PERSPECTIVES ON THE BOOK OF JONAH

by

ALAN MONROE WAGNER

(Under the Direction of David S. Williams)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a survey of scholarship concerning the book of Jonah. I have chosen samples from rhetorical criticism of Jonah, parody and satire as a literary genre of Jonah, as well as a miscellaneous research covering the form of Jonah and reading Jonah as part of the book of the Twelve. I have examined different arguments that these scholars have given and critiqued them where necessary. I have also highlighted what are the best techniques for reading the book of Jonah. In doing so I adopted the rhetorical critical methodology foremost but have also borrowed from the analyses of satirical and parodic elements found in the text. I have also argued that the psalm should be considered an original part of the text, by examining the adaptations of quotations and common themes found with the rest of the book of Jonah.

INDEX WORDS: Jonah, Rhetorical Criticism, Narrative Criticism, Jonah-language, style, Parody, Satire
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ALAN MONROE WAGNER

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## CHAPTER

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Jonah presents a unique challenge to the biblical reader/interpreter. The text presents an Israelite prophet, but one who does not fulfill the expected role of a prophet. In telling the story, the author uses familiar subject material and has artistically arranged and distorted this material to present a story specifically tailored to his/her audience.

In this thesis I shall attempt to provide a survey of scholarship pertaining to Jonah, analyzing and critiquing the scholarly arguments. I must add that this survey is not comprehensive of all scholarship concerning this book. Instead it will provide a representative examination of different fields of research concerning Jonah. I will analyze the scholarship that I have chosen by dividing it into three thematic categories. These are: a rhetorical approach (represented by Phyllis Trible, Alan Hauser, and Kenneth Craig); the literary genre of Jonah (represented by James Ackerman, John Miles, and Arnold Band); and a miscellaneous category consisting of influential works on Jonah (represented by Jonathan Magonet and Alan Cooper).

The themes of the book of Jonah as generally agreed upon are: particularism vs. universalism, true vs. false prophecy, and the conflict between the power of God vs. the freedom of man. In my survey of scholarship on Jonah, I hope to show how different scholars address these questions and how they show that the text supports or fails to support these themes.

In the final chapter of the thesis, I will determine what in my analysis are the best interpretations of Jonah from the surveyed scholars. I will also address the originality of the psalm in chapter two and show how it is important in reading the book of Jonah as a whole.
Phyllis Trible interprets the book of Jonah using rhetorical criticism. Drawing upon James Muilenburg’s statement that “proper articulation of form yields proper articulation of meaning,” she examines how the author of Jonah expresses his desired themes by the forms which the literature uses.²

The rhetorical method focuses less on a diachronic analysis of the text and adopts a synchronic view, emphasizing the final form. This is not a major concern with the Book of Jonah since no major textual variations have been found. The main textual problem deals with the originality of the psalm in chapter 2, which Trible believes is not original or essential to the story.

Trible first looks at the overall external structure of the Book of Jonah and then focuses on the internal (word-by-word) structure of the text. She defends the consensus view that the text consists of two major parts (or scenes) dividing them as such:

Table 1: External Design: A Study in Symmetry³

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¹ I wish to note that I have inserted the Hebrew characters throughout my paper with the exception of two commonly transliterated words, kikayon, the gourd or castor oil tree, and hesed, covenant or steadfast love.
² Phyllis Trible, Rhetorical Criticism; Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah GBS, OT Series (Minneapolis: Fortress 1994), 91
³ Ibid., 110.
### Scene One: Chapters 1-2

**I)** Word of Yhwh to Jonah (1:1)

**II)** Content of the word (1:2)

**III)** Response of Jonah (1:3)

**IV)** Report on impending disaster (1:4)

**V)** Response to impending disaster (1:5)
   - by the sailors
   - by Jonah

**VI)** Unnamed captain of the ship (1:6)
   - efforts to avert disaster by
     i) action
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**VII)** Sailors and Jonah (1:7-15)
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   - sailors’ action and its result (1:7cd)
   - sailors’ questions (1:8)
   - Jonah’s reply (1:9)
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   - sailors’ action (1:15ab)
   - result: disaster averted (1:15c)

**VIII)** Response of the sailors (1:16)

**IX)** 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
     i) by word (2:11a)
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### Scene Two: Chapter 3-4

**I)** Word of Yhwh to Jonah (3:1)

**II)** Content of the word (3:2)

**III)** Response of Jonah (3:3-4a)

**IV)** Prophecy of impending disaster (3:4b)

**V)** Response to impending disaster (3:5)
   - By the Ninevites

**VI)** Unnamed king of Nineveh (3:6-9)
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**VII)** Ninevites and God (3:10)
   - Ninevites’ action (3:10ab)

   - Result: disaster averted (3:10cd)

**VIII)** Response of Jonah (4:1)

**IX)** 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
     i) 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)
Trible quite eloquently demonstrates what she sees to be the symmetry between the two sections of Jonah. She supports her chart by showing how the two “scenes” parallel each other.

Scenes one and two, for instance, parallel Yhwh’s call that Jonah receives in 1:1 is repeated basically verbatim in 3:1, “And the word of the Lord came to Jonah saying, ‘Arise, Go.’” The only difference is that in 3:1 the word יָנָה occurs after Jonah. In both instances Jonah arises, setting the stage for action.

In Unit four Trible shows a thematic symmetry in contrast to the exact verbatim of symmetry in units 1, 2, and 3. Here the narrator describes a tumultuous future for both the sailors and the Ninevites. In scene one, the narrative describes God’s action, hurling a tempest on the water and threatening the ship with breaking apart. In scene two Jonah reports that the Ninevites are facing “yet forty days” and they will be overturned. While Trible acknowledges that thematic symmetry can be questioned, she backs up her view using the length of both accounts, thirteen and seventeen words respectively, as well as their positions within the narratives. One thing that might help Trible’s claim is that although the two reports are given by different subjects (scene one is reported by the narrator and scene two the report is given by Jonah), the cause of each impending disaster is the same, Yhwh.

Unit 5 is symmetrical based on verbs that are used in reference to the Gentile characters respective to each scene. The sailors are described as “they-feared,” “they-cried,” and “they-threw.” Likewise, the Ninevites are described as “they-believed,” “they-called,” and “they-put-on.” We have in each scene three verbs that are used to describe the Gentile response to a threat from God, and in both instances they are in compliance with reverence to Yhwh. Trible also contrasts this with Jonah’s irreverent response when God calls him.
Unit 6 relates how two characters, both in an authoritative position and unnamed, respond to the news of doom. Both characters react by speaking with a similar idea in mind. They both seek to prevent the disaster that will soon befall them, and they do so with piety in mind.

However, the author presents the authorities differently. The captain is part of the crew; he is up close to the raging storm. He speaks quickly and shortly; perhaps due to panic. The king of Nineveh on the other hand is farther away; the proclamation of doom does not reach him immediately. He also issues a more lengthy degree ordering the people (and animals) to fast and put on sackcloth. Trible states that “both leaders proclaim a theology of hope.” Recalling that Jonah does not state why Nineveh will be overturned and that the captain of the ship does not know the cause of the storm, neither authoritative figure has the knowledge of any reason for an impending punishment, but both approach the possibility of salvation with a pious response to their God(s).

In Unit 8 Trible argues for symmetry by emphasizing the use of the word הַרְוֹן. This is a stretch since הַרְוֹנָה is a common word in Hebrew and probably does not have any special significance here. Here she relates the two responses to the reversal of impending doom with “And-feared the-sailors a-fear great” with “and-was-evil to Jonah an-evil great.” The use of “great” as an adjective to a direct object should mark the end of a narrative section. However, the second use is followed by a prepositional phrase, “and-it-burned to-him,” driving the story onward as Jonah has not reached a settlement. Thematically speaking, there is symmetry here in that characters respond to an averted disaster. However, with the exception of the use of הַרְוֹנָה, which may be a necessity of the narrative, they are really asymmetrical. We really have a

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4 Ibid., 113. Both leaders seek to divert their impending doom, yet both recognize that there is nothing they can do which will assure their survival.
5 Ibid., 114.
contrast of two responses, one by pagan sailors who now fear the Lord, and the other by Jonah, who after finally doing his duty becomes angry at the way things have been resolved.

Trible does a good job in showing the symmetry between the endings of the two scenes. In both the word הָנִּמָּה is used in reference to Yhwh appointing something in order to influence Jonah. She also points out the differences in the responses of the two characters, Yhwh and Jonah. In the psalm Jonah replies piously in response to salvation: he will sacrifice and pay his vow. The Lord does not respond to this. In scene two, Jonah replies in rage, asking to die to the act of salvation to which the Lord responds by questioning him repeatedly.

Trible states that the “asymmetry vies with symmetry” with the major differences in the two scenes providing a shifting view of God and establishing a theme for the story. God is transformed by the narrative from a God of distance and power, to a God of dialogue and persuasion.6

In an internal analysis of Jonah, Trible goes through word-by-word to see how the author put the text together. The emphases of the text are brought to light by the particularities the author uses for the story. For scene one, Trible divides the text into four episodes (1:1-3, 1:4-6, 1:7-16, 2:1-11).

Episode one consists of Yhwh’s command and Jonah’s response. The book opens with “And the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai saying.” This is a traditional form found throughout the prophetic books. However, nowhere is Jonah called a אָבִּית and though we have the use of a prophetic form, it is not the typical call story that we would expect to find.7

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6 Ibid., 116.
7 There is a Jonah son of Amittai mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25. The distinction here is that Jonah is a very different prophetic book that any other one found in the Hebrew Bible. It is the story about a prophet rather than a collection of his oracles.
Trible believes the opening verse is arranged in such a way to show a dominant relationship between Yhwh and Jonah by enclosing the prophet within the divine speech. 

Next come three imperatives: Arise, Go, Call. Trible claims asyndeton rhetorical device between the first two imperatives producing a hurried rhythm to the story and eliciting a hurried response. Next comes the imperative “and call” to Nineveh followed by the preposition $\text{YK}$. Here the preposition signals the reason for which Jonah is to call to Nineveh, that “that their evil has come up before me.” Evil uses the third person masculine plural suffixed pronoun to indicate that the whole city is responsible for the evil. Yet the evil is never specified, and Jonah’s message is never directly stated. This leaves open the possibilities of response for both Nineveh and Yhwh. It also leaves the readers without important information, requiring them to wait until later in the story before finally seeing the full picture.

The divine imperatives usually require the indicatives to follow. In Book of Jonah, what we have after the imperatives is, “And Jonah arose,” seemingly following in the same form of other prophetic books with Jonah obeying the divine command. The expectation is canceled by the next verb which uses the infinitive $\text{XRBL}$, not to Nineveh but to Tarshish. Trible also emphasizes the change from the preposition $\text{YK}$ to the use of the directive on Tarshish. The author’s use of these forms clearly shows Jonah breaking with his divine assignment and alerts the reader to the unique situation. According to Trible this forms a chiasm:

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8 Notice that Jonah is enclosed by the word of the Lord and the divine saying.

9 Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 125. Trible does acknowledge $\text{YK}$ as conventional speech. Jack Sasson also points this out, *Jonah*, 69-70. Since this is a common phrase it seems unlikely to be asyndeton.

10 Trible uses 1 Kings 17:9-10 and Jer. 13:4-5 to show how the divine imperative is obeyed by the prophet.
A  And-but-arose Jonah to-flee to-Tarshish from-the-presence-of Yhwh
   B  And-he-went-down to-Joppa
   C  And-he-found a-ship
      D  Returning (to) Tarshish
         C′  And-he-paid her-fare
   B′  And-he-went-down in-it
A′  To-return with-them to-Tarshish from-the-presence-of Yhwh.\textsuperscript{11}

Following the traditional reading of Hebrew chiasms, the center statement is what is being emphasized. Here Trible believes that the ship “returning to Tarshish” signals Jonah’s ultimate disobedience to his divine command, establishing the main storyline for the rest of the book: Jonah does not want to listen to God and call against Nineveh. The response to Jonah’s surprising action will occur quickly, but perhaps more importantly the reasons for Jonah’s flight remain hidden (and will until chapter 4).

Episode two, scene one, consists of three incidents the hurling of the storm, its effect on the sailors and Jonah, and the efforts of the captain to avert disaster.

Anadiplosis between the end of verse 3 and the beginning of verse 4 places emphasis on the Lord by repeating the name. Trible says, “Divine activity begins to erode the distance that Jonah sought to put between himself and Yhwh, even though narrated discourse continues to thwart direct communication.”\textsuperscript{12} Trible sees in verse 4 examples of prosopopoeia,

\textsuperscript{11} Trible, \textit{Rhetorical Criticism}, 129. The location of Tarshish is unknown, however, it should be seen to represent a place commonly viewed to be outside Yhwh’s authority.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, 131.
onomatopoeia, and assonance. She believes that these devices underscore the terror of the storm hurled by Yhwh.13

Verse 5 shows the response by the sailors and Jonah to the storm. The reaction of the sailors to the storm is told in three related clauses, with each subsequent clause increasing in length. Jonah’s reaction also is described by three related clauses, but offers a contrast with the sailors’ response. In the Jonah sequence, the first clause is the lengthiest, followed by two very short clauses, made up of only a conjunction and a verb.14 The effect of the length shows that the sailors become more and more desperate as the storm rages on unabated. Jonah, on the other hand, becomes increasingly unconcerned as he goes down into the ship and goes to sleep. His activity decreases along with the length of the clauses reporting that activity.

Trible also relates how Jonah precedes the verb “to go down” similar to Yhwh preceding “to hurl.” The author has set up this syntax to show the power struggle between the two main characters.15

Jonah, throughout verse five, reduces himself to an object. Jonah sleeps during the storm in contrast with the personified boat which thinks itself about to break apart. Jonah also goes down into the ship and effectively makes himself an object by replacing the wares that the sailors had cast overboard in their attempt to survive.

13 Ibid., 132. While these features may be present in the text, it is difficult to claim that we know what an ancient Israelite believed what a ship breaking apart would sound like. Therefore, onomatopoeia may not be occurring, while prosopopoeia and assonance are more likely to be valid.

14 Ibid., 134-135. “And the sailors feared. And they Cried, each man to his god(s), and they hurled the wares that were in the ship to the sea to lighten from upon them.”

15 The noun preceding the verb may simply be that there has been a change in subject which is characteristic of Biblical Hebrew, see C. L. Seow, A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) 150. However, Jack Sasson also points out that the identical phrases are significant because they force the audience to regard the three events in sequence: “God hurls the storm on the ship; the ship expects to crack up; then Jonah goes down to the ship’s bowel.” Jonah, (AB, 24B; New York: Doubleday, 1990) 100.
Next the captain of the ship comes to Jonah to and we have the first dialogue involving a human character. The captain issues two imperatives to Jonah ‘Arise, Call (to your-god).’ The imperatives echo the divine command found in verse two.

After the dialogue with the captain of the ship the story moves into the interaction between Jonah and the sailors. The sailors identify Jonah as the culprit of the “evil” that is happening to them. Notice the use of “evil” as being the same as Nineveh’s transgression in verse two. Having identified Jonah as the cause of their misfortune, they question him. They ask him, “On whose account is the evil to them,” followed by questions about his identity. Jonah responds by answering, “I am a Hebrew,” and confirms his culpability. Trible observes the structure and sees Jonah trapped between the evil his deed has caused and Yhwh.16

Verses 10-13 use repetition and structure to show a continued attempt to avert disaster. The sailors begin the unit by asking Jonah, “What is this you have done?” They then ask, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may be quiet from upon us?” Here Trible points out the use of the repetitive יק as well as other things such as pronominal suffixes. The יק produces a rhythm in the reading of the text, whereas the suffixes help the characters to interrelate in the story.

Nevertheless, the sailors learn what they need to about Jonah, including his response to averting the storm, yet they attempt to row back to shore. God however, does not allow them to do this. The conclusion of the section occurs in the next scene.

After the sailors have unsuccessfully attempted to row back to shore, they call unto God with the hope to avoid innocent bloodshed. This echoes the previous action of “each man called to his god(s).” The sailors are contrasted to Jonah and his conspicuous lack of praying. The story also shows how the storm is reversed, paralleling the sailors’ change of mind. We should
compare Yhwh’s hurling of the storm and the effect that it has on the ocean and the sailors hurling of their wares into the water. This is reversed by the sailors hurling Jonah into the water and the sea ceasing from its waging. Using the same word for “hurl” as well as the repetition of “the sea,” the author shows how the author portrays the sailors as recognizing Yhwh and therefore undoing their perilous situation.

Chapter 2 comprises the final episode of scene one. Trible sees another chiasm in 2:1 and 2:11.

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

B  and-was Jonah in-the-belly-of the-fish three days and-three nights.

B’ And-prayed 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.\textsuperscript{17}

Here Yhwh returns as a subject of active verbs, and a cause and effect sequence is initiated. Yhwh causes a fish to swallow Jonah. The stay in the fish’s belly causes Jonah to pray to God. This causes Yhwh to speak to the fish and which then vomits Jonah to the dry land. Trible also believes that “the-belly-of-the-fish” lies within the “belly” of the chiasm emphasizing the setting in which Jonah’s prayer takes place.\textsuperscript{18}

The psalm takes place between Yhwh’s appointing and his causing the fish to vomit. Jonah’s descent is therefore, completely within divine confines. Trible’s analysis of this chiasm removes the actual reported psalm which she believes is not necessary for the story. She claims that the psalm interrupts the flow of the narrative and rhetorical analysis of the text. The psalm

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 139. Here the Hebrew reads, “And Yhwh God of the heavens, I am fearing, who made the sea and the dry land. Jonah being the “I” surrounds himself with the name of his God and his God’s power in creation.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 157.

\textsuperscript{18} Trible notes that idea of symmetriphobia in placing the psalm off-center here, yet she argues that the disruption of the chiasm is evidence that the psalm is not original to the story. See also, M. J. Boda, “Chiasmus in Ubiquity,” \textit{JSOT} 71 (1996) 55-70, who argues that the center of a chiasm is not always what is being emphasized. The fact that Jonah prays and the content of that prayer may be more important that his location during the prayer.
does have discrepancies with the previous narrative: who is responsible for casting Jonah into the sea, sailors or God? The adjective “great” does not occur in the psalm although it is the most common word in the rest of the text. Also instead of a complaint song the psalm is a song of thanksgiving. The psalm also presents Jonah praying and vowing to Yhwh although, in the rest of the story, he seems constantly to disobey God.

The psalm disrupts the narrative since it breaks the aforementioned chiasm occurring between B’ and A’. It causes a delay in the storytelling reporting Jonah’s prayer and his stay in the belly of the fish before finally continuing with the narrative after ten verses. The psalm also begins with the word “distress” anticipating a lament, but Jonah delivers a thanksgiving psalm instead.19

The dissonance is evident from not only the structure of the poetry but also from the message. Jonah has a distorted view of reality; he believes Yhwh has cast him into the sea (in contrast to the report of the sailors in 1:15). Jonah also prays a thanksgiving song, although he remains in mortal danger, claiming that he has remained faithful and pious while doing the exact opposite. The closing line is very telling. Jonah tries to contrast himself with pagans, although from our experience within the story of pagan characters, it is Jonah who forsakes God’s hesed.20

Upon Jonah’s returning to dry land scene two begins. Yhwh once again commissions Jonah to go to Nineveh to prophesy, using the nearly the same wording as in 1:1.21 Jonah is once again told to “Arise, Go unto the great city of Nineveh.” Here however Jonah is to call the word

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19 Trible states, “irony joins disruption and delay to sound dissonance between the psalm and the narrative,” *Rhetorical Criticism*, 162
20 *Ibid.*, 173. Trible believes, “The omission of the psalm does not disrupt, much less destroy, the storyline. The psalm disrupts symmetry, prolongs a focus on Jonah, delays the movement of the plot, exploits irony, and introduces perspectives at variance with the narrative.” However, one must be careful not to disregard a possible literary device of the author here, just for the sake of a more coherent story.
21 The second call omits “the son of Amittai” while adding “a second time” to mark the carry-over from the previous commission.
that “I (Yhwh) am speaking to you.” This time Jonah arises and actually goes to Nineveh after his previous attempt at escape has been thoroughly stopped.

In this scene the author uses repetition of words such as “city,” “walk,” and “day” to emphasize that the Nineveh is the appointed destination.22 It also uses the infinitive “to walk” to echo the previous infinitive “to flee.” Jonah walks into the city one-third of the way and gives his prophecy, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overturned.” This does not begin like the traditional prophetic speech which uses “Thus says the Lord” or “oracle of the Lord.” The main verb in the prophecy is וְתֵשֶׁב, “overturn,” which Trible notes may be either reflexive or passive.23 Due to the lack of prophetic form and also a reference to the Lord delivering this exact message to Jonah, the prophecy invites characters and readers to exploit meanings.24

Episode two in scene two shows the effect that Jonah’s prophecy has on the city of Nineveh, namely the astounding response that it produces. The first response is for the people of Nineveh to call a fast and put on sackcloth, “from their great and to their small.” There has been speculation as to the reason for the Ninevites response to Jonah’s message. Why was their response so quick and absolute?25

22 P. Trible, Rhetorical Criticism, 179. The use of these words may not be adding emphasis but simple a necessity of the storyteller.
23 Trible notes that the verb is ambiguous, noting that the word carries the opposite meanings of destruction and deliverance. This is a point that J. Sasson utilizes in arguing that perhaps Jonah did not realize which connotation of the word the Lord was intending, Jonah 236.
24 Ibid., 180.
25 Trible notes that the lack of information follows Sternberg’s three types of omissions: 1. Blanks signify irrelevancies. 2. Temporary gaps signify information delayed for the sake of interest. 3. Permanent gaps signify information omitted for the sake of interest. This gaps fits into example three. Ibid., 182.
Next the king responds in a manner in which his two actions reverse his previous situation:

A And he arose from his throne

B And he removed his robe from upon him

B’ and he covered himself with sackcloth

A’ And he sat upon the ashes

The king and his officials then offer their decree ordering the Ninevites and the animals to repent. The decree is issued because, “Who knows, he may return, and God may repent, and he may turn from the burning of his nostril and not we will perish.” Again we have an echo of the captain from chapter one who hopes that Jonah will call upon his god and the crew and himself will perish.

Following the decree is the divine response to this repentance. Again we have a chiasm:

And-saw the-God their-deeds

That they-turned from-their-way-of the-evil

And-repented the-God about the-evil

That he-worded to-do to-them

And-not he-did

Here mutual turning eradicates evil as does the verb “to-do.”

Trible cites the use of an Aristotelian pattern of reversal and recognition is continued from chapter one (the storm ceases and God repents of his evil).

Scene two concludes with an extended dialogue between God and Jonah which finally reveals the true natures of both characters. Following the repentance of God in response to the repentance of the Ninevites the narrator says, “And-it-was-evil to Jonah an-evil great and-it-

26 Ibid., 188-189.
burned to-him.” Jonah responds by claiming that knowing God was so merciful he fled to Tarshish. The narrator has finally told us why Jonah fled in chapter one.

Trible points out that both Nineveh and God have turned from “evil” yet Jonah allows the great evil to “burn” him. The author also contrasts Jonah with the sailors in scene one who “vowed vows” and “sacrificed sacrifices.” Jonah “eviled” evil. Here the narrator is showing the inner character of Jonah. We now know why he fled. In addition the portrayal of Jonah is in direct contrast with the pagan characters.

The question is now why does Jonah flee in 1:3? Although he answers the question in 4:2-3 this does not resolve the issue. As Meir Sternberg believes, the gap of information that the narrator withholds leads the audience to believe that Jonah flees because “[he] is too tender-hearted to carry a message of doom to a great city.” Other interpretations exist which Trible finds more convincing. Jonah may be fleeing because he fears his message of doom will generate violence toward him, causing the Ninevites to kill him. Possibly Jonah fled because he wanted Nineveh to be destroyed and did not want his prophecy to prevent that outcome.

God asks Jonah if it is good for him to be angry. Jonah responds by leaving the city and waiting to see what will happen to it. Trible analyses word-by-word how Jonah goes out East of the city (opposed to fleeing West to Tarshish) and once again seeks shelter (here in a booth, before in the innermost parts of the ship and the belly of the fish). “Jonah’s narrated response to Yhwh’s direct question shows habitual defiance while hinting at inevitable defeat, Trible argues.”

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28 Trible, Rhetorical Criticism, 203.
29 Ibid., 206.
Here the dialogue really develops with God’s attempt to convince Jonah that it is not wrong to be compassionate, even to an evil city like Nineveh. The important appointing of the kikayon to shade Jonah is reported “And-delighted Jonah upon the-plant a-delight great.” Notice how Jonah is enclosed in delight, setting the stage for his very depressed reaction when it is destroyed by the appointed worm. That is reported in a cause and effect passage where God appoints the worm, the worm smites the plant, and the plant dies allowing the sun to smite the head of Jonah. Jonah once again asks for death in response to the loss of the kikayon.

The story concludes with an open-ended question. Jonah’s concern over a plant is compared to God’s concern over the great city of Nineveh (which He built and which has a great amount of men and beasts in it, even if they are stupid).  

Alan Hauser

Alan Hauser’s article “Jonah: In Pursuit of the Dove” demonstrates the book’s use of surprise and misdirection is establishing the theme for the author. It is by carefully disguising Jonah’s attitude toward God until the final chapter that allows the reader to become more aware of learning something.

Hauser builds his argument on the premise that Jonah flees his divine calling because of a reluctance to pronounce doom on the city or because he is fleeing the terror of God’s wrath. Here Hauser emphasizes the prophet’s name ḫnwy (dove) as the author’s first step in misdirecting

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30 It is debatable as to whether an ancient Israelite would have viewed God as the creator of Nineveh.
31 Hauser uses Aristotle’s claim, “Most smart sayings are derived from metaphor, and also from misleading the hearer beforehand. For it becomes more evident to him that he has learnt something, when the conclusion turns out contrary to his expectation, and the mind seems to say, ‘How true it is! But I missed it.’”
Flight and passivity are used in characterizing Jonah as he flees from prophesying against the Ninevites. Had Jonah wanted to see Nineveh destroyed then he would have willingly performed his prophetic task.

Though Jonah arises to flee “from before the Lord” throughout the first section of the book, he is quite passive. Once he boards the ship, he goes down to the inner most part of the ship and falls asleep. He does not pray to “his God” as the ship’s captain urges him to do. Also, once the lots have exposed him as the cause of the storm, the sailors question his background, to which he meagerly responds “I am a Hebrew and the Lord, God of the heavens I am fearing who made the sea and the dry land.” He then instructs the sailors how to calm the storm by throwing him overboard, again indicating his passivity. He does not actually do anything, instead he is the object of the action. This sets the stage for the dramatic turn of events in chapter 4 in which Jonah becomes quite active in his anger against God.

Along with the activity of the sailors, the action of God performs an important role in chapter one. God hurls “a great wind” upon the sea and causes the “great storm” to threaten the ship. Jonah conspicuously refuses to pray for salvation here, which Hauser explains, “The writer hints thereby that there is no point in Jonah’s praying. Jonah, as the principal target of God’s wrath, could not reasonably expect God to listen to him.”

The buildup of God’s wrath against Jonah is demonstrated by the storm which starts off as a great wind and becomes a great tempest; then twice the sea is described as becoming more

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32 Not all interpreters understand this to be Jonah’s reason for fleeing. Several scholars believe the audience knows that Nineveh will repent before the narrator informs them in Chapter 3. See my discussion of the readers’ knowledge below.
33 He notes that “flight, passivity, expressed through mourning over the fate to which one is or has been subject (e.g., Isa 38:14; Nah 2:7; Hos 11:11) or through submission to the sacrificial cult (e.g., Lev 1:14; 5:7, 11; 12:6, 80; and beauty, as in the love between a man and a woman (e.g., Cant 1:15; 2:14; 4:1).” 22
34 *Ibid.*, 24. Hauser also notes the sailors’ intense activity in chapter 1 where they pray “each man to his gods,” cast lots, question Jonah, try to row to shore, and eventually throw Jonah into the sea.
and more tempestuous. However, once Jonah is thrown overboard the sea immediately calms, showing the powerful effect of God’s wrath and clearly indicating the one who is the object of that wrath.

Throughout chapter one Hauser notices that there is very little dialogue between God and Jonah. The only instance is the divine order to go prophesy against Nineveh. Yet there is a fairly large amount of dialogue between the pagan sailors and Jonah. The captain of the ship tells him to wake up and pray in hopes of saving the ship. The sailors question Jonah as to why he brought the storm upon them. Jonah answers the questions, although he is brief with them, and even tells them how to calm the storm. Nowhere does Jonah express any hostility toward the pagan sailors, seeming to sacrifice his own life for their safety. Hauser believes readers would expect the same response from Jonah concerning Nineveh once they see that he has been delivered by the fish. It is God’s intense motivation to seek vengeance that drives the story to its dramatic surprise.

With God’s wrathful nature established, Jonah’s is characterized by his “fear” of Yhwh. Although he recognizes that the ship he is on is about to break apart, he does not simply repent and go on his prophetic mission. Why is this? Hauser believes that Jonah has passively submitted to his punishment, believing that God’s wrath cannot be turned. In reference to the concluding chapter Jonah seems to fear a God who does not carry out his wrath on the guilty in contrast to simply fearing God’s anger. The Gentiles in the story show a very different fear of God. They pray and repent, based on a theology of hope, with the intention of possibly persuading God to change his mind. The sailors set up the repentance of the Ninevites in their

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36 Ibid., 27.
supplication to God and their openness to the idea of forgiveness. Hauser points out that this emphasizes the unexpected effect of Nineveh’s salvation.

Building upon George Landes’ argument, Hauser believes that the fish found in the psalm is a mode of deliverance. The psalm describes Jonah’s descent through the sea down to Sheol. It is the belly of Sheol that presents the greatest danger to Jonah not the belly of the fish. This is why the psalm has the characteristics of a psalm of thanksgiving instead of a prayer for help. But we must be careful not to characterize God as repentant yet. Although he does listen to Jonah’s cry for help and save him, it is important to recognize the second calling that comes to Jonah immediately after he is vomited back onto the dry land. God therefore still has the motivation of forcing Jonah to carry out his prophetic calling rather than God’s simply relinquishing his anger against Jonah.

Throughout Jonah’s descent in the water, and his prayer from the belly of the fish, Hauser emphasizes Jonah’s continued passivity. He does call out to God as well as make vows and sacrifices, but throughout the psalm Jonah does not have any control over his destiny. Instead it is God who controls what happens to Jonah, overshadowing the limited action that Jonah performs.

The next motif that is emphasized is that of descent. Jonah flees from before the Lord, goes down to Joppa, goes down to the innermost part of the ship, then is thrown in the sea where he is below the waves and breakers. His head is wrapped by sea weed; he sinks to where he is encompassed by the ūn, down to the roots of the mountains, until the bars of the earth close upon him “forever.” All the while God has pursued Jonah, first hurling the storm, then hearing his call “from distress” and rescuing Jonah from Sheol. Again this emphasizes the passivity of Jonah, contrasting that passivity with the angry pursuit and actions of God.
The reader up to this point is still left wondering why Jonah chose to flee in the first place. The answer is stated in 3:10-4:2, showing that Jonah was fleeing God because he was afraid that God would forgive Nineveh. The dialogue contained in 3:10-4:11 shows that although Jonah is no longer physically fleeing God, “it is abundantly clear that it is from a God of forgiveness that the most earnestly wants to escape.”

The story shifts back to Jonah’s prophetic mission. Once he is back on the dry land and receives his second calling, he goes to Nineveh, a city with a distance of three days of walking. However, after coming into the city for a single day, he gives his prophecy, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overturned,” and all of Nineveh repents. The author throughout the story has shown Jonah’s reluctance to carry out his prophetic duty. He first flees from before the Lord; then he only walks one-third of the way into the city before giving his prophecy. The reader is also set up to think that Jonah does not want to do this because of his reluctance to see God’s wrath, based on his name and his reaction to the pagan sailors. Hauser believes these are all ploys by the author of Jonah to lead the readers away from the true nature of Jonah which is revealed in chapter 4.

After Jonah delivers his message, Nineveh repents with incredible sincerity. All of the people repent by fasting and putting on sackcloth. The king removes his royal robe and puts on sackcloth and sits in the dust. He even issues a proclamation ordering not only his people to do the same but all animals as well. However, judging from previous events in the book, readers are not prepared to anticipate God’s reaction to these events. God wrathfully pursues Jonah,

37 Ibid., 31.
38 Hauser points out that "can carry a double thrust. It not only means that Jonah walked into the city for only one day, but can also mean that the Ninevites eagerly repented after hardly having received Jonah’s message. He says, “The Ninevites eagerly repented despite Jonah’s reluctance to deliver the message.”
until his intentions are met (Jonah prophesies). Here the reader may expect God to destroy Nineveh regardless of their repentance since that seems to have been his intention from the beginning.

Contrary to what the reader may expect from the previously portrayed wrathful God, the author unexpectedly shifts the wrath from God (who repents over Nineveh) to Jonah (who is now angry that the Gentiles are not being destroyed). The author’s use of misdirection and surprise has led to this dramatic reversal of characteristics of the two main characters. The author’s ability to do this causes an “Aha” response in the audience who say, “Why didn’t we see it sooner.” This experience causes the audience to be more vulnerable and receptive to the message of God’s forgiveness. The audience now remembers the story from the beginning noticing that the ship was not sunk, the city was not destroyed, and no lives have been lost (including Jonah’s).

Hauser goes on to show that chapter four is a caricature of those who seek divine justice. The previously passive Jonah argues vehemently against God’s repentance, asking for his own death. This is in quite contrast to the previous prayer from the watery depths were Jonah asks for salvation from death. The caricature continues as Jonah sits outside the city to wait to see if God may change his mind again and destroy it anyway.

Here God teaches Jonah a final lesson by appointing a kikayon plant to shade Jonah, who is more concerned about his own individual suffering that the suffering of anyone else (sailors, Ninevites). Jonah “rejoices a great joy” over the plant yet becomes even more desperate in his plea for death after God appoints the worm to destroy it. God asks him, “Do you do well to be

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39 It should be pointed out that the king’s response to the prophecy comes after all the Ninevites fast and put on sackcloth. Hauser does not take up this issue, although other authors do. It could be part of the author’s intentional ambiguity or it may be of no consequence to the text.
angry?" To which Jonah replies, “Indeed, I do well to be angry, even unto death.” Now God points out the error in Jonah’s pitiful thinking by stating that if Jonah has such compassion for one small plant, which Jonah did nothing in creating, should God not have compassion for a multitude of people, whom he created, regardless of their stupidity.

Hauser demonstrates the use of surprise and misdirection by the author setting up the reader to be more receptive to the compassionate and forgiving nature of God. The natures of the two characters are reversed in 3:10 with the wrathful God becoming forgiving while the previously passive Jonah burns at God for not destroying Gentiles. The final scene shows a God who is eager to forgive his creatures, while Jonah selfishly remains angry at the Ninevites and asks to die.

Kenneth Craig: Poetics of Jonah

Kenneth Craig examines the book of Jonah from the idea of reading. Using M. Sternburg’s Poetics of Biblical Narrative, he states that, “reading is a time-art…the story proceeds and is perceived only in time-readers are invited to formulate hypotheses whenever information relevant to the unfolding plot is suppressed.” Using the idea of poetics, the systematic and scientific study of literature, we can attempt to answer some of the narrative techniques used in the book of Jonah.

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40 Ibid., 35. The surprise is in a shift of anger from God to Jonah, but also from a passive Jonah, to an angry, active Jonah.
41 Thomas M. Bolin, Freedom beyond Forgiveness: The Book of Jonah Re-Examined JSOTSup, 236; Copenhagen International Seminar, 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 162 n. 199. Bolin notes that the compassion of God was firmly established in Israelite theology, therefore the element of surprise would not occur here. Though we cannot conclusively date the book of Jonah, a post-exilic date engaged in the Ezra-Nehemiah debate cannot rule out a community which viewed God as vengeful.
M. Sternburg defines three principles which regulate Biblical narrative:

1. Ideological, found in the law passages and the prophetic speeches.
2. Historiographical, found in recurring dates, genealogies, and aetiological tales.
3. Aesthetic wherein the narrative produces indirection, gapping, repetition, deformation of chronology, variations in quotes, and the use of interior monologues.

Sternburg explains how these three principles work together:

In the abstract, they form natural rivals, with different goals in view and different forms of communication to match. Ideology would above all establish a worldview and, if militant, a consensus. It accordingly presses for transparent representation that will (and in didactic writing, does) bring the world into appropriate doctrinal pattern, schematized in equal disregard for the intractability of historical fact and ordering niceties of art. Historiography has no eye but for the past: at its quintessential, as in chronicle, it would like nothing better than to tack fact onto fact in an endless procession, marching across all artistic and ideological design. For aesthetics, the play’s the thing, ideally (as in abstract painting or the fantastic) with no strings attached to what is, was, or should be. Given free rein, therefore, each would pull in a different direction and either win the tug of war or tear the work apart.\(^4\)

Craig goes on to point out that while the Hebrew Bible is more often realistic that ideal in its presentation, Jonah is to be read differently. He argues that Jonah has two principles operating:

1. The ideological, found in the natural order’s consistent response to the Lord’s acts.
2. The artistic, found in repetition and antichronological statements made throughout the book.\(^4\)

The purpose of Craig’s book is to show how these principles function in the book of Jonah and how the author uses these techniques in the story.

\(^4\) Sternburg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 44.
\(^4\) Craig, A Poetics of Jonah, 8.
In order to understand the book of Jonah, Craig first analyzes the narrator of the book and he/she/it’s guidance of the reader. Craig points out that the narrator in the text is omniscient, having access to both Jonah’s inner thoughts (4:1), as well as God’s (3:10). The narrator’s knowledge cannot be equated with simply what is told in the text. Instead, Craig believes, “The narrator in Jonah could, if he chose, undertake to tell us what any of the characters felt at any moment, but consistently conveys information at the moment that best suits his strategy.” The role of the narrator is important in the choice of information either given or withheld.

In the opening of the Book of Jonah, the narrator sets the stage immediately by setting a quick pace and withholding much background information. Throughout the first chapter of Jonah, the narrative style is paratactic and lacking subordinate clauses. This focuses the attention of the reader on the action rather than thoughts or feelings of the characters. However, with the withholding of key information readers are forced to fill in the gaps with their own opinions. The author also forces the reader to read the text on more than one level. The audience should be able to sense this in 1:4 where the ship is reported as thinking it will break apart. The personification of a ship thinking would cause the reader to “expect the unexpected.”

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45 Ibid., 46.
46 Ibid 46. Craig also quotes M. Sternburg in reference to the narrator’s ability here, “the superhuman privilege is constant and only its exercise variable: it is precisely the distance between them that cries out for explanation. And whatever line the explanation takes, it always starts from the premise that the narrator could do otherwise if he chose.”
47 Ibid., 47-49. Craig compares the passages in 1 Sam. 25:2-3; Judg. 11:1-3; Job 1:1-5. In each of these examples there is a substantial amount of information given about the main character, consisting of where they are from, physical appearance, and wealth. This omission forces the reader to recall the brief account in 2 Kings dealing with Jonah.
48 Sasson, Jonah, 97. J. Magonet also believes that the author clues the reader into a multi-layered reading, but he postpones the signal until the ship’s captain echoes the divine command in 1:6.
In chapter two the narrator fades to the background, with most of the action taking the form of Jonah’s prayer. However the little information that the narrator gives us continues to show the emphasis on the action taking place.\(^49\)

Chapter three parallels chapter one in more than one instance. We should note the two commissions, the similarity between the ship’s captain and the king of Nineveh, and, we can also add, the delay of the narrator’s description of events.\(^50\) More importantly in chapter three the narrator gives the audience the first significant inside view of one of the characters, God. The narrator says, “And God saw their deeds, how they turned from their evil ways, and God was sorry concerning the evil which he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.” This reinforces the narrator’s omniscience and also subtlety passes over Jonah in silence, waiting for the climax in chapter four.

In the final chapter, the audience finally is given the reason why Jonah fled from his prayer in 4:2. The narrator also gives us the first inside view of Jonah, describing his anger at the deliverance of Nineveh. 4:5 also presents us with another instance in which the narrator has delayed a chronological detail for the sake of the storytelling.\(^51\) The disruption of seemingly logical chronological sequence emphasizes the purpose of the \textit{kikayon}. The narrator tells us Jonah sits outside the city to wait and see what will happen to it, and then recounts the whole incident of the \textit{kikayon}. It is only after all of the action involving the \textit{kikayon} takes place that we are presented with the final dialogue between God and Jonah. Craig points out that the narrator

\(^{49}\) The Lord appoints the fish, which swallows Jonah in 2:1. Then in 2:11 God speaks to the fish which vomits Jonah to the dry land.

\(^{50}\) Craig also notes in 3:2, 4 that the message that God speaks to Jonah is omitted and also why Jonah only travels one-third of the way into the city to give his message, \textit{A Poetics of Jonah}, 52. See also Table 1 where P. Trible charts the similarities between the two scenes.

\(^{51}\) Several scholars argue for the transposition of 4:5 to a more logical location after 3:4. Due to lack of textual evidence, as well as the author’s techniques seems to argue against such a decision.
never gives any moral evaluation of Jonah, “not because he lacks fervor but because he prefers a more sophisticated course.”

After discussing some other techniques of the narrator, Craig examines the characters, focusing on their speech patterns and their characterization through dialogue. Throughout the book the narrator describes events in relation to two characters or on one particular character interacting with a group of characters. These are divided up as such: the Lord and Jonah; Jonah and sailors/captain of the sailors; Jonah and Ninevites/king of Nineveh; the Lord and Ninevites. In analyzing the book of Jonah, we can clearly see these divisions occurring as the plot unfolds.

One important thing that Craig notes is in regard to chapter three. Here we are given the Lord’s action with the Ninevites, and Jonah is relegated to the background (similar to the Lord in chapter one see f. 12). Jonah has performed the command given him, and the action has shifted away from him. It would seem that the story has reached its conclusion, with the conflict of Jonah fleeing having been resolved. However, chapter four reintroduces Jonah, he and the Lord fulfilling the principle roles. It is here that the most extended dialogue takes place.

The effect that these divisions have is that “they allow the author to emphasize one of the dramatis personae over others thus highlighting and allowing the reader to notice any departure from expected norms.” Craig notes the contrast in action between the sailors and Jonah. There is also the contrast between the call story of Jonah and the call stories of Moses, Isaiah, and

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52 Craig, *A Poetics of Jonah*, 54. He cites 1Kings 15:34, 18:3, 2 Kings 21:3, and 2 Kings 21:21-22, as instances where the narrator specifically condemns or praises someone.
53 *Ibid.*, 59. Occasionally a third character is hinted at in the background, such as God’s presence during the storm, but the emphasis is clearly on Jonah and the sailors leaving the third character firmly “behind the scenes.”
54 This may be another reason why 4:5 is in the correct location, in order to leave the reader guessing throughout chapter three at Jonah’s conspicuous absence.
Jeremiah. We also have the contrast in that the king of Nineveh hopes to be spared, whereas Jonah asks twice that his life be taken from him.\textsuperscript{56}

The author also shows clearly Jonah’s own changing attitude in chapter four through this type of characterization. At the beginning of the book Jonah asks to die; then, Jonah is ‘extremely happy’ over the \textit{kikayon}, and finally he asks to die. This is followed by the most important contrast, Jonah’s concern over the plant and himself with God’s concern over all of creation.\textsuperscript{57}

Craig also explains a difference between Jonah and the Lord compared to the other characters, the sailors and the Ninevites. Jonah and the Lord are both named characters whereas the other two are anonymous groups. Of these two named characters, we are given significantly amount of more information in regard to the Lord than Jonah in chapter one. The audience can infer from God’s actions that he is a creator god who controls the natural order: he hurls the tempest, Jonah states that He (God) made the sea and the dry land, he appoints the fish to swallow and then vomit up Jonah, as well as causing the \textit{kikayon} to grow and die allowing His appointed east wind to smite Jonah. Nothing is told of Jonah until the fourth chapter in which Jonah gives his reason for fleeing at the beginning. Until now the readers have had to recall the 2 Kings passage and form their own opinions in regard to Jonah.

The sailors and the Ninevites fulfill a different role in relation to Jonah. First they allow Jonah to interact with them, helping the author to paint his portrait of Jonah, and, second, they allow the audience to contrast Jonah’s stubbornness with their “hopeful” and more pious attitudes. This can be seen in the repetition of the plot pattern in chapters one and three where there occurs: a threatened disaster→actions associated with contrition or repentance→resulting

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 60-61. See my sections on A. Hauser and J. Ackerman who highlight these contrasts in greater detail.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 61.
deliverance. In chapter four Jonah undergoes a similar situation but with different results: “Jonah experiences discomfort (but his is certainly not threatened) — he shows no sign of repentance or remorse — before finally asking to be delivered from his suffering by means of death.” \(^{58}\) The audience is thus able to see the contrast the author is trying to make between Jonah and the pagans, again highlighting Jonah’s stubbornness.

Along with the author’s characterization through actions, specific dialogue is also used to establish characters. The use of direct speech by the characters in contrast to the indirect speech of the narrator presents us with the different perspectives that each character has. Both the king of Nineveh and the captain of the sailors present their theology of hope in their direct speech.\(^{59}\)

The two identified characters, Jonah and the Lord, are portrayed more forcefully in chapter four. As already noted we have a contrast in their “concerns” which is given through direct speech at the end of the book. God asks Jonah, “Should I not be concerned for the great city of Nineveh,” and even lists the number of people. It is not until this chapter that God speaks without the imperative. It is through this type of characterization that God seeks to persuade Jonah to be concerned with someone other than himself. The dialogue also reverses the idea of the angry God, who pursues Jonah relentlessly and seeks to destroy the Ninevites, into a “gracious, compassionate, and slow to anger” God.\(^{60}\)

The direct speech of the sailors in chapter one emphasizes the confused nature of these characters. They rapidly ask Jonah, “Who are you? What is your job? From where do you come? What is your country? And from what people are you?” Along with Magonet’s

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 64.

\(^{59}\) The captain says, “Perhaps the god will give a thought to us so that we will not perish,” while the king says, “Who knows? God may turn and be sorry, and turn from the flaming of his anger so that we will not perish.” Neither character knows what effect their actions will have but both hope that they can bring about a better outcome.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 68-69. This is the argument A. Hauser makes, that the author using the tool of surprise to convince the reader of God’s universal compassion.
identification of the “growing phrase,” a repeated phrase with an addition of a word or element, the author has deliberately shown the panic the sailors felt.

Using dialogue and the contrast set up by the two character system, the narrator of the text is able to misdirect the audience, quite artistically, while still providing the necessary information. He then turns the story on its head with the unpredictable dialogue in chapter four, the only sustained dialogue in the whole book. While misdirecting the reader into believing the book concludes in chapter three, the author surprises the audience not only with Jonah’s reaction to Nineveh’s deliverance, but also with a new technique, in which God and Jonah converse for several verses, demonstrating changes in their characterization.

To the reader of the Book of Jonah, the text appears unstable, and indeterminate, causing the reader to formulate his or her own opinion. Gaps are present in the text and information suppression is used to force the reader to engage the text in a search for meaning. Then by filling in the gaps, or not, the author can surprise the audience. The reader’s attempt to stabilize the text of Jonah while they read it does result in a possibility of more than one interpretation.⁶¹

As stated previously, Craig believes that reading is a time-art. As such, we must be careful of the hindsight fallacy when we read the book of Jonah. To read Jonah without this fallacy, the ending cannot be applied to the beginning of the book. Craig states, “While the ending of any story affects interpretation, reading--even subsequent rereadings--is not carried out exclusively or even predominantly with the terminus in mind.”⁶² The author artistically tries to get the readers to formulate their own hypotheses about the text by leaving gaps and using misdirection. Craig notes two questions by which gaps are produced: first, what motivates Jonah to disobey the Lord’s command in 1:2a, and 2? Second, what is the message the prophet is

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⁶¹ Ibid., 75. The narrator, characters, and the reader regulate interpretations.
⁶² Ibid., 77.
“to call to her” (1:2b)? Not until 4:2 does the author give us the information to answer the questions. Reading Jonah, without the hindsight fallacy, the audience has had to formulate and hold their own opinions to these questions for most of the story. Understanding the text according to these guidelines, the psalm in chapter two then coincides with the rest of the story and provides a larger gap between the questions of 1:2 and their answer three chapters later.  

The next aspect Craig covers is the use of prayer in Jonah. While most research has gone into chapter two, Craig notes that there are seven references to prayers throughout the book. Chapter two contains a prayer that is often overlooked by scholars. While obviously 2:3 marks a prayer using כלָּבֹב (“he prayed”) but יָתַּר (“I called”) also marks a prayer, though we do not have the content recorded. Why then is it important that we have so many instances of prayer reported? The author’s use of prayer gives more depth to the psychological characterization in the book. The prayers throughout the book follow a similar pattern: Crisis→prayer→deliverance. This pattern is disrupted in chapter four in which we have: Deliverance→Crisis→Prayer for death. Jonah’s reaction to Nineveh’s deliverance reverses the prayer pattern that the audience has come to expect. Therefore, we can see that the author has skillfully established the idea of prayer in the first six occurrences, then heightens the surprise of the reader not only by Jonah’s reaction in chapter four but also by his reversal of the prayer pattern.

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63 See Craig’s Table 1 on p. 79 compares the call of Jonah to Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. It shows the verbal response to the call and the delay the author of Jonah uses to misdirect his/her audience.
64 See Table 2, p. 97. Four instances prayers are reported without their specific words recorded (1:5; 1:6b; 1:14; 2:3=2:6-8). The other three occurrences have the recorded prayer (2:3-10; 3:8; 4:2-3).
65 Some scholars translate יָתַּר as a present tense verb, with Jonah’s setting in the belly of the fish. This may be an attempt to coincide with the psalm with the narrative in 2:3, suggesting that there is only a single prayer in chapter two. Craig argues against this based on G. Landes observation that in the psalms when a perfect tense verb signifies a present tense action it is never followed by a vav-consecutive impf., which we have in Jonah, יְנַשְׁכָּה (“And he answered me”), 87.
66 Ibid., 100.
Using Benjamin Hrushovski and Adele Berlin’s analysis of biblical poetry, Craig examines the psalm according to semantic parallelism. This classifies the psalm according to static and dynamic relations. Static parallelism is as either a synonymous or complementary of the lines of poetry. Dynamic relations involving the parallel line are focusing, heightening; focusing, heightening reversed; and narrative moments. Of the fifteen lines we have eight occurrences of a focusing, heightening dynamic parallelism.\textsuperscript{67} This has the effect of intensifying the psalm as Jonah’s situation becomes more desperate and his deliverance more miraculous. Craig also notes that the water and pit imagery found in the psalm are common in Hebrew and Canaanite descriptions of death. While the imagery that the Book of Jonah uses echoes the Psalter, the author of Jonah has the highest concentration of sea imagery than any of the psalms. As Craig states, “With Jonah, intensity of ordeal is match by intensity of expression.”\textsuperscript{68}

The next approach by which Jonah is examined is the focus on the “inner life.” The Hebrew Bible’s range of portrayal is: “representation of the outer life where the world of action is described, or representation of the inner where feelings and thoughts are described.”\textsuperscript{69} Focusing on the representation of the inner life, we see that this can be achieved in three ways: direct narrative statement, direct discourse, or interior monologue. In the Book of Jonah we find the first two methods of representing the “inner life.”

In chapter one we have one of the more artistic representations of the inner life, given to us by the narrator concerning the sailors. The four occasions are:

1. “And the sailors were afraid.” (1:5a)
2. “And the men were afraid, greatly afraid.” (1:10)
3. “And the men were afraid, greatly fearing the Lord.” (1:16)

\textsuperscript{67} Craig notes this effect in lines 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14. \textit{Ibid.}, 109-110.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid.}, 122.
4. “For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord for he had told them.

While these quotations are neither surprising nor too in-depth, they do provide insight into what the sailors were experiencing. Quotes 1-3 represent what J. Magonet calls “the growing phrase” which highlights the increasing amount of fear that the sailors feel as the tempest grows stormier. The fourth quote Craig states shows “this artist’s skill in achieving the ideological objective lies not in adherence to any one supreme manner of narration but rather in an ability to alter the strategy as he shows us his characters.”

Craig also covers four more inside views in chapter one found in:

5. “Perhaps the god(s) will give a thought to us so that we will not perish.” 1:6b
6. “For you, Lord, as you have pleased you have done.” 1:14b
7. “I know that it is because of me that this great tempest is upon you.” 1:12b
8. “the Lord, the God of the heavens, I fear, who made the sea and dry land.” 1:9.

Again we have “shallow” views of the characters. Quotes 5 and 6 show the reader that the actions of the sailors in vs. 5 (throwing the cargo overboard) to be the attempts of innocent, desperate sailors trying to save themselves.

More telling are Jonah’s statements (7 & 8) which add to the ambiguity of why Jonah is fleeing. If Jonah states that he knows “the Lord, the God of the heavens, I fear, who made the sea and dry land” why does he try to escape by sailing to Tarshish? Craig state, “the quick shifts

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69 Ibid., 126.
70 See my explanation of J. Magonet’s growing phrase, 59.
71 Ibid., 130. This is compared to the more common direct discourse found in biblical narrative. Craig also covers four more inside views in chapter one found in: 1:6b; 1:14b; 1:12b; and 1:9.
from the outer to the inner world allow for relation, foster realistic, dramatic tension, and review a strategy of ambiguation and complication.\textsuperscript{72}

The psalm in chapter two provides another “inner view” but one that is misleading. We have the psychology of Jonah portrayed in vs. 10, “But I, in a voice of thanksgiving, I will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed, I will pay, Salvation is the Lord’s.” It seems that our prophet has decided to accept his commission. However, the end of the verse is ironic after reading chapter four. We are presented with a joyful Jonah after he has been saved in chapters two and four, but quite angry when the Ninevites are saved.

Chapter three provides two more instances of the “inner view:”

11. “And then the people of Nineveh believed in God.” (3:5a)

12. “[And the king said,] ‘Who knows? God may turn and be sorry, turn from the flaming of his anger so that we will not perish.’” (3:9)

Quote 12 echoes the speech of the ship’s captain in vs. 6: “Perhaps the god(s) will give a thought to us and we will not perish.” Here the reader sees that while the narrator may be omniscient, the characters are anything but. Both the king and the captain hope that their actions will lead to deliverance, but they do not believe that their actions necessitate their salvation. Craig argues against the universalist interpretation of Jonah because while the sailors and the Ninevites are delivered and they recognize the Lord, they do not take certain necessary steps. The author does not state that they embrace the Torah, acknowledge the Lord as the one true God, accept circumcision, or reject idolatry.\textsuperscript{73}

Chapter three leads into chapter four with a radical turn of events in which we are given an “inside view” of God:

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 132.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 137. Craig fails to mention the importance of the deliverance of the pagans here.
13. And God saw their deeds, how they turned from their evil ways, and God was sorry concerning the evil which he had said he would do to them and he did not do it. (3:10)

This event is actually presented through God’s eyes and is soon followed by other surprising events:

14. And it displeased Jonah, a great evil, and he became hot with anger. (4:1)
15. And the Lord said, ‘Is it right for you to become inflamed?’ (4:4)
16. And God said to Jonah, ‘Is it right for you to become inflamed about the kikayon?’ (4:9a)
17. And [Jonah] said, ‘It is right for me to become inflamed even to the point of death.’

(4:9b)

Here we have direct speech providing the inside view of Jonah. The repetition of “Is it right for you to become inflamed” strikes the reader as important and the addition of kikayon in vs. 9 alerts the reader to Jonah’s anger over the plant’s death. It also shows the reader that Jonah is more concerned with his own well-being that anything else. We also are told:

18. And Jonah was happy about the kikayon, extremely happy. (4:6b)

Jonah does not have normal reactions to the kikayon but either extreme joy or sadness. This use of rhetoric shows Jonah’s wish to die (in contrast to his prayer for salvation in chapter two) and how it relates to the prophet’s characterization throughout the story. This inner portrayal of the prophet is important for the next inside view:

19. And the Lord said, ‘You were concerned about the kikayon for which you did not labor nor cause to grow, which as a child of night came to be and as a child of night perished. And may I not be concerned about Nineveh, the great city, where there are more than 120,000 people who do not know their right hand from their left and many cattle?’ (4:10-11)
Here Jonah’s concern for the plant is contrasted with the Lord’s concern for the great city of Nineveh. While Jonah is only concerned for himself, the Lord is concerned for all of creation.

These inside views are presented in such a way as to emphasize the depth of Jonah and God. The pagan sailors and Ninevites are only give brief and shallow inner views. The author’s use of the “inner view” is able to show the conflict between the characters and to allow the reader to identify more with the characters.

Craig concludes his book by stating that the ideological view in Jonah shows 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.” Narrative poetics allows this conclusion to be drawn by examining how individual words, phrases, and syntactic arrangements function as a means of evaluation. Craig bases this idea on B. Uspensky who identifies four levels of point of view: phraseological level, the spatial and temporal level, the psychological level, and the ideological level.

On the phraseological level, God is portrayed as a creator. He “appoints,” “speaks,” and “hurls.” Plants, animals, and weather all obey his commands. The use of the infinitive is notable because when it is in reference to divine action the result is successful. However, when a human or group of humans is used with the infinitive verb the action is unsuccessful.

The spatial level is determined where Jonah is located in the narrative. In all four scenes the action takes place wherever Jonah happens to be occupying. The action follows Jonah from the boat, to the fish, to Nineveh, to outside of Nineveh under the kikayon. In connection with the spatial level, the temporal point of view is often altered. We have seen the confusion of the psalm and verse 4:5 that seems to disrupt the expected temporal order. However these

74 Ibid., 145. K. Craig’s emphasis.
75 Ibid., 145.
alterations seem to be the author’s attempt to generate gaps, allowing the reader to formulate their own hypotheses.

The psychological point of view has been demonstrated by Jonah’s emotions over the *kikayon* in chapter four where he shifts from extreme happiness to severe depression (asking to die). We have also seen that through the use of the first person in the psalm Jonah’s self-centered attitude. Each of these points of view function together or in conflict working to expose the ideological level.

In the book of Jonah, Craig believes that “every animate object is an *actual* carrier of the ideological point of view.”\(^76\) The characters are set up in a hierarchical relationship with God and Jonah, as multidimensional characters on top, and the sailors Ninevites, animal, and plant at the other end.

The phraseological, spatial and temporal, and psychological points of view set up God as the supreme authority figure. His word opens the book and his rhetorical question ends the story. The less authoritative characters in the book also confirm God’s authority. The fish, plant, and wind all respond to his commands. Also both the sailors and the Ninevites recognize His power. The pagan actions are not simply descriptions for the story but function to supply a worldview. Finally, Jonah’s dialogue in chapter four and the final question function to show that “God is free to command, to modify plans and to have compassion on all of creation.”\(^77\)

Craig demonstrates that the author of Jonah sets up an ideology from phrases, spatial, temporal, and psychological viewpoints. The way in which gaps are created, words are repeated, and the uses of the narrator are just some of the many ways that the author uses to tell the story and to share his/her view of a completely free God.

\(^{76}\) *Ibid.*, 151
J. Ackerman argues the book of Jonah represents the genre of literary satire. The prophet in this text is portrayed as being disconnected from reality, settling for false securities and therefore attack the cultic community. Ackerman begins by noting eight examples for why the song in Jonah should be omitted, which are:

1. There are other examples of a prayer being secondarily inserted into a prose narrative (2 Kgs 20:11-12 and Isa 38:7-39.1).

2. It seems that Jonah is thanking the Lord for his salvation while still inside the belly of the fish rather than already having been vomited out.

3. Jonah’s prayer describes his danger as drowning, not being inside a fish.

4. The word for fish changes gender from masculine (2.1) to feminine (2.2).

5. The song portrays Jonah being thankful, yet he asks to die in chapter 4. It seems that the song contradicts Jonah’s attitude as presented in the rest of the story.

6. In the psalm Jonah blames God for his situation in the sea, opposed to the sailors who were reported to cast him into the sea in chapter one. It also talks about Jonah’s desire to return and sacrifice in the temple, rather opposed to the action of Jonah fleeing in chapter one.

7. The psalm decries idolaters in 2.9, yet it is “violence” of which Nineveh is guilty.

8. The language that is used in the psalm is different than that of the prose, using different words (“cast” for “hurl”) and free from Aramaisms.
Ackerman goes on to show the recent literary interpretations of Jonah’s psalm and their wish to include it in analyzing the rest of the book. Likewise, he believes the song is integral to the rest of the story, but for a different reason. Ackerman believes the key to the psalm is that, “it establishes major dissonances between the prophet’s perception of reality and that of his narrative world.” The psalm then performs two functions: “It helps to establish an appropriate genre (satire), and it is also the crucial vortex into and out of which all of the story’s main images move, helping us to integrate and properly interpret the symbolism with which the work abounds.” Jonah’s characterization is a farce; he continually goes against what the reader would anticipate a prophet doing.

In analyzing the song, first Ackerman establishes the correct context from where it is sung. Jonah sings it while in the belly of the fish, not outside of the fish which is were we would expect him to sing it. Second, because we have now established a setting for the song, we now can say that the author has purposefully used archaic language and broken the traditional genre to get the audience to recall the expected theological setting of the form. Last, this context allows us to distinguish the psalm as a parody of the religious experience that it is subverting.

The song is preceded by the description of Jonah being swallowed by a fish. The verb used is חיב. The narrator then states that Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, which was the time span needed to journey to the underworld, making the reader think that Jonah is being carried to his death. The song opens with, “I called from my distress to the Lord and he answered me.” This cry for help supports the view that Jonah in undergoing

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79 Ibid., 216.
80 Ibid., 216-217
81 Ackerman notes that the verb never has a positive meaning in the Hebrew Bible. “Satire and Symbolism,” 220.
an ordeal. However, the prayer does not continue to be a cry for help but is transformed into a
song of thanksgiving. Note that Jonah says that God has answered him.\(^{83}\) However, Jonah is
still inside the belly of the fish according to verse 2.1. This is hardly a safe and secure location
for Jonah. Here Jonah’s perception of reality seems to be at odds with that of the narrative.

The song now shifts to a song of thanksgiving despite the fact that it begins more like an
individual lament rather than a song of thanksgiving.\(^{84}\) Ackerman believes that the author has
constructed the psalm in this way to show Jonah’s self-centeredness. Instead of praising God, he
opens up the song talking about his own troubles and making himself the center of attention.
Jonah also mistakenly attributes his salvation in the fish to his own “call” to the Lord.\(^{85}\)

Jonah’s misperception of reality is continued in 2.4 where he blames God for casting him
into the sea, although in chapter one it was reported that the sailors threw him overboard. Here
the verb used is יָשַׁל which the psalmist uses to refer to being thrown in the depths or removed
from God’s presence.\(^{86}\) Again, Jonah believes he has been cast out of God’s presence, although
he voluntarily runs away in chapter one.

A theme runs through chapter one and is continued in chapter two, that of descent. In
chapter one the verb יָנָה “to go down” is used three times along with a similar word יָנָה “to
be in a deep sleep.” The motif of “going down” implies a descent to the underworld. Therefore,
while Jonah has been fleeing God, he has unconsciously been heading for death.

\(^{83}\) The second half of the verse in parallel confirms this, “From the belly of Sheol I cried out, You heard my voice.”
\(^{84}\) A song of thanksgiving usually begins with the singer praising God or inciting others to praise God. “Satire &
Symbolism,” 222.
\(^{85}\) Ackerman believes that the sailors in chapter one are the cause of the response of the fish where they ask “Do not
give upon us innocent blood.” This seems to be problematic because God was obviously trying to sink the ship,
indicating that Jonah was not innocent. While the sailors were concerned with bloodguilt, it is not stated that they
knew Jonah was swallowed by the fish, therefore it is unlikely that God appointed the fish to absolve the sailors
actions or ease their minds.
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 223. This is a change from the verb by which God casts the storm יָשַׁל. Ibid., 223.
The satire continues in the song, where Jonah never repents of his fleeing, but instead promises to pay his vows and make sacrifices in the temple. Ackerman states that in the song Jonah expresses thanks for deliverance by Yhwh’s power, while the narrative indicates that Jonah should be afraid of being delivered into Yhwh’s power.  

The final point of satire in the song is the charge against idolaters in 2.9, “The ones keeping vain idols, they forsake their hesed.” The repetition of the idea of making vows and sacrifices forces us to compare this with the sailors in chapter one who make the same statement. What is ironic here is that the sailors have forsaken their אלוהי and instead recognize and fear Yhwh.  

It is evident later that Jonah believes God to be too full of hesed, tying the song to what will happen in chapter four.

God apparently does not think much of Jonah’s song of thanksgiving because the fish “vomits” Jonah out to the dry land. But even as Jonah’s song has continually shown his mistaken views of what is happening to him, he does manage to get something right, “Deliverance is Yhwh’s.”

Ackerman believes the central symbol used in the book of Jonah is his search for a secure shelter. As Jonah flees he first tries to seek shelter in the innermost part of the ship.” This is wordplay of the dwelling place on Baal. The descent into the “innermost parts of the ship” conjures images of Baal’s descent into the underworld and the foundation of

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87 Here Ackerman echoes what A. Hauser believes to be the characterization of wrathful, angry Yhwh in the first chapters of Jonah. The idea is that Yhwh will certainly punish Jonah for his disobedience, “Satire and Symbolism,” 224.
88 Ibid., 224.
89 Ibid., 225-226. This idea will become important in chapter four.
90 Ibid., 230. The word play is on “the innermost parts of Zaphon,” relating the ship to the Baal’s dwelling. Ackerman also connects this with J. J. M. Roberts’ interpretation of Job 26:6-9 in which Zaphon as a sacred mountain has in foundations extending into the underworld.
Zaphon, leading the reader to think that Jonah’s descent will continue naturally to the underworld.

This theme of descent to the underworld is displayed further in Jonah’s דָּלַם “deep sleep.”91 Again, it is a word play on דָּלַם. The captain’s imperative to “Arise, Call unto your God,” showing Jonah how to avoid his “death descent.” Jonah refuses to do so, seeking to continue his descent in the sea, and ultimately toward Sheol.

In Jonah’s sinking in the sea toward Sheol, he finally cries out to God. Jonah’s flight leads him to the womb of Sheol, which is not the secure location he sought in fleeing Yhwh. So he thanks God when he has been swallowed and is inside the belly of the fish, a more secure place than Sheol, but one that is still not safe. Jonah prays from the fish believing he will return to the “holy temple,” but Yhwh seeks to lead him again to Nineveh.

Ackerman points out the relationship between Jerusalem and Nineveh. Jonah seeks to escape Nineveh and the city of Death in the song. Here however, Jonah has again errs in his perception. Nineveh is subtly shown as the opposite of the city of death, by calling it “a great city for God.”92

The king of Nineveh plays another antitype role in the story contrasting him with Jonah. Both characters hear the word of the Lord but each responds quite different. The king “arises” from his throne and urges the people to “return” unto God. Ackerman states these are associated with the nether world, “the state from which one does not arise, the place from which there is no return.”93 The king sits in the dust and wears sackcloth, both of which were signs of mourning.

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91 Jud 4.21 uses this word as a preparation for death, which Ackerman believes to have a similar connotation here, “Satire and Symbolism,” 231.
92 Ibid., 238. Ackerman believes this is close enough to “the city of God” to establish this concept along with the repentance of both the Ninevites and God in chapter three. He also relates “the great city of Nineveh” to the “great fish,” showing how the author has transformed two images of evil into figures of divine purpose.
93 Ibid., 239.
This action shows the king symbolically mourning the death of his city. Ackerman claims that, “Death is a sphere from which there is indeed the possibility of return, and the key to the symbolic death is a ‘return/repentance’ from violence.” The king of Nineveh then in his symbolic mourning and his royal decree shows his hope to return from death. Jonah on the other hand arose to flee from the Lord and instead of “returning” to life, he “descends” toward death.

The final enclosures that Jonah seeks security in are the booth and the kikayon. The author contrasts the man-made booth with the divinely made kikayon. Jonah makes the booth in an attempt to wait and see what would happen to Nineveh. In order to teach him a lesson God appoints the kikayon to “deliver” him. Ackerman believes that Jonah rejoices so much over the plant because it provides the secure shelter that he has been seeking since chapter one. When God appoints the worm to smite the plant, Jonah becomes angry and asks to die again. Here the prophet is shown as someone who would not rise and seek to save pagan sailors or Ninevites from “perishing” but who becomes incredibly angry when a kikayon perishes. The point that God is making to Jonah is that he must emulate the Creator by living in שס with the world. The kikayon along with Tarshish, Eden, and Zion/Zaphon is part of an imaginary world which cannot be achieved. Only through “compassion can Jonah find the security for which he is looking.

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94 Ibid., 239.
95 Ibid 241-242. Jonah first asks to die in 4. 3. Ackerman states here in 4.8 that Jonah’s physical “burning” matches his spiritual “burning” from 4.3. He also relates the qigayon/worm to the tree-of-life/serpent motif.
96 Ibid 243. Ackerman believes that שס could be a world play on both רְצִי and נְתַנָה “to seek shelter.”
John Miles and Arnold Band

John Miles seeks to classify Jonah as a parody, which he defines as “literary humour which takes a familiar text or, more often, a familiar style as it vehicle.” This is an important classification because it focuses on Jonah’s commentary on Hebrew literature rather than religious behavior. Miles bases his work on Good and Burrows, but advances their theories by focusing on Jonah’s literary parody rather than its satire on fifth century B.C.E. Jewish life.

Since Jonah is a parody on a literary style, Miles first identifies the standard in Hebrew literature. He states, “The narrative of the prophetic career is surely the clearest stereotype in Scripture.” He describes the “stock characters” as the prophet, the summoning deity, and the wicked king in the wicked city. Likewise, the “stock scenes” are the prophet’s initial reluctance, his prediction of destruction, followed by his grief at failure. The book of Jonah contains an appropriate scene in relation to each of these stock characteristics.

The first scene to be analyzed by Miles is the call scene. Miles recalls other call scenes where the prophet expresses reluctance to fulfill the divine mission. Jonah parodies these other accounts by fleeing west, in the opposite direction of Nineveh, rather than complaining directly to God. Along with his flight the parody is furthered by the fact that Jonah remains silent through most of the first chapter. This is another attempt by the author to parody the eloquent speeches of the prophets who believe that are not up to their divine task.

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99 Miles, “Laughing at the Bible,” 205.
100 Moses, Ex. 4.10; Gideon, Judg. 6.15; Isaiah, 6.5; Jeremiah, Jer. 1.6.
The plot continues with a response from God, who produces a storm. The sailors offer a comical contrast to the action of Jonah. They pray while Jonah goes down into the ship and falls asleep. While Miles argues against the distributive in יִבְרָלָה לְעָלָה אֱלֹהִים, “each man praying to his god(s),” he argues that it represents a mockery of idolatry.  

The third genre parodied by Jonah is the “thanksgiving psalm.” According to the text Jonah issues his prayer while in the belly of the fish. His prayer which opens as a lament, unexpectedly changes into a psalm of thanksgiving from being rescued. The psalm then is comical in that it is not a metaphor like the usage from the Psalter. Instead, it is Jonah’s real situation. We are also presented with the most concentrated use of water imagery in the Bible. Miles claims, “The psalms are satirized through a comically exaggerated use of their imagery,” similar to the distorted use of the prophetic form in chapter one.

The fourth parodied genre refers back to the prophetic genre, that of the rejection of the prophet by the king. Recalling Pharoah’s response to Moses, Michaiah and Ahab, and Jeremiah and Zedekiah, the reader would expect the king of Nineveh to angrily dismiss Jonah or at least ignore him. Instead, the king not only repents after hearing Jonah’s message, but also orders a decree for the whole city to repent, including the animals!

The last element that Miles claims is a parody is the prophet’s response to the outcome of the mission. For instance, Elijah and Jeremiah, ask to die after their missions have proven to be failures. Jonah, on the other hand, asks to die after his message is heeded. This leads to the appointing of the kikayon and its subsequent death, to which Jonah continues to ask for death.

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101 Miles, “Laughing at the Bible,” 208. Here Miles states, “The admiral’s request that Jonah wake and add his prayer to the cacophony of different prayers to different gods only reinforces the buffo quality of the scene.”

Miles points out these parodic tendencies in Jonah which produce a comical text. We have an exaggerated use of traditional prophetic stories as well as an exaggerated use of material from the Psalms. However, we also are presented with an embellished view of the actions of the Ninevites who respond to Jonah with such incredible actions that they even order their animals to repent. Therefore for Miles the whole book of Jonah should strike the reader as making fun of traditional ideas of both Israelite tradition and gentile tradition.103

Arnold Band builds on Miles’ argument of reading Jonah as parody. This means he believes that the book should be read as an imitation of another, usually serious, piece of work. The texts have to be familiar to the reader, thus the way it alters those known genres is where the interpretation of the book of Jonah rests.

Band places the book in a post-exilic setting, probably in the late fifth century BCE

Band tries to define parody to help understand clearly how the book of Jonah works.104

He lists how he separates parody from satire:

1. Parody always assumes a pre-existing text which imitates and distorts that text. However, parody criticizes that genre whereas satire usually “censures wickedness and folly” in human society.
2. Parody raises expectations in the reader in the same style of the original text but it “frustrates” those expectations by distorting that original text.
3. Therefore the parodic text consists of two text-worlds: that of the parodist and of the parodied texts.
4. The parodist utilizes a variety of devices (puns, word play, exaggerations, etc.) which give two signals: one hinting at the parodied text and the other against that parodied text.
5. For the parody to be effective the reader must respond to both signals, though not all reader are competent to do so.
6. The attitude of the parodist to the parodied text may be contempt or sympathy, but it may also be ambivalence.
7. The target of the parodist may be the parodied text, its world, or an unidentified contemporary text which aspires to the norms of the parodied text.

103 Ibid., 214-215.
104 Arnold Band, “Swallowing Jonah; The Eclipse of Parody,” Proof 10: 177-95. Band claims to be building upon the works of M. Burrows, J. Miles, B. Halpern, R. Friedman, J.C. Hulbert, and J. Ackerman, but he tries to sharply define the difference between parody and satire, which he does not feel has been thought of enough, 179.
8. Parody raises a host of questions concerning varying norms and expectations, audiences, interpretation, and canonization, since the reader is assumed to be able to respond to the text’s two-world structure.\footnote{Ibid., 179-180.}

Band claims that the most important text for understanding Jonah’s flight from Yhwh is in Exodus 34. This passage contains the encounter between Moses and Yhwh on Mt. Sinai where Israel and Yhwh enter into the covenant that excludes Israel from entering into a covenant with any other nation, as well as possibly excluding Yhwh from electing any other people.\footnote{Ibid., 181.} He believes that this provides the Jonah’s author with the theme of God’s compassion, plus “it allows or even necessitates the ambiguities of the book and offers a cardinal model of re-inscription.”\footnote{Ibid., 182.}

Band agrees with Miles in his statement that Jonah is a parody not on Jewish life but on Hebrew letters. This leads to the questions:

What is the effect of the parody? Who might have written it? What might be the proximate target have been? What does the possibility of parodic composition and reception tell us about the episteme of the period? How, indeed could the book have been accepted for canonization by a sober, pious group of religious authorities?\footnote{Ibid., 184.}

Band goes on to divide the techniques of parody into two areas and two operations. The areas that he examines are the call to prophecy and the prophet’s reluctance to accept the call. The operations the parody uses are inversion and exaggeration.\footnote{Ibid., 185}

With these guidelines, Band first analyzes Miles’ work on Jonah. Miles lists five topics which he demonstrates the use of parody in Jonah. The obvious starting point is the call scene. Instead of Jonah responding with reluctance to God with dialogue, we are told about his flight to

\footnote{Ibid., 179-180.}
Tarshish. While the reader expects Jonah to be similar to a Moses, Gideon, or Jeremiah type we have “quasi-realistic, comic inversion.” The reader would recognize the ridiculousness of Jonah by immediately recalling other prophetic stories and comparing the Jonah’s absurd reaction with theirs.

The second topic Miles covers is the sailors’ prayers in chapter one, which he believes are a parody on Second Isaiah’s mockery of idolatry. Band believes that this is the weakest of Mile’s arguments and tries to build a better argument with the use of the idea of “romance” in the Book of Jonah. Using Northrop Frye’s idea of romance, Band believes that the author has inverted the typical pattern: “the hero’s quest; his trial and conquest; the final exaltation of the hero or his God.” The “romance” is inverted in that the quest is refused, the trial is slept through, and the exaltation of God is concretized by the sudden acceptance of Jonah’s God by the sailors. The conquest of Leviathan or a dragon is also listed as part of the romance which shows further inversion, since Jonah is ingested, then vomited, without performing the expected action.

The third topic is that of the psalm. Band agrees with Mile’s description that the psalm is an example of previous metaphors becoming reality, thus making the text “bombastic.”

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108 Ibid., 185.
109 Ibid., 185.
110 Ibid., 186.
111 Ibid., 186. While Band does admit that it is hard to define romance in the Hebrew Scriptures he does not hesitate with following Frye’s suggestion here.
112 The author of Jonah is not consistent in his parody here, though that may not be necessary. It seems that we have three uses of inversion with an exaggeration thrown in the middle. This may be Band forcing the text to be read as a parody. I also have trouble with the conquest of the dragon. Unless we can provide a more definite time period for Jonah I would wish to stay away from using this as a topic, since it does not seem to develop until later in the 2nd Temple period.
The fourth topos is the “rejection of the prophet by a king.” The reader would expect from previous prophetic stories that the King would either ignore the prophet or angrily reject him. However in Jonah, the King of Nineveh not only listens to Jonah, but repents and orders his people to repent after a measly five word oracle. Jonah is then the most successful prophet and he has hardly prophesied at all.

The last topos that the author parodies is Jonah’s wish to die. While Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah all ask to die, it is after a prophetic failure. The successful Jonah asks to die because Nineveh was saved and the kikayon perished. This would hardly seem worthy to end one’s life over. Band also points out that after Elijah asks to die, he goes to Horeb where God speaks to him with “a still, small voice.” Jonah on the other hand has an extended dialogue with God arguing over the rationale of his right to be angry.113

While Band agrees with many of the example of parody that Miles lists, he does not believe that the parody is simply of prophetic literature, but of prophetic narrative. The text also parodies psalmody and romance, which Miles does not point out.

Band uses Halpern and Friedman’s article “Composition and Paronomasia in the Book of Jonah” to examine the “stylistic operations” of Jonah’s parody. Halpern and Friedman provide a list of terms that are repeated throughout Jonah and provide theological implications for the text. Band responds by arguing that the translator has run into a hermeneutic circle. By reading the text as a parody then Band says these repetitive words assume a comic effect.114

The second parodic tendency in Jonah is the use of puns throughout the story. Halpern and Friedman believe that are semantically inconsequential, though Band believes that they serve

113 Ibid., 187.
114 Ibid., 188. Band may have run into a circle of his own. By approaching the text as a parody these words may assume a comic effect which then demonstrates that the text is a parody? I do not believe that he takes into account that these words are common words whose meanings do not rely as heavily on the context.
to enhance the humor or playfulness of the parody. One example that he particularly likes is the relation of *vayaqe* (to vomit) to *kikayon* (the gourd). This may provide a reason of the only occurrence of *kikayon*, possibly “a vomit tree.”

Halpern and Friedman do acknowledge that some words have significance semantically as puns, though they do agree with Band’s claim that all of the words have significance. One of the more important words that they point out is נָבֹא (overthrow), which Jonah uses in his prophecy, “forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” While the connotation may mean “physical overthrow” it can also simply mean a change of character, which Jonah does not comprehend.

Examining Ackerman’s view that Jonah is portrayed as mis-perceiving reality, Band criticizes him for not distinguishing satire from parody. Ackerman claims that Jonah is a Menippean satire, by which characters are made to look ridiculous through their actions. Band argues that the satire is a composite of parodic texts, and so is Jonah. The content of Jonah is composed of many genres “which it, in a sense, parodies.”

The text of Jonah then should be read as a parody even though it may seem inconceivable that such a book would be canonized. Band believes that the canonizing process can “misunderstand” the message of a book to support its worldview. In addition the length of time from when the book was written to its canonization could cause a misunderstanding of the

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115 *Ibid.*, 188-89. The extensive use of paronomasia does not seem to be insignificant to the story, but it may not have a huge effect either. Halpern and Friedman also state: “paronomasia pervades the book so patently, in fact, that one is intrigued even by the tie of the name of the primary setting, Nineveh, to the name of the central character, Jonah (nywh/ywnh).”

116 A few scholars argue that the meaning should only be read as a physical overthrow since the usage of the word is usually in a negative context. While this may be the case the author could certainly have seen the double meaning of the word and selected it for those purposes.

meaning of the text. Due to the fact that parody assumes a pre-text, Band believes that it is more susceptible to “misunderstanding.”

Using Morton Smith’s classification of two classes, the Assimilationists and Separatists, Band believes the author of Jonah would have been a member of the Assimilationist group. While Band recognizes that no proof of these parties exists, he does cite the fact that changing attitudes during the period of canonization affected the interpretation of the book. With this in mind, the parodic nature of the text becomes changed (misinterpreted) as a true story of a prophet (the prophet mentioned in 2nd Kings) and the book was converted into the genre that it itself parodies.

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118 Ibid., 191-192.
119 Morton Smith, Palestinian Parties (London, SCM, 1987). Assimilationists are defined as “ones who tolerated the worship of Yahweh together with other Gods.” The Separatists worshipped “Yahweh alone.”
OTHER SCHOLARSHIP

Jonathan Magonet

Jonathan Magonet examines the text of Jonah by analyzing the repetition of words, the content of the psalm, the use of quotations from the Book of Psalms, and finally the structure of the whole book to determine the themes of Jonah.

The first task that Magonet undertakes is to account for the number of times words are used in the book of Jonah. In Table 1, he divides the verbs according to how many chapters they occur in, which chapters they are found, and how many times they occur in that specific chapter. One notices immediately the repetition of verbs that occurs in chapters one and four while this is not the case for chapter two or three. Magonet later uses this fact to support his conclusion that the two halves are mirror images of each other.

Tables two and three cover verbs that appear in two and three chapters of Jonah. This shows that three verbs occur quite frequently between chapters 1-3. These do not occur in chapter four at all, leading Magonet to conclude that a unit consists of the first three chapters, excluding the fourth chapter.

What does the repetition of verbs have on the audience? Using his chart Magonet looks at the repetition of the verbal phrase “Arise, Go…Call.” This is the word that comes to Jonah in

120 Jonathon Magonet, Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Technique in the Book of Jonah. (Bible and Literature Series, 8 Bern; Herbert Lang, 1976), 14.
121 Magonet divides the book between chapter two and three, so part one consists of Chapters 1 & 2 and part two consists of chapters 3 & 4. Using a mirror image chapter three mirrors chapter two and likewise chapter four mirrors one.
122 The verbs that occur are כָּרָה (six times), לָהָל (eight times), and רָאָה (nine times). Ibid., 14-15.
1.2 as well as the prophetic call in 3.2. Recognizing the almost parallel wording (the exception is “a second time” inserted in 3.2) the audience can see that the divine call is the same and is still waiting to be carried out. Magonet also points out that this phrase is used by the ship’s captain, when he urges Jonah to wake up in 3.6.123 This provides a subliminal effect on the audience by disguising the call that Jonah is fleeing from in pursuit of him.124

Magonet points out that chapter four uses different verbs to form its message. It uses a repetition of verbs that are opposites to show the polarity between God and Jonah.125

One of the more important techniques that the author uses in Jonah is what Magonet terms “the Growing Phrase.” This is a repetition of a phrase in which a word or element is added to it. The first example used is from chapter one in regard to the fear of the sailors:

“And the sailors feared” (1.5)

“And the men feared a great fear” (1.10)

“And the men feared a great fear of the Lord.” (1.16)

Magonet quotes Frankel who points out, “Note the fear of the men at the hour they are delivered from death is greater than when death comes upon them.”126

Magonet uses the concept of the growing phrase to interpret the meaning of the idea in 3.3 which states that “Nineveh was a great city for God.” This has grown from the previous “the great city of Nineveh” in 1.2. The reader does not know if the growing phrase is in reference to

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123 Here the phrase is only “Rise up, Call” but is similar enough to the other occurrences to catch the audience’s attention.
124 Magonet, Form and Meaning, 17. Magonet also points out that this technique would have alerted the reader to read the story on at least two levels.
125 Ibid., 18.
126 Ibid., 32. Cohn adds an example of the growing phrase of the storm in 1.4, 1.11, and 1.13.
its evil or if it refers to a “fuller relationship to God.” As chapter four reveals we know that the phrase is in reference to both its size and its relationship to God.127

Magonet argues the effect that repetition of verbs and phrases has on the audience. They cause the reader to analyze the text on at least two levels and subliminally show things like: the fear of the sailors, the contrast between the king of Nineveh and Jonah, and the prophetic call following Jonah.128

The psalm is the next part of Jonah that is analyzed. Magonet notes the similarities between it and some by the Psalter. This being the case, the psalm in Jonah can be classified according to Hermann Gunkel’s *gattungen* as a “Dankpsalm.”129

While many previous scholars believed that Jonah was a later addition by some redactor or possibly an earlier composition, Magonet points out some characteristics which tie the psalm with the narrative. He believes that the psalm utilizes the “growing phrase” in verses 4 and 6 as well as between verses 5 and 9. Verses 4 and 6 describe the descent of Jonah:

“And the flood was round about me” (vs. 4)

“The deep was round about me” (vs. 6)

Magonet claims that the repetition of the verb “to surround” emphasizes the descent of Jonah.130

Verses 5 and 9 utilize a different phrase “unto your holy temple.” Note the growing phrase that Magonet points out:

“Yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple” (vs. 5)

“And my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thy holy temple” (vs. 9)

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127 *Ibid.*, 33. Here may be another example of the author delaying an explanation of something, similar to the answer of why Jonah fled in 1.2.
128 These are a few examples that will play a larger role in my later discussion of the broader themes of the book.
The repetition here serves to reverse the descent of Jonah so that “there is thus a perfect balance between his physical descent and his ‘spiritual’ ascent.”131

Another unique characteristic of the psalm is that it describes Jonah’s descent with a geographical exactitude. This is not found in any of the psalms, leading Magonet to believe that while the Jonah borrows from the Psalter, it was probably composed by the author for this particular instance. In analyzing the psalm, Magonet divides it into three elements: the act of God, the physical situation of the speaker, and the spiritual situation of the speaker.

The act of God is to first cast Jonah into the “heart of the sea” and then to raise him up. The physical state of Jonah is one of him sinking further downward into the sea, even to the gates of Sheol. Jonah’s spiritual state is one of rising (based on the growing phrase between verses 5 and 9). Magonet points out that the actions of God exactly parallel the outer and inner movements of Jonah. Thus as Jonah sinks he begins to “call” out to God and finally as his life is “fainting away” Jonah prayer comes unto God’s holy temple noting his high spiritual state and God raises him up.132

Magonet analyzes the psalm and notes similar wording from other phrases found in the Book of Psalms. However, they are not direct quotes, showing that the author has modified the phrases to suit the specific needs of the story. This should indicate the importance and originality of the psalm to the rest of the book.

Magonet also examines the psalm in relation to the rest of the book and concludes that it is necessary for the story. Without the psalm, the narrative would simply state that Jonah was

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131 Magonet also relates this to the sailors in chapter one who as the storm grows so does their fear of the Lord, 40.
132 Magonet, Form and Meaning, 40-43.
swallowed by a fish, prayed, and was then vomited upon the dry land. Without indicating any change of Jonah’s inner state, Jonah loses all credibility for Magonet.133

The psalm does feature similar style to the narrative (i.e. the growing phrase) but also features a similar theme, irony. In chapter one Jonah’s statement of the Lord as the creator of the sea and dry land is ironic because Jonah has tried to escape Him by boarding a ship. Here in chapter two Jonah begins his prayer, “I called from my distress to the Lord,” seemingly with a pious attitude but the prayer soon develops into a long first-person account of Jonah’s troubles and his self-righteous attempts to “continue to look unto your holy temple.”134

Magonet analyzes the structure of the book as well as the use of quotations in the book to build a foundation on which to discuss themes. I will skip his discussion of structure and quotations and move directly into his discussion of the themes, referencing the previous analysis where necessary.

Determining the themes of Jonah raises two problems. The first is why Jonah asks to be thrown overboard? There seems to exist a paradox between Jonah’s wanting to die (asking to be thrown overboard by the sailors) and his prayer and thanksgiving for salvation. This forces the readers to choose their own explanation for this seemingly erratic behavior. The second problem is the question “Why does Jonah run away?” Though Jonah gives an answer himself in 4.2, it does not specifically address what he objects to. The traditional views of what Jonah objects to are:

I) Jonah wants justice against Nineveh rather than mercy.
II) He knows/anticipates that Nineveh will destroy Israel.

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133 Magonet states, “If one had only an account of his behaviour it would be almost impossible to take Jonah seriously and remarkably difficult to understand why God bothers with him,” Form and Meaning, 53.
III) He is concerned over his reputation as a “true” prophet, which will suffer if his prophecy does not come true.

IV) He wants God’s mercy and compassion to be solely Israel’s (nationalism vs. universalism).\textsuperscript{135}

The devices by which the author communicates these themes are:

I) The overt narrative text

II) The “subliminal” level of word play and repetition.

III) The level of quotation and reminiscence.

Magonet believes these three types of communication then present four types of polarities in the text:

I) Knowledge of God/Disobedience of God.

II) Particularism/Universalism.

III) Traditional Teaching/New Experience.

IV) The Power of God/The Freedom of Man.\textsuperscript{136}

The first polarity is established right away when God orders Jonah to go to Nineveh and he instead flees toward Tarshish. Jonah claims that God is the one who “made the sea and the dry land,” yet he seeks to escape by boat. He asks to be thrown overboard rather than asking the crew to return him to land, and then sings a song of thanks when God rescues him. In the song, he wishes to go to the temple in Jerusalem to pay his vows, but God once again orders him to Nineveh, and Jonah reluctantly accepts. Jonah has repeatedly attempted to disobey God, while

\textsuperscript{134} P. Trible does not believe the psalm to be part of the original work because it interrupts a chiasm between vs. 2.1 and 2.11. While this chiasm may be interrupted here, it is not sufficient evidence to claim that the psalm does not belong here.

\textsuperscript{135} Magonet lists these as well as suggesting that the author may be employing two or more of the themes and leaving it open for the reader to decide, \textit{Form and Meaning}, 87.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Ibid.}, 90.
he has shown from at least since 1.9 that he should know it is futile. Perhaps the biggest polarity
is his statement in 4.2 in which Jonah finally gives the reason for his flight. Although he reports
here that he knows God is forgiving and compassionate, he sits outside of the city with the hope
the city will be destroyed anyway. Magonet lists three reasons for Jonah doing this:
I) He may believe that the Ninevites will soon revert back to their violent ways.
II) He perhaps may be trying to force God to destroy them (though illogical, so was he
    attempt to flee).
III) He may just be recording his protest.

These show that while Jonah has knowledge of how God acts and what He is capable of, Jonah
seems quite unwilling to accept those attributes.137

Throughout the book the concept of “to know” plays an important role in distinguishing
Jonah from his pagan contemporaries. The captain and the king of Nineveh both make
statements claiming no one knows what God might do. In contrast Jonah “knows” that God
made the sea and the dry land and that he is “compassionate, slow to anger, of much kindness,
and repent over evil.” Magonet points out that the knowledge of God forces a choice—to obey
God or not. The Ninevites who do not even know their left hand from their right then generate
compassion from God. Jonah on the other hand who knows God but chooses death and evil
shows the disobedience of God and the consequences that implies.138

The second polarity is that the contrast between particularism and universalism. Jonah,
representing Israel, is portrayed in the book as bad, while the pagans, sailors and Ninevites, are
shown in a good light. The reversal of the traditional characteristics of the two groups would

137 Ibid., 90-92.
138 Ibid., 92.
alert the reader to examine their views on whether Yhwh can work for other nations other than Israel.

The sailors in chapter one at first pray to their gods but eventually are lead to pray to Yhwh; they even “vow vows and sacrifice sacrifices.” The Ninevites surpass the sailors by repenting of their evil, from the king to even the animals. Both of these pagan groups are portrayed as doing the right thing contrasted with Jonah’s self-centeredness. He disobeys his God putting the sailors’ innocent lives in danger; he pleads for Nineveh to be destroyed even after they have repented (and possibly by fleeing in the first place). By portraying the Israelite character with such a negative view, the audience is forced to sympathize with the pagans and to adopt a more tolerant worldview.

Magonet shows the use of the words “to rise” and “to sit” as contrasting the pagan king of Nineveh with Jonah. Whereas the king rises from his throne and sits in the dust when he receives word that Nineveh will be overthrown, Jonah on the other hand sits comfortably under a booth with the hope that Nineveh will be destroyed anyway.

Jonah is also more self-centered in his prayer to God in comparison to the pagans (as noted earlier). Again we are presented with Jonah in a negative light forcing the audience to identify with the pagans. But we must be careful not to interpret the book as severing the relationship between Yhwh and Israel but rather to as Von Rad states, “to warn against the temptation of using their peculiar position in God’s sight to raise claims which compromise Jahweh’s freedom in his plans for other nations.”

The third polarity that Magonet brings forth is the idea of Traditional Teaching/New Experience. In chapter one Jonah answers the sailors questioning of him by simply replying, “I am a Hebrew.” This archaic term represents the traditional idea of God’s chosen people while
the author presents us with a new idea of “God-fearers.” Magonet also points out the repetition of the idea of vowing vows and sacrificing which both the sailors and Jonah state (1.16, 2.10).

Jonah’s religious tradition is constantly being referred to by similarities between himself and other Israelite prophets. His reluctance to accept his mission immediately brings to mind Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Each of these prophets tries to convince God that he would not be an able prophet. However, none of them tires to run away from his commission. Also, as Elijah asks to die after his failure of prophetic activity, Jonah in contrast asks to die after his incredibly successful prophetic activity. What Magonet believes the author is trying to do here by caricaturing previous prophets is to force the audience to re-read their tradition.

Perhaps the most important instance of tradition in the book is Jonah’s connection with the Jonah ben Amittai of 2 Kgs 14:25. The Jonah in 2 Kings is nationalistic prophet who prophesies that Jeroboam will expand the boundaries of the Northern Kingdom. This tradition also ties into the previously mentioned idea of particularism/universalism.

One other instance in which the Israelite tradition plays an important role for the reading of Jonah is that of Moses. While Jonah is reluctant to live in a world where God’s justice may not be concrete, Moses urges the children of Israel to flee the security of slavery and take a chance on freedom offered by Yhwh. Jonah states that “the ones keeping false idols forsake their hesed.” Although, the Israelites were forgiven at Mt. Sinai for making the golden calf. We are also presented with the tradition that the Israelites wanted to turn back from the Promised Land because they were afraid of the inhabitants. There was prophetic activity against

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139 Ibid., 99.
140 Magonet states the term “Hebrew” is a pre-exilic description of Israelites speaking about themselves to foreigners, but is not post-exilic, Form and Meaning, 100.
141 Ibid., 102.
syncretism (i.e. Elijah). The doom of the Northern Kingdom was prophesied during Jonah ben Amittai’s time in 2 Kings. Jeremiah and the struggle for Judah to repentant would be remembered. Finally, the book of Jonah brings the threat of destruction and hope of repentance to the pagan world. We then have Jonah recalling the tradition of previous prophets for Yhwh and this tradition is now being extended beyond Israelite history to Gentiles.142

The last polarity is between the Power of God and the Freedom of Man. Here we should recall the speeches of the ship’s captain and the king of Nineveh, both of whom express hope that they will not perish. The sailors also state that, “as you please, you do.” Both of these statements show that the pagans recognize the power of Yhwh. The narrative shows that Jonah has the freedom to flee from his prophetic call. Yet though he has the freedom God’s power is such that even though Jonah does not perform his specific function God can still turn that into something beneficial (Jonah is able to convert the pagan sailors). Recall the attempts of characters throughout the story: Jonah attempts to flee and the sailors attempt to return to dry land. Both of which were unsuccessful. However, when God attempts to do something, He is successful (God repents of the evil he said to do, and not he did). Another aspect is that God can forgive, which is something that Jonah struggles to come to terms with. It is in the acceptance of this that Magonet believes the freedom of man will be in accord with the will of God.143

Magonet has demonstrated the themes of the book by emphasizing the four polarities that exist in the text. By examining the polarities in terms of the narrative, word play, and quotations, the multiple messages of Jonah can be better understood and how the text allows them to be enacted.

142 Ibid., 104-105.
143 Ibid., 110.
Alan Cooper believes that Jonah should be read in relation to the other Minor Prophets. In doing so the message of Jonah should be understood as deliverance being a free act of divine love. The Book of Jonah completely reverses a “common sense” expectation of the narrative. Prophets do not flee in the opposite direction when called by God; when God announces he is going to destroy a city it will be destroyed, and, Assyrians would not completely change their way of life on a five word speech by a Hebrew prophet.

Tying the two occurrences of Jonah together, Cooper sees two instances of plot-reversal. In 2 Kings 14.25-27 God expands the borders of Israel despite the sinfulness of Jeroboam and the people. In the Book of Jonah, God turns from His plan to overthrow Nineveh as reported by Jonah. In these two instances God has changed his mind concerning two of His prophecies.

The main concern for the author is God’s motive for sparing the condemned people rather than the traditional themes such as the contrast between Israel and gentiles, universalism vs. particularism, the tension between divine justice and mercy, or the dilemma of false prophecy.

In 2 Kings 14.26-27 God sees that Israel is helpless and determines not to blot them out from the earth. Therefore, he expands their boundaries and forgives them even though they sin against Him. In the Book of Jonah it seems that the same principle is being used in relation to the Ninevites. The final verse states that they do not know their right hand from their left hand.

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145 In Jonah 3.10 God has turned from the prophecy he spoke to Jonah. In 2 Kgs 14.25-27, Cooper believes that Amos’ prophecies are being turned around, Ibid., 146.

146 Ibid., 146.
emphasizing their stupidity and helplessness. And once again, a helpless people are spared by God.

This interpretation does not account for the actions that occur in the text. In regard to the 2 Kings passage and Jeroboam’s reign, Amos describes Israel as a powerful nation with many luxuries. Likewise, the Ninevites upon hearing the judgment of Jonah immediately repent in perhaps a farcical nature. Cooper claims that, “This hardly represents the behavior of helpless, ignorant or irresponsible people. And their motivation for repentance is sophisticated: ‘Who knows but that God may turn and relent’ (Jon 3.9).”

Also both of these instances of divine mercy were eventually overturned themselves. The Israelites continued to sin and were destroyed and the Ninevites, who destroyed Israel, succumbed to the Babylonians (see Nahum). It is therefore necessary to read the Book of Jonah in regard to the Book of the Twelve and 2 Kings.

Cooper states that question that the Book of Jonah raises is “Why does God allow a wicked nation to prosper, only to destroy it later on for the selfsame wickedness?” God’s behavior here seems to be inconsistent, and the three explanations trying of the behavior Cooper judges to be invalid. With an intertextual reading of the two passages, both Nineveh and Israel are saved for a short time but in the end are destroyed.

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147 Ibid., 147. Cooper quotes Amos 6.4 and 6.13. Amos 6.1 shows that at least the wealthy Israelites viewed their nation as prosperous and secure. Cooper does raise an objection to this view which would argue that Israelite self-perception was different than God’s view. He believes this attempt is forcing a harmony between the Amos account and 2 Kings.

148 Ibid., 148.

149 Ibid., 148. Cooper believes that the audience of Jonah would have been familiar with all of these books and intertextual reading would have had a major impact on their reading of the story.

150 Ibid., 149. This is based on I. Abravanel’s explanation on Jonah’s anger in 4.1.

151 Ibid., 149. Those three explanations are: “God spares the helpless; God is ‘compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment’; God eschew the punishment of those who repent.”
This brings us to the point of the book for Cooper that, “God’s actions are uncanny and inexplicable; he is absolutely free to do as he chooses.”\textsuperscript{152} For a post-exilic audience, this type of reasoning is important for the failed covenant, which required God to destroy Israel. God does not act in such a way that if someone is wicked He has to destroy them, nor if someone repents he has to spare them. God’s mercy is seen as “a worthless people’s only hope for survival.”\textsuperscript{153}

To support this view Cooper looks at chapters 3 and 4 in detail. To begin with he claims that Jonah has the same effect on Nineveh as the \textit{kikayon} has on Jonah.\textsuperscript{154} The author of Jonah has set up a parallel between Jonah and Nineveh and then contrasts their responses. The Ninevites begin “their” chapter in a state of evil, and Jonah, upon their sparing, begins “his” in a state of evil. Each character represents a different response to God. For the Ninevites, they hope that God will repent of the word he says against them. Here there is uncertainty to His actions. Jonah takes the opposite stance; he wants to be certain God will carry out His word, regardless of any repenting that takes place.

Jonah 3.5-10 sets up the Ninevite king as an “antitype” to Jonah in 4.2-6.\textsuperscript{155} There is wordplay between Jonah’s sit (ḇšw) and the Ninevites’ repent (ḇšw) relating the two actions but

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 150.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{154} He notes the wordplay on YONA/qiqaYON. He also believes the qi element to be related to the wayyaQE in 2.11 where the fish “vomits” Jonah to the dry land. The plant lives one day and Jonah only spends one day in Nineveh. This may not necessarily be the case because the text only describes Jonah walking into Nineveh a distance of one day and does not comment on how long he stayed in the city. \textit{Ibid.}, 153.
God has the same response to both actions. While no more mention is made of the Ninevites’ response to God sparing them, Jonah wishes to die. God then seeks to teach him a lesson by killing the *kikayon* that Jonah sits under. Again Jonah wishes to die.

To counter the traditional view of God’s lesson here, Cooper argues three examples. First, Cooper does not believe that Jonah is angry about the salvation of Nineveh, even if he may be mad about his prophetic failure. Secondly, it is wrong to infer a cause-and-effect relationship from 3.10 between the repentance of the Ninevites and the repentance of God. Third, Cooper believes it is a misreading of 4.10-11. Here it seems that Jonah is concerned about small, insignificant things (*kikayon*) that he did not help create while God is more concerned with big things (the great city of Nineveh). Cooper believes this is a false reading not only because it makes sense for Jonah to grieve over the *kikayon* but also he claims it is “preposterous” to think that God was responsible for the construction of Nineveh and would therefore grieve over the loss of it. For Cooper the Ninevites and the *kikayon* are not analogous, the plant is salvation for Jonah while the Ninevites are but recipients for God. Therefore the point is not that Jonah cared

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155 Note Cooper’s table based on J. Ackerman and J. Magonet:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nineveh (Jon. 3.5-10)</th>
<th>Jonah (Jon. 4.2-6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Ninevites fast and mourn.</td>
<td>Jonah prays; he demands to die.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah’s word reaches the king; the king gets up from his throne.</td>
<td>Jonah leaves the city; he sits down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The king puts on sackcloth, and sits in the dust.</td>
<td>Jonah erects a booth and sits in its shade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ninevites mourn, fast, and turn away from their wickedness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ninevites pray; they hope to live.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God sees what the Ninevites have done.</td>
<td>Jonah waits to see what will happen in the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God decides not to do the evil that he had promised to do.</td>
<td>God provides a <em>qiqayon</em> to save Jonah from his evil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jonah rejoices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

156 Cooper uses Darr’s summary that Jonah cares more for “infallible prophecy and mechanical justice” than mercy. Also Jonah should not be more concerned over a plant than God should be concerned over a repentant city that has many people in it.
about the plant, but that God did not care for the plant. Following the reading of verse 4.10 here then 4.11 should be read in parallel to that, “As for me, I do not care about Nineveh.”\textsuperscript{157}

The ending of Jonah leaves the final outcome of the characters undetermined. The audience is not told what will happen to Jonah or the Ninevites. Cooper believes that the outcome is told outside of the book. He believes it was supposed to be read in its canonical context therefore; it should be read intertextually.\textsuperscript{158}

Using allusion to Exod 34.6-7 Cooper notes five texts that parallel the thought of a gracious God, but one who will “by no means clear the guilty.”\textsuperscript{159} Here we have a movement from a sinful Israel which God will destroy despite previous sparings and will eventually be redeemed (Hosea). In Joel the idea is continued: Israel does not want a God who is ‘reliable’ (like in Exod 34) but one who will renounce His promised punishment should the people repent. Jonah then serves to question the causality that Joel tries to establish first by showing that although Nineveh repents, if God is caused to repent then He is not being ‘true’ to His word. However, the true message of Jonah is not one this mechanical view of God or Joel’s opposite mechanical view, but one in which “God does as he pleases, and it is folly to try and justify or rationalize his behavior.”\textsuperscript{160} This is further supported by Micah 7:18-20, in which God simply renounces Israel’s punishment out of hesed, with no repentance required. And in the final step, the Book of Nahum recounts the destruction of the Assyrians and Nineveh, reversing the plot of Jonah, and showing God’s wrath is as inexplicable as his love. Israel is annulled in Micah although there is no repentance and Nineveh is eventually destroyed although they undergo what

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 158. This opposes the traditional rendering of 4.11 as a question, “Should I not care about Nineveh?” However, there is not interrogative in the verse. Reading Jonah in the regard to Nahum makes Cooper believe it should not be rendered as an interrogative but a simple declarative statement.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 159.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 160. The passages cited are Hos. 14.3,5; Joel 2.13-14; Jon.3.8-4.2; Mic 7.18-20; Nah. 1.2-3a.
seems to be the most thorough repentance ever. The basis of winning divine favor is based on *maybe* and not any certain behavior of God.

160 *Ibid.*, 162. Logically speaking if an oracle of doom can be reversed then so can an oracle of restoration. As for the quote that “God does as he pleases,” Cooper fails to note that these are the exact words of the pagan sailors in 1.14.
Perhaps the most discussed aspect in the Book of Jonah concerns the psalm that is present in chapter 2. Originally it was seen as an outside addition to the story. Recent scholarship has left that stance and instead examined how the psalm fits in with the rest of the story. G. Landes argues that whoever inserted the psalm was sensitive to characteristics of the rest of the book, and K. Craig states, “The extended poetic prayer is part of a major pattern in the book overarching all of the action including the crucial, final scene outside Nineveh.”

I will now attempt to summarize some prominent positions of the reading of the psalm as well as provide an overall reading of the book of Jonah.

G. Landes was one of the first scholars to examine the psalm in its context with the themes of the rest of the book of Jonah. For many reasons, scholars tended to view the psalm as either an earlier composition or a later insertion. The first argument is that the psalm is not original because it is written in poetry rather than narrative prose. There are other incongruities that exist between the psalm and the rest of the story. For instance, it is expected that Jonah would offer a cry for help while in the belly of the fish, yet the psalm is one of

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162 George Landes, “Kerygma of the Book of Jonah.” Here he states that most modern scholars view the psalm as a later redaction. It should also be noted that there is no textual evidence that provide evidence the book existed differently than it does now, 10.
thanksgiving. This leads to the question of how exactly does Jonah view the fish? We are also presented with inconsistencies in plot.\textsuperscript{164} We are also presented with an odd view of Jonah in the psalm. In the other chapters, Jonah is very obstinate, seeming to be concerned only with himself. However, in the psalm, Jonah is pious, stating that “I [Jonah] will repay what I vowed and sacrifice sacrifices.” Phyllis Trible makes the claim that the psalm in a later insertion because in disrupts the chiasm found in vs. 1, 2, and 11. However, as Landes has begun the psalm should be read in context with the rest of the book and doing so points to the fact that it works in harmony with the rest of the work.

Magonet points out several instances in which Jonah’s psalm seems to be quoting from the Psalter. He also points out that while Jonah seems to quote the Psalter the quotations are always changed slightly to fit the context of the book. This would seem to at least rule out the psalm existed prior to the composition of the prose account.

Landes’ rules out the possibility that the psalm does not fit the context of the rest of the book. Using evidence from Sumerian myths, “The Descent of Inanna to the Nether World,” he believes that the fish serves as a vehicle of deliverance for Jonah.\textsuperscript{165} The reason that Jonah is in the belly of the fish for three days is not because Jonah in stubborn and God is punishing him, but instead because Jonah had sunk down to the “bottom of the mountain” where the “bars of the earth closed upon me forever.” It then takes three days to journey back to the land of the living. Landes’ states, “By having Jonah swallowed by the fish, the writer had therefore no intention of implying it was the cause of the prophet’s distress, or even that it was a vehicle of punitive judgment upon him. The fish, “appointed” by Yahweh, is simply a beneficent device for

\textsuperscript{164} In chapter one the sailors throw Jonah in the sea, while Jonah claims God cast him into the sea in 2.3. These plot inconsistencies are attempted to be explained by Ackerman, Craig, and Magonet.

\textsuperscript{165} As seen previously in the discussion of J. Ackerman, “Satire and Symbolism in the Song of Jonah,” who believes the psalm is borrowing from this ancient account of a trip to the underworld taking a three days’ journey in length.
returning Jonah to the place where he may reassume the commission he had previously abandoned.\textsuperscript{166}

This reading does not agree with the narrative in 2:1-2 in which Jonah is reported to be in the belly of the fish and to make his prayer from that location. Yet, the language of the prayer refers to the plight of someone drowning. Nowhere does Jonah complain about being in the belly of the fish. While some commentators have preferred to read the psalm’s description of drowning as a metaphor, it should be read more literally.\textsuperscript{167}

The question now is why is the psalm inconsistent with vs. 2:1-2? It seems likely that this might be evidence to view the psalm as an outside addition. To answer this, Landes points out that Jonah prays not once, but twice.\textsuperscript{168} Both Landes and Craig note that the author of Jonah has left gaps in the text to attempt to draw the reader further into the story. J. Ackerman also believes that the inconsistency of the psalm with the narrative is a satirical device demonstrating that Jonah’s view of reality is distorted.\textsuperscript{169}

To emphasize the psalm’s placement within the book of Jonah as a whole, Landes lists where the psalm parallels chapter 4.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{167} G. Landes believes the psalm to have a literal meaning, as does J. Magonet. Also see J. Ackerman who believes that the psalm’s satirical effect is in the fact that it \textit{is} literal instead of a metaphor.
\textsuperscript{168} Landes says, “The text of the first prayer is not given, but it is explicitly referred to in verses 2 and 7 of the psalm.” “The Kerygma of the Book of Jonah,” 15.
\textsuperscript{169} Note that J. Magonet views the psalm as a piece of irony in much the same that Ackerman believes it is a satire.
\textsuperscript{170} Landes, ‘The Kerygma of the Book of Jonah,’ 16.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1:17-2:10</th>
<th>4:1-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The focus shifts to Jonah</td>
<td>The focus shifts to Jonah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah is spared</td>
<td>Jonah is angry because Nineveh is spared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah prays</td>
<td>Jonah prays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He refers back to his distressing situation in the Deep</td>
<td>He refers back to his distressing situation in Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He asserts God’s merciful deliverance</td>
<td>He draws an inference from the thought God may save Nineveh: he must flee to Tarshish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 | 10 |
---|---|
| Jonah’s response to Yahweh: worship with sacrifices and vows | Yahweh’s response to Jonah: he acts so that the prophet may respond favorable to the divine mission (still to be accomplished) |
| Yahweh’s response to Jonah: he acts so that the prophet may respond favorable to the divine mission (already accomplished) | 

This chart shows similarities between the second and fourth chapters of Jonah. This leads Landes to conclude whoever put the psalm in its current position “was no less sensitive to the form, structure, and content of the book than the original author himself.”

Though rhetorical criticism adopts an approach typically using a synchronic view of the text, it is important to see the psalm as an integral part of the story. By arguing against a later redactor adding the psalm to the story, it becomes evident how many similarities the psalm has with the rest of the book of Jonah. Viewing the psalm as an integral part of the story will affect the idea of the artistry by which the author argues the themes of the story.

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I will now provide what I consider to be the best explanations concerning the style and interpretation of the book of Jonah. I should note that there is no one correct way to read Jonah, instead our knowledge allows the text to be read in a multitude of different ways. We are limited only by the text itself in our interpretation of Jonah. I have adopted the rhetorical critical method for analyzing the story.

The book of Jonah opens up with a similar form to other prophetic books, with the call narrative.\textsuperscript{172} We are introduced to the prophet Jonah, son of Amittai, who is mentioned in 2 Kings. We are told nothing else about his historical situation, forcing the reader to recall what is mentioned in 2 Kings. We are then told that Jonah is to call against the great city of Nineveh, yet we do not have the report of what it is that Jonah is supposed to say. Next, Jonah arises, but flees toward Tarshish. As many scholars have noted, the story opens up with similarities to other prophetic books, but the author has manipulated the text for his/her own purpose. The reader is immediately struck by the fact that this is a story about a prophet rather than a collection of oracles by a prophet.\textsuperscript{173} The views of Jonah as a satire or parody are also helpful here, providing a reason for the distortion of the expected prophetic actions. Jonah is not the typical Hebrew prophet; his book is about him and not oracles that he gives, and he flees from before the Lord, not addressing him like Moses, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.

\textsuperscript{172} It should be noted that no other prophetic book opens in the same way as Jonah, although the form “And the word of the Lord came,” is common to prophetic literature. The book of Jonah skips the usual biographical information and advances quickly into the action of the first chapter.

\textsuperscript{173} Jonah most closely resembles the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Most of the other prophetic books contain little information concerning the actual prophet preferring instead to record their sayings.
P. Trible’s chiasm is useful in that it emphasizes the fact that Jonah’s flight is to Tarshish.\textsuperscript{174} Although the exact location is not known, it is the idea of Tarshish, as the most remote location from the Lord that is important. The portrayal of a Hebrew prophet who seeks to completely escape from God’s control is unique to this story.

Once aboard the ship, God casts a wind upon the sea, producing a great tempest threatening the lives of the sailors, and even the ship “thinks” it is about to break up. The use of the word “to think” is only used with an inanimate object in this occurrence. Magonet believes this forces the reader to read the story on at least two levels.\textsuperscript{175}

As the storm grows more tempestuous, the sailors’ fear for their lives increases. This is stated three times, but is also demonstrated by the author in what Magonet calls “the growing phrase.”\textsuperscript{176} Here a similar phrase is used on each occasion, with a word or words added to provide extra meaning to the statement. This is just one instance in which the author reports the fear of the sailors in chapter one. Note that when the lots indicate Jonah as the cause of the storm the sailors ask questions, “What is your occupation?” “From where do you come?” “What is your land?” “And from what people are you?” The rapid questioning of Jonah underscores the terror that the sailors are experiencing in the tempest. Jonah replies briefly with, “I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord God of the heavens who made the sea and the dry land.” Again, we have a somewhat comical view of Jonah. Although he acknowledges that the Lord made the sea, that is exactly how he has sought to flee Him.

\textsuperscript{174} Refer back to the chiasm on p. 15
\textsuperscript{175} Magonet, \textit{Form and Meaning}, 17. Sasson makes a similar statement, “Its usage jolts the readers, albeit temporarily, preparing them to expect the occurrence of the unexpected.” \textit{Jonah}, 97. The use of the verb makes the story more fantastic, building up to the climax in chapter four as well as exceeding the normal boundaries of prophetic literature.
\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Ibid.}, 31-33.
This has not abated the fear of the sailors, who now question Jonah as to how to get the sea to stop storming. After an attempt to return to shore the sailors decide to throw Jonah overboard, as he had previously instructed them, yet even here the sailors are reluctant to do anything that might worsen their condition. They first pray not to have innocent blood given upon them by throwing Jonah into the water. They do this despite the fact that the lots fell upon Jonah, and Jonah readily admitted to the storm being his fault (1:12). After Jonah has been thrown overboard and the storm ceases, the sailors are said to have their greatest fear according to the “growing phrase,” “And the men feared a great fear of the Lord.”

The originality of chapter two has been discussed previously. Reading chapter two in relation with the rest of the book shows some of the themes continued in the psalm. P. Trible does not believe that the psalm is original to the story because it is not necessary to the story and it also interrupts a chiasm in vs. 2:1-2, 11. Even if we have a chiasm between the narrative verses, it is not necessarily an outside interpolator who has disputed the chiasm. Also as previously noted whoever inserted the psalm was no less sensitive to the prose than the author of the prose material. If this is the case, the story may make sense without the psalm, but it would not make the “complete” sense that the author of the narrative material planned.

G. Landes describes the length motif of three days and three nights here. As previously noted, he believes it is taken from a Sumerian myth, “The Descent of Inanna to the Netherworld.” Agreeing with this, the reason that Jonah is located in the belly of the fish for the length

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177 This is the longest verse in the three that Magonet cites in his growing phrase, indicating that here the sailors are the most afraid.
of time told in 2:1 is due to his being delivered from the death that is described in the psalm.\textsuperscript{178}

This also causes the poem to be read in the past tense for the perfect verbs.\textsuperscript{179}

A. Hauser comments on the idea of descent in the first two chapters. Chapter one has the repetitive use of “to go down” along with perhaps a pun “to sleep deeply.” Jonah’s descent continues in chapter two, where we are given a detailed description of sinking in the waters.\textsuperscript{180}

The description takes us from the top of the ocean all the way down to the bottom of the mountains. Again this is interpreting the psalm to be a literal description of Jonah’s plight, opposed to the metaphorical imagery used with death in general.

Magonet analyzes Jonah’s psalm with those from the Psalter and finds that in Jonah we have the most concentrated use of water and death imagery than anywhere else in the Bible. Miles believes that the psalm is a parody by using a traditional metaphor and making it a literal description.

The psalm then continues the descent of Jonah begun in his “going down to Joppa.” The extreme use of water imagery is notable because it is drowning that Jonah is afraid of, not being in the belly of the fish. By the end of the psalm, Jonah’s prayer has been answered and he is vomited back to dry land and the story resumes.

Chapter three opens with the exact wording of 1:1, only with “a second time” added. After Jonah’s previous experiences, he has no choice but to accept his divine commission. Note that Jonah only walks one day’s distance into a city reported to be a three days distance across.

\textsuperscript{178} Jonah states that “[he] cried out from the belly of Sheol” (2:3). Also, “To the bottoms of the mountains I went down, the earth, her bars closed upon me forever” (2:7). Both of these verses show the distress than Jonah is experiencing, his concern being drowning.

\textsuperscript{179} Many scholars have attempted to translate the psalm in the present tense, trying to make it consistent with verses 2:1-2. Following Landes lead, Jonah’s main threat is drowning, not the fish, therefore when he is in the belly of the fish the threat of drowning is in the past.

\textsuperscript{180} Magonet notes that we have the most geographical description of traveling downward in the water in this psalm. Hauser emphasizes the pursuit of the Lord after a passive Jonah.
It is difficult to know exactly why Jonah does this, but it may be showing that he is still reluctant to prophesy against Nineveh.

We are also presented with the only prophetic speech in the whole book, consisting of a meager five words, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overturned.” It does not follow the standard prophetic form using “thus says the Lord’ or “utterance of the Lord.” Again we have the traditional breaking of an expected form. Jonah’s continued reluctance to speak also sets up the surprise that the extended dialogue in chapter four displays.

Sasson notes that the word “to overturn” while almost always has a negative connotation can also simply mean to change one’s lifestyle. I agree with the view that it is possible Jonah does not get the double meaning of this word.\(^{181}\)

The prophecy reaches the king who leaves his throne and puts on sackcloth and sits in the dust, traditional signs of repentance. However, his decree to order the people and the animals to fast and put of sackcloth is humorous.\(^ {182}\) There is parallelism between the king of Nineveh and the captain of the sailors from chapter one. Both are leaders of their group of people and both have a similar response to the threat to their lives. The two leaders display a “theology of hope” that they might do something and God will change His mind and the people will not perish. The repentance of the Ninevites causes God to repent Himself and leads to the climax in chapter four.

Chapter four begins with Jonah being “displeased” over the outcome of his prophecy. Nineveh is not destroyed and when God asks him why he is angry, Jonah finally reveals his motivation for fleeing in chapter one, “Was this not my word before when I was in my land, therefore I acted previously to flee to Tarshish because I knew that you are a gracious God,

\(^{181}\) J. Sasson, *Jonah*, 234-235. It is uncertain whether the audience would have gotten the double meaning of the word either.

\(^{182}\) Although Herodotus recounts instances where animals participated in repenting by being dressed in sackcloth, the fact that this is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible makes it absurd.
compassionate, and slow to anger, of much *hesed* and repenting over evil.” The gap that was created from the beginning concerning Jonah’s motivation for fleeing has been filled in by the author, although the audience would have certainly formulated their own hypotheses by now.\footnote{I am uncertain whether the audience knew this was the reason Jonah fled in the beginning or not. Scholarship tends to be divided over the issue, M. Sternburg and A. Hauser both represent scholars who do not believe the audience would have known this. A. Cooper claims that even as a child he knew Nineveh would repent. It seems to me possible that some readers would have been able to guess that Nineveh would repent while other would not have. The fact that the author gives the explanation may indicate that not everyone would have understood properly Jonah’s motivation.} The fact that the author has left the prolonged gap has allowed the reader to be drawn into the book and possibly introduced the element of surprise, for which A. Hauser argues.

Next we are presented with the most extended dialogue between the two main characters, God and Jonah. Chapter four presents a very emotional Jonah, going from extreme joy over the gourd to extreme despair over its death. Jonah asks three times to die, again parodying prophetic literature. The audience would certainly recognize the prophet asking to die (i.e. Elijah), but the fact that Jonah has had success in his mission indicates Jonah’s absurdity. After Jonah’s final plea to die, God presents him with the final rhetorical question, “Should I not be concerned over the great city of Nineveh where there are more than 120,000 people in her, who do not know there right hand from their left hand and also many cattle?”

Of the traditional themes of Jonah: the contrast of Israel and gentiles, universalism versus particularism, the problem of divine justice and divine mercy, and the conflict between true prophecy and false prophecy, it is difficult to confine Jonah to only one of these categories.

I agree with K. Craig who argues against the notion that the book is concerned with the conflict between universalism and particularism. Nowhere is it stated that the pagan sailors or the Ninevites convert to worshipping Yhwh. They simply seek to cancel the punishment that is about to befall them. Even if Jonah could be firmly dated in a post-exilic setting, it does not use
similar terminology as the book of Ruth, where Ruth states, “Your people are my people, and your God is my God,” (1:16). Had the book of Jonah emphasized something other than fear, this argument would be more valid.

One aspect of the book of Jonah that has not often been addressed is what the concept of the righteous Gentiles means. The contrast between Jonah’s behavior and the behavior of the counterpart Gentiles, may lead the audience to identify with the pagans. We are presented with Jonah’s order to leave the holy land and go to a pagan country to prophesy. His removal from a purer land to the impure Nineveh, yet still encountering people who are righteous, the sailors and the Ninevites, may help the Universalist themed argument. The actions of the God-fearing sailors and Ninevites, though not Jewish, can be emphasized to support the claim that the text is against an exclusive Israelite temple cult, arguing that righteousness can be found outside of Israel.

The problem of divine punishment versus divine mercy is at work in the text. Jonah’s own statement in 4:2, seems to indicate this. Following K. Craig’s and A. Cooper’s arguments, God is portrayed as being free in His decisions, either being wrathful or merciful, to whomever He pleases.

We also cannot rule out A. Hauser’s argument of the importance of the compassionate characterization of God. If Jonah can be reliably dated to the fifth century b.c.e. then it is possible that the post-exilic community would be concerned with this characterization of God. Having just experienced the Babylonian Exile, it is understandable that the ancient Israelites

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184 This is based on the consensus that Ruth is a post-exilic book with an argument against Ezra and Nehemiah’s exclusivism.
185 David Payne, Jonah from the Perspective of its Audience,” JSOT 13 (1979), states believes that the pagans “serve as a foil and a contrast for Jonah,” and “it is doubtful the reader would have drawn direct moral lessons form their words and behavior,” 9.
would have questioned the personality of their God, who may have been viewed as a wrathful, vindictive God.

As for the dilemma of true versus false prophecy, this seems to be a later development. With the exception of A. Lacocques, who believes Jonah should be dated in the third century B.C.E., scholarly consensus places the book earlier than this and therefore probably not involved with the later problem of false prophecy. As J. Sasson points out, Jonah’s prophecy may not really be false since the use of the word ה-deals may be misleading. Nineveh is “overturned,” and Jonah may be mistaken as to the correct usage of his own prophecy.
CONCLUSION

The book of Jonah has had very distinct interpretations over its history. This is despite the fact that is little variance between our ancient sources. The fact that so many opinions are held concerning what Jonah is trying to say is due to our lack of full understanding of Hebrew literary conventions.

Surveying the field of scholarship on Jonah has allowed for the different themes to be highlighted by certain methodological approaches. Rhetorical criticism looks at repetitions, chiasms in the text, as well as what we know about ancient Israelite literature to explain different meanings that the book of Jonah can have.

Another way to approach Jonah is to assign it to a literary genre, which is typically classified as a satire or parody. Analyzing these elements of the text allow the reader to interpret the author’s criticism of either some aspect of his/her society or perhaps the literary style of Hebrew prophetic literature.

It is also possible to read the book of Jonah in a larger context, as part of the book of the Twelve. Alan Cooper suggests this is the appropriate way to read Jonah and shows how this reading allows Jonah to be a commentary on Exod 34, a familiar Deuteronomistic precept. Cooper is then able to conclude that the theme of Jonah is the freedom of God.
Jonathan Magonet points out the themes of Jonah and notes that it may be anyone one of those suggested themes or a combination of one or more.\(^{186}\) As P. Trible notes that texts often have a multitude of interpretations which are regulated by the text itself.

There are also many ways to interpret the psalm. As, G. Landes shows, the psalm may be using a motif in which Jonah is returned from the underworld by the fish. Also, if the psalm is read in the past tense then the fish becomes a salvation figure, rather than a means of divine punishment.

Thus, although there are different ways to read the book of Jonah, I have tried to highlight the best techniques for interpreting Jonah. Without being able to determine the date of the composition, the previously mentioned themes are difficult to narrow down. Dating the composition would allow a distinction between post-exilic and pre-exilic Israelite thinking to have more of an effect. Unless future discoveries can shed light on this or we find ancient textual variations, scholarship will have to deal with what seems to be gaps and misinformation given by the author. Hopefully, I have been able to present some of those views here, and provide a basic guideline for reading the book of Jonah.

\(^{186}\) Magonet lists these polarities as important for analyzing the message of the book: Knowledge of God/Disobedience of God, Particularism/Universalism, Traditional Teaching/New Experience, The Power of God/The Freedom of Man. *Form and Meaning*, 90.
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