the second chapter. Kelle begins with an exposition on “classical rhetoric,” which emerged in the fifth century B.C.E. through the works of Plato and Aristotle. The primary exposition is, of course, taken from Aristotle. It is from neo-Aristotelian criticism that forensic, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric developed. Likewise, Kelle notes that the analytical categories of invention, disposition, and elocution flow from a neo-Aristotelian mindset. More important, it is the effects of these new(er) rhetorical strategies and their effects of discourse on the immediate audience that interests Kelle (23). Within biblical studies, rhetorical persuasion is not new. Scholarship has embraced rhetorical criticism for quite some time (e.g., Muilenburg’s application of rhetorical theory to biblical studies). Kelle simply seeks to offer a deep reading of Hos 2 utilizing the pragmatic goals in specific rhetorical situations. Kelle briefly introduces “metaphor in theory and practice” in order to lay the classical groundwork for his thesis. Likewise, he further educates readers by commenting on both “metaphor theory and biblical studies as well as metaphor theory and Hosea 2.” After an exhaustive investigation into metaphor theory, he concludes that metaphors are not simply linguistic devices but rather operate as rhetorical weapons in certain instances (42). Kelle contends that in order fully to understand a metaphor one must be cognizant of the broader historical construct (both Israelite and ancient Near Eastern). In this fashion the speaker’s semantic and cultural context must be elucidated fully for the reader.

Metaphors of marriage and divorce are the overarching themes that Kelle investigates in the third chapter. Four major sources are adduced for the source of the marriage imagery: the “marriage imagery comes from the prophet’s personal, marital experience, the metaphor relies on and reacts against a Baal fertility cult in the eighth-century Israel, the language emerges from the preexisting idea of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel, and the imagery comes from the language of curses in the ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties” (49–50). Kelle surveys and then dismisses the more popular possibilities for the marriage imagery. Rather, he postulates, “Hosea, it is concluded, derived both the general idea of a marriage metaphor and the specific imagery therein from the relationship between suzerains and vassals attested in these treaties” (51). Kelle adroitly surveys the legal rationale for divorce within the context of sexual and physical violence and rightly

concludes that a majority of sexual and physical violence imagery found in Hos 2 is not within the context of the marriage metaphor. He concludes this chapter by arguing that such imagery must be sought in other venues.

The twin concepts of זנה “fornication” and נאף “adultery” are adduced as metaphors for the wife/mother city in the fourth chapter. It is here that Kelle brings his scholarship to bear on the perplexing problem of Hos 2. He first notes and rejects the consensus view, namely, that the “wife” is the people of Israel. Likewise, he surveys and rejects the “wife” as the land, Rachel, and Asherah. Drawing on Fitzgerald and Schmitt, he contends that the “wife” in Hos 2 is none other than the capital city of Samaria. Kelle strengthens his contention by an appeal to a wide range of comparative metaphorical traditions. He concludes, “The personification of cities as females within the prophetic text appears exclusively within contexts of imminent, threatened, or present destruction. In these contexts, the texts evidenced a tradition of using language of sexual and physical violence against a woman (stripping, exposure, etc) to describe metaphorically the destruction of a personified city” (93). Likewise, Kelle argues that Samaria’s foreign alliances further added to the images of both fornication and adultery. It is due to these negative political actions on behalf of Samaria that Hosea deemed them contrary to Yahweh’s will and harmful to the people.

In the fifth chapter the twin concepts of אהב “lovers” and בעל “Baal(s)” are examined in their respective social settings. Kelle first surveys and then rejects the consensus view of “lovers” representing “other gods.” Rather, he argues that the “lovers” of Hos 2 represent political alliances outside the will of Yahweh. The author notes, “the primary issue for this metaphor (e.g. lover) in Hos 2 is not whether the term can carry a political meaning, since nearly all commentators agree that it can, but whether that meaning is more probable for this text. In this regard, a number of factors combine to suggest that the political sense of ‘lovers’ as inappropriate allies may indeed be the primary meaning of the metaphor in Hosea’s oracle” (119). Similarly, he contends that בעל does not represent the Canaanite fertility deity but rather is a representation of a political ally or overlord. Although Kelle gives an exhaustive account of his reading בעל as an overlord, I, like van der Toorn, am still unconvinced of this position.

Within the sixth chapter, evidence adduced in the first five chapters is integrated into a rhetorical reading of Hos 2. Here Kelle first examines the broader issues of the rhetorical unit, the rhetorical horizon, and the rhetorical-historical situation. He takes nine pages of text to argue forcefully for a unified reading of Hos 2:1–15, concluding, “while a reader may divide Hos 2 into various subparts for the sake of analysis, there does not appear to be sufficient reason for viewing these parts as originally separate rhetorical units” (178). Kelle refreshingly postulates that there is no compelling reason to deny Hos 2 as having

been composed by the eighth-century prophet Hosea. In this vein, Kelle adduces four principal rhetorical horizons for Hos 2. Not surprisingly, Kelle argues that the text reveals a time of inner-Israelite conflict, a joint action undertaken by both Israelites and Judeans, a focus on the capital city Samaria and its improper political actions, and a relationship with political allies and apolitical overlord (199–200). If the rhetorical horizon that Kelle identifies is correct, then the most likely time frame for the events described would be during the Syro-Ephraimitic war during the mid-700s B.C.E.

Quite possibly the most interesting chapters in the entire work are chapters 7 and 8. Here Kelle undertakes an in-depth examination of Hos 2 via the traditional methodology (e.g., translation of the Hebrew text; identification of speech and rhetorical situations). Kelle concludes that Hos 2:1–3 functions as a type of overture to the extended metaphorical discourse found in 2:4–25. In essence, verses 1–3 provide a general overview of the events and the prophet’s understanding of their theological implications (227). The eighth chapter is an exposition on the divine speech found in Hos 2:4–25. This chapter is a continuation of Kelle’s labor in the previous chapter. Here he argues that “Hosea relies on the form, process, and property arrangements of ancient Near Eastern divorce texts to depict the possible actions available to Yahweh, the wronged husband” (283). Political alliances are depicted by Hosea as akin to adultery; the city’s overlords are known as “lovers” and “paramours” who attempt to lure Yahweh’s wife away. The import of these metaphors is one easily explained by Kelle. He argues that “metaphors function to change existing conceptions of reality and replace them with new ones. In the situation of Israel and Judah at the close of the Syro-Ephraimitic War, it was precisely the present conceptions of political and social realities that were under negotiation and that the prophet sought to recast” (284). Hosea 2, for Kelle, is both a theological and a metaphorical commentary on the politics of Israel and Judah during the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic War.

Bibliographically, Kelle’s work is rich and well researched—as one would expect from a published dissertation. It is refreshing to find that Kelle’s materials are quite recent for a 2005 publication. Helpfully, he also includes an index of ancient sources for materials such as classical sources (e.g., Strabo, Tacitus, Aristotle), Mishnah, Talmud, Qumran materials, *KTU*, Nuzi, and other types of related literature. The typical indices of authors and scripture are also included. I found Kelle’s work to be thoroughly researched, impeccably well written, and infused with erudite logic. His close reading of Hos 2 is to be commended. The level at which Kelle writes is such that the book could be recommended only for graduate students in Hebrew Bible or ancient Near Eastern studies. Nonetheless, were I teaching a class on Hosea or the Twelve, I would not hesitate to require Kelle’s work for the seminar.