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The Lofty and the Low

Orienting toward Metaphor in the Composition of Isa 2:6–22

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Abstract

This article bridges composition-critical methods with Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to reconsider the composition-history of Isaiah 2:6–22, a passage regarded as fragmentary and reflective of redactional clutter. It suggests that attention to the UP/DOWN metaphor helps us detect the boundaries (vv. 10, 17) of the old poem (vv. 12–16*) long-regarded to be at the center. This poem reflects the metaphor PRIDE IS HEIGHT; humans should go DOWN because only Yahweh is UP. An idolatry layer surrounds the work; here idol use is associated with a negative sense of DOWN. It is integrated into its context via refrains that echo vv. 10 and 17 (vv. 9, 11, 19, 21). Verse 11 bridges the metaphors between these layers as it paints idol use as UP (haughty). The haughtiness of idolatry in the secondary layer becomes the new target domain of the first. This article suggests the potential use of CMT in composition-critical approaches.

Keywords: Composition criticism, Isaiah redaction, metaphor, idolatry, day of Yahweh, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Over 100 years ago, Duhm assessed Isa 2:5–22 most negatively: “Dies Stück ist das schlechtest erhaltene des ganzen Buches.”¹ His statement has resonated throughout scholarship. The passage

¹ Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 17. For the sake of space, I will not be considering v. 22 in this article. It is arguably much later than any of the other additions, as suggested by Sweeney (*Isaiah 1–4*, 175). I will also not be including v. 5 because it is an editorial line designed to link vv. 2–4 with vv. 6–22 via *Stichwort*. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 191.

does have anomalous features and a complex layer of secondary additions. To some degree, commentators cannot find a poetic logic to these additions, and instead have labelled them as debris,² mistakes (perhaps unintentional) or fragments,³ poorly thought out,⁴ and absurd.⁵ Their statements reflect, in the words of Raz, the “attempt to retrieve an authentic prophetic kernel from ... the obscurations of scribal mistakes and glosses.”⁶ This approach to the composition history of Isa 2:6–22 is still very much at the heart of the scholarship.

² Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 1–39*, 194) begins his analysis, “Picking our way through the editorial debris that has gradually accumulated in this passage....”

³ Wildberger (*Isaiah 1–12*, 103) states that v. 10 was “*mistakenly* inserted into the text at this point,” v. 11 is a “variant reading for v. 17, which, *intentionally or unintentionally*, has been placed in the text here also,” and that “with v. 19, we are once again dealing with a fragment” (emphasis mine). He claims that v. 19 is one of the four original “fragments” that “have been woven together” (the others are v. 6, 7–9a, and 12–17). Clements (*Isaiah 1–39*, 45) labels v 13aβ “a mistaken repetition.”

⁴ Berges, (*Book of Isaiah*, 65) describes v. 22: “In contrast [to vv. 6–21], the closing verse appears to be well thought out,” suggesting that what precedes it is not.

⁵ Beuken (*Jesaja 1–12*, 101) describes v. 10 as a “Warnung *per absurdum*” since one cannot hide from a theophany. The alleged absurdity of the verse, however, is problematic because similar imagery appears in Ugaritic material relating to the appearance of Baal, suggesting the theme of hiding (in v. 10) belongs within classical Storm God theophanies. For example, *KTU* 1.4 VII:35–37 reflects the attempt to hide in natural shelters from the Storm God theophany: “The enemies of Baal took to the woods/the haters of Hadd to the mountainsides.” Translation taken from Smith and Pitard, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2:84. See also Cathcart, “Kingship,” 54–56; Kemp, *Forgetting to Remember*, 84 n. 37; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 46–48.

⁶ Raz, “Jeremiah before the Womb,” 86.

Even scholars who eschew a composition-critical approach for Isa 2 echo these same sentiments.⁷ Lynch, for example, concedes that the text “likely underwent a complex redactional process,” but argues that “attempts to read 2:6–22 in terms of a carefully crafted literary structure are often forced and ultimately unpersuasive.” Rather, following Childs, Lynch sets aside the compositional arguments, which have been “pale and insipid,” and instead attends to the poetics that produce a “rough, awesome terror.”⁸ Lynch’s analysis of the poetry is impressive, but his metaphor for the composition history produces tension with his aims. He states that “the poetic fragments in 2:6–22 coalesce around two primary portions of text,” and that the fragments “cling” to the primary units “like iron filings to a magnet.”⁹ He essentially argues that the chapter is too fragmentary to analyze compositionally (since it was created by the equivalent of a textual magnet), but simultaneously so sophisticated that its poetics stun the reader’s senses. I find this tension difficult to sustain, and like the composition critics, he does not give credit for these poetics to their composers.

I highlight these statements not to sidestep the idiosyncrasies of the text (it has plenty),¹⁰ but to carve out a space in which we can analyze them afresh. In this article, I would like to bridge a composition-critical approach to Isa 2:6–22 with an approach that brings its complex metaphors

⁷ Roberts (“Isaiah 2,” 292) claims that the “anomalies that have been taken as signs of ... editing are in fact anomalies left by Isaiah’s own *imperfect adaptation* of earlier oracles to new situations.” Emphasis mine.

⁸ Childs, *Isaiah*, 33.

⁹ Lynch, *First Isaiah*, 36–37.

¹⁰ To name a few specifically, some commentators see v. 8b as an inappropriate B line to v. 8a, v. 18 lacks a parallel line altogether, v. 20 breaks into prose, and there are inexact repetitions between vv. 9, 11, and 17 on the one hand and vv. 10, 19, and 21 on the other hand. The lack of precision in these repetitions bothers a significant number of commentators (for example, see discussions of the critical apparatus of *BHS* in nn. 23–24 or Roberts’s correction of v. 12b in n. 22). There are some critical differences in the manuscript traditions, with the adjoining fact that there are apparent verb/subject disagreements in several places, not all of which can be easily solved text-critically (vv. 11, 12, 18, 20). For a good treatment of the textual issues, see cited commentaries and in particular Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 36–39, and Muraoka, “Isaiah 2,” 317–340.

to the forefront.¹¹ Ultimately, what I would like to suggest is that an attention to the operative HIGH/LOW orientational metaphor can actually help us to determine the boundaries of an old poem embedded at the center of this pericope and can help us sort through which of the so-called “refrains” (vv. 9, 11, 17 and vv. 10, 19, 21) might belong to this older layer and which might belong to the additions, a question that is not agreed upon in the scholarship.¹² This approach shifts us away from labeling sections of this text as illogical mistakes, and moves us toward leading with the assumption that the scribes who composed this piece were perhaps more capable of verbal art than our discipline has given them credit for.¹³ I do not take this approach in sympathy with a Romantic longing for originality, but instead I seek to “examine the unique productive capacities and possibilities generated by secondary figures and secondary additions.”¹⁴

I argue that there is an old poem embedded in this passage, composed of vv. 10, 12–17*, which depicts the Storm God theophany on the day of Yahweh. To arrive here, I begin with my translation of the text (see 1), then I locate the major sections, which are vv. 7–8a and 12–16* (see 2). Though the additions to the old poem may have occurred in multiple stages, my interest is in the boundaries of the old poem; therefore, to vv. 7–8a, I add vv. 6, 8b, 18, and 20 to a broad secondary layer concerned primarily with idolatry. I also argue here that the day of Yahweh poem was not originally linked to any portion of the idolatry section. Next, I consider the orientational metaphors in each of these two main layers and suggest that they do not necessarily cohere (see 3). Based on my analysis of the metaphors, I argue that vv. 10 and 17 are a part of the old poem (see 4). At the same time, the echoes of these refrains (vv. 9, 11, 19, and 21) work to integrate the metaphorical landscape of the two major sections together. To make these claims, I use the

¹¹ For a discussion of metaphor in this chapter, see also Kim, “Little Highs, Little Lows,” 133–158.

¹² The specific authorship of this poem has no bearing on my argument; what is important for this article is the relative dating between the old poem and the later idolatry layer.

¹³ This is not to say that scribes do not make mistakes; it is obvious that they do. Rather, I think it improves our understanding of biblical literature when we lead with the assumption that the scribes were skilled in their craft.

¹⁴ Raz, “Jeremiah before the Womb,” 89.

traditional tools of composition criticism, but I argue that in these discussions, we might support these claims by bringing sustained attention to the poetics of our passages, and in this case, metaphor.

1 The Text

Isaiah 2:6–22 is broadly acknowledged to be a part of a larger pericope that runs from Isa 1–12 (or perhaps a shorter one in chs. 1–4) and has undergone additions and editing by much later (perhaps even post-exilic) editors.¹⁵ Plenty of studies consider the wider context of Isa 2:6–22 and how its editorial history might relate to this context, but this article will remain focused on these verses.¹⁶ Before entering into a discussion of the text, I find it helpful to reproduce my translation of the poem here along with the most relevant aspects of the text-critical discussion (the old poem depicting the Storm God theophany is in standard print, and the later additions are in italics):¹⁷

- (6) *But you have rejected your people,*
 the House of Jacob
 for they were full of diviners from the east
 and soothsayers like the Philistines
 and they teemed with the children of foreigners.
- (7) *And his land was full of silver and gold*
 And there was no end to his storehouses
 And his land was full of horses
 And there was no end to his chariots
- (8) *And his land was full of idols*
 To the work of his hands they bowed

¹⁵ See the commentaries cited, as well as Williamson, *Book Called Isaiah*.

¹⁶ See discussion in Berges, *Book of Isaiah*, 38–122.

¹⁷ Readers can also find my full text-critical notes in Kemp, *Forgetting to Remember*, 74–77, 88–89, 92–93.

- To that which his fingers have made*
- (9) *And humankind was bowed down*
And people were brought low
*You shall not forgive [literally: lift] them!*¹⁸
- (10) Go into the rock!
 Be hidden in dust!
 Before Yahweh's terror
 And before the splendor of his majesty¹⁹
- (11) *Humankind's haughty eyes will be brought low*²⁰
And the height of people will be bowed down
And Yahweh alone will be exalted, on that day
- (12) Indeed, Yahweh צבאות has a Day
 Upon everything proud and lofty²¹
*And upon everything lifted (and it will be brought low)*²²

¹⁸ 4QIsa^a and 4QIsa^b both have ולא supported by LXX (though LXX has a first-person singular verb).

¹⁹ LXX contains a plus harmonizing it to the parallel statements made in vv. 19 and 21. MT (supported by 4QIsa^b) is the preferable text.

²⁰ The gender and number of the verb from שפ"ל does not agree with the apparent subject (eyes, feminine plural). 1QIsa^a contains the fp verb תשפלנה. Williamson (*Isaiah 1–5*, 198) prefers MT based on the principle of *lectio difficilior*, but the verb is too difficult to be correct. Thus, 1QIsa^a contains the preferred reading.

²¹ In this passage, I translate על as “upon” instead of the more common “against” (ESV, NRSV) because it reflects and participates in the orientational metaphor active in the poem. Alter (*Prophets*, 628–629) translates it as “over,” which also captures the high/low imagery.

²² In v. 12b, LXX reflects the Hebrew Vorlage, ועל כל נשא וגבה ושפל. Roberts (*First Isaiah*, 38) suggests that LXX contains a “doubled reading” in which proto-LXX harmonizes the manuscript tradition by maintaining an older reading (ועל כל נשא וגבה) and combining it with ושפל from MT. This is possible, but it rests on the assumption of a parallel of similarity within v 12b. MT should be preferred as the shorter text and contains a parallel of contrast.

- (13) And upon all the cedars of Lebanon
The lofty and the lifted
And upon all the oaks of Bashan
- (14) And upon all the lofty mountains
And upon all the lifted hills
- (15) And upon every high tower
And upon every fortified wall
- (16) And upon all the ships of Tarshish
And upon all the desirable crafts
- (17) And the haughtiness of humankind is bowed down
And the height of people is brought low
And Yahweh alone is exalted on that day
- (18) *And the idols will entirely vanish*
- (19) *And they will go into caves in the rocks²³*
And into holes in the dust²⁴
Before Yahweh's terror
And before of the splendor of his majesty
When he rises to strike the earth with dread
- (20) *On that day, humankind will fling his idols of silver and his idols of gold (that*

²³ The verb in MT is וּבִאוּ. We should not follow Thomas's suggestion in *BHS* that the verb should be בִּאוּ since he harmonizes this verb with the imperative in v. 10 without manuscript evidence.

²⁴ *BHS* corrects this verse toward v. 10 by adding וְהִטְמִנוּ (from v. 10 adjusted for number). The objection by Williamson (*Isaiah 1–5*, 202) captures my own: “if the text as we have it makes perfect sense (and it does), and if the textual witnesses are agreed (and they are) and if there is no possible way in which scribal error could account for the proposed corruption (and there is not), then we must surely keep to the text we have.”

they had made for him to bow to) to the moles²⁵ and to the bats.

(21) *To go into the rocky crevices*

And into the crags in the cliffs

Before Yahweh's terror

And before of the splendor of his majesty

When he rises to strike the earth with dread

2 Two Major Sections: Structure, Theme, Metonymy

Structure is helpful for identifying the major sections in Isa 2:6–22, the first and largest of which is universally identified as vv. 12–16*.²⁶ These verses exhibit a fairly standard poetic parallelism, and they reflect a depiction of the day of Yahweh, which is often connected to the Storm God theophany, as is the case here.²⁷ There is a pounding repetition of “upon all” indicating the targets of the Storm God, with a movement from the natural (cedars, oaks, mountains) to that which is human produced (towers, walls, ships). The other (shorter) continuous section is in vv. 7–8a with 8b taking a turn into language associated with the idol taunts.²⁸ Verses 7–8a contain parallel lines that repeat “and his land was full” in the A line and “there was no end” in the B. They move from a concern about the accumulation of silver, gold, horses, and chariots to a focus on idolatry. The coherent internal structure of each of these two sections provides a solid place to begin an analysis of the composition history of this passage.

²⁵ There is a word misdivision in MT as represented in *BHS* (לחפר פרות) that is correctly preserved in 1QIsa^a but with a masculine plural ending (לחפרפרים).

²⁶ I join the majority of scholarship and suggest that vv. 12b and 13a^β are secondary insertions. On the basis of form, they interrupt what is otherwise standard poetic parallelism in vv. 12–16. In terms of content, they echo language derived from vv. 14 and 17.

²⁷ Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 61. See also Fink and Smith, “Day Storm,” 53–54; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 145–194.

²⁸ Isaiah 17:8; Jer 1:16; 25:6–7; 32:30, 44:8; see also Hos 14:4; Mic 5:12. The language also appears in Deut 4:28; 27:15; and 31:29.

An analysis of the themes, I suggest, can help us identify some of the scope of the additions and supports the claim that these two major sections were not an original unity.²⁹ If we begin with vv. 7–8a, I suggest that though vv. 6 and 8b may originate from another hand, they cohere to the degree that we can consider them alongside vv. 7–8a. Altogether, vv. 6–8 progressively zero in on the problem of idolatry. The text introduces the problem of divination within the House of Jacob (v. 6), moving on to a criticism of wealth hoarding (v. 7) that culminates in idolatry (8a), ultimately landing on a phrase evoking the genre of idol taunts in v. 8b (“to the work of his hands they bowed/to that which his fingers have made”).³⁰ This movement packs a powerful rhetorical punch in which idolatry is the culmination of the text’s concern and is emphasized by the abrupt shift from repetitive parallelism to a known formula in v. 8b. Lending weight toward the conceptual unity of vv. 6–8, the “polemic against soothsaying and worship of idols,” in the words of Wildberger, “corresponds to the thought-world of Deuteronomy.”³¹ These issues are linked in

²⁹ Pace the arguments of Blenkinsopp (“Fragments,” 51–62) and Beuken (*Jesaja 1–12*, 99–106), who both argue that there is an indictment (vv. 6–8) and verdict (12–16) structure that makes up the oldest layer of the text. They disagree over the precise boundaries (Blenkinsopp does not include 8b; Beuken adds v. 9, 17).

³⁰ Since Duhm, many have argued, in the words of Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 1–39*, 193), “the parallel stitch [to 8a] seems to have fallen out.” In its place the editor has inserted “a conventional phrase from the stock vocabulary of anti-idolatry polemic particularly in evidence during the exilic period.” Blenkinsopp, “Fragments,” 54.

³¹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 103. Both Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 1–39*, 195–196) and Kaiser (*Isaiah 1–12*, 60) also note and discuss the thematic connections here. Lynch (*First Isaiah*, 52–55) argues against the connection to Deuteronomy here, but his argument is unpersuasive. “Those who attribute Isa 2:8 and 20 to other [i.e., later] hands,” he claims, “typically do so on the assumption that (a) the concern with idolatry derives from later periods in Israel’s history ... and (b) that monotheistic discourse matures in later texts,” neither of which are particularly applicable to any claim of Deuteronomistic influence here. I want to be clear that I am not necessarily suggesting a Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic reworking of the text; rather, I appreciate Wildberger’s wording in suggesting that these verses reflect the “thought-world” of Deuteronomy, which suggests a rather looser sense of influence.

canonical thought, and therefore their combination in what is according to most scholars a relatively late addition is a strong possibility.

In addition, vv. 18 and 20 address the same concern of idolatry and integrate well with vv. 6–8. We can see this nicely if we examine the metonymic connection between silver/gold and idolatry.³² The accumulation of silver and gold followed by a concern for horses and chariots suggests an overall image of wealth in vv. 6–8. The author relies on the metonymic relationship between wealth and idolatry in v. 8, which indicates that the land was also full of idols (אֱלִילִים).³³ After the unit in vv. 12–16*, v. 18 reintroduces the אֱלִילִים, and v. 20 integrates the metonym (gold/silver) and the referent (idols) as the author notes the destruction of the “idols of his silver and the idols of his gold.” In other words, rather than a land full of gold/silver *and* a land full of idols, which relies on the reader’s knowledge of the metonymy (as in vv. 7–8), v. 20 presents the elements together (idols *of* silver and idols *of* gold). There is a movement in this layer that starts with gold/silver and progressively zeroes in on the issue of idolatry and subsequently overlays these onto each other. Therefore, despite the possibility that vv. 6–8, 18, and 20 have a complex composition history, they have a coherence and, as I will now argue, are later than the old day of Yahweh poem in vv. 12–16*.

The separation of at least vv. 7–8a from vv. 12–16* is not a universal claim, but it is well-supported. Several scholars bolster their arguments in this direction by noting that, in the words of Blenkinsopp, “most of the occurrences [of idolatry in Isaiah] are acknowledged to belong to late editorial strata.”³⁴ I agree that the evidence suggests that the two sections of text originated from different hands, in large part because there are only three other places in the canon in which the

³² There is a close connection between silver/gold and idolatry across biblical literature, but in several cases, authors rely on a metonymic connection between the two. See Deut 29:16; Jer 10:9.

³³ Brueggemann (*Isaiah 1–39*, 29) notes the connection between wealth, military weaponry, and idolatry.

³⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 240. See also Seybold, “Die anthropologischen Beiträge,” 411. It should be noted that Blenkinsopp (“Fragments”; and *Isaiah 1–39*, 194–196) argues that the original unit is 6–8a, 12–16, with v. 10 acting as a linking verse.

practice of idolatry appears as a concern in texts about the day of Yahweh; these are Isa 10:10–11 (which most scholars take to be exilic or post-exilic) and Ezek 7:19–20 and 30:13.³⁵ Given the prevalence of the day of Yahweh theme, and given the prevalence of concerns about idolatry throughout prophetic literature, the fact that these two themes are only linked in these three other late texts strongly suggests that these two major sections—vv. 6–8, 18, and 20 on the one hand and vv. 12–16* on the other hand—were not originally integrated with one another.³⁶

Several critics have argued that these two sections together make up the original unit, but these arguments tend to reflect the somewhat derisive perspective I critiqued above. Beuken, for example, makes this argument on the basis of structure, stating: “Das Ineinander von linearem und konzentrischem Aufbau lässt bereits vermuten, dass diese Passage einen literarischen Werdegang durchlebt hat.”³⁷ The linear structure to which he refers is what he labels as the combination of an “Anklage” (indictment) in vv. 6–9 and a “Gerichtsankündigung” (court announcement) in vv. 12–

³⁵ See discussion in Kemp, *Forgetting to Remember*, 99–100.

³⁶ Williamson (“Formation,” 61) also argues that vv. 6–8 and 10–17, 19 (the latter is what he considers to be the old poem) should be understood as originally separate compositions for three reasons. One, “the universalistic outlook of vv. 10–19 contrasts sharply with the application in vv. 6–8 to a single nation. Two, “6–9 are couched in the past tense ... [and] verses 10–19 look to the future” (I add nuance to the future tense reading in Kemp, *Forgetting to Remember*, 81–94). Three, “the first poem (as presently formulated) is addressed to God, whereas in the second he is referred to in the third person.” Taken together, these observations support my argument.

I sympathize with the warning of Lynch (*First Isaiah*, 52) against “an evolutionary view of monotheism’s development wherein First Isaiah *could not* possibly be the progenitor of anti-idolatry language, or even a distinctive creative voice on the subject.” However, given that Lynch explicitly disengages with the composition-criticism of this passage from the beginning of his study, I am not convinced by his argument for the integration of the two sections. The evidence points us toward the idea that they were not originally linked.

³⁷ Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 101. Translation: “The interplay of linear and concentric structure suggests that this passage has experienced a literary career.”

17, and he argues that most of these verses belong to the earliest layer of the text.³⁸ Beuken's concentric structure, on the other hand, is composed of a number of repetitions in the text. He states "Man darf annehmen, dass die Verbindung von Anklage (V 6aß–9a) und Gerichtsankündigung in der Gestalt 'eines Tages für JHWH' (V 12–17) den Grundstock gebildet hat."³⁹ In other words, the linear structure represents the older layer of the text, and those verses that create the "concentric structure" he views as secondary. The broad claim is a coherent model, but he does not state *why* a "linear" structure would be older than a "concentric" one. Instead, he labels things as secondary *because* they repeat (creating the concentric structure) or frame an identifiable unit.⁴⁰ He seems to set "linearity" in a more positive light, and his method reflects an assumption that "privileges authenticity and originality over secondary and derivative redaction."⁴¹ On the contrary, the evidence suggests that Isa 2:6–22 contains an older day of Yahweh poem in the middle (vv. 12–16*) and a later comment on idolatry bookended on either side (vv. 6–8, 18, 20).⁴² I will now turn to examine the poetics in each of these main layers before I deal with the difficult refrains in the remainder of the pericope (vv. 9, 11, and 17 on one hand and vv. 10, 19, and 21 on the other).

³⁸ Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 101. A similar "indictment and verdict" structure was advocated earlier by Blenkinsopp, "Fragments."

³⁹ Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, 101. Translation: "One may assume that the combination of the indictment (V 6aß–9a) and the court announcement in the form of 'YHWH has a day' (V 12–17) formed the foundation."

⁴⁰ He identifies v. 10 as a frame, and therefore secondary, since it is repeated in v. 19 around the identifiable unit of vv. 12–17.

⁴¹ Raz, "Jeremiah before the Womb," 89.

⁴² Berges (*Book of Isaiah*, 64) calls this an "'idol polemic' ring," though he argues that v. 18 is a later addition to this ring. Whether or not v. 18 is relatively later than the rest is outside the bounds of the present study.

3 **Orientational Metaphor**

The dominant, cognitive approach to metaphor is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which was pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980.⁴³ Most fundamentally, CMT “reconceiv[es] metaphors as not fundamentally about words, but as features of thought. We speak in metaphors because we think in them first.”⁴⁴ Conceptual metaphors “are defined as systematic sets of correspondences, or ‘mappings’, across conceptual domains, whereby a ‘target’ domain ... is partly structured in terms of a ‘source’ domain.”⁴⁵ The target domain is often an abstract concept (time, emotions, relationships, etc.) and the source domain tends to be more concrete (motion, physical object, embodied experience, etc.).⁴⁶ For example, in the metaphor PRIDE IS HEIGHT (which I argue is present in Isa 2:12–16*), the target domain is the abstract concept of “pride,” and the source domain is the more concrete concept of “height.” In this case, “pride” is partly structured in terms of “height,” which makes sense given that words for “pride” in biblical Hebrew are often derived from roots related to “height” (e.g., נָאָץ from the root הָאָץ).⁴⁷

Orientational metaphors, such as PRIDE IS HEIGHT, “give a concept a spatial orientation; for example, HAPPY IS UP,” and they are considered to be some of the most foundational metaphors in

⁴³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. See discussion in Lancaster, “Metaphor Research,” 241–249.

⁴⁴ Lancaster, “Metaphor Research,” 241.

⁴⁵ Semino, *Metaphor in Discourse*, 5.

⁴⁶ As stated by Santana and De Vega (“Metaphors Are Embodied,” 1), “metaphors help us to understand abstract or relatively unclear concepts such as mental states in terms of concrete sensory-motor experiences.” They continue, “concepts are primarily metaphorical (rather than symbolic or propositional) and linguistic metaphors are systematically derived from these concepts.”

⁴⁷ Most of the work on metaphor in Isaiah is focused on Deutero-Isaiah. Korpel, “Metaphors in Isaiah LV,” 43–55; Brettler, “Incompatible Metaphors,” 97–120; Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*; Lund, *Way Metaphors*; Low, *Mother Zion in Deutero-Isaiah*. But there are also a few studies on metaphor in First Isaiah, e.g., Exum, “Broken Pots,” 331–352; Nielsen, *There Is Hope for a Tree*; Landy, “Metaphorical Clusters,” 47–60.

cognitive systems.⁴⁸ Given that orientational metaphor “does not structure one concept in terms of another but instead organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another,”⁴⁹ the target domains tend to be coherent and organized in relation to one another.⁵⁰ In other words, if HAPPY IS UP then its opposite (SAD) will be DOWN. If MORE IS UP then LESS IS DOWN. If PRIDE IS UP then HUMILITY IS DOWN. As hinted at by Lakoff and Johnson’s example, HAPPY IS UP, “orientational metaphors often target the domain of values and morality.”⁵¹ For example, in the “smiting of the enemy motif” in ancient Egyptian royal iconography, the proper location of the pharaoh is elevated in contrast to his victims who are physically lower. Hsu analyzes this motif in terms of orientational metaphor and suggests, “The king is up—GOOD IS UP, HIGH STATUS IS UP, LIFE IS UP, CONTROL IS UP, ACTIVE IS UP, and ORDER IS UP; his enemy is down—BAD IS DOWN, LOW STATUS IS DOWN, DEATH IS DOWN, LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN, PASSIVE IS DOWN, and CHAOS IS DOWN.”⁵² Examples such as these are abundant in the ancient world, further suggesting that proper ethics, status organizations, and cosmic order can be commonly conceptualized with orientational metaphors, like those relating to UP and DOWN, and that what is considered positive versus negative will largely be coherent within these systems.

Returning to Isa 2:12–16*, this section conveys the orientational metaphor PRIDE IS HEIGHT. An interplay between literal and figurative heights is introduced in v. 12 which begins, “Yahweh **צבאות** has a Day upon everything proud and lofty [**גאה ורם**].” These words relate to both figurative and literal height. The root of “proud,” **גאה**, is related to “rising,” but in its form in v. 12, it is only ever used in reference to the figurative height of pride.⁵³ The second term, “lofty” (**רם**), can refer to both “proud” and “high”—to the figurative and the literal, as it does in various places

⁴⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14.

⁴⁹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14.

⁵⁰ Lakoff and Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 92) suggest that *coherence* between metaphors is possible when the “metaphors have shared entailments.” In relation to biblical studies, see Dille, *Mixing Metaphors*, 14–16.

⁵¹ Taha Mohamed, “Is Up Always Good?” 207.

⁵² Hsu, “You up—I down,” 284.

⁵³ Job 40:11–12; Jer 48:29; Ps 94:2; Prov 15:25.

throughout this pericope.⁵⁴ In vv. 13–16*, the poet introduces literal heights (trees, mountains, walls, etc.) and notes Yahweh’s destructive orientation toward them. These images operate on two different levels: First, they operate on the figurative level, as source domains for the target domain of human pride; and secondly, they operate on the literal level as images that the Storm God attacks on his day. They move from heights in the physical world (trees and topographical features) to human-produced structures (towers, walls, ships), not all of which necessarily convey a literal height but do connote a sense of human pride or figurative height (i.e., an impulse to control what is properly in Yahweh’s control, namely, attacking enemies and the sea).⁵⁵ In this section, PRIDE IS HEIGHT, and Yahweh will attack both literal and figurative heights on his day.

Isaiah 2:6–8, 18, and 20 are more literal, and they convey only lowness with no mention of height. For example, v. 8b reflects a literal lowering of the human body for idol worship: “to the work of his hands they bow.” This downward orientation is continued in v. 20, which states that “humankind will fling his idols ... to the moles and to the bats.” In this verse, the idols to which humans have lowered themselves will now go even lower by literally going caves (i.e., entering the earth). Idolatry means that humans are bowing low and that eventually the idols will be brought low.

We can see that the orientations of the two sections do not cohere particularly well. On the one hand, in vv. 12–16*, PRIDE IS HEIGHT, and on the other hand in the secondary layer of vv. 6–8, 18, 20, idol use is literal lowness. In other words, if HEIGHT is negative, then its opposite should be positive, but that is not the case here. What is the bridge between these two concepts? In the next section, I will discuss the so-called refrains of this pericope (vv. 9, 10, 11, 17, 19, 21) and suggest that vv. 10 and 17 are part of the old poem, evidenced by the fact that they cohere with the PRIDE IS HEIGHT metaphor. Further, vv. 9 and 11 are repetitions of v. 17, and they function to bridge the temporality and metaphors within each major section. Verses 19 and 21 are repetitions of v. 10

⁵⁴ Isaiah 2:11, 13, 14, 17.

⁵⁵ See Isa 25:12; 30:25; 48:8; Ezek 38:20. This aligns with the larger motif throughout biblical literature of Yahweh as a Storm God who controls the sea. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 156–162.

that re-literalize the composition and orient it back to the lowness of idol use. Of the refrains, vv. 10 and 17 belong within the bounds of the old poem while the rest are secondary.

4 Refrains

There are two sets of refrains in Isa 2:6–22: vv. 9, 11, and 17 on the one hand (the “Bowed Down/Exalted” set), and vv. 10, 19, and 21 on the other (the “Into the Rock/Majesty” set). These refrains are generally situated between the old poem (12–16*) and the material relating to idolatry (vv. 6–8, 18, 20), and they appear in a very similar structural pattern: v. 10 is before the old poem and there are two closely related repetitions of it after the old poem (vv. 19, 21); in the other set, v. 17 is after the old poem and it has two closely related repetitions before the old poem (vv. 9, 11). Like the day of Yahweh poem, these refrains are dealing with a high/low dichotomous orientation and an interplay of literal and the figurative extensions of meaning. Though scholarship has not found agreement on the composition history of these refrains, by attending to how they interact with the poetics of each section, I suggest we can make some headway in identifying which of them should be included in the old day of Yahweh poem.⁵⁶

The “Bowed Down/Exalted” set (vv. 9, 11, and 17) has to do with humanity being humbled or bowed down; the words relating to this, again, are both figurative and literal extensions of their roots (לִפְנֵי and מִלְפָּנֵי), and are frequently parallel to one another, especially in First Isaiah.⁵⁷ For

⁵⁶ Verses 11 and 21 are unanimously considered late, but the rest of the refrains have attracted some debate. For example, Berges (*Book of Isaiah*, 63–65), Kaiser (*Isaiah 1–12*, 63–66), and Clements (*Isaiah 1–39*, 42–46) align with my own view that vv. 10 and 17 are included in the old poem (though none of them argue this on the basis of metaphor). Williamson (“Formation”) and Seybold (“Die anthropologischen Beiträge”) both add v. 19 to this. Barré (“A Rhetorical-Critical Study”) includes v. 17, but not v. 10. Blenkinsopp and Beuken have a different model that includes some amount of vv. 6–8 (see n. 29): Blenkinsopp includes none of the refrains in his oldest layer (he claims v. 10 is a linking verse), and Beuken includes vv. 9 and 17. For an overview of the scholarship, see Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 189–227.

⁵⁷ Apart from Isa 2, this parallel occurs in Isa 5:15; 25:12; 26:5; 29:4; and also in Job 22:29; Eccl 12:4.

example, *qal* verbs from the root **ל"פ"ש** can indicate a literal lowering as in “to be brought low” (e.g., Isa 25:12; 32:19; Eccl 12:4) as well as a figurative lowering as in “to be humbled” (e.g., Prov 16:19), with both often being activated at once, as is also the case with words from the root **נ"ח"ש** (e.g., literal: Isa 60:14; figurative: Ps 10:10). This literal and figurative lowering is contrasted against the third line in vv. 11 and 17, “Yahweh alone is exalted (**נשגב**),” which can also extend to both literal and figurative meanings related to height (e.g., Isa 30:13; Prov 18:10; Isa 33:5; Ps 148:13). Whereas the third lines of vv. 11 and 17 match verbatim, v. 9 varies in its third line and implores that Yahweh “shall not forgive [**נש; lift**]” the offenders, which again captures a play between the literal (“to lift” after being brought low) and figurative (“to forgive” them). In this set of refrains, all words relating to the high/low dichotomy connect to literal and figurative meanings, and there is a contrast between the lowness of humanity and the height of Yahweh.

The “Into the Rock/Majesty” set contains verbs from the root **נ"ב"א** (go in), followed by various earth features, each of which indicate a downward movement of the subject. This lowering is contrasted against Yahweh’s **מאג**, his “majesty,” which is only used as a figurative extension of its root **ה"אג** that relates to height (e.g., Prov 16:18; Ezek 30:6). The second set of parallel lines is identical across each verse: “Before Yahweh’s terror/And before the splendor of his majesty.” But vv. 19 and 21 have an additional third line that reads: “When he rises (**בקומו**) to strike the earth with dread,” which adds a literal rising. In these refrains, there are images of literal lowness (e.g., entering the rocks) as well as the height of Yahweh depicted in both literal (**בקומו**; vv. 19, 21) and figurative (**מאג**) modes.

I turn now to the refrains in the order in which they appear. Based on the verbal forms, v. 9 clearly follows v. 6–8: vv. 7–8a contain a series of *vav* consecutives, and v. 9 continues these, which suggests that the abasement in v. 9a occurred in the same past situation as the actions in vv. 6–8. At the same time, the imperative in v. 9b brings the reader to the present moment that is largely reflected in the old poem, the temporality of which reflects “an ongoing present with the possibility, but not the inevitability, of a very immediate future.”⁵⁸ This suggests that v. 9 functioned as a temporal bridge between the major sections. In terms of metaphor, v. 9 adds a figurative lowness to the literal lowness involved in idolatry; humanity is now figuratively low via

⁵⁸ Kemp, *Forgetting to Remember*, 82.

the *abasement* brought on by idol use. I suggest that v. 9 is not within the bounds of the old poem simply because the PRIDE IS HEIGHT metaphor does not cohere well with the IDOLATRY IS ABASEMENT metaphor.⁵⁹

Verse 10 reflects a literal lowness (“Go into the rock”), but this verse is oriented toward going low in a preventative sense—to prevent being a target of Yahweh’s own figurative height (his גאון). This call to action actually coheres with the PRIDE IS HEIGHT metaphor in vv. 12–16*, but in some ways causes tension with the IDOLATRY IS ABASEMENT metaphor in vv. 6–8 (i.e., if idolatry is low, then going low to avoid the day of Yahweh is odd). However, if we consider v. 10 in relation to the PRIDE IS HEIGHT metaphor (vv. 12–16*), the speaker commands the human using a literal low image (go into the rocks and dust) to prepare for Yahweh’s figurative height—“the splendor of his majesty,” his גאון. When we juxtapose גאון to גאה from v. 12 in the old poem, majesty and pride, we can recognize גאה as a *Leitwort* connected to the poem’s high/low orientations. With v. 10 as the introduction, the metaphor extends but does not fundamentally change: *HUMAN PRIDE IS HEIGHT* and *YAHWEH’S MAJESTY IS HEIGHT*.⁶⁰ Therefore, both figurative and literal heights (that is human pride and the trees/mountains) are rivals to Yahweh’s own height. The inclusion of v. 10 gives the reader context as to why the heights encompassed in גאה ורם (v. 12) are a problem—in essence, the figurative heights of humans are a threat to Yahweh’s height, and therefore the prudent human should go low. Like Pharaoh in the smiting motif, there is a proper organization of heights with Yahweh legitimately in the superior position. At the same time, the inclusion of v. 10 in the old poem works well with my claim that v. 9 is a temporal transition from

⁵⁹ I expand this below and in reference to v. 11, which syncs these orientations together.

⁶⁰ An “extended” metaphor occurs “where several metaphorical expressions belonging to the same semantic field or evoking the same source domain are used in close proximity to one another in relation to the same topic, or to elements of the same target domain.” Semino, *Metaphor in Discourse*, 25. In this case the “metaphorical expressions” are those expressions that evoke height in relation to the same topic of the day of Yahweh (Yahweh’s height [גאון] and the rival heights [גאה ורם and so on]). The language in v. 10 extends this source domain by including Yahweh’s height and relating it to what happens on the day of Yahweh (i.e., people should go low to avoid Yahweh’s attack on rival heights).

the additions in vv. 6–8 to the old poem in vv. 12–16*; the imperative at the end of v. 9 matches the imperative that begins the old poem in v. 10.

The meeting of metaphors in Isa 2:10, 12–16* and vv. 6–9 is striking. What we have are two orientational metaphors, both of which rely on the same dichotomy of UP and DOWN, but which at the same time reflect opposing values systems. In the first metaphor, PRIDE IS HEIGHT (vv. 10, 12–16*), pride is UP, and UP in this case has a negative connotation (i.e., an improper status organization; the human should be DOWN but has positioned themselves as UP). Coherent with this is v. 10 in which people should go DOWN to avoid when Yahweh destroys rival heights. In other words, the proper status organization is YAHWEH IS UP and HUMANS ARE DOWN. Humans violating this organization will be targeted. Within the PRIDE IS HEIGHT metaphor, humans orienting DOWN is positive but orienting UP is negative. Conversely, in the IDOLATRY IS ABASEMENT metaphor in vv. 6–9, idolatry is DOWN, and DOWN is the result of negative actions. Likewise, in the declaration that the House of Jacob could be “lifted” (v. 9), i.e., forgiven, UP is positive. There is a conflictual aspect to the combination of metaphors in these two sections in that in vv. 6–9 idolatry is DOWN and negative (but UP is positive); but in vv. 12–16*, escaping the heights of Yahweh is DOWN and positive (but UP is negative). While linguistic systems and poetry in particular can tolerate conflictual metaphors and/or a lack of metaphorical coherence, this observation lends weight to the proposition that these are two distinct layers of text, which, I will now argue, gain metaphorical coherence with the addition of v. 11, which is unanimously considered a late addition.

Just as v. 9 provides a temporal transition between the old poem and the additions, v. 11 allows the orientational metaphors in the pericope to flow together. Whereas in vv. 6–9 idol worship is literal and figurative lowness, v. 11 indicates that it is also *figurative height* that will be brought low *in the future*. Though vv. 9 and 11 are quite similar, there is a striking difference. In v. 9, it is only the human who is low (“And *humankind* was bowed down/and *people* were brought low”), reflecting a figurative significance back on the literal bowing in v. 8. However, in v. 11, a figurative height is added: “humankind’s haughty [literally “high,” גבהות] eyes will be brought low/and the height [רום] of people will be bowed down.” In following vv. 6–10, the addition of “high eyes” introduces the metaphor IDOLATRY IS HEIGHT. This orientational addition suggests a simultaneous height and lowness of idolatry: idol use is “self-elevation in intent and self-

denigration in impact, performed physically with a low body but high eyes.”⁶¹ With this addition, as the reader approaches the composite text and moves to the rest of the old poem in vv. 12–16*, the pride/HEIGHT associated with *idolatry* becomes the target domain that is partially structured in terms of the literally high images in the old poem (the source domain; mountains, hills, etc.). The inclusion of the height pole in the idolatry section allows the orientational metaphors of the entire pericope to cohere: Yahweh is attacking everything “high and lofty” on his day (v. 12), and the thing that is high and lofty is the idolaters’ images of themselves, even as they bow low.

At the end of the poem, v. 17 operates as the closing rhetorical punch for the orientational metaphor: “And the haughtiness of humankind is bowed down/and the height of people is brought low/and Yahweh alone is exalted, on that day.” The two abstract nouns related to height (גבהות and רום) both point to a figurative sense of height (pride), and their roots echo back to vv. 12–16* (גב״ה in v. 15 and רום in vv. 12 and 14). These echoes in v. 17 at the high point of the poem work to emphasize the metaphor PRIDE IS HEIGHT; the abstract nouns remind the reader that the high images in vv. 12–16* are the source domains that structure the target domain of pride. Once the (figurative and literal) heights are leveled, only Yahweh remains (figuratively and literally) elevated. The fact that the last phrase, “on that day” in v. 17 links to the introduction of the day in v. 12 lends evidence to the integration of v. 17 to the old poem. The old poem is thus composed of vv. 10, 12–17*. The metaphor active throughout captures the idea that the proper place of humans is figuratively and literally lower than Yahweh because HUMAN PRIDE IS HEIGHT and YAHWEH’S MAJESTY IS HEIGHT. The introduction and conclusion in vv. 10 and 17, respectively, work with the metaphor in the old poem *and* they provide more context for its logic—Yahweh confronts the heights in vv. 12–16* because only Yahweh should be high.

This argument regarding the boundaries of the old poem leaves vv. 9 and 11 as repetitions derived from the end of the poem in v. 17. I suggest that vv. 19 and 21 are similarly best understood as repetitions derived from the beginning of the poem in v. 10. If we follow the metaphorical

⁶¹ Kemp, *Forgetting to Remember*, 91. Brueggemann (*Isaiah 1–39*, 29) makes a similar observation about the haughtiness involved in idol use in this chapter. In speaking of vv. 6–8, he notes: “Along with money and weapons comes a land *full* of idols, projections of self-achievement, self-security, and self-congratulations.”

structures of the old poem, v. 10 calls for a literally low place to hide from Yahweh's figurative height. Verse 12 indicates that Yahweh's day is pointed at anything figuratively or literally high, and the images in 13–16* highlight the literal (trees, mountains, ships, etc.). At the end in v. 17, the poem's flip into the figurative reads like a conclusion in which it is revealed that the figurative heights are indeed the main concern. Conversely, vv. 19 and 21 return to a literal sense of lowness. In v. 19 a third masculine plural subject will enter caves and holes in order to hide from Yahweh on the day of theophany. While this verse could theoretically cohere with the orientational metaphor in the old poem,⁶² I think it is better understood as secondary. I agree with Clements here who suggests that "v. 19 has been developed as a rather literal understanding of the poetic image of v. 10."⁶³ To nuance Clements's statement, the difference between the two verses is minimal, as stated above, and yet the call to enter the "caves" of rocks and the "holes" in the dust is best seen as a literalist expansion that functions to explain exactly how people should perform the difficult feat of going into the rock and the dust referenced in v. 10 (there are conveniently "caves" and "holes"). In following vv. 10, 12–17*, which weave their way through a complex metaphor and climax with an attack on the figurative heights of people, the return to and the expansion of the literal image that begins the poem strikes me as secondary. However, v. 19 does follow much better after v. 18, which is unanimously considered a secondary addition.⁶⁴ In this reading, the idols will be destroyed (v. 18) and will go into caves (v. 19). Thus, v. 19 is not included in the boundaries of the old poem. Verse 21 is also considered late, a unanimous claim across scholarship.

⁶² Several scholars assign v. 19 to the old poem. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 194–196; Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*. Wildberger also argues that v. 19 is one of the four fragments making up the oldest core of the poem. See n. 3.

⁶³ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 43.

⁶⁴ Kaiser (*Isaiah 1–12*, 64) makes a similar claim when he says "v. 19 really seems lame after v. 17b, because the announcement that the glory of Yahweh will be all that is left at the end cannot be followed by anything else."

5 Conclusion

The scholarly impulse to view Isa 2:6–22 as a chaotic assemblage on the one hand or as awe-inspiring poetry on the other hand in many ways reflects the divide in biblical studies between composition-historical approaches and theory-driven literary approaches, as articulated by Hendel who speaks of the divide between (German) *Literarkritik* and literary criticism (in the Anglophone sense).⁶⁵ Though Hendel is principally addressing pentateuchal criticism, the divide in the field between composition-historical studies and studies of poetics is indeed wide, but his contention that both of these approaches “are complementary practices for elucidating the subtle shades of meaning and compositional design” rings especially true in relation to Isa 2:6–22.⁶⁶ As I have argued above, an attention to metaphor in this case can be an illuminative factor in parsing through the compositional layers. In addition, it also helps us find a poetic logic to the composition history, which is preferable to following the long-standing view that regards it as a redactional mess. This study suggests that it may be illuminative to integrate CMT into our methods by which we address composition-critical questions. Though it may not be relevant in every case, it can certainly help add nuance to our claims and to integrate a more serious attention to ways in which the poetic landscape shifts with each literary intervention into the text.

In the case of Isa 2:6–22, an attention to metaphor can help us detect the boundaries of the old poem embedded at the core. In the bulk of the old poem in vv. 12–16*, the metaphor is PRIDE IS HEIGHT, and vv. 10 and 17 cohere with this orientational metaphor in which the human UP is viewed negatively. Verse 10 coheres with this spatial organization in that it commands humans to go DOWN because only Yahweh is legitimately UP. From this perspective, v. 17 operates as the closing rhetorical punch for this metaphor as it states that any human who is UP will be put DOWN on the day of Yahweh.

With vv. 10, 12–17* as the oldest core of the chapter, v. 9 operates as a temporal transition between the past in vv. 6–8 and the opening imperative verb in v. 10. That is, v. 9 begins with a series of *vav* consecutives stating the figurative lowness associated with the literal lowness of idol use and ends with a command not to “lift” (or forgive) the idolaters. In vv. 6–9, idolatry is

⁶⁵ Hendel, “Abram’s Journey,” 567–593.

⁶⁶ Hendel, “Abram’s Journey,” 571.

figurative and literal lowness, which reflects the orientational metaphor, IDOLATRY IS ABASEMENT. Idol use means humans go DOWN, and DOWN is negative. This orientational metaphor does not cohere with DOWN as the ideal human location in vv. 10, 12–17*. However, v. 11 provides a transition between the metaphors in the two sections as it reflects the metaphor, IDOLATRY IS HEIGHT. The height associated with idolatry then becomes the target domain that is partially structured in terms of the physical heights (mountains and trees) that the Storm God attacks. With this addition, idol use is metaphorically both height and lowness.

In the final form of the text, this dual orientational metaphor reflects a merism that encapsulates the totality of destruction on the day of Yahweh. The idolaters within the House of Jacob have nowhere to hide; whether they go up or go down, every place, high and low, will be subject to “the splendor of his majesty when he rises to strike the earth with dread” (v. 19//21). Lynch is correct when he recognizes the power of the poetry. However, he is too quick to walk away from a composition-critical analysis; the poetry is a key to this compositional maze.

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