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Literary Approaches to the Book of Jonah

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LITERARY APPROACHES TO THE BOOK OF JONAH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Kein Buch des Alten Testaments, abgesehen von den Psalmen, ist so oft erklärt worden wie das kleine Buch Jona."[1] It is even common to see disclaimers for one more book being written on Jonah. Hence the disclaimer that this investigation is not on the Book of Jonah per se, but falls into "the almost legendary category of analysis of analyses."[2] That is, this investigation will not attempt to make an original literary analysis of the Book of Jonah. It will look at what others have discovered, analyze their purpose and methods, and seek to learn from them the contributions "literary approaches" are making to biblical studies.

Specifically, this investigation will explore three recent works on the Book of Jonah that come under the broad heading "literary approaches." The Book of Jonah fits the need of looking at different literary approaches working on a concrete text. Jonah is a short and complete text; it is mainly narrative prose though it includes a poetic psalm; and it has long been noted for its compact artistry. The three books to be examined are: "Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah," by Magonet; "A Poetics of Jonah: Art in the Service of Ideology," by Craig; and "Rhetorical Criticism: Content, Method and the Book of Jonah," by Trible. [3]

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[1] Jerome, quoted by Gerhard Maier, <u>Der Prophet Jona,</u> (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1976), 13. Maier also relates that Jerome (d.420) stated a need for his commentary on Jonah even though he knew "daß alte Kirchenmänner, griechishe wie lateinische, über dieses Buch viel gesagt haben." Jerome thought these older opinions too diverse and did more to confuse than enlighten the reader. Incidentally, Jerome did not speak German.

[2] This phrase comes from the preface of Hans W. Frei, <u>The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics,</u> (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), vii.

[3] Jonathan Magonet, <u>Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah,</u> (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983); Kenneth M. Craig, Jr., <u>A Poetics of Jonah. Art in the Service of Ideology,</u> (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1003); Phylllis Trible, <u>Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah,</u> (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

This introduction cannot give a synopsis of literary criticism that will touch on all the related questions that such a study would provoke. Even the simple matter of definitions is not so simple, as different authors use terms differently.[4] "Literary criticism" has usually been defined differently by biblical scholars and literary critics. For the biblical scholar the term meant analyzing texts to discover structure, style and sources of composition, if any, to determine the date of origin of the text, and something about the author or redactor. Many times this older type of literary criticism has been equated with source criticism, the "becoming" of the text. The newer type of literary criticism, for the most part, is not concerned with the genesis of the text. Instead of looking for sources the new literary critic looks for structures, style and themes that indicate unity, that is the "being" of the text.[5]

"But a Biblicist venturing into contemporary literary criticism to look for aid and guidance finds himself in a field of intense intellectual combat. . . . All problems of interpretation swerve alarmingly toward metaphysics. . . . Literary criticism expands to absorb philosophy, linguistics, aesthetics, and psychology. . . . The hapless Biblicist finds that literary theory is dangerous ground to venture on."[6]

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[4] Aida Spencer lists fifteen definitions in "Literary criticism" in New Testament Criticism and Interpretation, ed. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 235-36.

[5] This apparent confusion of terms is seen in two of the Fortress Press Guide series, published six years apart: Norman Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), and David Robertson, The Old Testament and the Literary Critic, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977). For further confusion see The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines, (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993). In this last book what is really considered new literary criticisms are those criticisms that are "post-structuralist:" Feminist, Materialist/Political, Psychoanalytic, Reader-Response, and Deconstruction. Certainly, personal and even cultural subjectivity may influence our reading of the Scripture texts (which the exegete should strive to know and to be honest about), but there is a vast difference between this sort of "inadvertent" influence and theories that are made into hermeneutical principles. Since these "new literary" methods are bound more by certain ideologies than the text, they might better take the name "ideological criticisms." The term "ideological criticism" is used by David M. Gunn in "Narrative Criticism," in To Each its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and their Application, eds. Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 171. Richard N. Soulen, "Literary Criticism" in Handbook of Biblical Criticism, second edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 113-114, lists three major definitions of the term: 1. Source criticism. 2. An approach which seeks to explicate the author's intention and achievement through the component elements and structure of the text. 3. An approach which reads the Bible simply as literature paralleling the interests and methods of secular critics.

[6] Stephen A. Geller, "Through Windows and Mirrors Into the Bible. History, Literature and Language in the Study of Text," in A Sense of Text: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical

Some literary critics who work on the Bible do not see themselves as biblical scholars, nor their task as

biblical scholarship. One literary critic admits that biblical scholarship is also enormously specialized and

sophisticated. "A literary critic's attempts to make pronouncements in that field are bound to be as

amateurish and rudimentary as the attempts of biblical scholars to conduct literary criticism. After all, the

literary critic usually doesn't even know the original language."[7] This introduction will provide a general

reference point for the specific literary studies, done by biblical scholars, on the Book of Jonah.

There is a claim that biblical studies are undergoing, or have undergone (depending on who is

making the claim), a "paradigm shift," that is, something of a revolution from what can be broadly termed

historical-critical methods to literary methods.[8] The idea of "paradigm shift" was introduced by Thomas

S. Kuhn, who analyzed why scientific revolutions came about. The history of science is not characterized

by unbroken continuity, but by sudden "shifts" in thinking about the data. Paradigms try to account for as

much of the data under investigation as possible, though no single paradigm can account for all the data.

Part of the reason that scientific revolutions come about so infrequently is that it is extremely difficult to

understand the given data in any way but from within the paradigm that the researcher has been taught.

Thus a "paradigm shift" is a sudden move from one way of viewing the data to another. "Not

surprisingly, a number of theologians and exegetes have sought to appropriate these insights in their

attempt to determine why different scholars or groups of scholars reach different interpretations of biblical

passages."[9]

Literature, Papers from a Symposium at The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, May 11, 1982 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 6.

[7] Leland Ryken, "Literary Criticism of the Bible: Some Fallacies," in Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, ed. Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 29-30.

[8] Leo G. Purdue, The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 7-11, lists six reasons for the collapse of history as the dominant paradigm for Old Testament theology. However, he writes, "one should avoid making rather bold claims for a paradigm shift that places history and literature, or history and Scripture into oppositional, either/or categories or that consigns historical criticism to the graveyard of methodological relics," 154.

[9] Moisés Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible? The History of Interpretation in the Light of Current Issues, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, series ed. Moisés Silva, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 19. See Leland Ryken, The Bible as Literature: A

David Robertson claims that the change from a historical paradigm to a literary one is the fourth major paradigm change in the study of the Old Testament. "From the point of view of those holding to a previous paradigm . . . a new paradigm . . . is arbitrary and entails a serious and even violent distortion of its original intention and true meaning."[10] Robertson admits that reading a section of Scripture as literature will likely, though not necessarily, distort the original intention and meaning of the Scripture as perceived by modern historical scholarship. "Literary critics are aware of the arbitrary nature of their starting point and are willing to sacrifice some goods, like the understanding of the Old Testament as given by critical historians, for other goods, the insights that will be gained only by considering it as literature."[11]

Robertson describes a literary approach to the Scriptures where nothing outside the text itself is used to support a claim about the text. This means that methods such as source, form, and tradition criticism are usually not used, nor the results of these methods, because the text is read in its received form. This allows Robertson to say that "literary criticism" is "inherently ahistorical."[12]

Also, a literature paradigm involves certain assumptions about the nature of symbols. Symbols are used to construct a "fictive world where actions are not real actions but imitations of real actions, and where ideas do not apply directly to the real world but to the fictive world."[13] Questions put to the text will not be historical, theological, nor scientific, but literary. That is, one will approach the Bible in the same way one would examine any other piece of literature. The irony of the last statement is picked up

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Brief History" in A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible, eds. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 60, for his assessment as to how the "paradigm shift" occurred.

[10] Robertson, 4.

[11]Ibid., 5. According to Robertson, the first paradigm shift was from the time when the Jews began to read the "diverse writings" as scripture, representing a canon of doctrine and practice. The second shift occurred when Christians read the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. The third shift was brought about by the modern critical investigation of the Bible, which in some ways is a return to reading the Scriptures as "diverse writings."

[12] David Robertson, "The Bible as Literature," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), 548.

[13] Ibid., 549.

by David Gunn who says that the life-force of modern historical criticism was a determination to deal with the biblical text in the same way as secular texts were treated even if that should lead to the shaking of some dearly held truths. Literary criticism challenges the notion of history and of text held by historical criticism.[14]

By no means does David Robertson speak for all literary critics. Indeed, he has been called a "radical proponent" of the literary approach. There is no monolithic voice in this area, as there is none in the historical-critical camp. However, there are basic assumptions agreed to by many literary critics.

Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis says that he thinks other literary critics like Robert Alter, Michael Fishbane, Meir Sternberg, David Robertson, and Leland Ryken, share his basic assumptions about literary criticism of the Bible. These include:

> 1. The emphasis on the sacredness of the Bible and on the necessity of studying it in its historical contexts are rejected by me, as they must, I believe, be rejected by any student of literature. . . . The text to us is not sacred, and whether the events it describes are historical is not relevant to our purposes. . . . Our approach is essentially ahistorical.
> 2. Teachers of literature are primarily interested in the literary reality of a text and not its historical reality.
> 3. Approaching the Bible as literature, then, means placing emphasis on the text itself-- not on its historical and textual backgrounds, not on the circumstances that brought the text into its present form, not on its religious and cultural foundations.
> 4. The literary critic assumes unity in the text.
> 5. The literary critic assumes conscious artistry in the text.
> 6. Literary criticism of the Bible is not biblical scholarship, it is literary criticism; the two are complimentary.
> 7. We know, as students of literature, that the author's intention, his goals in writing for a contemporary audience, and his religious convictions play a small role indeed in literary criticism and, more important, in the analysis of literary texts.
> 6. A literary critic begins by being primarily interested in how a work is structured and organized.[15]

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[14]David M. Gunn, "New Directions in the study of Biblical Hebrew Narrative," in Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 39 (1987): 66.

[15]Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, "Some Methodological Considerations," in Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, ed. Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 14-15. Mark Allan Powell, What is Narrative Criticism, New Testament Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 6-10, relates basically the same things. He does mention that literary criticism is based on communication models of speech act theory, where the text is a form of communication through which a message is passed from author to reader. Historical criticism has approached texts on the basis of an evolutionary model. The text, then, is an end product of a process of development.

Other literary critics state the case differently. Robert Alter, for example, says that what is at stake in a literary approach to the Bible is more than methodological issues. "What is at stake is a pursuit in the Bible of a different order of truth--to invoke again Hans Frei's terms, it is a turning from the truth of history to the truth of realism, that is, to what may not be a factual account of events but is coherently history-like."[16] Alter acknowledges that although a literary approach does not automatically contradict belief in an inspired text the approach can work without such belief. "Literary analysis . . . brackets the question of history, not necessarily out of indifference to history but because it assumes that factual history is not the primary concern of the text and that it is, in any case, largely indeterminable, given the scant data we have to work with at a remove of two to three millennia from the originating events to which the text refers."[17]

Meir Sternberg is an influential scholar who does not sit comfortably within the camp of "literary critics." He plainly says that he does not share many of the assumptions listed by Gros Louis, even though he is named by Gros Louis above. Sternberg gives, what he perceives to be, needed correctives to the statements of many literary critics. His basic call to literary critics is for a more systematic examination of literary approaches, instead of mere espousal vis-à-vis historical-critical approaches. His views will be looked at more closely here for further help in analyzing the three literary approaches to the Book of Jonah under investigation.

Sternberg thinks the above list of Gros Louis, for the most part, a child of "the New Criticism."[18] He notes that such literary approaches are a reaction against the excesses of historical

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[16]Robert Alter, The World of Biblical Literature, (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 201-202.

[17] Ibid., 203.

[18] Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 7. See especially pp. 7-57 for his theory in detail. Sternberg is particularly harsh on David Robertson. For "New Criticism" see John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 142-151. Barton says New Criticism is the name given to an important movement in literary criticism that flourished mainly in America in the 1940s and 1950s. He isolates "three major theses of the New Criticism which mark it off sharply from what went before. . . . They are (a) that a literary text is an artifact; (b) that 'intentionalism' is a fallacy; and (c) that the meaning of a text is a function of its place in a literary canon," 144. The term "new criticism" can be traced to John Crowe Ransom's book, The New Criticism, published in 1941.

scholarship and contain an anti-historical bias (see Gros Louis #'s 1-3,7 above). In relation to the problem of the "author's intention," Sternberg maintains that intention is "embodied" or "objectified" in the text. To discover "intention" involves historical reconstruction, based on linguistic knowledge, that delimits what the author could have meant.

Sternberg also disagrees with the description that literary approaches are necessarily antithetical to the "genesis of the text." "Genesis as a framework of intelligibility is ever-available to all: it would be as idle for the literary scholar to deny it (and unscholarly to deny oneself of it) as it would be for the traditional biblicist to maintain that genesis comes to light regardless of exegesis."[19]

Sternberg calls the two major headings under which approaches to the Bible are carried out source-oriented and discourse-oriented inquiry. These differ in regard to the type of questions asked of the object of study. Source-oriented inquiry focuses on some object behind the text like the process that generated the text, or Israelite history, or the language system underlying the Bible. Discourse-oriented inquiry looks at the text itself as a pattern of meaning and effect. These should not be in competition with one another, but both are needed with their respective "reconstructions." "Accordingly, the more complete and reliable our knowledge of the world from which the Bible sprang, the sharper our insight into its working and meaning as text; . . . [T]he converse is also true. . . . [W]hen all is said and done, the independent knowledge we possess of the 'real world' behind the Bible remains absurdly meager."[20]

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[19] Sternberg, 14. Other scholars have taken exception to Sternberg's actual practice of reading the Bible. The critique is that Sternberg, contrary to his theory and support of historical investigation, is not concerned about "historical" aspects of the text. In other words his practical concern is exclusively synchronic. See Burke O. Long, "The 'New' Biblical Poetics of Alter and Sternberg," in Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 51 (1991): 80. Bernard M. Levinson, "The Right Chorale: From the Poetics to the Hermeneutics of the Hebrew bible," in Not in heaven: Coherence and complexity in Biblical Narrative, eds. Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson (Indiana University Press, 1991), 131-32. Robert C. Cully, Themes and Variations: A Study of Action in Biblical Narratives, (The Society of Biblical Literature: 1992), 28. David Damrosch, who attempts to use both literary and historical-critical approaches levels the same critique. See David Damrosch, The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 23f.

[20] Sternberg, 16. Said differently, "We have to ask whether or to what extent the questions posed by traditional Old Testament scholarship have been legitimate and of what relevance they are in a changed framework." Rolf Rendtorff, Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology, trans. and ed. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993), 28.

Sternberg also does not think a literary approach, even though it is primarily "discourse-oriented," can legitimately subscribe to the "fictionality" of the Biblical accounts vis-à-vis a "historical" understanding. Much of the trouble, according to Sternberg, has to do with the ambiguity of key terms like "history" and "fiction." Sternberg defines history-writing as "not a record of fact--of what 'really happened'--but a discourse that claims to be a record of fact." Fiction-writing may not be wholly inventive, that is, it may include some historical facts, but it does claim "freedom of invention" and is not bound by history. "The antithesis lies not in the presence or absence of truth value but of the commitment to truth value. The difference between truth value and truth claim is fundamental."[21]

Historiography and fiction are genres of writing, that sometimes are not easily distinguished. Because there are no infallible marks that might distinguish the two genres, Sternberg says that they can be distinguished only by their overall sense of purpose.[22] According to Sternberg, everything points in the direction of Biblical narrative belonging to the historical genre. This does not deny that there are fictional accounts in the Bible (cf. 2 Samuel 12 and the fictional story Nathan told to David concerning the Poor man's Ewe-Lamb). "Were the narrative written or read as fiction, then God would turn from the lord of history into a creature of the imagination, with the most disastrous results. . . . Hence the Bible's

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[21] Sternberg, 25. Sternberg gives as examples of this principle Thucydides, Edward Gibbon's history Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and other historians. Succeeding historians may challenge conclusions or sources, that is, did the historian get the "facts" right, but no one for that reason would say historical writing thereby becomes fiction. "Whatever its faults, real or imagined, bad historiography does not yet make fiction." However, Edgar McKnight quoting Northrop Frye, notes how Gibbon's "history" has become literature. But this still does not say it is fiction. This notes how perceptions of material changes. See Edgar V. McKnight, The Bible and the Reader: An Introduction to Literary Criticism, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 11. Sternberg (24-35) critiques Robert Alter's understanding of "prose fiction" or "historicized fiction" as described in The Art of Biblical Narrative, (New York: Basic Books, 1981) 23f., as the best way of describing biblical narrative. Sternberg thinks Alter best represents the more sophisticated literary critics who are neither historical nor literary enough in their arguments for the Bible's fictionality.

[22] Sternberg, 30. V. Philips Long, The Art of Biblical History, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, series ed. Moisés Silva, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 113, agrees on this point. Long also has a good section on History vis-à-vis Fiction, 58-87. The various descriptions of the genre of the Book of Jonah bear witness to this. Silva writes: "Most evangelical scholars recognize that the discourses in the Book of Job, whatever their historical basis, reflect a certain measure of literary creativity. Not many, however, are ready to concede that the Book of Jonah relates a fictional story," in Has the Church Misread, 15.

determination to sanctify and compel literal belief in the past."[23] What this means is that the Bible wants

to be read on its own historiographic terms. It does not mean a scholar has to believe in the Bible's

inspiration as such.

Finally, Sternberg asks what is the relationship between the form of the Bible's narrative and its

teaching. Simply, "form has no value or meaning apart from communicative (historical, ideological,

aesthetic) function."[24] Sternberg lists eight biblical forms that play a central role in a poetics of the

Bible:

1. Temporal ordering, especially where the actual sequence diverges from the chronological.
2. Analogical design: parallelism, contrast variation, recurrence, symmetry, chiasm.
3. Point of view, e.g., the teller's powers and manipulations, shifts in perspective from
   external to internal rendering or from narration to monologue and dialogue . . .
4. Representational proportions: scene, summary, repetition.
5. Informational gapping and ambiguity.
6. Strategies of characterization and judgment.
7. Modes of coherence, in units ranging from a verse to a book.
8. The interplay of verbal and compositional pattern.[25]

However, these forms are not unique to the Bible, therefore a literary approach to the Bible

should not be content merely with pointing them out, but explaining how they function and asking what is

their purpose or effect that informs the organization of the material. "Form can produce or imply an

artistic function, it still cannot enthrone one regardless of context."[26] The ideological, historiographic,

and aesthetic principles of biblical narrative all cooperate and interrelate, working together to provide a

"foolproof composition" in which "the Bible is difficult to read, easy to underread and overread and even

misread, but virtually impossible to, so to speak, counterread."[27]

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[23] Sternberg, 32.

[24] Ibid., xii. Sternberg states that "Biblical narrative emerges as a complex, because multifunctional, discourse [sic]. Functionally speaking, it is regulated by a set of three principles: ideological, historiographic, and aesthetic," 41.

[25] Ibid., 39. Sternberg , very simply, defines poetics as the systematic working or study of literature (2), and the reader's primary business is to make purposive sense of the Bible, "so as to explain the *what's* and the *how's* in terms of the *why's* of communication," 1.

[26] Ibid, 40-41.

[27] Ibid., 50. Sternberg calls the biblical narrator an "artful ideologist," 38.

To conclude this introduction a few examples will be given noting the shift from historical-critical approaches to more literary ones in some recent biblical commentaries and biblical analyses. The editor of Shalom Paul's Amos commentary in the *Heremeneia* series notes that Paul's commentary is very different from Hans W. Wolff's approach. This is by series design so that commentaries may be presented by "scholars with different fields of competence or different methods of approach to critical and historical issues."[28] Paul explicitly questions the "scissors-and-paste" conjectures of form and redaction criticism, exemplified by Wolff's commentary. Paul writes that "almost all of the arguments for later interpolations and redactions . . . are shown to be based on fragile foundations and inconclusive evidence."[29]

The authors of the *Anchor Bible* commentary on Amos state: "We do not wish to deny the validity and value of the results of modern criticism, but we can no longer display those results with the confidence and finality that are found in many old handbooks."[30] This commentary is interested in the text, the traditional Masoretic text, as it stands.

The author of the *Anchor Bible* commentary on Zephaniah also works with the text as it stands. She calls her exegetical approach "literary," and objects to analyses which subject Zephaniah to fragmentation. "A literary approach tries to get at the distinctiveness of a prophet's rhetoric and to explain how it achieves its impact. . . . Moreover, the primary task of the exegete is to explain the *book*, not only its pieces. The exegete will therefore assume coherence (as readers do for all texts), until all attempts to find it fail."[31] David Hagstrom, in his work on the book of Micah, thinks that Micah is a

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[28] Shalom M. Paul, Amos: A commentary on the Book of Amos, Heremeneia Series, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), xxvii.. See Hans W. Wolff, Joel and Amos, trans. W. Janzen et al., ed. S. Dean McBride, Jr., Heremeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

[29] Paul, 6.

[30] Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Bible Vol. 24A (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 4.

[31] Adele Berlin, Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Bible Vol. 25A (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 20-22.

"composite text with an extended compositional history." [32] However, he too deals solely with the final

form of the text and asks what kind of coherence the book of Micah exhibits.

Gordon Wenham, however, points out that how historical-critical approaches and literary

approaches can be synthesized is not so simple.   Some scholars who use a literary approach to their study

of the text don't want to deny the validity of the older critical approaches, nor some of their conclusions,

yet there is tension involved in saying this.

> [S]ome of the old criteria for source division are seen quite differently by literary critics.
> . . . So in certain areas literary criticism is consciously affecting source-critical
> judgments. . . . Our commentary therefore aims to discuss first what is certain, namely,
> the present form of the text, before tackling less certain issues of sources and their
> redaction. This approach is not only sounder from the point of view of literary method,
> but also theologically. . . . The final form was seen as the canonical and inspired text, on
> which the godly meditated and formed their lives.[33]

Chapter six of this thesis will survey several commentaries on the Book of Jonah to see what new

contributions literary approaches are making above and beyond these commentaries without an avowed

literary approach. The next chapter will give a brief historical survey of literary approaches to the Bible

in order to better put in perspective where the three books under investigation fit, and also to help in

analyzing any benefits to be gained from modern literary approaches.

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[32] David Gerald Hagstrom, The Coherence of the Book of Micah: A Literary Analysis, SBL
Dissertation Series 89 Old Testament ed. J.J. M. Roberts (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 4.
Hagstrom writes: "I readily grant that the book of Micah stems from a number of hands operating over a
period of several centuries," 8.

[33] Gordon J. Wenham, Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word
Books, 1987), xxxv-xxxvi. See also fn. 17 above where scholars were pointing out inconsistencies
between Sternberg's theory and practice, noting just how difficult a synthesis of approaches is. Robert
Alter, commenting on Damrosch's critique that many literary critics neglect the historical circumstances
in which the texts evolved says, "but [Damrosch] is struck with the opposite quandary of basing an
analysis on scholarship's conjectural identification of discrete strata in the texts and on the still shakier
dating of the proposed strata." See Robert Alter, "Biblical Imperatives and Literary Play" in Not in
heaven, 15. See also Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical narrative, (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 2, and
Adele Berlin, "Poetic Interpretation and Historical-Critical Methods" Chapt. 5 in Poetics and
Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983; repr., Winona Lake, IN:
Eisenbrauns, 1994).

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF LITERARY APPROACHES TO THE BIBLE

Only a very thin thread, which spans centuries, can be woven to give an outline of all the

approaches and scholars that could be listed in this chapter. " 'Literary approach' is a deliberately vague

term that covers sundry literary techniques, presuppositions, terminology, and levels of interpretation."[1]

The purpose of this chapter is to put the three specific books under investigation in historical perspective.

This chapter will focus more on developments in Biblical scholarship, primarily in Old Testament

analysis, within the last several decades. However, it is important to note that "literary approaches" did

not only develop within that time. Hagstrom, at the end of his analysis of the book of Micah, writes that

his "observations suggest that the advent of biblical criticism interrupted an interpretive tradition of

reading the biblical texts as literature which made sense in its final form."[2] Morgan and Barton also write:

> The changing relationships between literary and historical tastes . . . cannot be reduced
> to a simple formula. But it is clear that the historical task of reconstructing persons,
> events, and traditions did not gain independence, channeling literary insights to serve
> its own quite different aims, until it became a weapon of the modern rationalist assault
> on traditional Christianity. Before that, and even subsequently in more orthodox circles,
> historical questions were raised and answered in order to resolve difficulties in the *texts.*
> They were guided by the *literary* interest that is inseparable from any intelligent reading
> of the Bible, not by a specifically historical interest. That did not develop until Richard
> Simon (1638-1712), and then the deists, saw its anti-Protestant potential.[3]

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[1] Tamara C. Eskenazi, "A Literary Approach to Chronicles' Ark Narrative in 1 Chronicles 13-16," in Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday, eds. Astrid B. Beck et al., (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 260.

[2] Hagstrom, 130. See also James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," in Beyond Form Criticism, 56. "It would be an error, therefore, to regard the modern school in isolation from the history of OT scholarship because from the time of Jerome and before and continuing on with the rabbis and until modern times there have been those who have occupied themselves with matters of style." This lecture was originally published in Journal of Biblical Literature, 88 (1969), 1-18.

[3] Robert Morgan with John Barton, Biblical Interpretation, Oxford Bible Series, Gen. eds. Peter R. Ackroyd and Graham N. Stanton (London: Oxford University Press, 1988), 206.

However, even before beginning the historical survey proper, it can be claimed that one of the reasons there is interest in literary approaches, or in "the Bible as Literature," is because the Bible is good literature. Philo claimed that Moses learned about Greek meter, rhythm and harmony from the Egyptians, all of which he used to compose Hebrew poetry.[4] The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes writes, "In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly."[5]   There is evidence also that the Biblical writers "wrote in apparent awareness of the literature being produced in surrounding nations. . . . The Bible itself advertises its literary nature in both direct and indirect ways. Throughout history, interpreters have been able to approach the Bible as literature precisely because the authors of the Bible did so before them."[6]

The early church fathers had differing views about the literary quality of the Bible. Origen thought that the Bible did not compare, in terms of dialectics and rhetorics, to Greek and Roman classical literature. He thought that it was not the style, but the substance, of the writings that caused the conversion of people to Christianity. Jerome judged biblical literature superior to that of Horace, Virgil, or Cicero. Jerome asked, "How can Horace go with the Psalter, Virgil with the gospels, Cicero with the apostle?"[7]

Augustine, at an earlier stage of life, was not impressed with the literary qualities of the Bible.[8] However, in *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine gives his final word on the matter. Augustine was a teacher of rhetoric so he naturally looked at the Scriptures from this point of view. Ryken calls this work the most important early statement about the Bible as literature.

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[4] Trible, 14. See Philo, De Vita Moses, trans. F.H. Colson,, Vol. 6, Loeb Classical Library (1966), 1.23.

[5] Eccl. 12:9-10. This example is cited by Ryken, "The Bible as Literature," 50.

[6] Ryken, 50-51.

[7] Ibid., 51.

[8] See Augustine's Confessions, Book 3, section 5.

It would hardly be an overstatement to say that the subsequent history of the Bible as literature is a series of footnotes to Augustine. The key ingredients are all here--an assumption that to approach the Bible as literature means relating it to known literature, delight in the form and beauty of the Bible, sensitivity to the interplay between form and religious meaning in the Bible, and a cautionary awareness that conventional literary criteria, though relevant, do not fit in all the ordinary ways.[9]

From the early church fathers through the middle ages Christian scholars continued analyzing the Bible by reading the text "closely," somewhat akin to what is commonly called a "close reading" today.[10] Jewish scholars also "plumbed the literary treasures of scriptures, analyzing form, style, tropes, and related features to explicate meaning."[11] In the 15th Century, Rabbi Judah ben Jehiel Rophé, titled Messer Leon, wrote an *ars rhetorica* in which he claimed that the Hebrew Scriptures were the best source from which to learn rhetoric. He thought the Scriptures, though perfect like God, were to be studied according to the same rhetorical principles as that of secular literature.[12]

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[9] Ibid., 52-53. See Brevard Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 36-39. Childs writes that Augustine analyzes "the Bible in considerable depth in terms of its purely literary qualities as to how its figures of speech function, and how its sentences are constructed. . . . However for all of Augustine's concern with careful literary analysis, it remains for him only a vehicle of its true content. Eloquence can be a trap if divorced from wisdom, rhetorical skills apart from truth," 38-39.

[10] Many books use the term "close reading" without further defining what it means or involves. Some readers read more "closely" than others. Hasel writes that "close reading" is "the meticulous, detailed analysis of the verbal texture of the final text." See Gerhard F. Hasel, Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate, 3rd ed., repr., (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 93.

[11] Trible, 16. For a more extensive, though still brief overview, of the ancient to modern period see Trible, 14-21.

[12] Juda Messer Leon, The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow (Sepher Nophet Suphim), A Critical edition and Translation by Isaac Rabinowitz, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). See introduction by Rabinowitz, where he writes, "Astonishingly innovative and ahead of its time though [Leon's] rhetorical exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures is thus seen to be--Book IV of the N.S. is even today not superseded as a systematic study of Biblical Hebrew figures of diction and thought--it is culturally fallacious in two fundamental respects. One of these . . . is that the canons and principles of Greek and Latin rhetorical art may not simply be presumed--as Rabbi Judah believed--to have been functional in the ancient Israelite culture in which the Hebrew Scriptures were produced. . . . (therefore) all his rhetorical analyses of biblical texts are necessarily suspect of cultural fallibility. The identical suspicion, we hasten to add, for the same reason--though with far less excuse than in the case of our fifteenth-century scholar!--attaches to practically the whole of our modern rhetorical and literary criticism of the Hebrew Bible. A valid rhetorical understanding of the Hebrew Bible is still, as it was in JML's day, a prime desideratum of biblical scholarship." lxv.

"The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries represented a remarkable flowering of literary appreciation for the Bible."[13] In this period of the Renaissance and Reformation the Scriptures were approached to better understand both their content and style. During this period exegetes and poets influenced one another, holding the Bible to be a sacred book and appreciating its form.[14] Luther wrote,

> I am persuaded that without knowledge of literature pure theology cannot at all endure
> . . . nay, I see that there has never been a great revelation of the Word of God unless He
> has first prepared the way by the rise and prosperity of languages and letters, as though
> they were John the Baptists. . . . Certainly it is my desire that there shall be as many
> poets and rhetoricians as possible, because I see that by these studies, as by no other
> means, people are wonderfully fitted for the grasping of sacred truth and for handling it
> skillfully and happily. . . . Therefore I beg of you that at my request (if that has any
> weight) you will urge your young people to be diligent in the study of poetry and
> rhetoric.[15]

Robert Lowth is credited with writing the pioneering work of modern literary criticism of the Bible, "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews," in the eighteenth century. Some scholars think Lowth's book the most influential in terms of "secularizing" the Bible. Lowth himself said his work was not concerned with theological questions per se, or with the Bible as a source of religious truth, but with analyzing the forms and conventions of Hebrew poetry.[16] James Kugel has said Lowth's book changed the way the Bible is read.[17] Written as the inaugural lectures when he became Professor of Poetry at

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[13] Ryken, "The Bible as Literature," 53.

[14] See Barbara K. Ledwalski, Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). For a reformer's use of rhetorical categories in doing exegesis see Philip Melanchton's Paul's Letter to the Colossians, trans. D.C. Parker, (Sheffield: Almond Press), 1989.

[15] Preserved Smith and Charles M. Jacobs, eds., Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters, Vol. 2, (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publishing House, 1918), 176-177, quoted in David J. A. Clines, "Story and Poem: The Old Testament as Literature and as Scripture," in Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in Old Testament Literary Criticism, ed. Paul R. House (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 25.

[16] See Ryken, "The Bible as Literature," 54-57. For a more sympathetic view of Lowth's "secularizing" work see Morgan, 207-211. Morgan notes that Lowth became Bishop of London and that originally Lowth's work was not conceived in such hostile ("secularizing") terms. Lowth could not foresee what others would do with his work.

[17] James L. Kugel, The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 286.

Oxford, these are famous today for having identified three main types of parallelism in Biblical poetry: synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic. Lowth also pointed out that Hebrew poetry is not inferior to that of "classical literature," and that while having similarities with the "classics" its uniqueness needs to be studied and appreciated.

From Lowth we skip more than a century to get to Herman Gunkel (1862-1932), the father of Form Criticism.[18] Some would see no reason to list Gunkel in a "literary approach" section, and others see him and form critics as the most direct descendant of Lowth.[19] The reason Gunkel is listed in a "historical survey of literary approaches to the Bible" is because he advanced literary study of the Bible by seeking to identify the genre of the text.[20] One scholar has defined form criticism as "aesthetic analysis bending toward history."[21] Form criticism, however, has changed since Gunkel's times, with scholars pointing out "its inadequacies, and especially its tendency to be too exclusive in its application of the method."[22] James Muilenburg was in the forefront of that change. He stimulated and promoted the study of style. His proposal, which he called "rhetorical criticism," will be examined next.

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[18] Frei, in The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative, has documented the shift in biblical scholarship from a literary to a more historical frame of reference during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

[19] For the former view see Meir Weiss, The Bible from Within: The Method of Total Interpretation, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), esp. 1-46. Morgan, 207-211, acknowledges the big difference between Lowth and Gunkel, though they are bound by finding the characteristic Hebrew forms in which ideas were expressed.

[20] Gunkel called Form Criticism, "Gattungsforschung." The German "Form" may be translated "form" in English, and it implies the structure or shape of a passage. "Genre" may be the best English translation of the German "Gattung," though in English usage "genre" does not cover all that "Gattung" can. "Gattung" means also the oral traditions and forms. See Barton, Reading, 30-44, and John Barton, "Form Criticism: Old Testament," in Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 838-41, for brief overviews of Form Criticism. Stephen K. Sherwood, "Had God Not Been on My Side:" An Examination of the Narrative Technique of the Story of Jacob and Laban Genesis 29.1-32.2, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 1-2, says Gunkel was the first critical commentator on Genesis to address literary technique at length.

[21] Geller, 10.

[22] Muilenburg, 52. See Old Testament Form Criticism, ed. John H. Hayes, (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974). See Bernhard W. Anderson, "The New Frontier of Rhetorical Criticism: A tribute to James Muilenburg" in Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg, eds. Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler, (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1974), ix-xviii. See Trible, 81-83. Even

Muilenburg, in his presidential address to the 1968 Society of Biblical Literature, did not intend to reject form criticism, but did want to supplement it by looking beyond the confines of form criticism to literary features which were ignored by older methods. He was concerned with the particularities of the text rather than the typical and representative features. For instance, Muilenburg argued that the "Gattungen" which appear in the Bible are usually not the "pure" types that form critics stress, so a reduction of the biblical "Gattungen" to "pure Gattungen" misses the distinctiveness of the biblical "imitation," and thereby the thought of the author is obscured.[23] Muilenburg formulated that "a responsible and proper articulation of the words in their linguistic patterns and in their precise formulations will reveal to us the texture and fabric of the writer's thought, not only what it is that he thinks, but as he thinks it."[24] This means that attention to language and style may reveal as much about the author's intent as that of the author's historical situation.

The rhetorical critic, according to Muilenburg, must first define the limits or scope of the literary unit under investigation. The critic will observe the formal rhetorical devices of the beginning and end, and also the substance or content of these points, in order to better grasp the writers intent and meaning.[25] Secondly, the critic must recognize the structure of the composition to discern the configuration of its component parts, that is, to show how the parts work together in the overall design.

Muilenburg did not create a comprehensive system for rhetorical criticism. His life of teaching, and this lecture, however, did influence many. Some concentrated on rhetoric as the art of composition,

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though Muilenburg thought he was merely supplementing form criticism, rhetorical criticism became a discipline in its own right, and practiced in different ways.

[23] Muilenburg, 53-55.

[24] Muilenburg, 56. Trible notes that outside of this presidential lecture Muilenburg varied this formulation to "a proper articulation of form yields a proper articulation of meaning." 27. Trible notes that this changes from a focus on "authorial intent" to a more general concept of "meaning." According to the second formulation, then, meaning may center in the text, the reader, or the author. Wherever the center, though, meaning always has a theological dimension.

[25] Muilenburg, 58, notes the great need for literary sensitivity in determining the limits, as well as noting structural marks like climatic or ballast lines that bear the burden of the unit. Ring construction, or *inclusio,* should be noted too.

others on rhetoric as the art of persuasion.[26] Muilenburg has been criticized for focusing too much on the

aesthetics of the Scriptures, though he would not regard rhetorical criticism merely as an aesthetic

approach. Rhetorical criticism as conceived of by Muilenburg was to help understand the Scriptures.[27]

The years 1969-1974 are listed by Paul House as the time when the seeds of "literary criticism"

as a discipline were sown. 1969 refers to Muilenburg's work, "Form Criticism and Beyond," while the

"watershed year," 1974, refers to the founding of the journal *Semeia* in the United States.[28] In the first

issue of *Semeia* it was noted that the journal did not intend to discard older traditional critical theories, but

that *Semeia* had to do with "such matters as the dynamics of human speech and communication,

language modes and patterns, the apperception of hearer or reader, the social-cultural nexus of all

language-phenomena, and the relation of language to referent and to reality."[29]

Those seeds of literary criticism took root in the years 1974-80.[30] During this time structuralism

and formalism came to the fore.[31] Structuralism is not only concerned with exegesis of the Bible. It can

be applied, and has been, to many other disciplines. Structuralism is a method of organizing all human

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[26] See Trible, 32-48. These two understandings of rhetoric are distinct, though not incompatible. See also Thomas B. Dozeman, "OT Rhetorical criticism," in Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 714-15, especially on the "Muilenburg School." For a current example of one in the "Muilenburg School" see Chris Franke, Isaiah 46, 47, and 48: A New Literary-Critical Reading, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

[27] One such critic is Wilhelm Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking us?" in Catholic Biblical Quarterly 49, no. 1 (January 1987): 451. Paul House places the "paradigm shift" from interest in the pre-text to text with "rhetorical criticism." See Paul House, "The Rise and Current Status of Literary Criticism of the Old Testament," in Beyond Form Criticism, 8.

[28] House, 4-10. For a listing of some important biblical/literary works in the past few decades see Gunn, "Narrative Criticism," 172-178.

[29] Amos N. Wilder, "*Semeia*, An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism: An Introduction," Semeia 1 (1974): 4.

[30] House, 11-15. House lists the dates as 1974-1981.

[31] On structuralism see John Barton, "Structuralism," in Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. 6, 214-217. John Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 104-139. Wesley A. Kort, Story, Text and Scripture: Literary Interests in Biblical Narrative, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 61-71.

social phenomena.   Structuralism had its beginnings in linguistics, and is especially associated with the

work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Saussure brought something of a "Copernican revolution" to

linguistics by focusing on a synchronic study of the system or structure of the language, versus the

traditional diachronic study of language.   Saussure also pointed out the arbitrariness between a sign and

what it signifies. An easy way to point this out is to show how two different languages use different

words, or signs, for the same thing signified. [32]

Saussure also distinguished the linguistic system, which he termed "langue," from a linguistic

utterance, or "parole." Simply, this is the difference between the language system and language usage.

Within the language system the principle of "binary opposition" is primary. This means that we can

understand what a given "sign" means because it is opposed, or contrasted, to another sign.

In biblical studies structuralism is interested in the "final form" of the text, that is, it studies the

surface structure of the text. However, this is done not to understand its meaning as such, but to get

"behind the text," to explain the deep structure or the system behind the surface that determines the

surface.[33] "In principle, structuralists are concerned with *analysis* rather than with exegesis: they are not

so much proposing new interpretations of texts as trying to show how *any* interpretation, old or new,

comes to be an appropriate reading of a text."[34]

The two main branches of structuralism, as practiced on biblical texts, are called "actantial" and

"paradigmatic" analysis.[35] As in all the methods, or approaches to the study of Scripture, there is not a

single way of doing structural exegesis.   Structuralism is often faulted for being too complex, confusing,

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[32] "Signs" do not always have to be words. They can range from phonemes, to actions, to larger
cultural "signs."   Sometimes "signs" are called "signifiers."

[33] For a structuralist analysis of the Book of Jonah, see A group from Rennes, France, "An
Approach to the Book of Jonah: Suggestions and Questions," in Semeia 15 (1979) : 85-96.

[34] Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 121.

[35] See Craig L. Blomberg, Robert I. Hubbard, and William W. Klein, Introduction to Biblical
Interpretation, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993) 429-432. Actantial analysis posits that most stories have
six major actants that develop the action of the story. These are: sender, object, receiver, helper, subject
and opponent. Paradigmatic analysis posits that the basic message of a narrative is connected with pairs
of opposites and the ways they are mediated or resolved.

or subtle, and therefore a more accessible theory was desirable to many. Such a theory, formalism, which challenged structuralism for prominence in literary criticism, will be mentioned next. Some think structuralism is already on the wane in biblical studies. However, it did generate further interest in "close readings" of the text. "In fact, some of the most valuable results of structuralism may, somewhat ironically, come from the analysis of 'surface structural' features, even though that was not the primary intent of the discipline."[36] Structuralism, however, "must not be confused with formalism of any type. . . . Real structuralism makes total claims. . . . Form is viewed not as access to meaning but as meaning itself. Structure is omnipresent; it not only controls but *is* the way the mind thinks."[37]

Formalism also comes in different varieties. The type discussed here is another name for the "new criticism," the "modern American phase of formalism."[38] The term "new criticism" has rarely been used in biblical studies. Formalism studies themes, motifs, plot, characterization, setting, imagery, narrative viewpoint, poetic ambiguity, tension, irony, the way the language is used, and other things to help uncover a text's meaning, in much the same way as "secular" literary criticism uncovers a text's meaning. Meaning is determined solely from within the text, and not from without, by a close reading of the text .

Another development during this time period was the founding in 1976 of *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (JSOT), and also a supplement to the series, by scholars from the University of Sheffield, England. The "Sheffield school" has adopted many of new criticism's insights into biblical exegesis.[39] JSOT joined *Semeia* as a major vehicle for Old Testament literary criticism.

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[36] Ibid., 432.

[37] Geller, 23-24.

[38] Lynn Poland, Literary Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Critique of Formalist Approaches, (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 75.

[39] See David Gunn, "The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation," in JSOT Supplement 6 (1978), and "The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story," in JSOT Supplement 14 (1980). "Gunn advanced the notion that solely literary analyses are legitimate for exegesis. . . . He showed that the method was versatile enough to illuminate text, theme, and theology," see House, "The Rise and Current Status," 15.

The flowering of literary criticism happened in the 1980's.[40] This decade can be described by a series of important books, only a few of which will be mentioned. The first is Robert Alter's The Art of Biblical Narrative. Alter's easy to understand book, and his reputation as a literary critic and one who was very much at home in the Hebrew language helped convince many concerning the advantages of formalistic analysis. Alter's aim was to bring to light the distinctive principles of the Bible's narrative art. Alter stated that in many cases a literary student of the Bible can learn more from the traditional commentaries than from modern scholarship.

> The difference between the two is ultimately the difference between assuming that the text is an intricately interconnected unity . . . and assuming it is a patchwork of frequently disparate documents. . . . With their assumption of interconnectedness, the makers of the Midrash were often as exquisitely attuned to small verbal signals of continuity and to significant lexical nuances as any 'close reader' of our own age.[41]

One of the elements of biblical narrative, according to Alter, is repetition. "In biblical prose the reiteration of key-words has been formalized into a prominent convention which is made to play a much more central role in the development of thematic argument then does the repetition of such key words in other narrative traditions."[42] Alter would "insist on a complete interfusion of literary art with theological, moral, or historiosophical vision, the fullest perception of the latter dependent on the fullest grasp of the former."[43]

Another book, written by a secular literary critic, important in a literary approach survey is Northrop Frye's The Great Code.[44] Frye does not give detailed commentary on specific texts, but he does argue that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, needs to be read as a whole book. Under the headings of language, myth, metaphor and typology, Frye places a narrative structure over the whole

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[40] House, 15-19.

[41] Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, 11.

[42] Ibid. 92.

[43] Ibid. 19.

[44] Northrope Frye, The Great Code: The Bible and Literature. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

Bible, strengthening the literary critical emphasis on the Bible's unity. Frye does not believe this unity to be of the kind that a single author might produce, but because the Bible has been read for centuries as a unity he believes that the reasons for studying it as such can be found in the text itself.[45]

Meir Sternberg's The Poetics of Biblical Narrative has already been mentioned.[46] The importance of his book cannot be underestimated. It is "the fullest and most ambitious structuralist study of the Bible that has yet appeared and sets a new standard for literary study of the Bible."[47] Like Alter, Sternberg has contributed in understanding Hebrew narrative technique. Besides this, however, he has worked for a more solid theoretical framework for the practice of literary study. A major complaint against Sternberg by other scholars is that he presents his framework as "normative," and thereby would stifle other ways of reading the text.

In fact, it is agreed by all that there currently is no "normative" way to read the Bible, nor is there a "normative" methodology, in scholarly circles. In the 1990s the proliferation of approaches that come under the heading "literary" continues to expand. Terminology is bound to be confused in such a changing environment. One recent book has defined the truly new "new literary criticisms" as "post-structuralist." These include feminist, materialist or political, psychoanalytic, and reader-response criticisms, as well as deconstruction.[48] David Gunn has stated that

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[45] Frye does not discount that the Bible is "the end product of a long and complex editorial process," xvii. However, he thinks discovering this process is near impossible. "They [the editors] have pulverized the Bible until almost all sense of individuality has been stamped out of it," 203.

[46] See Chapt. 1, 6-9.

[47] Damrosch, 23. This sentence gives a good example of terminological confusion. "Structuralist" does not mean Sternberg practices structural criticism.

[48] Exum and Clines, The New Literary Criticism, 12-15. They characterize this "new" period, as represented by the essays in their book, as eclectic, exemplifying no methodological purism, with no real attempt to theoretically undergird a particular way of working with a text. Finally, there is a move from interpretation of the text to a critique of the text, in other words, an "evaluation of the biblical texts from standpoints outside the ideology of the texts themselves," 14. On "Deconstruction" see Tremper Longman III, Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, series ed. Moisés Silva, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 41-45. For a deconstructivist study on Old Testament texts see Peter D. Miscall, The Workings of Old Testament Narrative, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

the major challenge to biblical criticism mounted by literary criticism cannot be
expressed in terms simply of a shift from 'diachronic' to 'synchronic' analysis but rather
involves the question of normative reading. This is especially so for those many among
biblical scholars who are interested in theology and, in whatever tradition, the authority
of the Bible. For it seems clear to me that those theorists who recognize the reader's
inextricable role in the production of meaning in texts have the future on their side. . . .
Many religiously conservative/orthodox critics are finding in literary criticism
(especially of 'historical' narrative) a refuge from the hobgoblin of historicity. Yet my
prediction is that troubling times lie ahead as the reader theory of the secular critics
begins to corrode the edges of normative exegesis and doctrines of biblical authority
which insist on viewing the Bible as divine prescription.[49]

This brief and selective survey can be concluded by showing a diagram which is useful in

mapping the various approaches to the Bible.   This diagram was devised by the American literary critic

M. H. Abrams.[50]

Universe
(World or Historical Events)
▲

Work
(Text)
↗   ↖

Artist   Audience
(Author)   (Reader)
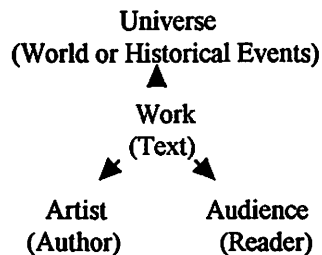
Theories about the nature of literature can be assigned each element in the diagram.[51] Depending

on which element is emphasized categories or criteria of criticism take shape.   While each theory has

appeared throughout history, and usually takes into account portions of the different elements in the

diagram, there are definite periods where certain theories are dominant.

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[49] Gunn, "New Directions," 69-70. Barton, Reading the Old Testament, likewise believes that it
is the tendency of every "criticism" to seek to be "normative." He writes that "it has emerged that
problems with methods almost always begin at the point where they cease to be descriptive and tentative
and become rigid and doctrinaire. The basic flaw, I have suggested, is the belief that the question 'How
should we read the Old Testament?' can be answered," 207.

[50] M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition
(London: Oxford University Press, 1953). The parenthetical additions are not original to Abrams, but are
sometimes used by other writers.

[51] For overview see Trible, 10-13; Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 198-207; Longman III,
Literary Approaches, 18-45.

Mimetic theories concentrate on the universe (world), and posit that literature imitates, copies, or represents the external world. This was the dominant literary theory from the fourth century B.C. through the eighteenth century A.D.

Expressive theories focus on the artist (author).[52] These could also be called author-centered theories. The work is meant to express the author's thoughts and experiences, therefore the intent of the author is sought. Methods to discover who the author was, his characteristics, and his historical background, and therefore the text's background, are sought. In biblical studies such methods include source, form, and redaction criticism. The historical-grammatical approach also notes the importance of studying the text in light of its history.[53]

Objective theories focus on the work (text) itself, and view each work as an object of study in its own right, without regard to how it mirrors the world, shows the author's mind, or affects the reader. These theories could be called text-centered. Here would fit theories such as New Criticism, or formalism, structuralism, and rhetorical criticism.[54] "Even though the antecedents for objective theories run . . . all the way back to Aristotle, not until the twentieth century has attention focused on the work itself as the *sine qua non* for literary criticism." [55]

Pragmatic theories focus on the audience (reader) and the effect the literature has upon it. These might be called reader-centered theories. Naturally, reader-response theories fit here. Again, differences among reader-response theories abound, so it is unfair to say of all of them that meaning resides solely in

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[52] "Author" may mean authors, redactor, or a community as well.

[53] Walter Kaiser has said, "The *author's* intended meaning is what a text means." Quoted in Longman, Literary Approaches, 25.

[54] Rhetorical criticism as defined by Muilenburg in his presidential address was interested in the author's intent, and so might be seen as an author-centered approach. The majority of rhetorical critics, however, is interested more in the text than extra-textual matters. Barton, while realizing Brevard Childs might disagree, would place a "canonical approach" to Scripture under text-centered approaches. For a discussion of this see Barton, Reading the Old Testament, 202, 208-211.

[55] Trible, 13.

the reader, as if anything goes, and not somehow related to the text.[56] A more extreme form of reader-centered theories are "ideological readings" of Scripture like feminist or materialist/ political readings. One proponent of a reader-centered theory has written:

> The four elements of work, artist, imitated universe, and audience form a dynamic system of criticism in which each of the elements is a variable coordinate differing in meaning and function. . . . The challenge and the opportunity for criticism today is that no one of the elements (in the Abrams diagram) is dominant. There is no single pervasive world view of which one theory could be an integral part and therefore which would be dominant in literary criticism. All of the elements whirl in combinations which defy simple systemization.[57]

How the three books under investigation deal with the various elements of a literary work will be observed in the next chapters.

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[56] See Robert M. Fowler, "Who is 'The Reader' in Reader Response Criticism?" Semeia 31 (1985): 5-23. See McKnight, The Bible and the Reader, writes, "This does not mean 'anything goes,' for systems of interpretation involve components that must be correlated with each other and with the reader. . . . These components include a world view that constrains the sort of meaning desirable and possible," 133. Another name for a reader-centered theory is "reception theory."

[57] McKnight, 2.

CHAPTER THREE

JONATHAN MAGONET: *FORM AND MEANING: STUDIES IN LITERARY TECHNIQUES IN THE BOOK OF JONAH*

Introduction

Magonet's book is the earliest written of the three books under investigation and so will be discussed first.[1] Magonet seeks to discover why there is a vast range of interpretation on the Book of Jonah considering it is an apparently simple narrative. Behind the simplicity, however, he has discovered a complex structure which ranges from repeated words to structural patterns covering whole chapters. Magonet begins by looking at individual words and phrases and then moves to analysis of larger units and chapters, and finally he gives an analysis of the themes in the Book of Jonah.   His study is "concerned with the interrelationship of these various levels of construction and the ideas they convey; form and meaning, "and his method of investigation was "largely empirical . . . based upon repeated attempts at a close reading of the text." [2]

Magonet is conscious of the effects the literary techniques employed in the Book of Jonah have on the reader. However, Magonet's goal is to let the Book of Jonah speak for itself.   All the details of Magonet's analysis cannot be presented, so representative selections will be made.

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[1] This book evolved from Magonet's 1974 doctoral dissertation. It originally appeared in the series Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie, eds. Jürgen Becker and Henning Graf Reventlow (Bern and Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter and Herbert Lang, 1976). The book was reprinted in 1983 with corrections and supplementation. The 1983 edition is the basis of this study. In the 1983 foreword James Ackerman writes that 1976 saw two major works produced on the Book of Jonah: Magonet's and Ludwig Schmidt, "De Deo:" Studien zur Literarkritik und Theologi des Buches Jona, des Gespräches zwischen Abraham und Jahwe in Gen. xviii 22ff. und von Hi. i, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976). Schmidt's analysis of Jonah is based on source critical assumptions, while Magonet's book is a "literary interpretation." In 1983, Ackerman could say that he thought biblical scholars had not taken note of Magonet's book. Magonet also wrote the entry for the "Book of Jonah," in Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. 3, 937-942.

[2] Magonet, 11.

Analysis of Language

One of the first concerns of a literary analysis is defining the unit to be studied. Magonet starts

by looking for clues to structure at the level of individual words. He lists all the forms of a verbal root that

occur more than once in a Chapter and notes all the connections, or lack thereof.[3] All of this initial

analysis will help him formulate and evaluate hypotheses about structure and meaning. From this data he

makes a "provisional note" that chapters 1-3 can be taken as a unit because the "call words" (הלך קום

קרא) appear only here.

Magonet also seeks to determine the effect of the repetition of a verb within a single Chapter. He

concludes three things.[4] Firstly, such repetition may have a "neutral" effect, for instance, when a

technical term like נפל is used in the "casting" of the lots by the sailors in Chapter 1. Secondly,

repetition may also emphasize the underlying "atmosphere" of a Chapter. For instance, ירא occurs six

times in Chapter 1 which emphasizes a strong undercurrent of "fear" in this Chapter. It "serves, almost

subliminally, the fearsome situation in which the sailors find themselves."[5] Thirdly, repetition may

reinforce the ideas that are expressed overtly, that is, on the level of the story. The "call words" can

illustrate this third effect of repetition. Not only does YHWH "call" Jonah, so does the captain of the boat.

However, the "call" of the captain means something different to Jonah (and the reader), who hears the

"call" of YHWH repeated, even though it is somewhat "disguised" in what the captain meant. "The effect

of this technique upon the reader is to force him from the beginning onwards to read the story on at least

two levels."[6] The "call words" are repeated again at the beginning of Chapter 3, so Magonet concludes

that until the word of YHWH is completed it is "in the air," waiting for fulfillment.

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[3] Ibid., 14.

[4] Magonet recognizes that one of the key problems in reading a narrative text by analyzing the individual words in this way is determining the significant repetition from the "chance" one. See Magonet, 29-31.

[5] Ibid., 16.

[6] Ibid., 17. Magonet also notes the "subliminal" effect of the repetition of the verb טול, "hurl." YHWH "hurls" the storm, and the sailors "hurl" the cargo into the sea, and Jonah asks to be "hurled" into

Repetition of verbal forms with different subjects further allows characters within the story to be compared and contrasted. One example is the fact that both YHWH and Jonah show חוס, "compassion," but on different objects: YHWH on the people of Nineveh and Jonah on the קיקיון plant in Chapter 4. Through such repetitions the author of the Book of Jonah is inviting the reader to make connections between the characters.

Through repetition the author of the Book of Jonah also creates certain ambiguities. The author "uses what is overtly a very precise and economical technique of word usage, but at the same time succeeds in conveying reverberations and ambiguities that dissolve any oversimplified reading of the story."[7] The word רעה can illustrate this. Jonah 3:10-4:1 reads[8]:

וירא האלהים את מעשיהם כי שבו מדרכם הרעה
וינחם האלהים על הרעה אשר דבר לעשות להם ולא עשה:
וירע אל יונה רעה גדולה ויחר לו:

Magonet translates 4:1: "But it 'displeased' Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry." He notes that "displeasure" must relate in some way to the previous uses of "evil." Jonah 4:6 reads:

וימן יהוה־אלהים קיקיון ויעל מעל ליונה להיות צל על ראשו להציל ול מרעתו

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the sea. "The act of YHWH in sending the storm has consequences which are revealed not merely on the level of the narrative itself, but also on the 'subliminal' level of the word that repeats and repeats itself through the episode," 16-17. Another example is ירד. Jonah's "descent" to Jaffa, into a boat, and the "innermost part" of the boat, suggests not only physical, but spiritual descent. In 2:7 Jonah continues to "descend." So, repetition not only helps define a unit, it can reveal "subliminally" the "atmosphere" of the episode, and also provide a connection to a different episode. On the term "strategic mystification" see Magonet, 112.

[7] Ibid., 25. Magonet rightly observes that such ambiguities can be lost in a translation of the Hebrew text. Magonet bases all his observations on the Hebrew. Besides the repetition of words, Magonet also discusses "growing phrases." These are phrases that are repeated with an additional word or element. See Magonet 31-33.

[8] Magonet provides the underlines. רעה is used of all three "characters" in the Book of Jonah: God, Jonah, and the pagans. This invites comparisons. "Although the author could have chosen a different word each time to express different shades of meaning, by retaining this one, he allows each usage to interact with the other, multiplying the levels of correspondence and contrast between the subjects or contexts related to the word," 22.

Here there is a word play on צל/להציל, "to be a shade/ to deliver." The קיקיון will help "shade"

Jonah's head (one might even say "hot-head"), that is, his "displeasure" concerning the heat of the day.

It will also "deliver" him from his "evil," that is, his anger at the non-destruction of Nineveh.

> We have thus here a highly complex interweaving of ideas about the nature and source
> of evil. . . . What is important for our analysis is the recognition of the ambiguities
> implicit in such multiplicity of meaning. 'Evil' is no longer a static thing to be ascribed
> to the 'wicked Ninevites' 'out there,' but a dynamic thing, admitted and unadmitted,
> constantly changing as does the relationship between the characters of the book. The
> reader is caught up in these changing currents, and must frequently adjust his
> perspective.[9]

One final thing will be mentioned under this section of "analysis of language." Magonet seeks

to find a reason for the different usage of the divine name: יהוה, יהוה־אלהים, אלהים, and האלהים.

He sees two different systems at work in the book that correspond to the division of the book into chapters

1-3 and Chapter 4 (with the exception of 2:1). Magonet's structural analysis of the book will be looked at

more closely shortly, however, in addition to the division based on the restriction of the "call words" in

chapters 1-3, he notes that chapters 1-3 deal with Jonah's experience with the pagan world. Chapter 4

deals with the "discussion" between Jonah and God.[10] Based on the observations that the author of Jonah

is very purposeful in his use of language, Magonet believes that the name changes are not mere accidents,

or stylistic variations.

In 1:9, Jonah confesses that he is a Hebrew who fears יהוה אלהי השמים "YHWH God of

the heavens." This definition by Jonah explains how he, the sailors, Ninevites and their leaders (the

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[9] Ibid., 25. On the question of whether or not Jonah is "delivered" from his "evil," there is no
direct answer at the story level. However, Magonet notes that every action performed by characters other
than God, which are introduced by an infinitive, turn out to be unsuccessful. The things ordained by
God, when the infinitive is used, succeed. At 3:10b, however, an action of God introduced by an infinitive
fails--God "repented of the evil which he said he would do to them, and he did it not." "Only God has
the power to break the rules by which events (and, so to speak, the language which describes these events)
are governed," 31.

[10] Magonet gives a slightly different division as it relates to the divine names in the Anchor Bible
Dictionary entry. See "Book of Jonah," ABD Vol. 3, 938, where he states that in chapters 1 and 3 (not 1-
3) the use of the divine designation is related to the religious perceptions of the "pagan world." The use
in Jonah chapters 2 and 4 relate to the "private" internal dialogue between Jonah and God. However,
in good new critical fashion I will deal only with Magonet's book "Form and Meaning" to determine
Magonet's intent.

captain of the boat, and the king) use the divine name. The sailors cry out to their own אלהים (1:5).

The people of Nineveh called out to אלהים (3:8). The captain of the boat and the king of Nineveh

identify אלהים as האלהים (1:6; 3:9).[11] Jonah prays to אל־יהוה אלהיו "to YHWH, his Elohim"

(2:2). Therefore, in chapters 1-3, אלהים refers to the "local" god, or the local concept of god of the

pagans. Some of these pagans then recognize אלהים as האלהים, the Supreme God. The sailors

ultimately identify אלהים as יהוה, who is the "God of the Heavens," the God of the Hebrews/Israelites

and Jonah.[12]

In Chapter 4, where the two characters are Jonah and God, there is a different system in use

which highlights different attributes of God depending on which designation is used. In Chapter 4:2

Jonah confesses in prayer that יהוה is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abundant in loving-

kindness, and one who turns from evil." In 4:4 יהוה asks if Jonah's anger is "good." In 4:6 אלהים־

יהוה "appoints" the קיקיון for Jonah. This divine designation is also a hint at the dual purpose of the

קיקיון "to be a shade for/ to deliver" Jonah. In 4:7 it is האלהים who "appoints" the worm to destroy

the plant. In 4:8 אלהים "appoints" the east wind.[13] Magonet notes that יהוה brings out the aspects

of compassion, mercy, slowness to anger, while האלהים/אלהים brings out the aspects of teaching and

discipline. "It is God as YHWH whose compassion extends to all His creature [sic] and works. It is God

as Elohim who can bring a painful physical lesson and a testing to His prophet--paradoxically in order to

lead him to an understanding of, and participation in, precisely this compassion of God."[14]

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[11] Magonet says this may be because they are "more sophisticated people and leaders of the pagan world," 35.

[12] Magonet answers a possible objection that in 2:7 Jonah does not conceive of God as a "private" or local god as the captain of the ship does (1:6). He notes that this designations conforms to the narrator's designation of Jonah's God in 2:2. And, even though Jonah does not consider YHWH to be a "local" God the usage at 2:7 is subsumed to the naming system.

[13] The word מנה "appoint" is used four times in the Book of Jonah (2:1; 4:6; 4:7; 4:8). Each time it is used with a different designation of the divine name. 2:1 is the exception in Magonet's theory, coming as it does in Chapter 2. However, he thinks it should be taken as belonging to the "Chapter 4 system" because of the word מנה.

Analysis of the Psalm

Magonet thinks the psalm is an integral part of the book of Jonah, written by the author of the

book, even though it is designed and can exit as an independent unit like other "thanksgiving psalms."[15]

Magonet has discovered stylistic and thematic features common to both the psalm and the narrative parts

of the book. The image of God given in the psalm is one who starts an event which must be acted out by

man. This is "thematically consistent with the image of God emphasised [sic] throughout the book."[16]

Magonet has also studied the usage of quotations from the Psalter in the psalm of Jonah. He

starts by demonstrating passages that can be proven to be quotations and then examines the rest in the

light of his theory. He begins with 2:4b which is identical to Psalm 42:8b:

כל משבריך וגליך עלי עברו

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[14] Magonet, 36. An interesting footnote in Magonet's study states that Rabbinic interpretation of the names of God expresses the idea that "in every place where the name of YHWH is used, it refers to God's attribute of mercy. Wherever the name Elohim is used it refers to His attribute of justice. . . . Whether this separation of names was the invention of the author of Jonah, or already represents the formalization of a known usage of the divine names in earlier Biblical tradition . . . takes us beyond our immediate concerns, however such a study might throw light on other texts where the interchange of divine names can be shown to have a significance in the narrative itself," 126. James Limburg, Jonah: A Commentary, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) 45-46, agrees with Magonet's "simple and compelling" explanation of the distribution of divine names in the Book of Jonah.

[15] The psalm is 2:3-10. See James W. Watts, Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative, JSOT Supplement Series 139 (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1992), 132. "The relation between the narrative and psalm in the Book of Jonah has been studied and discussed more than any other psalm in a narrative context." For one example of an analysis of the language of the psalm, which differs markedly from Magonet, see Frank M. Cross, "Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Verse: The Prosody of the Psalm of Jonah," in The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall, eds. H. B. Huffman et al., (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 159-167. For an interesting example on the basis of a "metrical reading," which concludes, like Magonet, that the psalm is original to the Book of Jonah see Duane L. Christensen, "Narrative Poetics and the Interpretation of the Book of Jonah," in Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOT Supplement Series 40 (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1987), 29-48.

[16] Magonet, 41. In the psalm God acts (God throws Jonah in the deep, and he draws him up). Jonah physically sinks, but his inner state "rises." See footnote 6 above and the discussion of "hurl." The verb ירד also provides an example of a key word in the psalm which integrates the psalm with Chapter 1. Another stylistic similarity can be seen in the use of the "growing phrase" technique in the psalm and Chapter one, see above footnote 6. In 2:4 ונהר יסבבני and 2:6 תהום יסבבני demonstrate a progressive descent in the sea. In 2:5 and 2:9 אל היכל קדשך is repeated with a progressive ascent of Jonah. This is similar in Chapter one to the sailors drawing closer to God as the storm increases.

He then finds two phrases that are similar to two phrases in Psalm 31. 2:5a is similar to Psalm 31:23, and 2:9 is similar to Psalm 31:7. The fact that the two phrases in Jonah come from the same psalm make "borrowing" more likely. In regard to 2:9: משמרים הבלי שוא חסדם יעזבו Magonet notes that only here is the root שמר used in the Piel form. It is used in the Qal form in Psalm 31:7. Magonet states that the author of Jonah "implied" this connection be made to Psalm 31:7, the original source, not least because of the unusual Piel form.

> Methodologically we can argue that since the sentence surprises us by its sudden
> appearance, and puzzles us by having no obvious relationship to the experience in the
> 'psalm' we are forced to go to the only other place where an answer might lie (to which
> we are also led by the unusual verbal form), namely the original source of the phrase
> with which we are familiar from our tradition, namely Psalm 31.[17]

Upon comparison one will note that the "I hate" of "I hate them that regard lying vanities" in Psalm 31:7 is missing in 2:9. From this Magonet offers an interpretation of the unusual appearance of 2:9 into the psalm.[18] The author of the Jonah psalm has learned to be more tolerant of idolaters through his experience. He no longer hates the idolaters, but if they continue to regard their idols they will finally forsake the loving kindness of God.[19]

For Magonet, the above use of the Psalm 31 verses adds dimensions of meaning or makes comprehensible what otherwise would not be. He then assumes that the other "parallel phrases" found in the Jonah psalm are quotations and he seeks to explain why they were chosen and emended. The following lists the quotations Magonet has found in the Jonah psalm:[20]

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[17] Magonet, 46.

[18] See Jack M. Sasson, Jonah, The Anchor Bible Vol. 24B (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 166. Sasson regards this verse as an "observation" or an "aside."

[19] Magonet, 46. Magonet notes that the Piel form suggests repeated action or a more intense form of attachment to the idols. "Without such a cross-reference (to Psalm 31:7), which the author clearly intended (emphasis added), there would be no way within the context of the 'psalm' as it exists as a unity by itself, to understand its meaning."

[20] Ibid, 50.

Jonah Pslam		Quotation source
קָרָאתִי מִצָּרָה לִי אֶל יהוה וַיַּעֲנֵנִי	(3	Ps. 120:1
מִבֶּטֶן שְׁאוֹל שִׁוַּעְתִּי שָׁמַעְתָּ קוֹלִי		Ps.31:23b; 116:1; 145:19
וַתַּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מְצוּלָה בִּלְבַב יַמִּים	(4	Ps.120:11;– Ps.69:3,16
וְנָהָר יְסֹבְבֵנִי		
כָּל מִשְׁבָּרֶיךָ וְגַלֶּיךָ עָלַי עָבָרוּ		Ps.42:8
וַאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי נִגְרַשְׁתִּי מִנֶּגֶד עֵינֶיךָ	(5	Ps.31:23a
אַךְ אוֹסִיף לְהַבִּיט אֶל הֵיכַל קָדְשֶׁךָ		Ps.5:8; 138:2
אֲפָפוּנִי מַיִם עַד נֶפֶשׁ	(6	II Sam.22:5; Ps.18:5; 116:3; – Ps.69:2
תְּהוֹם יְסֹבְבֵנִי		
סוּף חָבוּשׁ לְרֹאשִׁי		
לְקִצְבֵי הָרִים יָרַדְתִּי	(7	
הָאָרֶץ בְּרִחֶיהָ בַעֲדִי לְעוֹלָם		
וַתַּעַל מִשַּׁחַת חַיַּי יהוה אֱלֹהָי		Ps.103:4
בְּהִתְעַטֵּף עָלַי נַפְשִׁי אֶת יהוה אֱלֹהָי	(8	Ps.143:4-5; 142:4
וַתָּבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ תְּפִלָּתִי אֶל הֵיכַל קָדְשֶׁךָ		Ps.88:3; 102:2
מְשַׁמְּרִים הַבְלֵי שָׁוְא חַסְדָּם יַעֲזֹבוּ	(9	Ps.31:7
וַאֲנִי בְּקוֹל תּוֹדָה אֶזְבְּחָה לָּךְ	(10	Ps.116:17; 50:14
אֲשֶׁר נָדַרְתִּי אֲשַׁלֵּמָה		Ps.Ps.116:16,18; 22:6; 50:14; 56:13; II Sam.15:7
יְשׁוּעָתָה לַיהוה		Ps.3:9

The author of the Jonah psalm has used other psalm quotations to construct his own psalm.[21] He has occasionally emended the quotations to fit in better with the rest of the Book of Jonah. However, at a certain point, when Jonah is going into new territory (V.6b-7b when Jonah is sinking deeper), no traditional terminology is evoked, but the author creates his own phrases.[22] Magonet sees here evidence of the psalm being written specifically for the Book of Jonah because the change from "familiar to unfamiliar" form expressed in the structure of the psalm is also a key theme of the Book of Jonah. Jonah must leave the familiar and venture into the unfamiliar. He must leave his home and go to Nineveh. He must leave the familiar pious affirmations of God and realize their wider, unfamiliar, import. In short, the form of the Jonah psalm supports meaning.[23] Other evidence for the psalm being integral to the Book of Jonah will be given in the next section.

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[21] Magonet writes, "Such a 'scissors and paste' way of composing a prayer seems a little strange until one recalls that many of the classic prayers and poems of later Jewish liturgy were composed in such a way, thus allowing traditional words and phrases, with all their familiar echoes, nevertheless to say something new," 131. Sasson, Jonah, 164, also writes, "Hebrew poets operated within a tradition in which it was perfectly proper to appropriate specific ideas and imagery from other sources. Poets might choose to alter the language of an appropriated thought or merely to pluck snippets from within it the better to suit their own poem's purpose . . . its insertion in a different context may be intentional, for the poet may be ironic, mocking, pedagogic, or the like." Sasson also found some different "inner biblical comparisons" than Magonet.

[22] Magonet admits that finding the significance in the selection and emendation of the psalm quotations by the author of Jonah "can be no more than a hypothetical retracing of the author's steps." 46.

[23] See Douglas Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 31 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 471-472. "[T]here is no significant component of the psalm which lacks some sort of

Analysis of Structure

Various analyses proposed by Magonet will be shown and discussed. The division of the book

into Chapters 1-3, where God deals with the pagan world, and Chapter 4, where God deals solely with

Jonah has already been mentioned. In this division Magonet believes two different schemes are used to

explain the various designations of the divine name.

The book can also be divided down the middle. Chapters 1-2 deal with the first call, Jonah's

flight, his return and his reactions to these events. Chapters 3-4 deal with the second call, the mission to

Nineveh, Jonah's reaction and God's final lesson and question to Jonah. It may be analyzed like this:[24]

1:1-1:16	The first call -- flight. Sailors
2:1	Transition
2:2-2:11	Prayer -- "discussion" with God
3:1-3:10 .	The second call -- obedience. Nineveh
4:1	Transition
4:2-4:11	Prayer -- "discussion" with God.

Other scholars have noted the "concentric" structure of chapters 1 and 4 and Magonet builds on

them. He analyzes Chapter 1 like this:[25]

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recognizable affinity with some theme or event elsewhere in the book." See also George M. Landes, "The Kerygma of the Book of Jonah," Interpretation 21 (1967): 3-31. Landes argues for the integral necessity of the Jonah psalm in the book. While Magonet points out what he considers the "irony" of Jonah's pious sounding phrases in the psalm, he states that if only the actions of Jonah were described in the book it would be hard to take Jonah seriously. "Yet for all his selfishness and absurdity, even Jonah has an inner life; he is capable of crying to God and of a limited degree of change in response to God's command and teaching," 53.

[24] Magonet, 55.

[25] Ibid., 57. Magonet recognizes that in this analysis some things are omitted to maintain the pattern (e.g., 1:16b). However, he maintains that the "mathematical ambitions" of the author are still clear. He invokes the term "symmetrophobia" via Phyllis Trible's doctoral dissertation and coined by George Adam Smith, in The Early Poetry of Israel in its Physical and Social Origins, (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 17. "[S]ymmetrophobia: an instinctive aversion to absolute symmetry, which if it knows no better, will express itself in arbitrary and even violent disturbances of the style or pattern of the work." Quoted in Trible, 117. Trible goes on to write, "[Smith] maintained that such deliberate irregularities constitute artistry within a larger whole. Rather than destroying symmetry, they confirm it. Difference enhances similarity. The concept of 'symmetrophobia' offers, then, another way to understand asymmetry in the design of Jonah." 117-118. For other reasons, however, Trible is not satisfied with Magonet's analysis, and does not allow the word "symmetrophobia" to be a cover for everything that doesn't fit. "To achieve this 'structure' [Magonet] relied upon themes, mixed genres, isolated words, and omitted what does not fit. . . . In the process many insights emerged, and yet the particularities of the text suffered." See Trible, 154-155.

1) 4,5a   Narrative -- Fear
2) 5b   Prayer of Sailors
3) 5c,6a   Narrative
4) 6b   Speech of Captain
5) 7a   Speech of Sailors
6) 7b   Narrative
7) 8   Speech of Sailors
C) 9,10a   Proclamation by Jonah -- Fear
VII) 10b   Speech of Sailors
VI) 10c   Narrative
V) 11   Speech of Sailors
IV) 12   Speech of Jonah
III) 13   Narrative
II) 14   Prayer of Sailors
I) 15,16a   Narrative -- Fear

Magonet diagrammed Chapter 4 in a similar fashion and made these observations:[26] Jonah's

first speech consists of 39 words; God's closing speech consist of 39 words. God's first speech consists of

3 words and Jonah's last speech consists of 3 words (5 words without the Maqqephs).

1) 2,3   Speech of Jonah
2) 4   Speech of God
3) 5   Act of Jonah
4) 6a,b   Act of God
5) 6c   Jonah happy
C) 7,8a   Act of God
V) 8b   Jonah "unhappy"
IV) 8b   Speech of Jonah
III) 9a   Speech of God
II) 9b   Speech of Jonah
I) 10,11   Speech of God

This structure helps Magonet solve the problem of 4:5.[27] Some scholars think it is better suited

to follow 3:4. Jonah replies to the question of יהוה in 4:4, ההיטב חרה לך, not with words, but by

leaving the city of Nineveh and building a booth for shade. יהוה אלהים responds to Jonah by

appointing the קיקיון to give Jonah extra shade. In effect, God answer's Jonah action with His own

action. This has its parallel in Chapter 1. When Jonah flees on the sea, God answers by creating a storm.

"God allows Jonah's choice of action to dictate His method of reply."[28]


[26] Magonet, 56-58.

[27] See Sasson, 287-289.

[28] Magonet, 58.

As seen above the form of Chapters 1 and 4 are similar. Magonet has discovered that Chapters 2 and 3 are likewise similar to each other in design. They are mirror images of each other, or what Magonet calls a "stepwise structure."[29] Recognizing that the psalm of Chapter 2 is an integral part of the book helps in discovering the structure of Chapter 3. "The general relationship between them can be clearly expressed in the general formula that whereas Jonah (in Chapter 2) descends in a step-wise manner into the depths (both geographical and spiritual), the people of Nineveh rise in a step-wise manner to the heights."[30] Confirmation of this structure comes when the question is asked why the King of Nineveh seems to act redundantly by ordering a fast and the wearing of sackcloth, even extending the decree to animals.

> [I]f we examine these actions in the light of the 'mirror image' in Jonah, they fulfil [sic] the same role as the author's use of traditional terminology up to a certain key point in the 'psalm' -- the people of Nineveh react in their traditional manner (fast and sackcloth), as does the king at the beginning of his proclamation. But precisely at the point where Jonah plummets down into a new, unknown,, and 'untraditional' depth in the sea . . . the king of Nineveh bursts upwards into a new dimension of penitence for his pagan people: 'and let them cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows . . . ?[31]

According to the above analyses of the chapters Magonet proposes three divisions of the book.[32]

First, the book may be divided according to events in Jonah's life and his reaction to them.

Jonah)

1	2	3	4
Outer Events	Inner Events	Outer Events	Inner Events
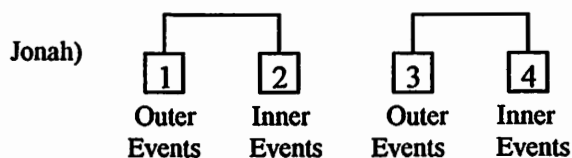
[29] Ibid., 60-63.

[30] Ibid., 60.

[31] Ibid., 63. Magonet handles a possible objection that his analysis does not take into account the "whole" psalm. He removes the "formal elements" of the Psalm, namely the introductory summary v. 3, and the closing "moral," v.9, and vow, v.10. He says that even without these elements the psalm is still a complete unit. See Magonet footnote 33, 134.

[32] Ibid., 59

Secondly, the book can be divided according to the two systems of how the divine name is used.

God)   ┌─────┬─────┐   ┌───┐
       │ 1 │ │ 2 │ │ 3 │   │ 4 │
       יהוה אלהי השמים   אל חנון ורחום
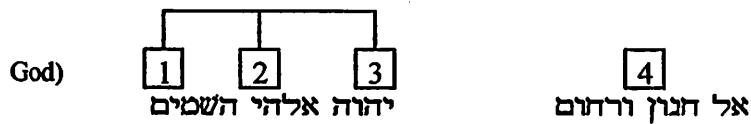
Thirdly, the book can be divided according to the structure of the of the chapters.

Structure)   ┌──── Descending   Rising ────┐
       │ 1 │   │ 2 │   │ 3 │   │ 4 │
       Concentric   Concentric
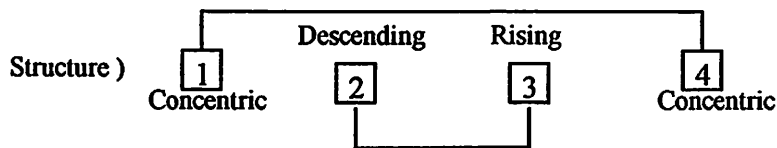
Analysis of Quotations

Outside of the Jonah psalm some scholars believe that the author of Jonah has quoted other biblical material. Magonet thinks that the author wants to lead the readers to Exodus 14 and 32; to Deuteronomy 21; to I Kings 19, to Jeremiah 26 and 36; to Psalm 139. Only the reference to I Kings 19 will be looked at in detail to give a feel for how Magonet analyzes quotations.[33]

Magonet begins by making a distinction between a "quotation" and "reminiscence." "Quotation" is used by Magonet when exact wording is used between the Book of Jonah and some other portion of Scripture. "Reminiscence" is used when no complete phrase is reproduced. A "reminiscence" may, however, be "as physically present in the associations produced by the book as any direct quotation."[34]

In 1:5, 6 the rare root רדם occurs for the "sleep" of Jonah in the boat. רדם appears eleven other times in the Bible. Because of the rarity of the word Magonet asks what are the connotations that

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[33] The I Kings 19 example is one where there is some degree of certainty that the author of Jonah is quoting an earlier source. Magonet wants to see what principles underlie the author's technique, then these principles are applied to less certain passages.

[34] Magonet, 65. As an example the word נהפכה is used to describe the coming destruction of Nineveh in 3:4. Outside of one usage of this word in II Sam.10:3; I Chr.19:3, where the king of Ammon fears that King David will overthrow his city, all other usage in regards to a city refers to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

go with this verb. He sees two broad associations: a deep sleep which is close to death and a sleep in which revelation takes place.[35] In the Book of Jonah, since there is no revelation given in sleep, and since Magonet believes Jonah has a "death wish," as Jonah requests to be thrown overboard in Chapter 1 and explicitly says he wants to die in Chapter 4, the former meaning applies to Jonah. Magonet hypothesizes that one might expect the verb רדם might appear in Chapter 4, when Jonah sits beneath his booth, but it does not. Magonet believes it is permissible then to go outside the Book of Jonah to look for "an additional meaning" as to why this rare verb is used.

"The next step depends upon the logic of association, and assumes both on the part of the author and his audience a mind fully conversant with other Biblical texts, and an ear finely attuned to detecting similarities and differences in phraseology."[36] In I Kings 19:5 the prophet Elijah lies down to sleep: וישכב ויישן. In Jonah 1:5 the phrase is וישכב וירדם. Elijah sleeps a "normal sleep," where Jonah sleeps a "deep sleep," that is, one already close to death. There are other similarities between Jonah and Elijah which Magonet points out, but he believes it is the use of the verb רדם that causes one to look at I Kings 19.[37] "[T]he author provides a number of 'clues' to direct us to a quite specific Chapter of an earlier book, and that the combination of quotation(s) and contextual relationship is the most convincing evidence in establishing the existence of quoted material."[38]

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[35] Ibid., 67. The eleven references are: Gen. 2:21; 15:21; Judg. 4:21; I Sam. 26:12; Is. 29:10; Prov. 10:5; 19:15; Job 4:13; 33:15; Dan. 8:18: 10:9. For the former meaning see Prov. 10:5; Psalm 76:7. For the latter meaning see Job 4:13; Dan. 8:18

[36] Ibid., 68

[37] Both Elijah and Jonah request that they might die in identical phrases (IK. 19:4 and Jon. 4:8). There is a similarity of numbers in the stories. There are parallel themes: both sit beneath plants, ask to die, and dialogue with God. "Can such an overwhelming amount of common material be mere coincidence or can one not say with a large degree of certainty that the author of the Book of Jonah looked to this Chapter on the life story of Elijah while he constructed his work?" Ibid., 69.

[38] Ibid., 69. Another interesting example involves the phrase of the sailors in 1:14 for יהוה not to "put innocent blood on us." See 69-76. The author of Jonah closely follows the structure of Deut. 21:7-8, yet because the context is inappropriate for the Book of Jonah, Magonet contends that the author might wish the reader to recall Jer. 26:14-15. In Jer. 26, however, the prophet Jeremiah is talking to the people who want to put him to death. Magonet believes the author of Jonah has made a "synthesis" of these two passages, that is, the author of Jonah has combined quoted formula from one section of Scripture (Deut.

Magonet's listing of Psalm 139, specifically 139:7-10, as a source for the Book of Jonah will

briefly be discussed. He is reacting to a question posed by another scholar: "Where did the author [of

Jonah] get the idea of making his hero embark on a ship for Tarshish?"[39]   The psalmist says in 139:7b

ואנה מפניך אברח. The contrast is between the psalmist's מפני and Jonah 1:3 when Jonah

לברח תרשישה מלפני יהוה. Following a lead by Rabbi Ibn Ezra, Magonet suggests that the author

of Jonah "knew the phrase of the Psalm and deliberately substituted the unusual form of מלפני to

emphasise [sic] that Jonah's flight was not merely physical, but was also flight from the mission itself and

its implications."[40] Magonet admits, however, that there can be no real certainty stating that Psalm 139 is

the source for the idea of Jonah's flight.

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21) with the context of another section (Jer. 26). He supports his contention by saying, "once again we must rely upon the circumstantial evidence that this would accord with a stylistic device employed a number of times by the author," 73. The circumstantial evidence is that the author of Jonah divides up material from a single source into two different chapters in the Book of Jonah (e.g., the "sleep" IK. 19:5 is placed in Jonah Chapter 1, while all the other events of the Elijah story take place in Jonah Chapter 4); He gathers into a single place in the Book of Jonah material form two separate places in the Bible (e.g., Deut. 21 and Jer. 26 in Jonah 1).

As another example of "combining" texts there is the interesting example of Jonah 4:2. Briefly, Magonet considers this a combination of Exodus 14:12 and IK. 19:4. This quote is worth noting in full: "Thus 'Jonah' once again links together the context of one passage (Elijah's flight and request for death) and the terminology from another--the words of the children of Israel before the Reed Sea. The effect is to set up a series of very powerful 'echoes' in which each text interacts with the other, and both react within the 'Jonah' context itself. It also has the effect of giving an interpretation to Elijah's puzzling statement that 'I am no better than my fathers,' linking it now with the unwillingness of the children of Israel to leave behind their slavery, both of which situations depend upon trusting in the word of God despite apparent danger. However, it is difficult to see how far the author of 'Jonah' intended the ripples of his associations to spread" (emphasis added), 75-76. In relation to how a literary analysis, like Magonet's, deals with a "problematic quotation," see 77-79. Magonet believes that Jonah 3:9a and 4:2c is not dependent on Joel 2:13-14a, as some scholars do. Rather he gives evidence of Joel being dependent on Jonah. This may have ramifications for "dating" the books of Jonah and Joel. In his Anchor Bible Dictionary article on Jonah, Magonet merely recognizes the problem of dating the book . Sasson, 23, remarks, that dating the Book of Jonah is a "difficult problem," and dating the book of Joel an "intractable issue."

[39] Ibid., 82. The scholar and source is A. Feuillet, "Les Sources du livre de Jonas" Revue Biblique 54 (1947): 161-186.

[40] Magonet, 83. The second edition of Magonet's book includes a postscript with the title taken from Psalm 139:7, "Whither shall I go from your Spirit?" It is a narrative paraphrase of his understanding of the Book of Jonah. See also footnote 70 to Chapter 4 in Magonet's book. The earliest Midrashic texts associate Psalm 139 with Jonah. A doctoral dissertation was written to disprove a suggestion that the idea for Jonah Chapter 1 came from Psalm 139!

<u>Analysis of themes</u>

Magonet concludes his book with an analysis of themes found in Jonah. He brings all the earlier material together to help support his analysis. In many ways this section is a narrative paraphrase and interpretation of the more extensive evidence found in earlier chapters of his book. "An interpretation which ignores the presence, for example, of quotations, or the various 'key words' and literary constructions, can only give a partial explanation of the ideas contained in the book."[41]

Magonet realizes that the Book of Jonah lends itself to ambiguity, or different interpretations, because insufficient information is given to the reader at certain points. For instance, why does Jonah flee? Why does he ask to be thrown off the ship? What one reader might think is "self-evident" might not be so clear to another reader. Magonet seeks to recognize the ambiguities found in the Book of Jonah and then demonstrate the various arguments through which certain ideas are transmitted. He does this by grouping the themes in terms of "polarities," that is, sets of contrasting ideas. The "polarities" are: 1) Knowledge of God/Disobedience of God. 2) Particularism/Universalism . 3) Traditional Teaching/ New Experience. 4) The Power of God/ The Freedom of Man. Each of these "polarities" is discussed at the overt narrative of the text, the "subliminal" level of word play and repetition, and the level of quotation and reminiscence.[42] Only the fourth polarity, "The Power of God/The Freedom of Man," will be examined.

Magonet states the problem: "God creates and rules the world according to His own plan, He is free to act as He wishes, is ultimately responsible for all that happens, and can force mankind to do His will — and yet in certain circumstances, man can himself successfully oppose God's decree. But in what circumstances, under what conditions, and with what consequences?" [43] At the level of narrative God

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[41] Ibid., 85.

[42] Ibid., 90. It is important to note that Magonet does not consider these "polarities" the only possible readings. "Different emphasis on any single element or group of elements can result in quite different readings. That such ambiguity exits and that no single reading is the "true" one, is no more, and no less, a problem than the attempt to recognize and understand the word of God itself at any given time," 112. In regard to "polarities" there is some "surface" agreement between Magonet and paradigmatic structural analysis. See above Chapter 2, footnote 35.

[43] Ibid., 107.

tells Jonah to perform a task, but Jonah flees. God uses his power as Creator to create a storm, and to appoint a great fish to bring about Jonah's compliance to His will. Jonah complies in the most minimalistic way, and yet the evil Ninevites turn from their evil ways and God does not bring about the "evil" he threatened. Jonah, who couldn't change the mind of God through his maneuvers, sees that God's mind is changed by the actions, repentance, of pagans. "God's word must be fulfilled, [but] the repentance of man can overcome the evil decree."[44] In Chapter 4 God shows he is still in control of the situation with Jonah by his questions to Jonah and the episode with the קיקיון. God's words should not only affect the sailors and Ninevites in a positive way, but they should also have consequences for Jonah.

At the level of word usage we have already seen the use of the infinitive in describing actions by God and humans and how it relates to success or failure.[45] Also noted was the "call words" remaining "in the air" until they were fulfilled by Jonah. Yet the Ninevites in their freedom believed the words of Jonah and they "repented." There is a certain amount of freedom given to man. Yet even the freedom of the Ninevites to "repent" was not seen by them as a way of controlling God. The king said, "Who knows . . . ?" The Book of Jonah ends with a question allowing Jonah the freedom to accept or reject a higher level of understanding concerning the nature of God than the one he had before he fled. "Beyond the message of destruction and repentance that Jonah must bring to the pagan world, he must himself come to understand the inner quality of that very pity in God that can forgive, overcoming his own wilfullness [sic] in the process. Then the freedom of man will come to accord with the will of God."[46]

At the level of "reminiscence" we have noted the connection of Nineveh with Sodom/Gomorrah.[47] Magonet finds similarities, parallels, or "evocations," between Jonah and Abraham's dialogue with God concerning Sodom. "In the Abraham story God wants Abraham to come to understand

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[44] Ibid.

[45] See above, this Chapter, footnote 9.

[46] Magonet, 110.

[47] See above, this Chapter, footnote 34.

the concepts of righteousness and justice—and God's right to conform to them, yet remain free to transcend them. In our book God wants Jonah, who understands about justice, to come to appreciated something of this pity of God which transcends justice." Magonet thinks these "associations" are too loosely tied to the text to be "proved" intentional, and yet he can say "they argue very persuasively that such was also the purpose of the author." [48]

Why does God spare Nineveh? To this question the Book of Jonah seems to give two answers: Because the Ninevites repented; Because God has "pity."

> Did God forgive them because of their repentance, or because of His pity? In not making a clear distinction between these two stages, a great confusion of motives is possible. In accepting the repentance of Nineveh, expressed in terms of the ethical category of turning away from the violence in their hands, we have the working of the familiar viewpoint presented by the quotation from Jeremiah [18:7-11a]: turning from evil can make God Himself "turn." The matter is not guaranteed, as the cautious "who knows" of the king of Nineveh clearly shows, but it is a well-established theological position in Israel. In the tension between strict justice and mercy [repentance] can lead God's mercy to prevail over His justice. [49]

Magonet finishes his book by stating that through "a remarkable, almost mathematical, technical precision in his narrative style" the author of the Book of Jonah conveys imprecision and ambiguity. This is what leads to different interpretations of an apparently simple book. While Magonet acknowledges no one right way of reading the text he extracts a theme clarified through his analysis. This theme, which incorporates the four polarities, is:

> The freedom of God to be beyond any definition by which man would limit Him....God is free both to maintain this privileged relationship [with Jonah and Israel] yet extend His concern at the same time to all mankind, and all creation. Jonah would contain God within his tradition — yet it is only at the point where his tradition proves inadequate, where he must break through to his own experience (whether in the depths of Sheol, or in the heights of repentance) that he can encounter God, waiting to meet him. For Jonah thinks he knows God and can disobey — but he does not know God, and ultimately cannot disobey. [50]

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[48] Magonet, 110.

[49] Ibid., 111. It should be noted that Jer. 18 was not one of the passages that Magonet thought was quoted in the Book of Jonah. Magonet, however, in ABD "Book of Jonah, " 939, does list Jer. 18:7,8,11 as being "reflected" in the Book of Jonah.

[50] Ibid., 112

Summary and Evaluation

Magonet has written a book that shows well the connection between form and meaning. He has shown, at the level of word usage and repetition, Chapter structure, and other techniques how the form of the book helps support the meaning of the text at the narrative level.[51] For instance, his discovery of the "mirror" structure of Jonah Chapters 2 and 3 lends credence to a theme he believes the Book of Jonah articulates, that is, the theme of venturing from the familiar to the unfamiliar. It is not unimportant to note that all of Magonet's "close reading" analyses are based on the Hebrew text.

In this book Magonet does not ask "historical" questions, except as they relate to certain dating issues of sources in the Book of Jonah. One would have to read the book very carefully to get a feeling of where Magonet stands on the "historicity of Jonah" question, and then it would only be a "feeling." Even the discussion of genre is not a part of this book.[52] In terms of the diagram devised by M. H. Abrams, Magonet's analysis of the Book of Jonah features all the elements of the diagram except the element that concentrates on the "universe" or "historical events." Magonet interacts with many other areas of Scripture to help him analyze the themes of the Book of Jonah. His synchronic analysis is aware of the diachronic dimension involved, as the author of Jonah quotes different sources.

For some of his conclusions Magonet assumes that the reader must be able to make the connections and sometimes subtle distinctions that the author of the book intended.[53] It is his assumption that the original reader/audience could make the connections. In this respect he is in line with many early

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[51] Magonet writes: "[T]he author has found a medium which forces the reader to live with some degree of uncertainty, particularly with regards the motivation of one of the central characters. We find ourselves continually switching between identifying with, and then rejecting, the prophet, and then sympathizing with him again, and so on. We are thus being taught the lesson of tolerance . . .", 87. Magonet says "tolerance" is one of the lessons to be found in the contents of the Book of Jonah, and that the narrative form of the writing contributes to this lesson being conveyed.

[52] In "Book of Jonah," ABD Vol. 3, 937-942, Magonet is more specific. However, the ABD entry serves a different purpose than the book under discussion and so has material in it that is not discussed in the book. The ABD entry is a good summary of Magonet's book, even though there are some minor changes.

[53] See Adele Berlin, "Literary Exegesis of Biblical Narrative: Between Poetics and Hermeneutics," in Not in Heaven, 120-128.

Rabbinic interpreters. The reader will follow the suggestions that are of interest or concern to him. He writes: "We, the reader, must follow Jonah on his journey, picking up such clues as we can from what occurs, but ultimately investing the story with our own insights and, inevitably, our own experience and private fears."[54]

A possible critique of Magonet has already been mentioned. That is, Magonet sometimes seems to force the data to fit a structural pattern. As noted, he is aware when he does this, and he gives his reasons. An awareness that other possible interpretations exist, which seems inherent in a "literary approach," would seem to keep one from overstating the case. "Assured results" are not precipitously declared. At times Magonet has talked about what the author of the book "clearly intended," but these are not many. When "authorial intent" is cited it is always an "intent" that can be shown to be embodied in the text. He has stated his case in "undogmatic" terms, while trying to convince the reader to accept his analysis. For Magonet, the nature of narrative text is not to be dogmatic, but to be suggestive. Therefore, there is a certain amount of room for the reader to make, or not make, the connections. This is especially true when it comes to articulating the themes of the Book of Jonah.

Finally, Magonet's method would not allow a fast reading of the Book of Jonah. Not only would one miss much of the artistry involved in the form of the book, one would also miss meaning that is to be found in the form. Magonet did not discover meaning solely in a form without corroborating "evidence" from the narrative level. There is a system of checks and balances which moderates the interpretation of form.

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[54] Ibid., 175.

CHAPTER FOUR

KENNETH M. CRAIG, JR.: *A POETICS OF JONAH: ART IN THE SERVICE OF IDEOLOGY*

Introduction

Kenneth Craig, Jr.'s book seeks to "elucidate the conditions of meaning by highlighting the close interdependence between descriptive poetics and interpretation."[1] Craig is interested in "how" the story of Jonah is told, with the goal of discovering "how individual words, phrases, and syntactic arrangements function as means of evaluation."[2]

The term "poetics" has many different usages.[3] Craig does not add to the confusion and so does not give a "definition." Rather, he rather takes a very broad definition from Benjamin Hrushovski that poetics is a systematic and scientific study of literature which is committed to a comprehensive investigation of texts.[4] Poetics, however, is not a "science" in the sense that it implies any absolute truth, or that a single theory of poetics can solve all problems and questions that literature provokes. Such a broad definition can be only a preliminary orientation. There is no single theory of poetics that would cover all situations, hence the title to Craig's book. He wants to see how the Book of Jonah made and

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[1] Craig, 2. Craig's book, like Magonet's, evolved from his doctoral dissertation. In a footnote Craig acknowledges Magonet's book as helpful, though he thinks Magonet's many charts, tables, and elaborate computations distract from the narrative art of the Book of Jonah.

[2] Ibid., 144.

[3] See above Chapter 1, footnote 25. Berlin, Poetics, defines poetics as "the science of literature, [it] is not an interpretive effort—it does not aim to elicit meaning from a text. Rather it aims to find the building blocks of literature and the rules by which they are assembled. . . . Poetics is to literature as linguistics is to language. . . . If literature is likened to a cake, then poetics gives us the recipe and interpretation tells us how it tastes," 15.

[4] Craig, 4. See Trible, 64. She quotes Todorov: "The aim of poetics, then, is 'to propose a theory of the structure and functioning of literary discourse.'"

makes sense. At times Craig brings in other examples from Scripture to illustrate certain poetic principles. These examples will not be mentioned in this study.

Craig alters Sternberg's principles of biblical narrative from three principles (the historical, ideological, and aesthetic) to two: the ideological and artistic. Even though Craig does not include the historical principal for a poetics of Jonah, he says that the poetics he argues for does not exclude historical questions. "However, [Craig's] poetics will resist speaking of the Jonah story by means of nontextual historical assumptions projected onto the text."[5] The two principles listed by Craig are a foundation to show "how" art serves ideology.[6]

The Impact of Translation

Craig gives his own translation of the Book of Jonah. He then devotes one chapter of his book to show how English translations can affect the way the story of Jonah is perceived, that is, how language functions to carry ideology. Specifically, Craig compares the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of Jonah with the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). He notes that of the forty-eight verses in the Book of Jonah forty-seven have been altered from the RSV by the NRSV. Craig has placed the changes between the RSV and the NRSV into thirteen categories.[7] Only one category will be mentioned: "Key Thematic Words are Rendered Differently."[8]

The main word changed between the English versions is נחם. RSV consistently translates it "repent." However, it was thought that the English word "repent" implies repentance from

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[5] Craig, 6.

[6] Craig employs the word "ideology" to mean "a deeply held and interlocking set of religious, social, and political beliefs or attitudes about the world and how the world works." 8. In this connection Craig says that he accepts the premise that "objective knowledge free of ideological taint exists only as a fiction in the mind," 9. Also, like Sternberg, Craig refers to the narrator of Jonah as the "artful ideologist."

[7] The thirteen categories are: 1) Changes in the Narrator's Voice; 2) Changes in Quoted Speech; 3) Inclusive Language; 4) Up-to-date Language; 5) Adversive vs. non-Adversive Conjunctions; 6) And →Then, etc.; 7) Key Thematic Words Rendered Differently; 8) New Paragraphs; 9) Additional Critical Notes; 10) New Punctuation; 11) Translation and Hebrew Syntax; 12) "Inconsistent" Translation of Hebrew Words in the NRSV; 13) Paratactic Style is Lost (Sometimes).

[8] Craig, 34-35.

"wrongdoing." Therefore, the NRSV never translates it "repent" when God is the subject of the verb. Instead NRSV has "relent" and "change his mind." Craig merely says that this is an improvement upon the picture of God, from one who "repents of evil," to one who "has a change of mind."[9]

Many of the changes listed by Craig are minor. Some of the changes are stylistic, and some are the result of progress in biblical scholarship. By including this chapter, however, one can see that Craig is not writing merely for the Hebrew specialist. He is concerned with how English translations will affect those who read the Book of Jonah in English. His conclusions may be summed up by the saying that "translating from one language to another requires that *interpretive* decisions be made."[10]

The Narrator and Characters

Poetics is interested in discovering "how" a story is told. It is natural then to look at the narrator of the story to discover "how" he goes about the telling.[11] It should be noted that the narrator in Jonah has access to privileged information. That is, he knows the thoughts and feelings of the various characters, even God.

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[9] See Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, Amos, 638-679, "Excursus: When God Repents." These authors list Jer. 18:7-10 as embodying the "general theory of divine repentance in the Hebrew Bible and expresses it as succinctly and directly as we can imagine it being done," 659. They write: "The repentance of God is an important aspect of his character and his behavior," 671.

[10] Ibid., 22. Craig translates ירד and וישכב in Jonah 1:5 as pluperfects, "had gone down," "had lain down" for clarity. However, Craig acknowledges that a past tense also makes sense. As part of his thesis he sees "ambiguity" working on large and small scales. He thinks both a past and pluperfect translation would be desirable at this point.

[11] Craig realizes a narrator might be a he, she, or it, but after "much reservation" he decided to call the narrator "he," or, in his own words, "the third person, masculine, singular pronoun is used throughout," 172. I will follow that wise decision. There is a subtle distinction between the author of the Book of Jonah and the narrator. The author shapes audience response through various techniques. "The author . . . works in alliance with the narrator. These partners are dominant carriers of ideology, and with respect to the ideological view, they do not disagree. In Sternberg's words, 'The implied author and the narrator to whom he delegates the task of communication practically merge into each other . . . . The biblical narrator is a plenipotentiary of the author, holding the same views, enjoying the same authority, addressing the same audience, pursuing the same strategy, self-effacement included. . . . They stand and fall together," (Sternberg, 75) 151 . Various terms, deriving from Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), are explained by Sternberg in his book. "The writer is the historical figure who . . . composed the work at a certain time and place. . . . The implied author is the image of the author projected by the text itself as the creator of its art and meaning and norms. . . . The narrator, last, is the figure chosen and devised by the author to perform the telling," Sternberg, 74.

The knowledge the narrator possesses can only be inferred from, but should not be equated with, the information shared with the audience. The narrator in Jonah could, if he chose, undertake to tell us what any of the characters felt at *any* given moment, but consistently conveys the information at the moment that best suits his strategy. . . . This distinction between the strategy selected among all the options available is a theoretical necessity, and only by recognizing it does the narrator's maneuvering emerge in its full light.[12]

Much of Craig's material is a paraphrase, or narration, of what the narrator is doing throughout the Book of Jonah. Therefore, only Craig's summation of the narrator's strategy will be given.[13]

Confirming what Robert Alter has discovered, Craig notes that narration in the Book of Jonah confirms the dialogue that preceded it, or it is confirmed by the dialogue that follows it.[14] In Chapter 4, key words of the narrator (4:1 וייחר לו, "And he became inflamed.") are repeated by the Lord and Jonah in 4:4b, 4:9a,b, in what he calls a "dialogue-bound narration."[15] The narrator also avoids explicitly condemning or praising any of the characters in the story. At the level of plot the narrator introduces dialogue, summarizes speech, conveys actions and thoughts, among other things. Craig believes every strategy the narrator follows in Chapters 1-3 is deliberate so that the reader will be surprised when reaching Chapter 4, when Jonah and the Lord assume the primary role in revealing there sorrow and disappointments.

The characters of the " nameless" sailors and Ninevites serve two purposes in the Book of Jonah. They help draw out aspects of Jonah's character and they provide contrast to Jonah's stubborn attitude. Also, they are foils not only for Jonah, but even for the Lord. The Lord and Jonah are also seen as the principal characters as they have names. "[To] bear a name is to assume an identity: to become a singular existent, with an assured place in history and a future in the story. . . . All . . . epithets are

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[12] Craig, 46.

[13] One interesting observation made by Craig, to the commonly designated comparisons between Jonah Chapters 1 and 3, is that the narrator's role is similar in the first six verses of Chapter 3 to the initial verses of Chapter 1. That is, the narrator swiftly advances the story. Also, on the question of the placement of 4:5, Craig observes that it is a characteristic of the narrator not to be always chronologically correct in the telling of the tale. See also 1:10b, 2:1, 4:2, and 4:5. Craig would place these "antichronological" moves under the "artistic" principle of composition.

[14] See Alter, The Art, 65. E.g. of the former: Sailors: "And let us cast lots." (1:7a); Narrator: "And they cast lots," (1:7b).

[15] Craig does not distinguish between the divine designations of God as does Magonet. He routinely uses "Lord."

implicitly proleptic within the dynamics of action. Not even the most idiosyncratic trait fails to cohere, sooner or later."[16] The Lord and Jonah are termed "multi-dimensional" characters.[17]

Dialogue is also important in characterization.[18] The Lord, who speaks in 1:2, and 3:2, concludes the Book of Jonah with a speech. What appears to be a story about a prophet's reluctance, struggles and fears, also turns out to be about God's own hurt, or concern, even in regard to pagans and animals. Characterization of the nameless sailors and Ninevites is also accomplished through dialogue. For example, the confused and panicked state of mind can be discerned by the series of brief questions the sailors ask.

Jonah and the Reading Process

Craig believes all stories offer readers opportunities to construct a framework in which to make connections between parts of the story. Texts invite the reader to fill in the informational gaps or blanks. In fact, this is done automatically by the reader as he tries to make sense of the text. "With respect to the book of Jonah, gaps are formulated in the mind of the reader as questions, and since these questions are elicited all along the text continuum, different readers formulate various questions in an attempt to make sense of the action."[19]

Too often reading is done according to what is termed the "hindsight fallacy." That is, the text's meaning is derived mainly for the conclusion of a story. While Craig notes that the ending of a story does affect interpretation, reading, and even re-reading, a story is not done primarily with the ending in mind.

> When reading is understood as a time-art, one begins to understand that meaning is equated not only with what happens in the final chapter or verse in the Jonah story, but, instead, with all that happens in the mind of the reader as impressions are drawn and redrawn throughout each of the chapters. This approach to reading might be dismissed

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[16] Sternberg, 331, quoted by Craig, 63. In Craig's analysis of the characters he also uses material observed by Magonet, 19-22.

[17] See Berlin, Poetics, 23-42 on characters and characterization.

[18] See Alter, The Art, 63-87. "By and large, the biblical writers prefer to avoid indirect speech," 67.

[19] Ibid., 75. See James W. Voelz, What does this Mean? Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 316-321.

as merely a reflection of modern trends or theories associated with narrative technique, but any objection of this kind appears to be countered by the Jonah story itself. For if the author(s) of the initial chapters of the story was/were not concerned with creating narrative interest, then why has vital information been withheld from the reader? Jonah's astonishing testimony explaining his reasons for fleeing comes toward the end of the story (4:2), and his true character is revealed only subsequently. By focusing on the sequence of events and by exploring the gaps that result in the reading process, the 'hindsight fallacy' may be corrected. Two gaps emerge early, and they both relate to the story's central characters: (a) What motivates Jonah to disobey the Lord's command . . . (1:2a), and, (b) What is the message the prophet is 'to call to her' (1:2b)?[20]

Recognizing the reading process has practical import. Craig agrees with scholars like Magonet and Landes that Jonah 2:3-10, the psalm, is an integral part of the Book of Jonah.[21] Understanding the reading process is helpful in supporting the integrity of the Jonah psalm to the Book of Jonah. While acknowledging other ways of showing that integrity, Craig proposes that the psalm is "part of a major pattern in the book overarching all of the action, until the crucial, final scene outside Nineveh."[22] Like Chapters 1 and 3, the psalm creates a need for more information about the prophet. Therefore, questions about the appropriateness of the psalm, and its characterization of Jonah, need not be asked only after the knowledge gained in 4:2. As the story of Jonah is read the psalm seems to fit well into the narrative. The characterization of Jonah only seems to be a problem to those who believe a character should or could not have different emotions at different times.

<u>Prayer Reports in Jonah and Poetry</u>

All the scholarly attention to Jonah 2:3-10 might give the wrong impression. Craig notes that there are seven references to "prayer events" in the Book of Jonah. These he categorizes into "prayers

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[20] Ibid., 78. Craig writes, "The view that compositional dynamics shape the reading all along the path to enlightenment is perhaps best illustrated by the reading (or viewing) of the murder mystery," 77. However, J. H. Steck, "The Message of the Book of Jonah," <u>Calvin Theological Journal</u>, 4, no. 1 (April 1969): 23-50, writes: "[T]he writer has woven his narrative very tightly. He moves swiftly, wasting no words on unnecessary detail, even refraining from supplying detail in chronological order when it will suffice him to introduce it at a later point where it contributes more materially to his narrative. This distinctive characteristic alerts us to take every detail seriously, and to note carefully the purpose it serves in its specific context. It also alerts us not to suppose that we can interpret this narrative piece-meal, as-we-read-along, isolating 'moments' in the narrative for discrete consideration. We must take it as a whole. The Biblical words are inspired, but Biblical literature is still *literature*, and must be interpreted as such," 35.

[21] Craig refers to Jonah 2:3-10 as the "poetic prayer."

[22] Craig, 73.

without verbal formulations," and "prayers with verbal formulations."[23] The three prayers with verbal

formulations will briefly be discussed.

In Jonah 1:14 the sailors pray according to a pattern similar to other prayers in the Bible.[24]

Address:	"We pray, O Lord!
Petition:	Do not let us perish on account of this man's life, and may you not put innocent blood upon us.
Motivation:	for you, Lord, as you have pleased you have done.

From the fact that the prayer of the pagan sailors is in the pattern of an Israelite prayer, Craig thinks the

narrator of Jonah is suggesting that the design of extemporized prayer was not uniquely an Israelite

practice.

Concerning Jonah 2:3-10, Craig understands the use of various psalms in the composition of the

Jonah psalm as highlighting the frenzied mental state of Jonah. Concerning Jonah 4:2-3, Craig states

that Jonah's prayer contains traditional Israelite phrases, unlike the sailors' prayer in 1:14 which only

follows the Israelite pattern. Not only is this a different interpretation of the data than Magonet's,[25] it

points out that Craig is mainly looking at the text to see "how" the narrator is working to shape

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[23] The prayer events without verbal formulation can be found at 1:5, 1:6b, 2:3=2:6-8, 3:8. The prayer events with verbal formulation are 1:14, 2:3-10, 4:2-3. Craig believes 2:3=2:6-8 refer to what Jonah prayed before being swallowed by the fish. He bases this on the קָרָאתִי, the perfect tense. See also Landes, The Kerygma, 15, "The psalmist is not alluding primarily to his present condition, nor does the praise he now sings constitute the prayer he spoke in the situation the psalm portrays; but rather he recalls an already experienced affliction which evoked from him a cry for help, and from Yahweh a beneficent response." Not only does this provoke questions about Hebrew tenses, especially as used in poetry, one would also have to deal with the location of מִבֶּטֶן שְׁאוֹל, "from the belly of sheol." Craig believes it does not refer to the inside of the fish. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch also believe ∴ is a "poetical figure" to denote the danger of death. See "Jonah" in Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 10, trans. James Martin, reprint (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 400. Magonet, 46-47, however, believes it refers to the belly of the fish. Craig says that the Jonah psalm combines elements of both "thanksgiving" and "lament" psalms to produce a prayer "entirely consistent with the psychological portrayal of this prophet fleeing from the Lord," 86-87. As a side note, Craig also sees evidence that the author of Jonah may have freely adapted material of non-Israelite origin in constructing the psalm. The evidence he sees comes from the fact that there is an absence of "fish motifs" in the Bible while there are extra-biblical sources that talk about deliverance from the sea by means of a fish.

[24] Craig notes that this pattern of prayer appears in four of the five books of the Torah and in the Psalter, and less frequently in prophetic literature. There are no reports of prayer in Leviticus. E.g. Gen. 24:12-14; Ex. 32:11-13 I Kings 18:36-37. In Jonah 4:2-3 the pattern is address-motivation-petition.

[25] See Magonet's analysis of the psalm and Chapter 3, footnote 38 above.

characterization. For Craig, "the prayers in Jonah are separate events of the plot related to the character's psychological portrayal and the activity of God."[26]

Craig is also interested in why the narrator uses poetry for the prayer in 2:3-10, and prose for the other prayers. He begins by noting that in the world of biblical scholarship there is some diversity over what constitutes Hebrew poetry and how Jonah 2:3-10 should be analyzed.[27] At minimum, most scholars recognize parallelism and terseness as of the essence to biblical Hebrew poetry. Craig adopts, and slightly adapts Hrushovski's understanding of biblical poetry, and looks at Jonah 2:3-10 under the headings of semantical, grammatical (syntactic and morphological), and phonological parallelisms.[28] Because Craig's point is not to do a thorough analysis of the psalm, but to discover "how" the psalm creates a different experience for the reader/hearer from the prose section, including the prose prayers, only an example of phonological parallelism will be shown.

From lines 7-9 of the psalm (2:6-7b) these sound patterns can be discerned:[29]

תהום יסבבני	אפפוני מים עד נפש	7
לפצבי הרים	סוף חבוש לראשי	8
ברחיה ועדי לעילם	ירדתי הארץ	9

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[26] Craig, 99.

[27] Craig, 102-119. In particular, Craig disagrees with Kugel's thesis that the distinction between poetry and prose is an imposition of a foreign concept on the Hebrew Bible. Craig does, however, see Kugel's thesis "that the B clause . . . carries the A clause further by echoing it, defining it, contrasting it, or rephrasing it," as a major and helpful reformulating of Lowth's position, 107. See Kugel, The Idea of Biblical poetry. For a good introductory work on Hebrew Poetry see David L. Petersen and Kent H. Richards, Interpreting Hebrew Poetry, ed. Gene M. Tucker, Guides to Biblical Scholarship Old Testament Series, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). This book mentions that Kugel, in a different writing, stated he did not intend to abandon the distinction between poetry and prose, 103. Craig is most influenced by Adele Berlin, The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), and Benjamin Hrushovski, "Prosody, Hebrew." Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 13, ed. Cecil Roth (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971).

[28] Craig divides the psalm into these "few grammatical parallels": Morphological pairing of words from different classes; Morphological parallelism by equivalence and contrast in definiteness or indefiniteness; Contrasts in person; Contrasts in tense; Contrasts in conjugation; Syntactical parallelism: contrasts in grammatical mood; Grammar and interlinear relationships.

[29] Craig, 118. See this page for a full table of the sound patterns in the Jonah psalm. Craig offers these definitions: Alliteration refers to the recurrence of the initial sounds in a successive words; Assonance is the repetition of identical vowel sounds; Consonance refers to identical final consonant sounds of closed syllables in a series of words.

Alliteration and consonance of sibilants — שׁ ס צ (lines 7-8). These two lines
  contain many nasals and labials (נ פ מ ב).
Consonance — ר (lines 8b and 9a)
Alliteration and consonance — ע ב ל (line 9b)
Assonance — "oo" sound (lines 7a and 8a)

Craig believes the repetition of parallel sounds between lines functions to forge a union between

lines. "The parallel (as well as perpendicular and vertical) phonological structures lead . . . to a

perception of correspondence in meaning."[30]

As a way of highlighting how the poetic prayer of 2:3-10 is different than the prose prayers in

Jonah, Craig writes out the prose prayers, with the disjunctive Masoretic accents as a guide, for

comparison. Here is the prayer of the sailors, Jonah 1:14:

אנה יהוה אל נא נאבדה בנפש האישׁ הזה /
ואל תתן עלינו דם נקיא //
כי אתה יהוה /
כאשׁר חפצת עשׂית //

Parallelism is lacking here. Terseness of expression is also not common in the prose prayers.

Craig realizes that semantic, grammatical, and phonological parallelisms work in combination to create a

different experience for the reader/hearer. However, whether the prayers are in poetic form or prose,

Craig notes that there is a "high frequency" of prayers in the forty-eight verses of the Book of Jonah.

This "testifies to the author's perspective of God's saving power and to the efficacy of human speech in

the form of prayer. The combined effect leaves no doubt that the central authority figure in this narrative

is God."[31] Thus art, in the choice of including prayers, serves ideology.

Representation of the Inner Life

Craig believes that the Book of Jonah is basically a story *about* a prophet. As further evidence

for this view, Craig spends some time talking about one of the book's claim to originality, which is, the

constant focus on the inner life. Craig disagrees with those scholars who say "the inward life is assumed

but not presented in primitive [i.e. Hebraic] narrative literature."[32] Representation of the inner life of a

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[30] Ibid., 119.

[31] Ibid., 123.

character may be achieved by direct narrative statement, direct discourse, or interior monologue. Also, Craig agrees with Sternberg and Alter that the biblical narrator is not only omniscient, but reliable. The reader must believe the "inside view" accounts when given by the narrator. "These inside views require our absolute faith."[33]

Craig lists nineteen "inside views" in the Book of Jonah, which is a high percentage of the total number of verses.[34] A few examples of how "inside views" affect reading will be given. At Jonah 1:12 one might wonder why Jonah asked the sailors to throw him overboard. Some think he had a death wish, while others believe he had compassion on the sailors and was trying to save them.[35] However, at this point in the story one cannot be certain because the narrator has given insufficient clues to the inner mind of Jonah. Neither does Chapter 2 clarify for the reader the motive for Jonah's actions. It is not until 4:2-3 where Jonah's inner mind is clearly perceived.

Craig often notes that he thinks Chapter 4 is the highlight of the Book of Jonah. This also can be shown in the fact that out of the eleven verses of Chapter 4 only one, 4:7, consistently describes the events of the outside world. The rest deal with the thoughts and feelings of Jonah and the Lord. This proves to Craig that the Book of Jonah is about the prophet himself, even though it certainly does contain other

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[32] Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog, The Nature of Narrative, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 166, quoted by Craig, 143. See also Sternberg, 475-481, where he says "direct inside view of the characters" is one among a spectrum of rhetorical devices through which the Bible shapes the readers response to a character or event.

[33] Craig, 129. Alter, The Art, 183-184, writes, "Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the role played by the narrator in the biblical tales is the way in which omniscience and inobtrusiveness are combined. . . . He is all knowing and also perfectly reliable: at times he may choose to make us wonder but he never misleads us." Sternberg writes "Omniscience in modern narrative attends and signals fictionality, while in the ancient tradition it not only accommodates but also guarantees authenticity," 34. See also Sternberg, 59-83. Craig also notes that inside views given by the characters themselves are less reliable than when given by the reliable narrator. The characters are fallible. See Craig, 130-131. A Bible passage that would seem to confirm this is 1 Cor. 4:3-4.

[34] 1:5a, 1:6b, 1:10 (there are two 2 inside views given in 1:10); 1:9; 1:12b; 1:14b; 1:16; 2:3-10; 3:5a; 3:9; 3:10; 4:1; 4:2-3; 4:4; 4:6b; 4:9a; 4:9b; 4:10-11. For exegetical reasons, Craig does not include 3:3, עיר גדולה לאלהים as giving an interior view of God. He translates לאלהים as a superlative, "an exceedingly great city."

[35] Magonet's belief in a "death wish" is not solely based on the information he receives as he is reading.

themes. Also the degree of the inside view of Jonah and the Lord is much greater than that of the sailors or pagans, confirming that Jonah and the Lord are the primary characters of the book. "[I]n Jonah and especially in the final chapter, the narrator frequently shows the characters in conflict by moving into and out of their minds. . . . [T]he author avoids prolonged or deep plunges into the minds of the characters, but sympathy or contempt may be heightened by the sharing of one character's thoughts and the withholding of other's ideas."[36]

The Ideological Plane

Craig seeks to show how the author/narrator and characters view the world, and how those views impact the ideological level.[37] Simply, the view of the text is the view that is given by the author/narrator. It sounds simplistic, but no character in the story is met directly. Everything is being shaped by the author/narrator. In Chapter 1 every verse except 1:2 is addressed to the reader by the narrator. The narrator's role diminishes, however, and by Chapter 4 less is heard from the narrator and more from the Lord.

The Lord is a dominant carrier of ideology and His authority is established in many ways. He speaks and things happen. The Lord has the first and last quoted speech in the book. Jonah, pagans, animals, and nature acknowledge His authority. The Lord is gracious and compassionate to all, Jonah, pagans and even animals.

Jonah is the dominant carrier of ideology among the human characters and his authority is shown in various ways. Jonah appears in every chapter of the book. He is the only who hears and speaks to the Lord. He also is the only character to resist the plan of the Lord, even though he knows that might

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[36] Craig, 143.

[37] On the subtle distinction between author and narrator see above, Chapter 4, footnote #11. The author's view refers not to a view independent of the text, but the view that emerges from the organization of the book itself. Craig follows the categories of Boris Uspensky, A Poetics of Composition, (Berkeley: Univerisity of California, 1973). Three of the four categories have been alluded to above: the phraseological level, the spatial/temporal level, and the psychological level. Only the ideological level is discussed here. On "the poetics of point of view," and a brief synopsis of Uspensky's categories, see Berlin, Poetics, 55-82.

be perilous. However, the ideology carried by Jonah, the sailors, Ninevites, the animals or the natural

order is not an end in itself. The unified position in the narrative world of the Book of Jonah is that

> God controls everything and is free to command not only the natural elements but the
> prophet as well, free to forecast impending doom, and free also to alter plans. The
> profound rhetorical question at the end of the book leaves little doubt that this
> ideological unity is sought, but, like the prophet, we take many turns before it is
> delivered. . . . The author finally subordinates this whole mass of ideology to a single
> accent and unified point of view: God is free to command, to modify plans, and to have
> compassion on all creation.[38]

As a way to further highlight the significance of Chapter 4 at the ideological level, and to show

how art serves ideology, Craig points out a series of "reversals."[39] In Chapter 4 the portrayal of God is

reversed from an angry God to one who has compassion on all, even animals. As mentioned above the

role of the narrator is reversed. In Chapter 4 he lets God and Jonah share their feelings through direct

dialogue. In Chapters 1, 2, and 3 when the two principal characters verbally address each other the

addressee does not respond verbally. In Chapter 4 the two characters finally talk to each other. Another

reversal involves the question: Who is on trial in the Book of Jonah? Is it Nineveh, or Jonah? "In the first

three chapters, Nineveh is the object of God's wrath. In chapter 4, Jonah is."[40]

Finally, Craig demonstrates that the Book of Jonah is "nondidactic" literature.[41] Some of the

techniques used by the author to transmit ideology, without being a "heavy-handed," have already been

shown. Questions, especially the rhetorical questions of Chapter 4, are an important technique used by

the author. "The Lord begins the attempt to persuade the prophet by issuing commands, yet ends up

trying to convince him (and us) by consistently asking short, compelling question."[42] Questions draw the

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[38] Ibid., 145, 154. Note the similarities between this and Magonet's statement above, 42.

[39] Ibid., 153-159.

[40] Ibid., 157.

[41] On didactic vs. nondidactic see Sternberg, 35-38. Sternberg believes the Hebrew Scriptures to be nondidactic. He writes: "[T]he whole idea of didacticism is alien, if not antipathetic, to the spirit of Israelite storytelling and has been imported from later philosophical and religious traditions that it would reject. But the choice presents itself as clear-cut and inescapable: the biblical narrator is either an incompetent didacticist or an artful ideologist," 38.

[42] Craig, 162.

listener/reader into the action of the story. The very last question in the Book of Jonah, asked by the Lord, does not receive an answer from Jonah. Who is to answer that question? The reader/listener certainly may. The author does not didactically say what the answer must be.

> There is an *attempt* to align Jonah's perspective with the Lord's, but is Jonah convinced? Is he even angrier? Even the silence is an ideological tool. In retrospect, we see that the narrator is more of a reporter (Jonah became angry; he was happy; he was extremely happy) than an evaluator. At the story's outcome, the final question has not only expressive implications, but, from the reader's side, persuasive force as well. By responding to Jonah with a question, the Lord stresses the supremacy of compassion and upsets the possibility of looking for a rational coherence of God's ways with the world. The author leaves no unambiguous dogma or decree. Just the mystery of divine compassion.[43]

Summary and Evaluation

Craig states that the ultimate goal of his poetics is "to move beyond matters of technique to the communication of values and attitudes from text to reader through the medium of a story about a prophet."[44] Because Craig does not follow any one definition of poetics, he is not bound to following such a definition rigidly. This allows him some freedom, and a critique cannot be based on a critique of poetics in general.[45] His work shows that poetics is not the same thing as interpretation, and yet these two aspects closely interact. The whole purpose of his book is not merely to give a poetics, that is, an "objective" description of the techniques that can be discerned in the Book of Jonah. Rather, he shows how all of the poetic techniques undergird a central ideological point of view. That is to say, poetics has helped Craig interpret the Book of Jonah. His interpretation is not exhaustive, and as stated, can be summed up as a "unified position" emphasizing the sovereignty of God.

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[43] Ibid., 165.

[44] Ibid., 144.

[45] See Trible, p.65. Trible says poetics has greater affinities to biblical form criticism than rhetorical criticism because poetics is interested in finding the conventions and norms of a piece of literature. Poetics as a "science of literature" is looking for the common instead of the unique. "Further, the separation of grammar from meaning runs counter to the [rhetorical critical] insistence upon the inseparability of form, content, and meaning." Craig's book was received too late to be reviewed by Trible in her study.

Craig's book would be more beneficial if he had spent more time on the theoretical underpinnings of his research. But, as we saw in Chapter two above, a move away from stating what is normative methodology and following it is the current norm. It also shows that Craig is interested more in a specific poetics, that is, poetics derived from a specific text, rather than trying to fit a text into a preformed poetic package. Craig is influenced by the work of many others in coming up with a specific poetics on the Book of Jonah. He seems to pick and choose from other scholars who have worked on what "poetics" means and applies their work to the specifics of Jonah. [46]

If we compare Craig's poetics to the diagram of Abrams we see that Craig is not interested in how Jonah may or may not reflect the "universe." The "work," or "text," of Jonah is that through which we discern what the author, or narrator, wants to convey. Craig is not interested in the author outside of discerning what the ideological point of the story is, and that is discerned from the text of Jonah alone. Craig is, however, very interested in how the poetics of Jonah effect the reader. After all, Craig defined his task as finding out how the techniques in the book of Jonah impact the reader. His poetics draws attention to, or makes explicit, what is going on in the story. At times this comes across as a mere paraphrase, or retelling, of the story of Jonah. However, the attention to the techniques of the narrator are important so that the reader can better understand the textual causes of his reactions to the story.

The section on "the reading process," though not original to Craig, is an important section. Not only the reading of a narrative, like the Book of Jonah, but exegesis of other biblical books, even epistles, is a time-art. While there is a circularity involved in exegesis, from the parts to the whole and vice versa, Craig highlights the necessity of dealing with the text as it flows, and being aware of the "hindsight fallacy."

The chapter of Craig's book that compares the RSV and NRSV makes the simple point that all translation involves interpretation. Translation will always affect how a work is received. This is one reason why working with the original text is so important. Though Craig has translated the text of Jonah himself, he was not shown all his labor. While Craig points out that some of the NRSV translations are

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[46] Especially, Sternberg, Berlin, Alter, Hrushovski, and Uspensky.

based on better Hebrew scholarship, he does not make a point out of the necessity of basing a poetics on the original text, if that poetics is to be as faithful as possible to the author's intent.

Craig has tried to present a poetics that shows how the author/narrator used language to communicate a value. In trying to understand "how" the story is told Craig sought to better understand the "what" of the story. It would seem that an understanding of "how" a biblical story is told should be an essential ingredient in any "full" exposition of that story.

CHAPTER FIVE

PHYLLIS TRIBLE: *RHETORICAL CRITICISM: CONTEXT, METHOD, AND THE BOOK OF JONAH*

Introduction

Phyllis Trible's book is part of the "Guides to Biblical Scholarship Old Testament Series," published by Fortress Press, and so serves the pedagogical aim of introducing the reader to rhetorical criticism as well as showing how this kind of biblical criticism works on the specific text of the Book of Jonah.[1] Trible's book is divided between these goals.

The first part of Trible's book, or the "context," gives a general historical overview of rhetorical criticism, beginning from the ancient Greeks. Trible shows that there are different types of rhetorical criticism and she relates biblical rhetorical criticism to other forms of biblical criticisms, especially other "literary approaches," explaining how biblical rhetorical criticism is similar or different from the others. What is of interest for the purposes of this thesis is not a rehearsal of rhetorical criticism in general, but seeing how Trible demonstrates rhetorical criticism at work on the Book of Jonah. Before looking in more detail at how rhetorical criticism works on the Book of Jonah we will see how Trible defines the task of rhetorical criticism. Trible does not formulate a program for rhetorical criticism for students to follow beyond what she calls the "guiding rubric."

Trible was a student of James Muilenburg and so is greatly influenced by him.[2] Starting with Muilenburg's "rubric" that "proper articulation of form yields proper articulation of meaning," Trible makes clear what Muilenburg assumed, namely, that the form and content of a composition, while distinct, are inseparable. The first task of rhetorical criticism is the articulation of "form-content. "

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[1] Like Magonet and Craig, Trible's Ph.D. dissertation was on the Book of Jonah. See "Studies in the Book of Jonah," Columbia University, 1963. This dissertation is judged by Jack Sasson as "the most useful collection of various readings for Jonah," see Sasson, 9. Trible's book on rhetorical criticism is composed in such a way as to teach about rhetorical criticism as the "art of composition."

[2] See above, Chapter 2, 16-18.

Trible often uses "form-content" to stress the organic unity that is at the heart of all rhetorical critical

readings. "Form" for the rhetorical critic means design or structure, and structure is the *ipsissima verba*

of the text, not a topical outline of the text. "A literary artifact is not a container from which ideas or

substance can be removed. Conversely, it is not a subject matter from which stylistic and structural

wrappings can be removed. No form appears without content and no content with form."[3]

"Form-content" is also the criterion for determining the boundaries of a text. This is done by a

"close reading" of the parts and of the whole. A rhetorical critic should be aware of text, source, redaction

and other critical work on a given text, and yet, rhetorical criticism is a synchronic analysis of the text.

Therefore, rhetorical criticism does not focus on factors like historical background of a text, archeological

evidence, authorial intention, etc., even as it recognizes that these things do have a role to play in

analysis of the text. However, their role cannot be defined *a priori*.[4] Trible labels rhetorical criticism's

concern as an "intrinsic reading" versus an "extrinsic reading."

The rhetorical critic does not only articulate "form-content," but also articulates meaning.

"Meaning" itself is subject to different meanings. While Muilenburg, in his presidential address, may

have stressed the meaning of a text with "authorial intent," Trible says that "authorial intent" is not the

whole of meaning. While not denying that texts do reveal their authors, Trible emphasizes that the

central concern for rhetorical criticism is the text itself. This, however, does not preclude the role of the

reader in determining meaning. "Meaning" therefore is not easily defined.

> A single meaning ought to prevail, and yet it does not. . . . The rhetorical criticism
> developed here works between the alternatives: more than a single meaning and fewer
> than unlimited meanings. In addition, it works at the boundary of text and reader, with
> emphasis on the former. . . . Choices made by the reader shape and receive meanings,
> but they do not harness the text. Other meanings lie in wait. To adjudicate possibilities

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[3] Trible, 92.

[4] Synchronic and diachronic analyses are not always incompatible. Trible states that there is a hypothetical possibility that the pre-history may be such that the received text is a "hodgepodge that undercuts organic unity." Trible notes that research has not confirmed this possibility. "Composers, compilers, and redactors seemed to know what they were doing even if readers cannot always follow their logic," 94.

remains difficult. Indeed, the guiding rubric recognizes the problem when it uses the adjective 'proper.'[5]

"Proper" articulation means not all articulation of meaning is valid, and not all valid articulations are equally valid. However, Trible is well aware that the word "proper" is open to various interpretations and norming standards. The point made by using the term "proper" is that articulation must be made with care. Readings that account for all elements of form-content should be developed. Meaning is more than mere description of content, it is also the interpretation of that description. The "Muilenburg rubric" which Trible follows, albeit with a few slight changes, "allows for, indeed requires, intuition and play. The test of its usefulness comes not in theory but in practice."[6]

Trible gives some guidelines to help facilitate the practice of rhetorical criticism. These are not meant to be followed rigidly, nor are they exhaustive.[7]

1. "Begin with the text. Read it again and again." The critic may start with an English translation or with the Hebrew, or use both at the same time.
2. "Read various scholarly works on the text and take notes. . . . Rhetorical criticism needs the nourishment of other disciplines even as it nourishes them." Exegetical commentaries are important to read.
3. "Surround the study of the text with background knowledge to give depth and perspective." Trible suggests that part of the background should include a form-critical study. However, this background knowledge should not become overwhelming.[8]
4. "Acquaint yourself with rhetorical terms."
5. "Attend closely to the following features of a text." a) Beginning and ending. b) Repetition of words, phrases, and sentences. Here it is important if working with an English translation to note that sometimes the translator will use a different English word for the same Hebrew word and so obscure repetition. "Rhetorical analysis needs to maintain in translation the exact consistencies and inconsistencies of the Hebrew

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[5] Ibid., 99. Throughout her presentation Trible asks questions concerning the nature of discovering "meaning" that are difficult to answer. Her presentation gives no definite answer. She writes that rhetorical analysis "eschews a single interpretation, cautions against claims for objectivity and accents the role of the reader in making choices," 155. On intentionality she writes: "Frequently comes the question, 'Did the author intend the literary structures and meanings that you have presented?' The forthright, if simplistic and dissatisfying, answer is, 'I do not know.' But the matter does not rest. . . . The preponderance of literary structures and meanings throughout the book attests to authorial intentionality . . . (but). . . intentionality is tricky business. . . . The lesson is that, for weal or woe, a text carries meanings its author never intended. . . . Without explicit documentation, authorial intentionality cannot be assured. And even if it be known, it cannot control interpretation of the text. My own writing teaches me so," 228-230. See also Voelz, 207-16.

[6] Trible, 101.

[7] See Trible, 101-106, for these guidelines in detail.

[8] See how Trible relates a form-critical study to rhetorical criticism, 191-193.

vocabulary." c) "Types of discourse." Discern difference between narrated and direct discourse. d) "Design and structure." Seek how the parts fit with the whole. e) "Plot development." Trace the development and observe how, when, where and what changes happen. f) "Character portrayals." See how characters are referred to by the narrator. g) "Syntax." Note unusual Hebrew syntax and relate to the particularities of the text. h) "Particles." The meaning assigned to particles will vary according to context.

6. "Show structure by using the very words of the text in the order they occur. . . . Formal or literal correspondence between the languages, rather than so-called dynamic equivalence, is required." Hebrew word order should be preserved as much as possible in translation.

7. "Translate so as to retain not only the Hebrew syntax but also the original number of words." In the case of a single Hebrew word that needs several English words to translate it hyphenation should be used "because only the Hebrew words exhibit and validate structure."

8. "Devise a series of markers to indicate prominent features of the text, particularly repetition." These markers are arbitrarily chosen, but their use must be consistent.[9]

9. Once structure has been demonstrated by using the *ipsissima verba*, then the critic must "describe in clear prose what the structural diagram shows and interpret both diagram and description."

10. "Correlate your discoveries. . . . Find the right questions for the text you are studying. . . . Wrestle with the interrelationship of form-content and meaning."

Trible divides her rhetorical analysis of the Book of Jonah between the external design and internal structure of the book. For the purpose of this thesis aspects of Trible's external design of the Book of Jonah and sections of her analysis of the internal structures of the chapters will be examined in more detail to give an idea of the rhetorical critical method at work.

External Design

"Rhetorical analysis unfolds by fits and starts, by hints and guesses."[10] "External design" is the end product of a long, and sometimes tedious process.[11] It involves gathering clues from reading the text and the secondary literature with reflection on the Muilenburg rubric. What follows is Trible's design. After the design is shown, Trible gives a prose description and interpretation of that design.

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[9] "Within a unit, an unbroken line may indicate a first group of repetitions; a broken line, a second group . . . and so on," 105. A translation of the Book of Jonah, showing literary divisions, rhetorical structures, etc., can be found in Appendix A of Trible's book.

[10] Trible, 106.

[11] Trible follows the aphorisms of Alonso-Schökel: "With the sweat of your forehead you shall produce fruit. Share the fruit not the sweat. Search and check and discard; and make no display of your toil. Follow your intuition but never confess it," quoted by Trible, 106.

External Design: A Study in Symmetry[12]

Scene One: Chapters 1-2

1. Word of Yhwh to Jonah (1:1)
2. Content of the word (1:2)
3. Response of Jonah (1:3)
4. Report on impending disaster
   (1:4)
5. Response to impending disaster (1:5)
   - by the sailors
   - by Jonah
6. Unnamed captain of the ship (1:6)
   - efforts to avert disaster by
     • action
     • words to Jonah
     • hope
7. Sailors and Jonah (1:7-15)
   - sailors' proposal (1:7ab)
   - sailors' action and its result (1:7cd)
   - sailors' questions (1:8)
   - Jonah's reply (1:9)
   - sailors' response (1:10)
   - sailors' question (1:11)
   - Jonah's reply (1:12)
   - sailors' action (1:13)
   - sailors' prayer (1:14)
   - sailors' action (1:15ab)
   - result: disaster averted (1:15c)
8. Response of the sailors (1:16)
9. Yhwh and Jonah (2:1-11)
   - Yhwh's action and its result (2:1)
   - Jonah's prayer (2:2-10)

   - Yhwh's response and its result
     • by word (2:11a)
     • by nature: fish (2:11b)

Scene Two: Chapters 3-4

1. Word of Yhwh to Jonah (3:1)
2. Content of the word (3:2)
3. Response of Jonah (3:3-4a)
4. Prophecy of impending disaster
   (3:4b)
5. Response to impending disaster (3:5)
   - by Ninevites
6. Unnamed king of Nineveh (3:6-9)
   - efforts to avert disaster by
     • action
     • words to the Ninevites
     • hope
7. Ninevites and God (3:10)

   - Ninevites' action (3:10ab)

   - result: disaster averted (3:10cd)
8. Response of Jonah (4:1)
9. Yhwh and Jonah (4:2-11)

   - Jonah's prayer (4:2-3)
   - Yhwh's question (4:4)
   - Jonah's action (4:5)
   - Yhwh's response and its result

     • by nature: a plant (4:6abcd)
   - Jonah's response (4:6e)
   - Yhwh's response and its result
     • by nature: worm (4:7)
                 sun and
                 wind (4:8abc)
   - Jonah's response (4:8d)
   - Yhwh's question (4:9a)
   - Jonah's response (4:9b)
   - Yhwh's question (4:10-11)

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[12] Trible, 110-111.

On the basis of the verbal parallels at the beginnings of Jonah chapters 1 and 3 two scenes are established. Within these scenes are "episodes" and each episode contains "incidents." These will be looked at more closely during analysis of the internal structure. A symmetrical design was discovered, yet within there is also asymmetry.

In unit 4 of the external design Trible sees a thematic similarity, but she notes that thematic analysis by itself does not establish a structural relationship between the verses in scenes one and two. "Thematic analysis can be arbitrary and slippery."[13] 1:4 is narrated discourse, using a thirteen-word sentence, while 3:4b is direct discourse using a 7-word sentence. Trible says that these verses acquire symmetrical validity due to the corresponding position of these verses, the subject matter and the surrounding content. Before unit 4 there are extensive verbal similarities in units 1-3. In unit 5 three verbs describe the response of the sailors: "they-feared," "they-cried," "they-threw" (1:5abc). Three verbs describe the response of the Ninevites: "they-believed," "they-called," "they-put-on," (3:5). Though different verbs are used between the scenes they match in number, order and kind.[14] Both groups first respond internally: "they-feared" and "they-believed." Next they articulate their response: "they-cried" and "they-called." Finally they outwardly act: "they-threw" and "they-put-on." As unit 4 is surrounded by units that support symmetry Trible concludes that unit 4 contributes a part of the overall symmetrical design, even though the shared theme of impending disaster is a "lesser type of juxtaposition."[15]

Two obvious sections of the external design where symmetry seems to be lacking are in units 7 and 9. Trible notes however that parallelism of position does not mean that the length, form, and content must also be parallel. This is true for unit 6 as well. In addition, the imbalance in length between these units contributes to the overall balance, or symmetry.   In scene one, unit 9 ends with Yhwh making no verbal reply to Jonah's prayer. The fish vomits Jonah on dry land. In scene two Yhwh dialogues with Jonah. This external design description must be interpreted. Trible sees this as Yhwh moving from a god

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[13] Ibid., 112.

[14] Number means "collective." Kind means that both collective groups are "foreigners."

[15] Trible, 112. For another example in the external design where a thematic association gains stability by verbal similarities which surround it see unit 7 and the "disaster averted" theme.

of distance to one of dialogue; "from a god of power to a god of persuasion, from a god of rigidity to a god

of rhetoric."[16]

It is obvious that there is asymmetry in the overall symmetrical design. Trible comments on this

"symmetrophia" as well.[17] One interesting example of how an awareness of rhetorical-critical

methodology can influence an exegetical debate can be seen in Unit 5, concerning the placement of 4:5.

According to Trible's external design there is a gap here. If 4:5 was transposed to follow 3:4 then Unit 5

would look thus:

Scene One	Scene Two
5. Response to impending disaster - by the sailors (1:5ab) - by Jonah (1:5c)	5. Response to impending disaster - by Jonah (4:5) - by the Ninevites (3:5)

Not only is the symmetry of Unit 5 improved so is the symmetry of Unit 9.

Scene One	Scene Two
9. Yhwh and Jonah (2:1-11) - Yhwh's action and its result (2:1) - Jonah's prayer (2:1) - Yhwh's response and its result • by word (2:11a) • by nature: fish (2:11b)	9. Yhwh and Jonah (4:2-11) - Jonah's prayer (4:2-3) - Yhwh's response and its result • by word (4:4) • by nature: plant (4:6a).

This improved symmetry, however, is not a basis to conclude that 4:5 should be transposed.

"Rhetorical analysis plays with the proposal while shrinking from promoting it."[18] The heart of rhetorical

analysis, however, is not merely establishing an external design. Word by word, phrase by phrase,

sentence by sentence analysis is necessary. This will be demonstrated in the next section

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[16] Ibid., 116.

[17] See above, Chapter 3, footnote 25.

[18] Trible, 119. "Lack of textual or redactional evidence weakens the argument for transposition. Yet a skilled editor may well have left no traces. But then the question why 4:5 became misplaced remains unanswered." Trible, 119, footnote 33.

<u>Internal Structure</u>

Analysis of the internal structure is based on a close reading of the text. Necessary for such a close reading is a knowledge of rhetorical devices and structural divisions. Shifts in discourse, setting, time, characters and subject matter all help in determining these divisions. Trible says scene one is comprised of four episodes: 1:1-3; 1:4-6; 1:7-16; 2:1-11. Sections of Trible's detailed analysis from each chapter of the Book of Jonah will be highlighted to show the method at work.

Episode one, 1:1-3, contains two incidents: Yhwh's command, 1:1-2, and Jonah's response, 1:3.[19]

And-was the-word-of Yhwh to Jonah, son-of Amittai, saying: (1:1)
    "Arise
        go to Nineveh the-city the-great
        and-call to-her because has-come-up their-evil before-my-presence." (1:2)

A   And/but-arose Jonah to-flee <u>to-Tarshish from-the-presence-of Yhwh</u>
  B   <u>and-he-went-down</u> to-Joppa

    C   and-he-found a-ship
      D   <u>returning</u> <u>(to) Tarshish</u>

    C'   and-he-paid her-fare
  B   <u>and-he-went-down</u> in-it

A'   <u>to-return</u> with-them <u>to-Tarshish from-the-presence-of Yhwh</u>. (1:3)

Narrated discourse begins the story of Jonah.[20] Trible notes that the opening of the story fits the form-critical category of "prophetic word formula." Rhetorical criticism, however, is interested in the particularities of this formula in the Book of Jonah, and no other prophetic book opens in exactly the same way. The Book of Jonah is not like any other prophetic book. It is more of a story about him than a

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[19] Since Hebrew alone validates structure hyphenation shows the number of Hebrew words in translation.

[20] Trible notes narrated and direct discourse throughout her study, and uses the distinction to help interpret. For instance, in 1:2 Yhwh speaks directly to Jonah. This gives Yhwh "immediacy and authority." Jonah's reaction is narrated, giving him "distance and diminishment," 130. This interpretation of discourse style is substantiated by the contents of 1:3: Jonah puts distance between himself and Yhwh by running away. In each case the rhetorical critic must discern how the types of discourse relate to each other. See also Alter, <u>The Art of Biblical Narrative,</u> 63-87, for a discussion of narration and dialogue.

collection of words by him. Conventional language then indicates the unconventional, and Trible wonders if this is a hint of things to come in the story.

Of particular interest is how Trible interprets the syntax of 1:1. The verse encloses Jonah with divine speech. This shows the "dominance of the deity. . . . Structure and content show that Yhwh prevails over Jonah to initiate the plot."[21] The relation of structure and content is always scrutinized by Trible. In the very next verse, 1:3, it is noted that "from-the-presence-of Yhwh" surrounds the flight of Jonah. Here, the narration of Jonah's fleeing is subverted by the structure which shows that he is still encompassed by Yhwh. "What the words proclaim, the structure subverts. Jonah is trapped in his flight, and his action implicates innocent sailors."[22]

While conventional language is used for the "prophetic word formula" and for the "commissioning" or "call" of Jonah, his response is unconventional. He flees. Trible draws significance from the fact that Yhwh tells Jonah to go to Nineveh, אֶל־נִינְוֵה, using the preposition אֶל, while Jonah goes to Tarshish, תַּרְשִׁישָׁה. That destination is expressed with the locative ה. Even the grammar is contrary to Yhwh's!

At the beginning of the chiasm in 1:3 Trible lets the translation "and/but" for ו stand. When the reader sees the וַיָּקָם he assumes that a prophet would carry out the command imperatives of Yhwh, and so would translate "and he arose." However, the next word is not "to go" but "to flee." So a correction of the initial translation must be made to "but he arose." This gives Trible an opportunity to point out in practice how deconstructionism relates to rhetorical criticism. "The ambiguity of *wa-* leads and misleads (or misleads and leads) the reader from command to disobedient response. A deconstructionist takes delight as the conjunction undermines its meaning."[23]

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[21] Trible, 125. For other examples see how Yhwh encloses the chiasm at 2:1,2,11 and 4:1 where Jonah is surround by "evil." Jonah's prayer in 4:2-3 is surrounded by anger, or "burning."

[22] Ibid., 131. Trible sees this structure/content incongruity as an example of irony in the Book of Jonah. To illustrate a rhetorical critical principle that an identical structure does not have the same meaning everywhere see 1:14 where the Sailors' prayer to Yhwh is enclosed by "Yhwh." In 1:14 the "inclusio" denotes the congruity between the what the Sailors seek and the structure/content, while the "inclusio" in 1:3 denotes the incongruity between Jonah's desire and the structure/content.

The chiasm also shows the rhetorical critical practice of using the *ipsissima verba* to make the structure. Trible repeatedly emphasizes the fact that rhetorical criticism wants to work with the *ipsissima verba* as well as possible. Devising a structure based on themes or summaries of the narrative will not be able to account for all the particularities of a text, and consequently will not be able to best interpret what is going on in the text.[24] Trible's method takes note of grammatical, lexical-semantic, and phonological aspects in describing structure. For instance, C and C' do not have the same vocabulary though both use third person masculine singular indicative verbs, and both have single direct objects that are related. In this "handsome chiasm" the repetitions produce regularity, rhythm and emphasis, while the variations add nuance and make possible movement of plot.[25]

Next, Trible's analysis of Jonah chapter 2 will briefly be discussed. Of primary interest is to see how her analysis deals with the question of the psalm's placement and originality. Trible begins by noting that without the psalm there is a chiasm formed from the narrative verses 2:1,2, 11.[26]

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[23] Ibid., 128. Trible writes that "deconstruction relates to biblical rhetorical criticism in unstable ways. The view that no fixed structures exist, that authorial intentionality does not prevail, and that meaning must be continually deferred decenters the Muilenburg stance. Yet rhetorical analysis itself characterizes deconstructionist activity. In dismantling texts, it investigates the persuasive power of language . . . delineates topes and figures, and pursues close reading with focus on the particularities (rather than the similarities) of texts. Though with marked differences, rhetorical criticism (in the Muilenburg mode) and deconstruction eschew comprehensive systems for controlling the text," p.72.

[24] Trible 152-155. See above, Chapter 3 footnote 25 and Trible's critique of Magonet's analysis of Jonah Chapter 1.

[25] Trible, 129-131. For a phonological example, Trible points out the assonance (similar sounds of the vowels) of חשבה להשבר in 1:4. In these words also she notes other rhetorical devices as onomatopoeia and prosopopoeia. "Focused on the ship, these devices underscore the terror of the storm hurled by Yhwh. They paint an unusual picture. Hence, a modest sentence acquires immodest proportions," 132.

[26] Trible draws significance again from the fact that Yhwh encloses the narrative chiasm. "Structurally and theologically, Yhwh as subject encloses the episode. Every movement happens within the divine confines. So the ingestion and descent of Jonah signify not destruction but appointment. By the same token, the ascent and ejection signify not restoration to resolution but to continuing conflict," 159.

A   And-appointed Yhwh a-fish great to-swallow Jonah

           ┌─── a ───┐ ┌──── b ────┐ ┌────── c ──────┐
B   and-was Jonah in-the-belly-of the-fish three days and-three nights.

           ┌─── a'──┐ ┌──── d────┐ ┌────── c' ──────┐
B'   and-was Jonah to Yhwh his-God from-the-belly-of the-fish.

A'   And-said Yhwh to-the-fish and-it-vomited Jonah to the-dry-land.

The psalm that appears between B' and A' is a challenge for the rhetorical critic. The question, however, for the rhetorical critic is not so much if the psalm was added, but how does it function within the Book of Jonah. "Function neither requires nor disavows harmony, though many critics seem to assume the former. They interpret the psalm as genuine piety of Jonah, and they seek continuity between it and the narrative. By contrast, this study ponders dissonance."[27] The disruption of the narrative chiasm, the delay of the plot, the irony between the reader's expectations and Jonah's actual prayer, and the fact that the perspective given of Jonah in the psalm is different than that of the narrative all lead Trible to conclude that the psalm is not part of the original story.[28]

Trible thinks Jonah misrepresents the facts in the psalm when he accuses Yhwh of hurling him into the sea (2:4), as it was the sailors who did so. She also thinks the expressions of cultic piety hardly fit his demeanor. Trible thinks Jonah arrogant, self-righteous, one who displays counterfeit piety, in contrast to the sailors and Ninevites, all of which creates a nauseous effect. "Such dissonance drives wedges between the psalm and the narrative—or it makes grotesque the developing portrait of Jonah."[29] Trible

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[27] "The isolation of the chiasm in 2:1,2,11 has already shown the rhetorical method at work on a putative earlier text," 161. Here one can see that while rhetorical criticism is interested in the final form of the text it also works with the findings of source criticism, without necessarily always endorsing those finds.

[28] Primarily, Trible thinks Jonah should be praying a complaint psalm, and not one of thanksgiving. She says "Genre and *Sitz im Leben* clash," 162. Thus, Trible can accuse Jonah of having a "distorted perception of reality" because his psalm proclaims deliverance, even while he is in mortal danger, that is, inside the fish. However, if Jonah is thanking Yhwh for delivering him from drowning, a psalm of thanksgiving is appropriate.

[29] Trible, 168. Adding to Trible's assessment of Jonah is her translation of 2:5, "But-I, I-said, 'I-have-been-driven-out from-before your-eyes,' Nevertheless (אך) I-continue to-look to the-temple-of-your-holiness." She writes, "Within the intricacies of the structure the precise meaning of the *'ak* remains ambiguous. Though it signals the reversal of Jonah's thoughts, it may work as either an asseverative or

does not claim that her analysis negates the analyses of those who do not stress the "dissonance" between

psalm and narrative, but she allows for that fact that different readers will evaluate differently. All

evaluation, though, must consider the difficulties presented in the text. This keeps debates from

degenerating into mere subjective opining. The rhetorical critical method advocated by Trible works at

the border of text and reader, with the emphasis on the former. Therefore, Trible deals with the text as it

stands, seeking to discover how the addition of the psalm affects the structure and theology of the story of

Jonah. [30]

    Aspects of Trible's analysis of scene two of the Jonah story, Chapters 3-4, will now be discussed.

Scene two is comprised of 4 episodes: 3:1-4; 3:5-10; 4:1-5; 4:6-11. The first episode, 3:1-4, concerns

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an adversative. The former would signify a humble gesture; the latter, a defiant stance. Given Jonah's desperate situation, the asseverative makes sense. Given his recalcitrant demeanor, the adversative makes sense. Perhaps Jonah engages Yhwh on both levels." Elsewhere in her study Trible points out where rhetorical analysis interacts with text criticism. Here, however, Trible does not discuss the proposal of the BHK that אִךְ should replace אַךְ. It may be because the manuscript evidence for this change rests only on the θ' (Theodotion) reading of πως at this point. This reading gives a different picture of Jonah.

    It seems that Trible may also be "reaching" to paint a more negative picture of Jonah from the psalm than is necessary. For instance, when Jonah claims it was Yhwh who hurled him into the sea, it must be remembered that Yhwh acts through means throughout this story. The sailors were the instruments by which Jonah was thrown into the sea. Yhwh was the efficient cause. During the reading process of Jonah 1 and 2 the reader does not know how Jonah's character will develop, so to accuse him at this point of counterfeit piety is to be reading and judging backwards, so to speak. It also seems to want to idealize how Jonah should respond to Yhwh's summons and chastisement and deliverance. The good that one should do is not always what is done (see Romans 7). Saints do not always act ideally, yet their rescue from the body of death is always due to Yhwh. For arguments in favor of the originality of the psalm to the Book of Jonah see Landes, 3-31. Trible's acknowledgment of "symmetrophobia" as a device used by Hebrew authors makes one wonder why the psalm is characterized as "a glaring instance of symmetrophobia," 162. Is the use of the adjective "glaring" meant to persuade the reader to agree with Trible?

[30] This, says Trible, relates rhetorical criticism to redaction and canonical criticism. If one compares the evidence presented by Trible against the originality of the psalm with the counter-evidence presented by Landes the student is in a better position to decide which deals with the text in a more sufficient manner. It is interesting to note how these authors use rhetoric in an attempt to persuade the reader of the superiority of their own position. However, Landes concludes his article like this: "Thus, although we must grant the possibility that the Jonah psalm attained its present position in the Book of Jonah through the work of a scribe who was not the author of the prose stories, our study surely suggests that if this is so he was no less sensitive to the form, structure, and content of the book than the original writer himself. When, as we think, it is just as plausible that the initial author of Jonah knew of and used the psalm, this raises the question whether it is even necessary to introduce the figure of a secondary interpolator," 31. In the end the reader must decide.

Yhwh's re-calling of Jonah, and Jonah's response. Yhwh uses the three call words, "arise, go, call,"

again. In 1:3 we saw that Jonah "arose," but to flee. There, he only obeyed one of the three call words.

<div style="text-align:center">

a
And-arose <u>Jonah</u>
                  b
and-he-went [walked] to Nineveh according-to-the-word-of Yhwh.

b'   c   d   e
And-Nineveh was a-city great to-god, a-walk-of three days,

a   c'   d'   e'
And-began <u>Jonah</u> to-enter into-the-city a-walk-of day one. (3:3-4a).[31]

</div>

In 3:3 Jonah "arose" and "went" to Nineveh. One might suspect the third word, "call," to

appear in close proximity to "went," but it doesn't appear until 3:4b. Trible sees this as a delaying

technique used by the narrator to create suspense in the mind of the reader. Jonah obeyed the first two

call words immediately. Will he obey the third? Will Jonah carry out the full command of God this

time?

The last thing to be examined from Jonah Chapter 3 will be 3:5: the first incident of scene two,

episode two.

> And-believed the-people-of Nineveh in-God,
>   and-they-called a-fast,
>   and-they-put-on sackcloth, from-their-great and-to their-small.

The very first word comes from the Hebrew root אמן. Not only does this signal a turn in the

plot, Trible suggests, it is a pun on Jonah's name--Jonah son of Amittai.[32] The Ninevites believe the 5-

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[31] This section also demonstrates some of the guidelines for the practice of rhetorical criticism. Trible shows how clauses within a unit are connected with the use of lower case letters. She notes synonymous parallelism (c, d, e, c', d', e'). She also draws attention to the fact that there is a problem in distinguishing the Hebrew words בא (1:3, and 3:4) and הלך (1:2; 1:7 3:2; 3:3) in translation. The rhetorical critic should strive for consistency in translating, however, this can lead to awkwardness of expression. "In all cases where a single word acquires or requires different translations or different words acquire or require a single translation, rhetorical analysis suffers (and so does the reader)," 179. This problem would only be overcome if the Hebrew were used to show the structure. It is a legitimate question, however, to ask if one must always consistently translate to render a proper rhetorical critical understanding of the text or if some words are merely repeated by "chance." See above, Chapter 3, footnote 4 .

[32] See Sasson, 69. "The name *'amittay* . . . is ultimately based on the root *'mn* but is more immediately constructed on the word *'met.* . . . The yod at the end of the word can be regarded as a hypocoristicon, allowing the name to mean something like 'Yahweh is steadfast.'"

word message delivered by Jonah, the son of Belief. The Ninevites also "call" a fast, as well as putting on sackcloth. Their actions give evidence of their belief.[33]

One of the guidelines suggested by Trible when doing rhetorical criticism is to be familiar with rhetorical terms. In this verse the phrase "great and small" is a merism, in that it signifies the whole of the population of Ninevah.[34] The phrase can also be seen as an example of pleonasm since it employs more words than necessary to describe the people of Nineveh. These rhetorical devices add nuance and emphasis to the fact that the entire population believes. Why they believe, however, is never explained. Jonah's recorded preaching is only 5 words, and it does not even mention God, yet the Ninevites respond immediately. This leads Trible to briefly discuss "gaps" in the Book of Jonah.[35]

Trible says this is a permanent gap in the story, since the information as to why the Ninevites believe is never given. Rather than coming up with reasons answering a question the text doesn't ask the rhetorical critic is more concerned with how the gap functions. One of the functions, Trible suggests, is to invite the reader to make "implied comparisons." "The developing portrait of the sailors gives ample reasons for their conversion; the nondeveloping portrait of the Ninevites gives no reason for their conversion. Juxtaposed, the portraits disallow stereotypical thinking about foreigners."[36] Looking forward a comparison also can be made with Jonah:

> So readily the Ninevites believe in God; no explanation complicates the outcome. So doggedly[37] Jonah will argue with God; elaborate explanation will complicate the

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[33] Trible says the word "call," in "called a-fast," "plays" on preceding events where the word "call" is used. For instance, Yhwh calls to Jonah, the captain calls to Jonah to pray, and Jonah called out his message in Nineveh. What or how this "plays" with the preceding is not further discussed. The word "play" seems to be an inclusive word to describe something that is hard to describe.

[34] Merism is the division of the whole into parts (see 1:9), and should not be confused with synecdoche which is the substitution of parts for the whole. In 3:7 these two devices are used together.

[35] Trible, 182, refers the reader to Sternberg, 235-265, and his discussion of three types of gaps in narrative. 1. Gaps may be irrelevant, when information is omitted for lack of interest. 2. Gaps may be temporary, when information is delayed for the sake of interest. 3. Gaps may be permanent, also for the sake of interest.

[36] Trible, 182. Trible thinks the message of Jonah to the Ninevites, unlike the raging sea for the sailors, did not give an immediate threat of danger and so is disallowed as a reason for conversion.

outcome. Juxtaposed, the portraits disallow stereotypical thinking about the foreigners and the Hebrew. In these and perhaps other ways, the lack of information about why the Ninevites immediately believe in God serves artistic and theological interests.[38]

Moving on to chapter 4 we will look at two more examples of gaps. Trible begins by analyzing Jonah's prayer in 4:2-3. The prayer fills the gap of information between Yhwh's command and Jonah's response in 1:2-3. The answer to Jonah's flight is now given. Trible points out that the filling of gaps by the reader, during the reading process, is not always self-evident. She notes that Sternberg believes the "self-evident" reason for Jonah's flight is because God is portrayed as wrathful and Jonah "is too tender-hearted to carry a message of doom to a great city."[39] Trible fills the informational gap by suggesting two other possibilities. The first is that Jonah is too scared to go to Nineveh. He fears he might be killed by the Ninevites. The second suggests the opposite of Sternberg's reading. Jonah is heard-hearted and wrathful. He wants Nineveh to be destroyed and so does not want to warn them of impending doom. He is so hard-hearted he is willing to endanger the sailors. Plus, the words of hope spoken by the captain (1:9) and the sparing of the sailors' lives (1:15) works against seeing God as wrathful. Whether one agrees with Trible's suggestions or not her point is valid: "In the filling of gaps there is no end."[40]

The next gap filler to be considered is Yhwh's final word, his question to Jonah in 4:10-11. Trible's analysis of these two verses finds that the declarative sentence, 4:10, has sixteen words while the interrogative, 4:11, has twenty-three words. Among other things in these verses, Trible is interested in the word "pity," חוּס, and how it functions in Yhwh's argument to Jonah, and how the reader understands Jonah. The argument is *ad minori ad maius*. It moves from Jonah's pity of the plant to Yhwh's pity of Nineveh.

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[37] Trible has a footnote at this point to illustrate bilingual paronomasia. She writes, "as noted, the Hebrew words for "a-fish great" (*dag gadol*) produce a wordplay through the reversal of the consonants *dg* and *gd*. In English these consonants cling doggedly to Jonah." This is one example of how Trible engagingly teaches as she writes.

[38] Trible, 182-183. Rhetorical criticism's exploration of "how" gaps function relates it to poetics.

[39] Ibid., 203. See Sternberg, 318-320.

[40] Trible, 203. The Jonah story is so well known that it might be hard to find "first-time" hearers of the story, but it would be interesting to investigate the reactions of such a group, and see how they fill in the gap.

"You, you-pitied for the plant... (4:10)

"And-I, (shall) not I-have-pity for Nineveh the-city the-great . . . " (4:11)

The verb סוח fits Yhwh well, but it doesn't seem to fit Jonah. The text, 4:6, describes Jonah's

"delight" concerning the plant. In fact, Jonah is surrounded by the word "delight" in this verse. After

the destruction of the plant by the appointed worm Jonah is then described as being angry to the point of

death in 4:8-9. He's "burning" mad (חרה). There is no mention of Jonah pitying the plant until Yhwh

says so. Trible writes, "On Yhwh's attribution of the verb to Jonah hinges the validity of Yhwh's

argument. *His* controls the premise and the conclusion. The integrity of the narrative ending as an

artistic and theological statement depends on it."[41] The question is: How does one know that Jonah pitied

the plant? Trible notes that one might take Yhwh's word for it, and leave it at that. However, she says,

this only begs the point. Commentators have difficulty with translating and explaining the meaning

סוח consistently since the word is used both of Jonah and Yhwh.[42] The following chart was developed

by Trible to help explain the function and meaning of סוח.[43]

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[41] Ibid., 218.

[42] Trible samples various commentators to show how they try to solve the problem of translating the word. She finds them all unsatisfactory in some way. Here again one can see clearly an instance where a literary approach, like rhetorical criticism, adds to the exegetical discussion.

[43] Ibid., 220. This chart was developed only after close readings of the sections involved were done. Trible's close readings have not been discussed. Trible notes too that the verb סוח does not pertain to Jonah's anger about the plant. Jonah "burns," or is angry, after being burned by the sun. Jonah's anger is mentioned in the structure of 4:1,4 and 4:9a,b. It is, however, separated from the last episode, 4:10-11. See Trible, 215-219.

A	**B**	**A'**
4:3-5	4:6-8f	4:8ef-9

a Jonah's request to Yhwh
     for death
b Divine question
     about anger
c Jonah's response: exit

a' Jonah's inward request
     for death
b' Divine question
     about anger
c' Jonah's response:words

d	**e**	**f**
divine appointment plant	divine appointment worm	divine appointment wind (and sun)
effect on Jonah shade and deliver	effect on plant attack and wither	effect on Jonah faint
Jonah's reaction delight		Jonah's reaction death wish

C
4:10-11
x Jonah's pity on the plant
y Yhwh's pity on Nineveh

Given the many symmetries the gap in the center of the center, at **B e**, is prominent. Jonah's

reaction is not recorded. What is the meaning of this gap that rhetorical analysis has exposed? The

search for meaning will take place within the text and between the text and reader. Trible's discoveries

deserve extensive quotation.

> Distinct in vocabulary, location, and message (C,x), the information serves two
> purposes. The obvious purpose is to form, for the incident in which it occurs, the
> premise of the argument. The subtle purpose is to supply, for the incident about the
> withered plant, the missing report about Jonah's reaction. Hence, this reference to the
> activity of pity fills the gap. Subject matter (Jonah and the plant) and point of view (pity
> rather than anger or self-pity) argue for the reading back into B, e of the information
> given in C, x. In the process the subtle purpose validates the obvious purpose. It
> validates the premise of Yhwh's argument that Jonah pitied the withered plant qua
> withered plant. He pitied it in and for itself. . . . The verbs 'delight' and 'pity' expand
> the character of Jonah beyond the one-dimensional portrayal of his being angry (4:1).
> In using them, the reliable witnesses, the narrator and Yhwh, suggest that there is more
> to Jonah than Jonah himself discloses when he asks to die. . . . The reading back of
> 4:10a into 4:7 does not mean that the former verse has been misplaced. . . . It requires
> the reader to reread: to read backward as well as forward. Having discerned and filled
> the gap through the clues in structure and content, the reader then interprets the last
> incident with new understanding. No longer does the analogy between Jonah and Yhwh

appear suspect. Jonah's showing of pity becomes a valid premise from which to argue for Yhwh's showing of pity.[44]

One final interesting discovery to be noted is the symmetrical structure of the speeches (direct discourse) in the last chapter of the Book of Jonah.[45]

4:2-3	Jonah's monologue	39 words
4:4	God's query (unanswered)	3 words
4:8	Jonah's query (sotto voice)	3 words
4:9	dialogue: God	5 words
	dialogue: Jonah	5 words
4:10-11	God's monologue	39 words

What is the meaning of this structure? Trible suggests that it means Yhwh and Jonah are evenly matched. Even though God has the last word in the book, that word is a question to Jonah. Jonah has the opportunity, or power, to answer. Trible thus sees the ending question as moving the story beyond the confines of the book itself.[46]

Summary and Evaluation

Trible's book is an excellent pedagogical tool. It gives a general overview of the history of rhetorical criticism, but its value is in showing a rhetorical critical method, based on the guiding rubric—appropriate articulation of form-content yields appropriate articulation of meaning—at work on the specific text of Jonah. The rhetorical criticism advocated by Trible cannot, or should not, be codified beyond the guiding rubric. If the rubric is followed according to Trible's suggestions or guidelines it

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[44] Ibid., 221-22.

[45] Ibid., 223-224. This structure was actually discovered by Sasson, see 317-318. Sasson notes that the symmetry is too obvious to be accidental, though the goal or purpose of the structure is open to speculation. He writes, "I can suggest that this balance and harmony are intended to keep us aware that God's responses are countermoves to Jonah's utterances. If so we are encouraged to *limit* the application of the lesson we derive from Jonah's last chapter to the unusual conditions that forced the confrontation between God and a displeased prophet. In other words, we are invited to perceive Nineveh's good fortune as uncommon and not easily reproducible; on future occasions, when populations sin badly enough to deserve divine punishment, God might not prove as charitable," 318.

[46] Trible says that Yhwh, like a classical orator, seeks to persuade the hearers or readers about the rightness of His actions. See Trible, 7-8, for a brief description of the five parts of classical rhetoric. The response of the hearers/readers becomes paramount. "Rhetorical eloquence is theological eloquence," 224.

might mean a more detailed study of a text than would otherwise be done. In the preceding pages most of the guidelines listed by Trible were shown applied to the text of Jonah. The guidelines, it must be remembered, were not exhaustive. "For rhetorical critics, like biblical exegetes throughout the ages, 'God dwells in the details.'"[47] Of necessity, much of Trible's detailed work, with many interesting discoveries, was not mentioned in this chapter. However, it can be stated that rhetorical criticism has illuminated the text of Jonah and its meaning.

Trible's analysis has shown the great artistry of the Book of Jonah. She has done this not at a "thematic" level in terms of outlining the Book of Jonah, but at the more detailed level, using the very *ipsissima verba* of the text. Her insistence that for structural analysis to be valid it must be based on the Hebrew, or a translation of the Hebrew that preserves intact, as far as possible, the exact number of Hebrew words and Hebrew syntax, is well stated and necessary.

But her analysis does more than just show artistry. According to the guiding rubric, there is no form without content and vice versa. To draw attention to artistry is not to detract from searching for theology. If only a search for artistry were done it could not rightfully be called rhetorical criticism. The example of finding the gap at 4:7 and noting how it is filled by the information in 4:10-11, in relation to the word "pity," is one example of illuminating artistry and theology.

Reading Trible's book and working with the rhetorical-critical method will also make one aware of, and grapple with, contemporary hermeneutical discussions. In several ways Trible makes it clear that interpreting is not an easy task. It certainly is not entirely an objective task, as many would like to think. If we consider Abrams' diagram, Trible has said that rhetorical criticism works at the boundary of text and reader, with the emphasis on the former. This should allay fears that rhetorical criticism might be too subjective. Especially in the filling in of gaps rhetorical criticism trys to keep focused on how the gap is filled by the text. For instance, it was mentioned that no reason was given why the Ninevites believed the words declared by Jonah. Rhetorical criticism doesn't seek to give a reason, but it does use this episode to further explore the character of Jonah. Even where one might disagree with Trible, it is clear from her

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[47] Trible, 235.

analysis that she does not set forth an interpretation that is not based on a careful study of the specifics of the text.

Trible has shown well the relationship of rhetorical criticism to other critical tasks, and that rhetorical criticism uses the research and findings of other methods to enrich the understanding of the text. Trible can show how source criticism might impact the Book of Jonah at 2:3-10. The best argument against the originality of the psalm would seem to be that the narrative chiasm surrounding it is broken. However, as Trible admits, this is not incontrovertible proof against originality. After asking a source critical question, Trible eventually deals with the text as it stands. Trible's analysis shows no interest in questions posed to the Book of Jonah that are concerned about whether or not the events depicted in the story really happened.

Trible has composed a well crafted book. She writes persuasively. She is a good teacher of rhetoric, rhetoric being understood both as the art of composition and as the art of persuasion. But while persuasive, she is not dogmatic. She recognizes that her study has not said all that can be said about the text of Jonah. Nor is the method advocated by her one that easily fits into a preconceived model of what rhetorical criticism should be. Her book is not a commentary, and yet it will be hard for any commentary written after her book not to take her findings, especially her structuring of the Book of Jonah, into consideration. If "the proof is in the pudding" Trible has served up a fine dish. Which is another way to say that what is more important than any theory of rhetorical criticism is its application to a text.

CHAPTER SIX

COMMENTARY SURVEY

Introduction

What kinds of questions are being asked by "literary approaches" that are not asked by the

commentaries? This chapter is intended to survey five commentaries on the Book of Jonah to delineate

new insights or contributions that "literary approaches" are making that these commentaries have not

made. Only five commentaries will be examined so this chapter does not claim to be an exhaustive

survey. Commentaries serve a different purpose than the "literary approaches" previously examined. Of

particular interest will be to see how the commentators relate the text to the author, reader, and to the

world of historical events. Also of interest will be discerning how the commentators examine the

structure of Jonah, the relation of individual words, sentences, and passages to the whole book. How do

the commentators handle the psalm? Do the commentators discuss concerns that we have noticed in the

three previous books? If so, how are they similar or different? This survey is not meant to be a critique

of the merits or demerits of each commentary, but merely to give a better understanding of the impact

that "literary approaches" are making in biblical studies.

C.F. Keil

Among the individual commentaries in the Commentary on the Old Testament , written with

Franz J. Delitzsch, Carl. F. Keil wrote the commentary on the Book of Jonah. This commentary is a

conservative, historical-grammatical approach to the text of Jonah. The introduction of the commentary

is concerned with defending the authorship of the book by Jonah and the historical events described

therein. Keil believes the book to have been written during the reign of Jeroboam II, between 824 and

783 B.C. The fact that Jonah was written by the historical prophet Jonah touches upon what might be

considered a larger canonical, some would say "literary," concern: the reason the Book of Jonah is included among the twelve minor prophets.[1]

Keil's apologetic for the historicity of the events described in the book is something not seen in "literary approaches." Without explicitly labeling the genre of the Book of Jonah, Keil would consider it to be a historical narrative. In contrast to the historical-critical scholars of his time, who wanted the Book of Jonah to fit some preconceived or "modern" notion of what historical writing should be and look like, Keil tries to defend the facticity of the account and show how the events described could have taken place. For Keil, this debate over the historicity of the account in Jonah was connected with understanding the nature of the living God who is active in history. [2]

Keil connects the relation of the events in the Book of Jonah with the world of historical events and ultimately to the antitype, Jesus Christ. In this connection Keil makes some of his best theological comments. Jonah is typical of the nation of Israel of his day, and of Jesus Christ. He writes, "This symbolical and typical significance of the mission of the prophet Jonah precludes the assumption that the account in his book is a myth or a parabolical fiction. . ."[3] This sort of typological understanding is absent in the studies of the literary approaches that were examined.

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[1] Keil, 380. See Paul R. House, The Unity of the Twelve, (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1990). House applies "literary methods" to discover the significance of the order of the twelve minor prophets as they now appear.

[2] See Voelz, 202-206 for a discussion of "the Historicity of Narrative and 'Allegorical' Interpretation." Of the commentaries surveyed for this chapter Keil is the only one who considers the Book of Jonah a historical account. Two other recent commentators who hold this view are Gerhard Maier, Der Prophet Jona, and Douglas Stuart, Hosea-Jonah. Stuart writes, "One can appreciate the story of Jonah whether or not it represents actual historical events. . . . But the issue of historicity has implications beyond the formal didactic function of the narrative," 440. For a listing and discussion of various genre designations for the Book of Jonah, from a conservative viewpoint, see T. Desmond Alexander, "Jonah and Genre," Tyndale Bulletin 36 (1985): 35-59.

[3] Keil, 387. Debate concerning the "historicity" of biblical narratives will impact how typology is understood. Many biblical scholars say that Jesus is merely drawing on a fictional illustration, much like a modern preacher can make a point by invoking a literary example, when he compares his death and resurrection to Jonah's stay in the fish. Is typology no more than mere analogy? Is typology a legitimate part of exegesis, or is it more of an application of Scripture? A survey of early Christian views on the Book of Jonah can be found in R. R. Bowers, The Legend of Jonah, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971). Bowers writes, "The written documents, then, of the first five centuries of Christianity, provide consistent recording of the apologetic use of the Jonah legend as a proof-text for eschatological assertion, in which Judaic typology based on the concrete reality of historical events, rather than Greek allegory based on abstractions, is most evident," 31-32. See also Richard M. Davidson, Typology in Scripture: A Study of

To use more recent terminology, Keil argues for taking the text "as it stands" by refuting proposals for various emendations. In Keil's explication of the story of Jonah he fills in the gap, or readerly question, concerning Jonah's motive to flee, by immediately "giving the answer" from 4:2. Keil is not interested in pursuing other possibilities as one reads, nor in how filling the gap might affect interpretation. He agrees with an interpretation by Luther, that Jonah feared that conversion of the Gentiles would infringe upon the privileges of Israel.[4]

Keil considers the psalm to be one of thanksgiving for deliverance from drowning and that it is original to the book. He sees no necessity to claim that it would better be suited to follow the narrative conclusion to Jonah chapter 2, nor that its characterization of Jonah is somehow contrary to the surrounding narrative. He lists many of the "reminiscences" from the Psalter that are found in Jonah's prayer. Unlike Magonet, he does not use this information to come up with a thesis for the structure of the book, nor as an aid in the thesis that the psalm was written by Jonah for the book.

Keil's commentary presents an exposition of the story of Jonah without an overly detailed concern with every word. He does not talk at all about the symmetry of the Book of Jonah, nor attempt to find a structure for the book. Keil touches upon some of the concerns we saw in the "literary approaches." He fills in the gap, a permanent gap, created by the lack of reason given for the Ninevites belief. This unlike Trible, for example, who uses the gap as means to compare and contrast the Ninevites with Jonah instead of coming up with reasons for the conversion which the text does not state. This, however, seems to have been done more as an apologetic against those who claim the sudden and massive repentance as evidence against the historicity of the story. Keil also believes that the various designations for God in 4:6-9 have significance. Unlike Magonet, he does not come up with a system to explain the designations of God for the whole book. Keil thinks the designation *Elohim* in 4:9, is an intimation of

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Hermeneutical ΤΥΠΟΣ Structures, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), especially "Fundamental Issues in Biblical Typology," 93-114. Davidson writes, "While traditional typologists would insist on the facticity of both type and antitype, modern proponents within the historical-critical framework no longer require the actual historicity of the single scenes, as long as the truth of the self-revelation of God is manifest," 96. See Brevard Childs, Biblical Theology, 13-14.

[4] Keil, 392.

the divine voice within Jonah, that is, not an auditory word. *"Jehovah's* speaking in 4:10 is a

manifestation of the divine will by supernatural inspiration."[5] Finally, the object of the Book of Jonah—to

show that the compassion of the Lord embraces all nations with equal love—is obtained by the final

question from God. Instead of emphasizing that the book ends on a question and demands an answer by

someone, hopefully in accordance with God's actions in the story, Keil, in a declarative manner, states

that the object of the book has been achieved. "Literary approaches" would emphasize the last rhetorical

question at the end more, and the effect it has on the listener or reader.

Julius A. Bewer

Bewer's commentary on Jonah is in the International Critical Commentary series and represents

the antithesis of Keil's commentary in regard to questions of historicity.[6] Concerning the events narrated

in Jonah he writes, "Do such things happen in a world like ours? . . . We are in wonderland! Surely this

is not the record of actual historical events nor was it ever intended as such. . . . [The author's] story is

thus a story with a moral, a parable, a prose poem like the story of the Good Samaritan, or Lessings' Ring

story in *Nathan the Wise,* or Oscar Wilde's poem in prose, *The Teacher of Truth.*"[7] Bewer acknowledges

that the text of Jonah presents some difficulties, but, with the exception of a few glosses and the psalm, the

book is a unity.[8] He does not believe there are multiple sources behind the text.

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[5] Ibid., 414-415.

[6] Julius A. Bewer, "Jonah," in A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah Malachi and Jonah, The International Critical Commentary series (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 3-65.

[7] Ibid., 3-4. Concerning the historicity of another, unrelated, event, Will Cuppy once remarked that " this story has been denied by several writers who weren't there. They refuse to believe it because nothing of the sort ever happened to them." See Will Cuppy, The Decline and Fall of Practically Everybody, (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., 1984), 208. It is also interesting to note that Bewer uses "recent" works to help him define the genre of an ancient work. Brevard Childs prefers the term "parable-like" over parable, and makes this comment: "By determining that the Book of Jonah functions in its canonical context as a parable-like story the older impasse regarding the historicity of the story is by-passed as a theological issue. Because the book serves canonically in the role of an analogy, it is as theologically irrelevant to know its historicity as it is with the Parable of the Good Samaritan." See Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 426.

In Bewer's exposition of the text sometimes he talks about what the narrator is doing, and how it affects the reader or listener. Though by no means a major concern, this shows some affinity with poetics.   Bewer notes that הטיל (1:4) is "one of the author's favorite words," but he does not go beyond this, nor trace the common occurrence of other oft used words by the author of Jonah and give an explanation for such a style.

Bewer does not mention the chiasm of the narrative frame, the part which he considers to be original to the book, around the psalm. The psalm is not original, according to Bewer, because he thinks the psalm should be one asking for help, rather than one of thanksgiving. He believes the psalm would fit well after 2:11. But even then, the psalm is too divergent from what precedes in Chapter 1 to be by the same author. Bewer prefers the reading of Θ ("how") at 2:5 on the basis of context. Bewer merely mentions that one should "Cf. Ps. 31:7 for the phrase *they who pay regard to vain idols*" at 2:9, and that many read with this parallel. This mere mention differs remarkably from how Magonet treated this verse in the psalm of Jonah.[9]

In his discussion of Jonah Chapter 3 Bewer is concerned with historical questions about Nineveh. He also notes that the narrator does not say what language Jonah spoke to the Ninevites, giving further evidence of the "folk-tale character of the story."   As Keil endeavors to be apologetic for the historicity of the narrative throughout his exposition, Bewer endeavors to show the impossibility of historicity throughout his commentary.[10]   At 3:5 Bewer notes that the Ninevites believe in "God," and that the

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[8] For instance, Bewer believes the original text at 3:4 should be read according to the Septuagint, "in yet three days Nineveh will be destroyed." This has bearing on 4:5 and why a hut was built. Some anonymous "ancient reader" read "forty" instead of "three" and so was under the impression that Jonah had lots of time to spend in the desert waiting to see what Yahweh would do to the city, and so added "and he made himself a hut and set down under it in the shade until he might see what would happen to the city." The "glossator" inserted this because he knew that if one was to spend time in the desert for so long one would need shelter. The "original" Jonah, however, knew that Yahweh would not destroy the city, but merely went outside to sit in anger. Thus, 4:5b is a gloss. If this is recognized, according to Bewer, it also solves the problem of the "double shade" and why the hut is not mentioned in 4:8 as a source of shade.

[9] Bewer, 47,49. See above, Chapter 3.

[10] When "expert witnesses" are called both for the defense and prosecution in a legal trial, and give differing accounts of the evidence, the question put to the jury is "whom are you going to believe?" Willy-nilly, one may choose sides, or go with the one who musters the most convincing evidence, or one

author does not use the name "Yahweh" here. The Ninevites do not believe that Yahweh is the only

God.[11] Bewer ends his commentary with a note on the use of יהוה and האלהים in the Book of Jonah.

Bewer believes the three variants of the divine designation are "used promiscuously, without any reason

for the variation."[12] He believes that יהוה אלהים in 4:6 is a conflation with אלהים being inserted by

a copyist under the influence of chapter three. Sometimes the original readings of יהוה, used throughout

the "original" chapter 4 by the author, reasserted themselves. Bewer bases this conclusion on a study of

the Greek variants of the text of Jonah. Some variants have ο Θεος, some κυριος, and some

κυριος ο Θεος.

Bewer has taken note that no verbal response of Jonah is given to Yahweh's question in 4:4 and

wonders why. It might be because this verse is not original, or perhaps the Jonah's answer of 4:9 must be

supplied.[13] In any event, Bewer has spotted what a literary critic might call gap--a lack of verbal

response-- and that one of his proposed solutions is to fill that gap with Jonah's verbal response in 4:9.

Bewer's analysis of Jonah's "pity" for the plant is a little confusing. Bewer seems to indicate that

Jonah's interest in the plant was not merely selfish joy, and that he is angry because the plant is destroyed,

or perishes so soon. But, Bewer also writes that Jonah despairs because the shade of the plant is taken

away from him, indicating some "selfish" reasons for valuing the plant. Here, one sees the value of

Trible's analysis of this section. Bewer ends his commentary by noting how the author of Jonah wants

the final question of Yahweh to sink deep into the hearts and minds of the hearers and readers. In fact,

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may conclude that the evidence is open to interpretation, and so must be left out of consideration of the case. Or, to use a different analogy, you may "check" your opponents moves, but never "checkmate." Such a situation leads to the current trend of dispensing with such "historical" questions all together by some literary critics.

[11] Bewer likewise sees the designation "king of Nineveh" as evidence for historical inaccuracy written by someone far removed from the historical situation. The designation adds to the "folk-lore" fashion in which the story is told.

[12] Bewer, 64.

[13] One could suggest that "he let his feet do the talking." Bewer does not make any attempt to diagram what is going on in the text. Trible's diagram of this section is especially helpful. One common trait of the "literary approaches" studied is the tendency to diagram or make tables and charts of things happening in the text. This "visual" approach aids learning.

Bewer ends his comments with a rhetorical question, just like the Book of Jonah: "Should we not share

[God's] love and His purposes?"

Bewer's commentary does not show evidence of a concern for the structure of the Book of Jonah,

nor how the individual parts relate to the whole. His main concern in studying the text is what lay behind

the text, even though he believes the events are not historical in nature. He wants to prove that the events

are not historical. Theological discussion is not extensive even though he writes at the very beginning:

"The Old Testament reaches here one of its highest points, for the doctrine of God receives in it one of its

clearest and most beautiful expressions and the spirit of prophetic religion is revealed at its truest and

best."[14] Reference to the person and work of Jesus Christ is limited to a very brief section related to the

sign of Jonah. He writes, "Sometimes, though not usually, the allegorical interpretation is combined with

the *typical* which sees in Jonah the type of Christ."[15] Bewer's main concern in this section as well is to

disprove the necessity of the historicity of the events in the Book of Jonah.

Leslie C. Allen

Allen labels the genre of the Book of Jonah as "parable" having a tone of parody or satire.[16] He

believes there to be extensive parallels between Jonah and the parable of the Prodigal Son. Allen appeals

to the "original intent" of the story to bolster his case for the parabolic nature of the book. This intent is

derived from clues in reading the text. For instance, Allen notes that one or two "exciting events" in the

story might not raise suspicion, but "the bombardment of the reader with surprise after surprise in a

provocative manner suggests that the author's intention is other than simply to describe historical facts."

But then Allen immediately cautions, "Bold would be the man who ventured to say that this series of

happenings was impossible, for who can limit the omnipotence of God and say categorically that any

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[14] Bewer, 3.

[15] Ibid., 10.

[16] Leslie C. Allen, The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976) 175-235.

could not happen?"[17] Allen is not overly concerned with supposed historical inaccuracies in the Book of Jonah, especially concerning Nineveh. He does believe that for the author of the book Nineveh is a distant memory in part due to the fact that הָיְתָה is used to describe the city in 3:3.[18] A marked polemic against the historicity of the book is not found in Allen. Allen believes that the historical "original situation" for which this parable was written was the postexilic community. Allen seeks how the narrator impacts this historical audience.[19] Allen also keeps the relevance of Jonah in mind for modern readers and expounds accordingly.

Allen believes the Book of Jonah to be a unity with even the psalm being inserted from an existing collection of psalms by the narrator. He departs from the Masoretic text only once by deleting מְצוּלָה of 2:4 on syntactical and metrical grounds. His exposition of the Book of Jonah follows his outline of the book:[20]

I. **A Hebrew Sinner Saved** (1:1-2:10[11])
   A. Jonah's disobedience (1:1-3)
   B. Jonah's punishment; heathen homage (1:4-16)
   C. Jonah's rescue (1-17-2:10 [2:1-11])
      1. God's grace (1:17 [2:1])
      2. Jonah's praise (2:1-9 [2-10])
      3. God's last word (2:10 [11])
II. **Heathen Sinners Saved** (3:1-4:11)
   A. Jonah's obedience (3:1-4)
   B. Nineveh's repentance (3:5-9)
   C. Jonah's rebuke (3:10-4:11)
      1. God's grace (3:10)
      2. Jonah's plaint (4:1-3)
      3. God's last word (4:4-11)

Allen notes that the Book of Jonah is "a model of literary artistry, marked by symmetry and balance."[21] He is sensitive to many of the items pointed out and expounded in more detail by the "literary

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[17] Ibid., 176.

[18] Though many commentators think the Qal perf. of הָיָה must be attached to "past time" this is not necessarily so, and here probably not. See Sasson, 228.

[19] Another reason given by Allen for this postexilic setting is the apparent use of Jeremiah 18 and Joel 2 by the author. However, see above Chapter 3, footnote 38.

[20] Allen, 200. The Hebrew versification is in brackets.

approaches," such as concentric structures (ex. 1:4-16), verbal correspondence between sections, repetition of key words, the role of the King of Nineveh adds symmetry with his counterpart, the captain of the boat. He notes wordplay and the difficulty of translating this wordplay consistently into English. He notes how the deletion of the psalm would disrupt the symmetry of the book, and that the psalm is bound together by an intricate pattern of recurring motifs and phrases.

Allen often talks about how the readers/listeners react to the narrative, and how the narrator shapes this reaction. "Some stereotyped conventions of the Hebrew religious ideology have been thrown overboard with Jonah. The listeners have been induced to turn completely against an Israelite prophet and to view Gentile dogs with increasing admiration and respect." [22] While Allen mentions techniques of the narrator to effect a certain response in the reader at appropriate times, he does not concentrate these findings in one section, or follow them as closely as Craig. His commentary is not "systematic" in the sense of looking for these "poetic" techniques of the narrator. It also does not track down the "allusions" in Jonah the way Magonet did. However, Allen can say that the narrator "has subtly made his tale comply with accepted prophecy and deliberately echoed its phraseology so as to induce a favorable response. Our story teller is a master of persuasion."[23] The narrator did his best to lead the reader to side with Yahweh instead of Jonah at the climatic question at the end of the book.

Allen has a brief section titled "theology" but he explicates theology throughout his comments. It is interesting to note that Allen mentions Psalm 139:7,9 as way of explicating the theology of Jonah 1:1-3. Magonet believes Psalm 139 may have played a more pivotal role in the formation of the Book of Jonah. He is not shy about referencing the New Testament to help explicate the theology of this Old Testament book. [24] As a reinforcement of Allen's thesis that the Book of Jonah is a parable he likens the rhetorical

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[21] Ibid., 197. One can note the influence of Trible's 1963 doctoral dissertation in Allen's commentary.

[22] Allen, 212.

[23] Ibid., 226.

[24] One example is the use of Matthew 18:23-35, the parable of the unmerciful servant, to draw out the implications of denying grace, or forgiveness, to another while accepting it for oneself. Worth

ending of the Book of Jonah to the appeal addressed to the Elder Brother, that is to say the "religious

snobs of Jesus' day," in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).[25] Allen's fine commentary

mentions many of the elements we have seen in the literary studies without going into great detail about

them.

Hans. W. Wolff

In the preface to his commentary Wolff mentions that he has been "stimulated by recent

American work . . . which presupposes that the biblical message does not merely take the form of a

historical account. . . . For an astonishingly long time, many interpreters found it difficult to take account

of the liberty and breadth in the narrative form."[26] The genre ascribed to the Book of Jonah is "novella."

In this novella the author incorporates unobtrusive didactic features, satire and irony, forming an

"ironically didactic novella."[27] According to Wolff, historical details in the Book of Jonah are not

accurate, but according to this genre, they do not need to be. Wolff therefore doesn't spend a lot of time

trying to disprove the historicity of events. [28] The genre designation also helps Wolff understand and give

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pondering is the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of that parable as contrasted to the Book of Jonah.
See Voelz, 275-288 for a discussion of "Speech-Act Theory."

[25] Allen, 235.

[26] Hans W. Wolff, Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis:
Augsburg Publishing House, 1986),12. The original German edition was published in 1977 under the
title Obadja und Jona in the Biblischer Kommentar Series. It is interesting to note that Wolff is thanked
by Magonet as giving "much helpful critical advice," in the preface to Magonet's book. Magonet received
his Ph.D. from Heidelberg University where Wolff was teaching. Throughout Wolff's commentary he
interacts with the findings of Magonet.

[27] Wolff, 85. Wolff notes identical characteristics between the Book of Jonah and a novella,
thus making Jonah one of the earliest examples of this genre, 82. Wolff translates ויהי of Jonah 1:1 as
"Now it once happened," 95. Wolff assumes Jonah spoke Hebrew to the people in Nineveh, and finds it
not surprising that the people and even the animals should understand Hebrew. After all, Jonah is an
"ironically didactic novella and not a historical account," 149. Bewer noted the narrator doesn't say what
language Jonah spoke and it makes little difference to the story, though it does give evidence of the "folk-
tale character of the story." See Bewer, 53.

[28] Wolff thinks the narrator of the story may have been inspired by tales, which could have been
heard in a port city such as Joppa, like Heracles or Perseus who were engorged by sea monsters, or Jason
who was swallowed by a dragon, when relating the "fish" episode, 132-133. He also writes that it would
be "pointless to try to find any basis in historical fact for Nineveh's 'fairy tale' size," 148.

flesh to the original audience. Thus, Wolff uses the text to reconstruct an original historical setting for the story, which helps him determine the purpose of the story.[29] He therefore does show concern for historical questions, and uses the text to help him understand events behind the text.

Wolff's commentary follows the same pattern for each scene in the story: Translation with notes, Form, Setting, Commentary, and Purpose. Wolff describes the structure of the Book of Jonah in terms of 5 scenes (1:1-3; 1:4-16; 1:17-3:3a; 3:3b-10; 4:1-11). A scene is delimited by a change in the location of action or a change of characters. Each scene's "form" is briefly discussed but Wolff does little to present an overall structure of the book. Wolff has a section titled "literary growth" of the Book of Jonah in his introduction, but none specifically concerning overall "structure." The "form" sections do not present the detailed structure of the Book of Jonah that was exhibited by Trible and Magonet.

Wolff is judicious in his statements concerning sources behind the text of Jonah as it appears now. Questions related to this are dealt with in the "Setting" sections. While acknowledging the possibility of sources, being able to discern them clearly is often not possible. He can say " 'basic stratum,' 'reworking,' and redaction flow into one another."[30] He acknowledges a "later narrator" who has shaped the present form of the book. However, Wolff believes the psalm to be a later interpolation

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[29] "First of all, the story is evidently trying to arrive at an understanding of certain contemporary groups. The crisis of faith which these people were undergoing may be most clearly evident in the final question in 4:11," 85. For Wolff, this group of people lived somewhere between the "last third of the fourth century (and) . . . the third century," 78. "The narrator makes Jonah the spokesman of the sullen murmuring among 'the God-fearing' of the postexilic era, who found it pointless to go on serving God and useless to inquire about his commandments (Mal 3:14ff.) since—in the face of the happiness of the wicked—it seemed vain to ask: 'Where is the God of judgment?' (Mal. 2:17)," 176

[30] Ibid., 164. This quote is in connection with 4:1-11 where Wolff is interacting with Ludwig Schmidt's De Deo. Schmidt thought sources, or levels, to the Book of Jonah based on content and changes in the names used for God could be discerned. According to Schmidt the "basic source" is 1:2, 3:3-10, 4:1,5a, 6-11. In this basic source, however, one must omit "Yhwh" at 4:6a, the Yhwh phrase at 3:3a, and change "Yhwh" to "Elohim" at 4:10. See Wolff, 131, Wolff says concerning possible levels behind Jonah 4:1-11, though it is applicable throughout the book, that "hypothesis based on literary criteria are too uncertain," 164. Of course, here "literary criteria" means source-critical criteria. Wolff believes the narrator to have "taken up already formed material" as an explanation for the changes to the name of God, 170. Strangely, Wolff does not mention Magonet's theory about the changes to the name of God. Wolff believes the narrator to have "taken up already formed material" as an explanation for the changes to the name of God.

since he thinks it does not fit the context of Jonah's situation, the language of the psalm is different from

the narrative, and the characterization of Jonah is different from that of the narrative portion.[31]

Wolff often points out the artistic skill, the "conscious artistry," of the narrator. This keeps

Wolff from the extreme conclusions about sources, or levels, to the Book of Jonah that Ludwig Schmidt

thought were detectable. Wolff notes certain catchwords which are used in different sections and of

different characters as ways that unify the sections and give opportunity to contrast the characters. For

instance, he notes the "narrative relationship" between the scene in Nineveh and the sailors on the boat at

a word level and at the level of "purpose"-- ולא נאבד (1:6; 3:9). He observes the poetic technique of

using questions to "thrust the story so powerfully forward (vv. 6a, 7a, 8b, 10a, 11a)" thus keeping the

reader in a "state of tense expectation."[32] Wolff is also aware of the narrative method of the author that

describes "inward" reactions of characters before preceding on with the story plot. " [Temporal

sequence] must be clearly distinguished from *narrative* sequence."[33] Therefore, Wolff does not agree with

the scholars who think 4:5 should come after 3:4.

It should be noted that Wolff often points out what he believes to be the author's skillful use of

irony or satire. In 4:10, when Yahweh says that Jonah had חוס "pity" on the plant he says that the

author "actually means the very opposite of what Yahweh says: Jonah is not really suffering with the

withered plant at all; he is simply missing his own comfort . . . (The plant) triggered off his self-pity.[34]

One can see how this differs from Trible's analysis of this section. Finally, Wolff notes that the question

posed by Yahweh to Jonah is the narrator's question addressed to the reader, so that the reader will come

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[31] See Hans W. Wolff, " Jonah: The Messenger who Obeyed," in Currents in Theology and Mission vol. 3 (April 1976), where the psalm is not included in his translation of the book.

[32] Wolff, Obadiah and Jonah, 109. Wolff commonly notes narrative techniques that have effect on how the reader reacts to the story. A concern for poetics is obvious in Wolff, though not overstated. Sometimes Wolff is unclear on the connection between catchwords. For instance, he notes the triple use of ירד in 1:3 (2x), 1:5, and can say, "[Jonah] is going down further and further. The person who inserted the psalm may have already discerned the direction leading to death (2:6f). . ." 112. When Wolff expounds on 2:6-7, however, he says, "That the writer deliberately wanted to build up the triple use of ירד (descend) . . . as J.D. Magonet considers. . . is improbable," 136.

[33] Ibid., 163.

[34] Ibid., 173.

up with answers on his own. How will the reader respond to "God's unlimited mercy with the whole world? Nowhere in the Old Testament is this question put so stringently and yet so kindly as in the Jonah story."[35]

Wolff's commentary takes up many of the concerns we have seen in the specific literary studies, though in less detail. Wolff has found an ally in approaches to the Book of Jonah that are concerned less with "historical" questions and more with "literary forms" found in the book. The text does not represent the external world, not because of historical errors, but because it never was supposed to be a historical account. Wolff describes the Book of Jonah as "literary work of art," and then quotes J.G. Herder concerning Jonah in a footnote: "If then this history, as a work of art, be beautiful, pertinent, and of utility, why should we torment ourselves with difficulties as to whether it be also a true history, and in what way this might be possible?"[36] One can see also by his many references to Ludwig Schmidt and Magonet that he is closer to Magonet's understanding of the Book of Jonah, and he discredits much of Schmidt's source- critical analysis. Wolff's commentary acts like something of a bridge between these two approaches. That is, while acknowledging the possibility of sources and even discovering them, the fruit of such labor is minimal and uncertain.

<div align="center">

Jack Sasson
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Sasson's commentary in the Anchor Bible series is extensive. It incorporates many items that we have seen in "literary approaches," but not merely because it is a large commentary. Sasson has an interest in literature and the "bible as literature" as evidenced when each section of his commentary is preceded by quotes from other portions of Scripture or from other literary works. He occasionally uses examples of literature to help the modern reader of Jonah understand what the narrator of Jonah was

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[35] Ibid., 177.

[36] Ibid., 81. From J.G. Herder, Briefe das Studium der Theologie betreffend, (1790), 141. See Childs, "Excursus: The Theological Problem of Old Testament History" in Biblical Theology, 196-207. Childs gives a brief synopsis of Herder's book. Childs writes that Herder turned his attention from trying to demonstrate the factuality of Biblical stories to "the discovery of the meaning of the stories through a sense of empathy with the ancient narrators. He advised his readers to leave aside learned commentaries and to participate aesthetically in the realistic features of the stories themselves," 198.

attempting to do. Sasson's commentary on Jonah has its roots in his participation in a "Bible as Literature" seminar.[37] His commentary is divided between the "notes" section, in which the philological groundwork is plowed, a "comments" section in which he translates his "notes" into "readable prose," and the "interpretations" section. At the beginning Sasson confesses that the interpretation of Jonah is not limited to solving the book's philological difficulties. Nevertheless, because his is a commentary, it deals with items outside the concern of "literary approaches." Yet, even that comment must be qualified. Trible mentions the importance of reading exegetical commentaries in her guidelines for doing rhetorical criticism. Craig also acknowledged the great influence of Sasson's commentary upon his own understanding of the Book of Jonah.[38]

Sasson deals with the Masoretic text of Jonah as it stands because he believes commentators do their job best when they expound what is in front of them, rather than some hypothetical construction. Having said that, however, Sasson thinks that there may have been various composite sources which circulated throughout Israel but at one point were gathered together to make up the book as we now have it. While he is not dogmatic about being able to clearly delineate the "sources" he does note the features that allow the story to be read as a "unity."[39]

Because of his views related to the composition of the Book of Jonah Sasson's view of the structure of the Book of Jonah is important to discuss. Sasson notes that the division of the Book of Jonah into four chapters cannot be dated earlier than the Middle Ages. The earliest Hebrew manuscript of Jonah, the Murabba'at scroll of Jonah, leaves an empty line after the end of the psalm at 2:10. There is a small space left between 2:11 and 3:1, and an empty line between 4:3 and 4:4. The Masoretic text duplicates this division for the Book of Jonah.[40] The Masoretic text places the consonant ס after 2:10 and

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[37] See Sasson, xi-iii.

[38] Craig writes, "Sasson's book, perhaps the largest to date on Jonah, confirmed several of my initial thoughts, but more often his work caused me to rethink and recast my earlier positions. His work stands out among the commentaries for the simple reasons that he understands what's going on in Jonah and he explains himself well," ix. Those sections of Sasson's comments that have been discussed while reviewing the previous works will not be discussed in this section.

[39] Sasson, 19-20. Among the features listed are "literary and stylistic devices."

4:3. It places the consonant ם after 2:11.[41] Sasson says that he adopts the Masoretic division of Jonah

and divided his commentary into sections that remain true to it. However, he diverges in Chapter 4. He

notes that one could establish boundaries in several ways. He has decided to divide Chapter 4 into two

units: verses 1-6, and 7-11 which recognizes "the reversal of Jonah's mood" as the basis for the division.

He does this to help him interpret or "better resolve the rift between Jonah and God."[42] Sasson does not

seem to be interested in showing or charting how well the whole Book of Jonah works as a unity, though

he acknowledges it does. Understanding the structure is to help him better understand the content of the

book. It is important to note too the freedom which Sasson evidences when he departs from the Masoretic

division, and that finding structure on the exegetical basis of content is not as objective as one might

think.

Sasson's review of the understanding of the historicity of Jonah is balanced. Sasson is well

aware of the problems associated with historicity and how to confirm it in biblical studies. The Book of

Jonah emphasizes these problems due to the nature of the story and "because [Jonah's] activities

sometimes test the limits of human credulity."[43] While Sasson regards the Book of Jonah as less than

historical he is cautious enough, and his scholarship of such extent, to point out that those who claim the

story to be fabular or mythical or fictional often rely on a misreading of evidence. For instance, the "king

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[40] Geza Vermes, "Manuscripts from the Judean Desert," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), writes: "The biblical documents from Murabba'at are to all intents and purposes the same as the Masoretic version of the OT. They attest, not only a Masoretic consonantal text, but also the same internal divisions of the text into sections, the same type of script, and the same format and arrangement of the writing on a leather scroll," 564. The biblical documents found at Murabba'at include Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the minor prophets.

[41] ס stands for פרשה סתומה (parasah setumah) designating a closed section or paragraph. פ stands for פרשה פתוחה (parasah petuhah) designating an open section or paragraph. See Emanuel Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 49-51. Tov writes, "The subdivision itself into open and closed sections reflects exegesis on the extent of the content units." He also notes that different Masoretic manuscripts sometimes have different designations for the section, or a section division may be missing altogether. "It is possible that the subjectivity of this exegesis created the extant differences between the various sources," 51.

[42] Sasson, 271-212. He notes the exegetical nature of the Masoretic division.

[43] Ibid., 327.

of Nineveh" designation was seen by Bewer as evidence of the book being written long after accurate

memory of the Assyrian kingdom had faded. Sasson proposes the possibility that the designation "king

of Nineveh" was formulated to subtly alert the audience that this account is fictional.[44] As a summary he

writes:

> I may sum up by observing that although Jonah is written in a style that impedes
> historical inquiry, it contains enough historicizing touches to encourage those who are
> not satisfied just search Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index* for appropriate parallels.
> Whether Jonah is history or fiction, therefore, is likely to be debated as long as Jonah is
> read. In the meantime, we may seek to understand how Jonah works as a narrative with
> a prophet for its major character.[45]

Though Sasson discusses historical features this is not the overriding concern of his commentary.

Even when discussing a date for the Book of Jonah he is aware how little that endeavor helps understand

the book. Even if a date for a book's composition, or final editing , could be established this does not

necessarily establish a time when the events described happened. Sasson does not blithely dismiss history

as unimportant as is done by some proponents of "literary approaches." However, after all the historical

investigations that can be done are, Sasson concentrates on the "artfully narrated and theologically

sophisticated book" of Jonah.[46]

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[44] Sasson, 248, writes: "The matter of a proper title would be trifling had some scholars not made opposite, but equally insupportable, decisions on its basis. . . . Bewer does not explain why a narrator made such a glaring error when Scripture was available from which to pick an impeccably historical title. Most modern commentators, however. consider this singular title to be good evidence that Jonah does not treat a historical event. If such a judgment implies that Hebrew narrators *unwittingly* confer historicity on a document of no historical value, we need to oppose it, for it demands too much historical precision from them." He also writes: "While we may doubt the historical worth of Jonah, we cannot presume that its narrator and early audiences found it much too fantastic to replay the past authentically. About the only potential indicator that the narrator meant us to treat Jonah as pseudo-historical is the use of anomalous title 'king of Nineveh,'" 335.

If part of exegesis is understanding how the text was understood, or meant to be understood by the original audience, Sasson's scholarship leads him to conclude that there is not much to argue against "historicity." Sasson also does not let the episode of Jonah's sojourn in the belly of the fish be, *a priori*, a reason against historicity. Modern readers too, like generations of earlier readers, can take this event to be miraculous, "precisely because miracles, if they are to be judged as such, must have us suspend doubts that events are real only when tested by human capability," 221. Or, they might choose to regard the tale as a fable, etc. Choice reigns. Sasson does not discuss historicity in reference to Jesus' use of Jonah in the New Testament, other than to say, that New Testament allegorically interprets the stay of Jonah in the fish with Christ's experience. Sasson does not discuss the relationship between typology and history.

[45] Ibid., 328.

Sasson notes the opening verses of the Book of Jonah have hints that might be overlooked by modern readers, or those unfamiliar with Hebrew narrative art. Sasson studies everything carefully in the "notes" section before coming to conclusions in the "comments" section.[47] This is important to note when discussing "literary approaches," for if anything, a commentary like Sasson's brilliantly reinforces the need to do sound exegetical work to make "literary" applications that are authentic to the text. For instance, on the basis of exegesis Sasson has come to the conclusion that the Hebrew קְרָא עָלֶיהָ of 1:2 conveys the notion of "imposing an (unpleasant) fate upon something."[48] This leads Sasson to conclude that Jonah understood that God wanted him to announce an impending doom on Nineveh. However, Sasson fills in the "gap" as to why Jonah fled with this statement: "No wonder that Jonah refused his charge, probably fearing the anger of the Ninevites."[49] Even reasoned exegesis does not exempt Sasson from hypothesizing conclusions that cannot be "objectively" garnered from the text.

When Sasson discusses Jonah Chapter 2 he talks about the issue of symmetry as it relates to the "originality" of the psalm. Sasson believes there is a "hidden agenda" that believes if symmetry can be shown between the psalm and the rest of the book it will establish "originality." Sasson questions this assumption, as an interpolator would also have a stake in making a symmetrical book. Sasson does not

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[46] Ibid., 28. For Sasson, historical investigation is more than just an academic exercise. It is important to know as much about the historical situations evoked by the text to better understand what the original audience would have felt, and how they would have understood the story. In connection with the investigation into the location of Tarshish and sea navigation of the historical period Sasson writes: "These details about navigation are not needed, of course, to analyze Jonah's theological import; but they must certainly have been common knowledge to ancient audiences who, very much like modern readers of science-fiction space sagas, recognized the difficulties that distant travels entailed and therefore appreciated the literary value in the accumulation of fortuitous events," 82.

[47] Sasson writes in the preface to his commentary: "Although I do not always record it, I can assure you that I have evaluated every word, every idiom, every phrase, every clause, and every sentence within the book. I have taken nothing for granted and have left few philological opportunities open to me unexplored," xi.

[48] Ibid., 75. See Sasson's discussion 72-75. Though the Hebrew prepositions אֶל and עַל can be interchanged without a difference in many instances, Sasson discusses the use of these prepositions with the verb קְרָא. He believes two different idioms are at work in 1:2 and 3:2. In 3:2, קְרָא אֵלֶיהָ has the connotation that a "specific" message will be delivered, not necessarily one that implies an "unpleasant fate." See Sasson, 226, for his discussion on 3:2.

[49] Ibid., 87.

think Magonet, who argued for the psalm's originality, was successful in proving the "stepwise" or

"mirror-image" structures of Jonah Chapters 2 and 3.[50] Sasson is judicious in his discussion of the

"originality" of the psalm. He does not believe the psalm is "out of context" with the surrounding

narrative. He writes: "[T]he narrator fashions it out of pious tenets known to Hebrew entreaties. That

particular prayer, lyrical though not poetic, suits the context perfectly, with language and conviction

naturally emerging from the unfolding narrative where awe and dread predominate."[51]

Sasson discusses the verb הפך in 3:4 and it's use by the narrator in telling the story as the verb

is significant in the development of the plot and in understanding the story. Sasson believes Jonah

understood the verb in the message YHWH told him to relate to Nineveh as a Niphal participle. Jonah

believes Nineveh will be undone, or destroyed, that is a "declaration of doom," which is in concert with

what YHWH said in 1:2. The Ninevites too understand the message delivered by Jonah in this way.

Sasson lists a second option, a reflexive meaning of the verb, which would indicate Nineveh will turn

over, meaning: re-form. A third possibility mentioned by Sasson is that the verb is deliberately

ambiguous.[52] The narrator does not allow Jonah or the Ninevites to understand הפך according to the

second option.

> The narrator is ascribing this understanding of the verbal form neither to Jonah nor to
> the Ninevites, but to an omniscient God. In doing so, the narrator gives good reason
> why the survival of Nineveh should not be attributed to a capricious or erratic deity.
> God knew all along that Nineveh was destined, in the end to earn divine forgiveness.
> . . . In recognizing the amphibolic nature of *nehpaket*, we do more than perceive
> Jonah's limitations or justify God's behavior; we unlock a major element of the plot.

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[50] Ibid., 203-204. Sasson interacts with the study of Magonet throughout his commentary. While not always agreeing with Magonet's conclusions, Sasson notes many of Magonet's findings such as the importance of following through on word usage throughout the book , how key words "unify" the book, how the same word invites comparison between characters, or how a verb like ירד can become progressively invested with a "psychological dimension" concerning Jonah, 80. Another example where Sasson disagrees with Magonet's analysis is in the understanding of the distribution of the divine names throughout the Book of Jonah. Sasson sees no discernible pattern or scheme, 18. Sometimes Sasson will agree with Magonet but add further support to Magonet's conclusions.

[51] Ibid., 202. Sasson writes: "In discussing the psalm, I take pains to show that if it is an insertion into the prose narrative, it is well suited to Jonah. I am careful to use this language because I recognize that narratives, biblical or otherwise, are rarely created *ex nihilo* and that they may partake of material that at one time or another circulated independently," 18.

[52] Ibid., 234.

Jonah's failure to understand God's subtlety will lead to the great confrontation featured in the fourth chapter. Moreover, when we realize that the message carried into Nineveh bore a two fold meaning, we become better equipped for the marked shift in the tone the narrator adopts for the last chapter. . . . As we observe this shift in character, mood, and temper, we begin to wonder whether God's great deeds at sea, below waters, and within Nineveh are but mere exhibits for a prophet's education. All these modifications will be necessary because, to the last, the narrator needs to keep Jonah oblivious of the little games that Hebrew words can play.[53]

Sasson often speaks about how the narrator of Jonah tells the story, in this case, in terms of what

words are chosen to best achieve the desired result. This shows an interest in poetics, but it also helps

Sasson interpret the story. Sasson points out how much relevant information the narrator controls in

telling the story. Another instance concerns the placement of Jonah's "confession" at 4:2. Placed here it

is essential to the telling of the story with specific ends in minds. "[T]o move Jonah's confession to its

chronologically natural location (after 1:2) may jeopardize God's autonomy, distort the portrayal of Jonah,

and undermine the story's major turnabout (Nineveh's survival). Remarkably enough, however, to

remove it form the story hardly affects narrative sequence and coherence. The only loss would be our

awareness of Jonah's opinion."[54] For the readers, however, knowing Jonah's opinion is important. "We

need to know Jonah's reasoned explanation of his own behavior not only because it turns him into a

multidimensional personality, but also to let us assess the wisdom of his attempted escape and to let us

ponder whether God treats him fairly."[55] Placing Jonah's confession at 4:2 creates a tension between the

main characters, Jonah and God, creating different perspectives from which to view the story. Sasson

uses this information to help him evaluate how others have interpreted the story of Jonah.

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[53] Ibid., 267-268.

[54] Ibid., 330.

[55] Ibid., 330. See also 294-298. Sasson thinks that Jonah's confession at 4:2 is a fitting response to God's commission in 3:4. Sasson thinks the "confession" does not only concern God's mercy shown toward Nineveh, but it is more about the nature of Jonah being a prophet of God. Jonah carried a message of doom to the city, and God revokes it without giving the prophet a role to play in the reversal. "[H]ow could that prophet trust in his own calling? How will Jonah know that he remains God's prophet," 297. "From God's perspective, Jonah fulfills his mission whether Nineveh crumbles or finds spiritual renewal. . . . From Jonah's perspective, however, his charge was to declare doom only. . . . Because he never grasps the double-edged meaning behind the message he communicates, Jonah perceives God's change of mind as a breach of proper etiquette obtaining between God and prophets, so he feels misused. I have sought to suggest that it is this perceived indignity, and not Nineveh's deliverance, that drives Jonah to grieve and complain," 346.

In the "interpretations" section of his commentary Sasson reviews various ways of interpreting the story of Jonah, noting strengths and weaknesses. He is not concerned to fit the Book of Jonah into one literary genre, and sees such attempts as misguided. Sasson states that there is not only one correct way of interpreting the story, for much depends on the reader. He offers no "big bang" solution. " I hope to make it evident that there are many reasonable readings and interpretations of the book as a whole. The demonstration should not surprise us because Jonah, a book of uncertain origin and purpose, could not have survived the test of time without satisfying diverse tastes and expectations."[56]

The strength of Sasson's commentary is the philological work, which is to say he concentrated on the text. Sasson was careful to point out various kinds of word plays and note how these were part of the narrator's technical skill. He also related the text to the reader, and noted how the reader was not confined by the text to come to certain conclusions, but how the text was suggestive enough, and so well constructed that it could incorporate many views or interpretations. One gets the clear impression, however, based on Sasson's careful research, that the reader is not free to come up with interpretations which the text does not allow. For Sasson the text was the window through which to discern the narrator's intent.

Summary

One can see a progression from Keil to Sasson in concern and interest and use of methods that have been termed "literary." This is to be expected due to the nature of scholarship building upon previous works and the changing academic winds or interests. Due to the nature and demands of writing a commentary, however, none have concentrated on certain "literary" aspects of the Book of Jonah to the extent of the three previous studies.

Keil and Bewer are very concerned with the historical element. Wolff and Allen believe the story of Jonah is not historically true, and spend more time concentrating on the text. Sasson's discussion of

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[56] Ibid., 326. Sasson points out how the character Jonah fits aspects of classification titled "comic dupe" and "comic hero." Sasson's final comment concerning the character God, and at least one of the lessons to be learned from reading Jonah is: "As in Job, the relevant lesson is about the incapacity of nvrtals to understand, let alone to judge, their God," 351.

history is balanced. While one may not agree that the relation of the text to history question can be dismissed as easily as "some think Jonah is historical and some do not, and there is evidence for both," for the question of historicity takes on larger hermeneutical significance, the three literary approaches investigated did not significantly interact with the "history question."

It is easy to see why Craig and Trible were enriched by Sasson's commentary. His commentary is thorough as well as conversant with "literary approaches." The "literary approaches" investigated, especially Magonet's and Trible's work, put more emphasis on the structure of the Book of Jonah than any of the commentators. They also presented their findings in charts. This was done not just to help see the artistry of the Book of Jonah, which is a worthy contribution, but to aid in interpretation, to plot the narrator's technique, at times to fill in the "gaps" of the story, and to show the unity of the Book of Jonah.

Though the commentaries surveyed touched upon "poetics" they are not full investigations into the techniques of "how" the story of Jonah is told to achieves it's effects. Though it would be hard for a commentator not to touch upon "literary" aspects as he comments, indeed Sasson even has a brief section on the characterization of the sailors and Ninevites, in sum it is safe to say the "literary" techniques of the Book of Jonah are not expounded as clearly by the commentators. Only Sasson's commentary comes close to the "literary approaches" in asking similar questions and pointing out literary techniques. This is due in part to the thoroughness of the commentary, but also to Sasson's interest in the "Bible as Literature" and his sensitivity to Hebrew narrative style. What the future of commentary writing and exegesis in general might look like, in relation to "literary approaches," will be briefly discussed in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This conclusion will look at how the works by Magonet, Craig, and Trible relate to the larger entity called "literary approaches," and discuss some advantages and disadvantages of the literary approaches as exemplified by these works.

First, the term "literary approach" is not used in any one strict sense. It is an "umbrella" term that covers many different methods of analysis. Assumptions about the nature of literature, language, history, knowledge, etc., are not always the same in these methods. There are always necessary qualifications, but the term is usually used in contrast with historical-critical approaches that sought to discover the "becoming" of the text. Normally, literary approaches are not concerned with the history and/or sources or anything that is behind the text in the final form.

The works investigated are also not concerned with coming up with a " literary paradigm" that will cover all aspects of reading a text. As mentioned above in Chapter One, the debate about what is or is not literary criticism, and how it relates to exegesis, interpretation, linguistics, etc., is intense and far from being decided. The authors of the three works investigated do not directly enter into that scholarly fray. These three authors are primarily biblical scholars, not literary theoreticians. They do not set out to devise a system that can, if used correctly, lead to the "right" reading or interpretation of the text of Jonah. Magonet does not even define his type of analysis with a term. It may be best described as a "close reading," but that term too is inexact. Craig practices "poetics" in the broad sense of seeing "how" the story of Jonah makes sense. Trible speaks of a "guiding" rubric only. This does not mean that these authors are willing to speak of unlimited meaning to the text. All are highly bound by the text. They do recognize, however, the role of the reader in shaping the meaning that is found in the text. When Trible described the rhetorical-critical method she advocates as working at the boundary between text and reader with the emphasis on the former, she was describing the critical method of Magonet and Craig as well.

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These authors do not spend much time on the question of sources to the Book of Jonah. In fact, the confidence with which sources per se can be detected, and dated, has radically changed. This holds true not only for the Book of Jonah, but for other portions of Scripture as well. What once was evidence for different sources and historical periods of writing are now viewed as essential elements in a well told story, and not meant to be analyzed separately for supposed information about the life and times of the sources' author. Even Trible, who believes the Psalm of Jonah Chapter 2 is an insertion, does not make a great issue out of the case. But especially from her we can learn that certain "literary approaches" are not necessarily inimical to the presence of sources or the scholarly search for them. However, questions of sources and their history may cause academic interest and debate, but they do not hold the attention of the "literary critic" who wants to look only at the text as it now stands and how it functions. So, in this sense, we have seen a "paradigm shift" in these three works.

Magonet, Craig, and Trible have all dealt with the Hebrew text seriously, which means they have also made text critical decisions. From the standpoint of these biblical scholars, a "literary approach" could not be content with merely reading a translation of the Hebrew text. They have made decisions in regard to translation which affect how they view the structure of the Book of Jonah and its meaning. Their decisions are based on interaction with other scholarly writings and commentaries, and the knowledge that every translation involves interpretation.

There is of course the weakness in some, if not most, of the "literary approaches" of not taking seriously the question of history. That is, questions such as how the text relates to a certain period of time, or whether or not the text describes historical events accurately are not a concern. This reaction is due in no small part to the lack of consensus among historical-critics and the lack of meaningful interpretations of the text by those interested in the history or sources behind the text. Biblical scholars have also been influenced by secular literary theory and studies. C.S. Lewis spoke for many when he said in a famous essay on biblical criticism and critics:

> [W]hatever these men may be as Biblical critics, I distrust them as critics. They seem
> to me to lack literary judgment, to be imperceptive about the very quality of the texts
> they are reading. . . . These men ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the
> old texts; the evidence is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worthy discussing)

the lines themselves. They claim to see fern-seed and can't see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight.[1]

For the literary critic the text is not meant to be, nor should it be read as, a historical document that sheds light on the time and circumstances of its composition or author. Such an anti-historical bias, however, need not be inherent in a "literary approach." Meir Sternberg brings some needed clarity to the discussion with "literary approaches" that would discount any question of the text as a historical document. As pointed out in Chapter One above, even the reading of the text must involve a certain historical reconstruction, based on linguistic knowledge, that can delimit what the author could have meant.

The three works investigated, like most "literary approaches," do not deal with "historical" questions, for example, how the story of Jonah relates to the historical world of Ninveh, or even a more historical-theological question concerning the nature of the miracles. All three could be classified as "objective theories" that focus on the text of Jonah itself. But as was seen, all three deliberately note how the text affects the reader, and the role of the reader in making sense of the story. They deal with the text of Jonah in much the same way one would deal with a fictional story. That is, whether or not the events really happened, or are accurate in their depiction of the events, the artistry of the book and themes or truths about God and man can still be shown regardless of what one believes about these "historical" questions.

Obviously, the three works investigated did not set out to write a hermeneutics, but they have approached their task with a certain understanding of what is proper for investigation and what is not. How the text relates to the world, or to history, is not a concern of these works. If the commentaries of

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[1] C.S. Lewis, "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," in The Seeing Eye and Other Selected Essays from Christian Reflections, edited by Walter Hooper (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967), 206, 210. This excellent essay exposes the flimsy foundations of some historical-critical thinking, especially on those who attempt to reconstruct the "genesis" of texts. Lewis in this essay, however, does not seem to think that the story of Jonah is meant to be taken as "history." Lewis especially challenges Bultmann's characterization of the Gospel according to John as being analogous to Jonah, by saying, in effect, that this is a comparison of apples and oranges. On the basis of Lewis' reading the Book of Jonah does have the markings of a fictional account. However, the Gospel according to John, if not historical "reportage" is centuries ahead of its time in anticipating the modern, novelistic, realistic narrative. Lewis writes: "*Jonah*, a tale with as few even pretended historical attachments as *Job*, grotesque in incident and surely not without a distinct, though of course edifying, vein of typically Jewish humour," 207. One could counter, in a good literary-critical way, that not all things historical need bear the same markings of style.

Keil and Bewer can be seen as representing the conservative and liberal positions concerning the historical reliability of the Book of Jonah, the three works investigated give the impression that such historical concerns, if not irrelevant to a study of the book they are not verifiable in most cases, and so are no cause for consternation. Since none of the three authors stated their beliefs about the "historicity" of the events depicted in Jonah it would be unfair to speculate too much about their views on this subject. In any case, all "literary approaches" would say the study of the artistry of the Book of Jonah has suffered due to an emphasis on historical questions. In short, these works do not satisfactorily answer questions about the relation of literature and history, or even how an understanding of this relationship affects the reader and his synthesis of the text and its themes. Also, due to the limited nature of these three works they do not relate the question of history to biblical typology and to the New Testament use of the Book of Jonah. This area needs clarification

The interrelation of meaning and the reader also needs to be addressed. Each of the three authors acknowledged the important role the reader has in determining the meaning of the story of Jonah. This is particularly evident, though not confined to the discussion of the motive for the flight of Jonah. What is "self-evident" to one reader, with the necessary textual indicators to bolster one's assurance, is anything but "self-evident" to another reader, who has other textual indicators to bolster his assurance. Even what one reader finds important in structure may not be viewed as such by the next reader. Trible made a case for using the *ipsissima verba* to demonstrate structure, rather than giving a thematic description of the structure. But Trible's structure still needed to be described and interpreted. Here a caution from Shimon Bar-Efrat, for all "literary approaches" that are concerned with showing the structure of a work, is in order: "It should be born in mind, however, that the interpretation of structure is much more prone to subjectivity than its mere description. In order to endow the proposed interpretation with a high degree of probability and convincing power it is recommendable to look for data in the text, apart from the structure, that confirm or support it."[2] Craig did not concentrate on the structure of the

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[2] Shimon Bar-Efrat, "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative," in Beyond Form Criticism, 204.

Book of Jonah like Magonet and Trible. The latter, however, did look for that confirmation or support for their structural descriptions in the text.

These three scholars have pointed out, without making a hermeneutical statement, that it is hard to have assured results when interpreting. This can be seen clearly in the "filling of gaps," though it involves even the basic details of interpreting the words on the page. However, because these authors are primarily text centered it should allay fears that any sort of interpretation is possible. This is in contrast to some of the newer "literary approaches" that are more ideologically oriented. These three authors could not be called "privileged misinterpreters" who "made texts an excuse for saying this or that as it pleased them with no thought of the real meaning of them [i.e., the texts]."[3] There was no talk of authorial intent that was independent from what could be gathered from the text of Jonah. Even then, these three authors were reticent in proclaiming assurance of what the author was trying to do or say. They recognize, even while they can persuasively argue for their viewpoint, that interpretation is not an easy task. Robert Alter states the case like this:

> I do not presume to judge whether a literary text may ever be thought to have an absolute, fixed meaning, but I certainly reject the contemporary agnosticism about all literary meaning, and it seems to me that we shall come much closer to the range of intended meanings--theological, psychological, moral, or whatever--of the biblical tale by understanding precisely how it is told.[4]

It is important to judge the three works on their own merit and not burden them with problems which infect some "literary approaches." It is necessary to see them not as stand-alone techniques which answer all the questions that can be put to the text. An artifact can only be judged by its intended use. Therefore, it is not enough to say about the three works investigated that they are deficient in their articulation of the relation of Jonah to history. These three authors have shown that the Book of Jonah was carefully written, and so should be carefully read.

They have successfully shown how much can be learned from a careful reading of the Hebrew text and analysis of a book's structure and literary techniques. Specifically, they have all contributed to a

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[3] F.W. Farrar, History of Interpretation (London: 1886) 246. Quoted in Bowers, The Legend, 38.

[4] Alter, The Art, 179.

better understanding of the Book of Jonah by illuminating the structure of the book and the techniques used by the author of Jonah to make it such a compelling little book. They have shown how the artistry of the Book of Jonah serves meaning. Trible was especially clear in her teaching concerning rhetorical criticism about the need for interaction with other biblical specialties. Magonet, by example, showed his familiarity with the Hebrew text and how the text of Jonah affected "reminiscences" of other portions of Scripture, and how these enriched the meaning of Jonah. Literary approaches need not necessarily lead to an either/or decision for or against historical inquiry. In the case of the three works studied, the primary purpose was not to delve into historical questions, or construct a theoretical view of history and literature, but to illuminate how the form of Jonah impacts the meaning of Jonah, and our reaction to that meaning. This concern for "meaning" is evident in the title of both Magonet's and Craig's books and in their concluding sections. For both, their looking for structure and techniques is not an end unto itself. It is not pure aesthetics. Trible's guiding rubric for rhethorical criticism also emphasizes the proper articulation of meaning. From Trible, most clearly, we can discern the desire to articulate a meaning, or meanings, that accounts for all the elements of the form-content of the book. The fruit of all "literary approaches" will be in the meanings they produce. When comparing various "literary approaches" to the Book of Jonah, we will ultimately ask which approach, or which study, interpreted the data without distorting it to fit a presumed "structure."

The approaches of Magonet, Craig, and Trible show careful readings of the text of Jonah. But, even careful readings do not always lead to the same conclusions. Also, one reader may find the style of the story proof of fiction while another finds no such thing. A "literary approach" as an entity unto itself is no more likely to solve all the questions put to texts than "historical approaches." Literary approaches teach the value of being eclectic in the study of texts. This approach is even clearly endorsed by Trible in her guidelines. We might summarize by saying use whatever is helpful in understanding the text. Choose what is good and discard the evil. Test the spirits of the methodologies.[5] A method that

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[5] It was stated above in Chapter two, by David Gunn, that what is involved in much of the debates between methodologies is what will constitute "normative" reading. John Barton has described the pursuit for normative readings by focusing on one particular critical methodology as a "basic flaw." Barton writes, "The basic flaw, I have suggested is the belief that the question 'How should we read the

would be against the historical basis of the Christian faith, or one that denies such historical referentiality *a priori* to the sacred texts, would necessarily not be of use. However, such a philosophical axiom need not be part of the "literary approaches" methodologies.

John Barton's charge that "literary approaches" are favored by some biblical conservatives as a way of avoiding the challenges of biblical criticism and avoiding the difficulties of historical enquiry should be taken seriously.[6] Indeed, "history" should never be a problem for conservatives, but rationalism, under the guise of "history" has been a problem. It should also call for greater clarity in respect to the challenge certain "literary approaches" pose to older historical-critical methods. It is not as easy as saying that "literary approaches" supplement the earlier criticisms, especially source criticism and some "evolutionary" ideas about the nature of the faith.

The term "historical-grammatical" method is used by those who wish to maintain the historical nature of the text and its relation to the acts of God and His people at specific times on the basis of the grammar of the text, and who do not want to use a methodology and its concurrent philosophy, nor the critique of reason, which denies or stands above the inspired text. For those who like the term "historical-grammatical" it may be suggested that the "grammatical" part also cover the structure and literary techniques of the text. This could only help in our understanding of the text and its meaning.

It can be seen in some commentaries on the Book of Jonah published after the wᵣᵣ ᵈ. of Magonet how he has influenced the commentators.[7] The three works investigated will undoubtedly play a large role in future commentaries on Jonah because they have analyzed the text well. Trible's book may be the most significant because she has done the most thorough job of structuring the Book of Jonah using the

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Old Testament?' can be answered. The pursuit of 'scientific' method has taken each illuminating insight in turn—source-critical, form-critical, redaction-critical, canon-critical and structuralist—and hardened it into this one valid way of understanding the text. If we would abandon this fruitless quest, we might turn again to each of the methods which litter the path of biblical criticism, and see in each the key to certain ways in which we do in fact read the Bible," Reading the Old Testament, 207.

[6] John Barton, People of the Book? (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1988), 59-69.

[7] For one instance, Stuart and Limburgh both interact with Magonet's theory about the distribution of the divine names in Jonah. Stuart disagrees with Magonet, while Limburgh finds his arguments simple and compelling.

ipsissima verba as well as making comments on that structure. The future of commentaries on Jonah, and other books with narrative, will undoubtedly stress the structure and artistry of the text, as well as how this affects our understanding of the text more than in the past. Analyses of books that do not merely focus one or two of the elements of Abrams' diagram of a literary artifact (work, universe, artist, and audience), but try to interact with each element as appropriate will be the most successful in interpreting the Word of God and applying it to readers. To quote McKnight again, "The challenge and the opportunity for criticism today is that no one of the elements (in Abrams' diagram) is dominant."[8]

This thesis on literary approaches to the Book of Jonah was introduced with the words of Jerome. He stated that the Book of Jonah has been commented upon more than any other book of Scripture, except the Psalms. This is all the more amazing since the text of Jonah has only 689 words, or one-quarter of one percent of the total word count in the Old Testament.[9] A study such as this, however, raises questions, not just about the nature of God and His dealing with a stubborn prophet, or a prodigal gentile city. It raises questions about the nature of inquiry into Holy Scripture, and about the nature of Holy Scripture. To be clear on the nature of Holy Scripture should come before advocating any "approach" to it. Certain theoretical and philosophical problems of "literary approaches" in general need greater clarification. Through "literary approaches," however, there has been the salutary effect of discovering the beauty of structure, narrator techniques which lead and guide the reader in assimilating the story, and how this all affects the reader's perception of the meaning of the story. Luther said, "I am persuaded that without knowledge of literature pure theology cannot at all endure. . . . Certainly it is my desire that there shall be as many poets and rhetoricians as possible, because I see that by these studies, as by no other means, people are wonderfully fitted for the grasping of sacred truth and handling it skillfully and happily."[10] In particular the studies by Magonet, Craig and Trible have done much to help us understand

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[8] See above, Chapter 2, 25.

[9] Sasson, xi.

[10] See above, Chapter 2, 15.

the text of Jonah and its meaning(s) better. At the same time they would urge that we, as readers, continue to contend with the text and interpretation.

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110

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