

**POETRY AND THEOLOGY  
IN THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS:**

**AN INVESTIGATION OF LAMENTATIONS 1—3  
USING THE AESTHETIC ANALYSIS OF  
UMBERTO ECO**

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## ABSTRACT

The present study assesses how *Lamentations* 1—3 synthetically presents its theology. It accomplishes this task by assessing the poetry through the aesthetic analysis of Italian semiotician Umberto Eco to discover how, in terms of genre, structure, and poetics, theology is presented for the model reader of *Lamentations* 1—3. Chapter 1 introduces the problem of theology in *Lamentations* and the difficulties and possibility of focussing the present research upon *Lamentations* 1—3. Within this discussion, these chapters are set in their historical context. Chapter 1 concludes by suggesting that interpretation of theology remains a complex task and employs the metaphors of horizons “behind,” “within” and “in front of” the text as theoretical tools by which different approaches could be categorised.

Chapter 2 surveys past research using the metaphors of “behind,” “within,” and “in front of” the text as a heuristic framework. Each horizon is assessed in turn: historical paradigms of Gottwald, Albrektson, Westermann, and Brandscheidt (world “behind” the text); literary paradigm of Renkema (world “within” the text); and the feminist approaches of Seidman, Guest, and O’Connor (world “in front of” the text). Finally, Chapter 2 adopts an “integrated” approach, typified by Dobbs-Allsopp, that takes seriously all three horizons in interpreting *Lamentations* 1—3.

Chapter 3 provides an entrée into the theory of Umberto Eco. His theory is useful because it coheres with the integrated approach adopted in the study, it provides a helpful means to assess aesthetic texts, such as *Lamentations*, and it enables distinctions between kinds of texts—how texts are designed differently to elicit different responses from model readers (open and closed). In light of the theological ambiguity in *Lamentations*, the open/closed distinction is shown to be useful. Finally, Eco employs the concept of the cultural encyclopaedia, a theoretical device that describes the cumulative amount of cultural data available to the producer of a text at the time of its production.

Chapter 4 frames the borders of encyclopaedic content for research into *Lamentations* 1—3. It presents the possible genres, structures, and poetics suggested for *Lamentations* research in the past. The analysis shows that *Lamentations* cannot be reduced to one genre but rather exploits different genres to advance its theology. As to

structure, analysis reveals that the acrostic is the most evident structuring device in the book. And finally, a number of poetic devices activated in the encyclopaedic world of Lamentations 1—3 are explored, including repetition, wordplay and enjambment, imagery, speaking voices, and allusion. This discussion frames the exegesis of Lamentations 1—3, accomplished in Chapters 5-7.

Chapters 5-7 assess Lamentations 1—3 using Eco's aesthetic theory. Each chapter presents an introduction to the structure, genre, speaking voices, and strophic divisions of Lamentations 1—3, follows with detailed exegesis of the chapters, and then concludes with a catalogue of the ways in which structure, genre, and poetics impinge upon theological portrayal in the poetry. Analysis shows Lamentations 1—3 tends towards "open" rather than "closed" textual strategies for their model readers. Recognition and cataloguing of the persistent poetic use of repetition proves to be an area that the present study adds to scholarly discussion, as well as how repetition impinges upon theological presentation in the book. There are two primary functions of repetition: intensification (upon suffering, sin, judgment) or combination (to recast previously held understandings or to provide interpretative depth). Repetition provides a variety of interpretative horizons for the reader in regards to the book's theology.

Chapter 8 concludes with a summary of results, an initial discussion of Lamentations 4 and 5, and the possible purpose of poetry and theology in Lamentations 1—3. The study concludes that the theology varies, but this is part of the function of the poetry. The poetry is designed to bring the reader on an interpretative journey through its contents rather than to teach a particular perspective. Despite the various ways in which the relationships can be configured, the poetry persistently drives the reader to address YHWH in prayer: each of the poems includes, and concludes with, prayer to the deity concerning various sources of pain. That the poetry highlights prayer to YHWH—even when he is the cause of pain—reveals this interpretative journey has a destination. The poetry of Lamentations 1—3 is designed to enable the reader to address God in light of the perspectives adopted and sufferings endured through the reading process.

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**AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed ~~in the thesis~~ are those of the author and in no way represent those of the Unive,

Signed ...

Date ..... 4 December 2008 .....

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ABC</b>	Anchor Bible Commentary
<b>ABD</b>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
<b>ABRL</b>	Anchor Bible Reference Library
<b>AJET</b>	<i>Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology</i>
<b>AnBib</b>	<i>Analecta Biblica</i>
<b>ANE</b>	Ancient Near East
<b>ANES</b>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
<b>ANET</b>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. With Supplement. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
<b>AOATS</b>	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<b>AOS</b>	American Oriental Series
<b>AOTC</b>	Abingdon Old Testament Commentary
<b>AS</b>	Advances in Semiotics
<b>ASB</b>	Austin Seminary Bulletin
<b>ATD</b>	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
<b>AUT</b>	Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis
<b>BA</b>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<b>BAR</b>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<b>BASOR</b>	<i>Bulletin for the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<b>BAW</b>	Die Bibliothek der Alten Welt
<b>BDB</b>	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907.
<b>BDS</b>	Biblical Dissertation Series
<b>BEATAJ</b>	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
<b>BeO</b>	<i>Bibbia e Oriente</i>

BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, 4th ed.
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BI</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
<i>BiOr</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BibSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BibZeits</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblicher Kommentar Altes Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue Biblique
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBOTS	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CBSC	The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
CC	Continental Commentaries
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
<i>COS</i>	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Edited by W. W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
CSPHS	Contemporary Studies in Philosophy and the Human Sciences
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
DAB	die Dichter des Alten Bundes
EB	Die Echter Bibel
EBAT	Echter Bibel: das Alte Testamente
<i>EJT</i>	<i>European Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>Église et Théologie</i>
ETSS	Evangelical Theological Society Studies
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature

- GBHS *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Bill Arnold and John Choi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- GKC *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, as Edited and Enlarged by E. Kautzsch, Revised by A. E. Cowley*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.
- GS Geistliche Schriftlesung
- HALOT Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999.
- HAT Handbuch zum Alten Testament
- HBM Hebrew Bible Monographs (Sheffield Phoenix)
- HCOT Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
- HThKAT Herders theologischer Kommentar zum alten Testament
- HS *Hebrew Studies*
- HSM Harvard Semitic Monographs
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- HZAT Handbuch zum Alten Testament
- IB *The Interpreter's Bible*. 12 vols. Edited by George A. Buttrick. New York: Abingdon, 1951–1957.
- IBHS *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- ICRHC The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture
- IDBSup *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplementary Volume*. Edited by Keith Crim. Abingdon: Nashville, 1976.
- Int Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
- Int *Interpretation*
- IOSOT International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament
- ISBL International Society for Biblical Literature
- ITC International Theological Commentary
- JAB *Journal for the Aramaic Bible*
- JANESCU *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
- JAOS *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*

- JM Joüon, Paul and T. Muraoka. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. Vols. 1-2. *SubBi*. 14. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2000.
- JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
- JQR *Jewish Quarterly Review*
- JQRSup Jewish Quarterly Review Supplements
- JR *The Journal of Religion*
- JSOT *Journal for the Society of the Old Testament*
- JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
- KAT Kommentar zum Alten Testament
- K&D Keil, C. F., and F. Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*. 25 vols. Edinburgh, 1857–1878. Reprint, 10 vols. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996.
- KHAT Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
- LAI Library of Ancient Israel
- Lambdin Lambdin, Thomas O. *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. London: DLT, 2004.
- LBS The Library of Biblical Studies
- LHBOTS Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
- LJLE Library of Jewish Law and Ethics
- LSU “Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur”
- LU “Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur”
- MC Mesopotamian Civilizations
- Miss *Missiology: An International Review*
- MLBS Mercer Library of Biblical Studies
- MT Masoretic Text
- NAC The New American Commentary
- NCBC The New Century Bible Commentary
- NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament
- NIDOTTE *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Edited by W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
- OAN Oracles against the Nations
- OBO Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
- OBS The Oxford Bible Series

OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
OT	Old Testament
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
<i>OsSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studien</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Oxford Theological Monographs
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RBL</i>	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>The Reformed Theological Review</i>
SAIS	Studies in Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture
SBB	Soncino Books of the Bible
SBEC	Studies in Bible and Early Christianity
SBLAB	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semeia</i>
SemSt	Semeia Studies (SBL)
SHI	Seminars in the History of Ideas
SHS	The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SOFS	Symbolae Osolenses Fasciculus Suppletorius
SOTBT	Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology
SSU	Studia Semitica Upsaliensia
STL	Studia Theologica Ludensia
<i>SuBib</i>	<i>Subsidia Biblica</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . 15 Vols. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006.
TgLam	Targum Lamentations
THBAT	Theologisch-homiletisches Bibelwerk: Die heilige Schrift, Alten und Neuen Testaments

<b>TTS</b>	Trier theologische Studien
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit Forschungen</i>
<b>UBSMS</b>	United Bible Society Monograph Series
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<b>VTSup</b>	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
<b>WBC</b>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<b>ZB</b>	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. The Problem of Theology in Lamentations

The destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians in 587 BCE marks a seminal moment in the history of Israel. The period after this event to the Edict of Cyrus (539 BCE),<sup>1</sup> most often described as “the exile,” became a theological watershed, spurring religious thinking and development for those who would write in this era and after. Becking has typified this as a “crisis in the Israelite, Yahwistic religion. The ruination of the temple of Jerusalem, that functioned as the central sanctuary for Yahwistic religion, and the collapse of the Davidic dynasty, that functioned as a symbol of divine presence and protection, should be seen as a fundamental breach in the Yahwistic symbol system.”<sup>2</sup> How would faith in God be expressed and persist? The destruction of the major religious centre of Judahite worship constituted a real religious and theological crisis.

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<sup>1</sup>Scholars dispute the veracity of the so-called Edict of Cyrus. It seems probable that there was, at the very least, an order from Cyrus to Sheshbazzar to rebuild the temple and install the temple implements. See Lisbeth S. Fried, “The Land Lay Desolate: Conquest and Restoration in the Ancient Near East,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 34-8. There is a discrepancy between the two passages in Ezra that depict the edict. Ez 1.1-4 speaks of YHWH’s command for Cyrus to build the temple and grant the exiles freedom to return to Palestine. Ez 6.3-5, however, commands only the rebuilding of the temple (paid for by the royal treasury) and the return of the temple implements. If both accounts are accurate, it is possible that Ez 6.3-5 represents the formal decree given by Cyrus while Ez 1.1-4 represents a subsequent proclamation of the decree given by official heralds in various Jewish communities spread throughout Persia. See J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, eds., *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: SCM, 1986), 444-5.

<sup>2</sup>Bob Becking, “Continuity and Discontinuity after the Exile: Some Introductory Remarks,” in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (eds. Bob Becking and Marjo C. A. Korpel; OS 42; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 4].

Lamentations is one literary expression of this historical and theological crisis.<sup>3</sup> The poetry reflects a multiform historical trauma attendant to Jerusalem's destruction. Human suffering is depicted in excruciating lucidity, including rape, cannibalism, and mourning, while religious crisis is expressed in a razed temple (Lam 2.6-7; 5.18), dead/impotent cult functionaries (Lam 2.9, 14, 20; 4.13-15), and a patron deity's judgment against his people (Lam 1.12-13, 16; 2.1-9; 3.1-17). In these crises, it seems natural that a religious people would turn to their deity.<sup>4</sup>

Internal evidence in the book confirms this "turn" to YHWH,<sup>5</sup> though apparently with no consistent motivation for appeal: prayer in Lamentations, among other things, expresses pain, voices anger, confronts God, and laments sin. Instances of formulaic direct address to YHWH in Lamentations express various points of pain; furthermore, the actual appeals to God vary and in some cases radically<sup>6</sup>: a desire for YHWH to see the sinfulness of the community (Lam 1.9c), emotional distress over internal grief due to recognition of sin (Lam 1.11c, 20a), the threat of enemies (Lam 1.9c; 3.59), disgrace at the hands of enemies (Lam 5.1b), and the violent—possibly unjust—activity of YHWH himself (Lam 2.20a). Why does such variety exist in the divine addresses, and does this range have theological significance?

Since 2000, no less than twelve new commentaries or monographs have been completed on Lamentations, and many of these have a theological focus that respond in one way or another to the question raised above.<sup>7</sup> These works display degrees of

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<sup>3</sup>As well as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Deuteronomistic History. Iain Provan, however, does not believe that the book can only be read in reference to (or datable to) a period close to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE ["Reading Texts against an Historical Background—Lamentations 1," *SJOT* 1(1990): 130-43; *Lamentations* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 7-19].

<sup>4</sup>Adele Berlin, *Lamentations* (OTL; Louisville: WJK, 2002), 17-22.

<sup>5</sup>The present study uses the anglicised version of the Tetragrammaton "YHWH" for the Hebrew equivalent יהוה.

<sup>6</sup>The formula is a vocative form of YHWH combined with either the dual imperative ראה וחבטתה, "look and consider," or ראה with the vocative יהוה (Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a; 2.20a; 3.59; 5.1b). See Heath Thomas, "Aesthetic Theory of Umberto Eco and Lamentations Interpretation" (paper presented at the SBL International Meeting, Edinburgh, Scotland, 3 July 2006); "The Liturgical Function of the Book of Lamentations," (paper presented at the IOSOT XIX World Congress, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 19 July 2007).

<sup>7</sup>John M. Bracke, *Jeremiah 30—52 and Lamentations* (Louisville: WJK, 2000); Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000); Ulrich Berges, *Klagelieder* (HThKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2002); Berlin, *Lamentations*; Daniel Berrigan,

continuity and discontinuity from previous research into Lamentations' theology. In a survey of research that spans from the beginning of the 20th century to roughly 1992, Westermann shows that two positions have been held regarding the theology of the book. It addresses God and the community (1) to provide the community an explanation of the disaster and confess their sin to YHWH, or (2) to point a way out of crisis by appealing to the Lord's beneficent nature.<sup>8</sup> These approaches are complementary as they derive from an emphasis upon Lamentations 3, especially its central parenetic section (Lam 3.22-42), which admonishes faith in God's justice and mercy, submission in punishment, and an appeal for confession and repentance.

In concord with Westermann's findings, many scholars mark this parenetic section (Lam 3.22-42) as the "heart" of the theology and indicative of the purpose of the book. For Mintz, Lamentations 3 is a triptych, whose three panels provide for the reader a process of alienation (Lam 3.1-20), recovery of faith (Lam 3.21-39), and the experience of reconnection with YHWH (Lam 3.40-66), thus comprising the "theological nub" of the book.<sup>9</sup> Heater believes the poem divides in half and that Lam 3.34-6 comprises the "central argument" of the poem, that YHWH is gracious.<sup>10</sup> While she views Lamentations 3 as composed after the other chapters, Brandscheidt believes it marks the official "pious" affirmation of faith to be adopted in the community, counteracting the impious tones of Lamentations 1 and 2.<sup>11</sup>

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*Lamentations: From New York to Kabul and Beyond* (Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2002); F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations* (Int; Louisville: John Knox, 2002); Nancy C. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo* (BIS 60; Leiden: Brill, 2002); Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002); Dianne Bergant, *Lamentations* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003); Jill Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* (OTM; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Paul R. House, *Lamentations* (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005); Elizabeth Boase, *Fulfilment of Doom? The Dialogic Interaction between the Book of Lamentations and the Pre-exilic/Early Exilic Prophetic Literature* (LHBOTS 437; New York: T & T Clark, 2006).

<sup>8</sup>Claus Westermann, *Die Klagelieder: Forschungsgeschichte und Auslegung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), 73-81 = *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 76-85.

<sup>9</sup>Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 33-41.

<sup>10</sup>Homer Heater, "Structure and Meaning in Lamentations," *BibSac* 149(1992): 304-15, especially 308-9.

<sup>11</sup>Renate Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenleid: Die Gerichtsklage des leidenden Gerechten in Klgl 3* (TTS 41; Trier: Paulinus, 1983), 350-52; *Das Buch der Klagelieder* (GS 10; Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1988), 153-57.

Similarly, Middlemas argues that the chapter is a piece of theological corrective, admonishing the people in the proper way to behave rather than in their impious lament prayers in Lamentations 1-2. As a result, Lamentations 3 provides positive theological rationale for repentance and submission to God's punishment, namely, his mercy and covenant love will prevail.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Lamentations 3 belongs not to Judahite provenance as does Lamentations 1—2 and 4—5 but rather (likely) from the exilic community. She writes, "The third chapter with its odd admixture of forms and its central optimistic vision seems to be of a different thought milieu from the rest of the material."<sup>13</sup> In her view, Lamentations 3 should be understood as correcting the theological perspective of Lamentations 1—2 and 4—5.

Though not corrective, others see Lamentations 3 as theologically determinative. Heim believes Lamentations 3 comprises the "heart" of the book: to encourage sufferers and show that YHWH is good and he will aid them<sup>14</sup>; Krašovec affirms this view though adds that divine aid depends upon repentance and "conversion," which the poem teaches.<sup>15</sup> Kaiser, too, sees the chapter as the theological crescendo and teaches both theodicy and divine succor in time of suffering.<sup>16</sup> Though dating the final form of the poem to the post-exilic period, Berges believes the chapter advances a positive theology: the poem teaches that YHWH's people may pray in lament to him on the basis of this continued relationship; moreover the poem offers a way to theologically "negotiate"—in contradiction to Middlemas and Brandscheidt—not "correct" the other poems of the book and the present situation.<sup>17</sup> Labahn believes Lamentations 3 offers a forward, hopeful

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<sup>12</sup>Jill Middlemas, "Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?" *VT* 56 (2006): 514-18. Though she dates the poem earlier, her argument is similar to Brandscheidt. In her view, Lamentations 3 was inserted into a specifically Judahite composition (Lamentations 1-2 and 4-5) that corrected its theology.

<sup>13</sup>Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 184.

<sup>14</sup>Knut Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem and the Drama of Her Bereavement in the Book of Lamentations," in *Zion, the City of Our God* (eds. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 163.

<sup>15</sup>Jože Krašovec, "The Source of Hope in the Book of Lamentations," *VT* 42 (1992): 232-33. So also Bo Johnson, "Form and Message in Lamentations," *ZAW* 97 (1985): 67-8.

<sup>16</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, *Grief and Pain in the Plan of God: Christian Assurance and the Message of Lamentations* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2004), 20-21.

<sup>17</sup>Ulrich Berges, "'Ich bin der Mann, der Elend sah' (Klgl 3,1): Zionstheologie als Weg aus der Krise," *BibZeits* 44 (2000): 1-20. Although YHWH has punished his people and land (Zion personified) his relationship with both through the covenant provides a ground for the future.

perspective for the suffering community in their process of grief, while the other poems offer a reflective, backwards view of suffering.<sup>18</sup> These interpretations, representing scholarship prior to and after Westermann's monograph, display an interpretative *Tendenz* that views Lamentations 3 as determinative for both the theology and meaning of the book as a whole. To understand Lamentations, then, the reader looks to this poem.

This tendency is embodied well by Childs:

“Chapter 3...plays a crucial role in interpreting the whole book...To summarize, the function of ch. 3 is to translate Israel's historically conditioned plight into the language of faith and by the use of traditional forms of appeal to the whole nation to experience that dimension of faith testified by a representative figure. The promises of God to Israel have not come to an end, but there are still grounds for hope (3.22ff.).”<sup>19</sup>

As Westermann anticipates, the theological conclusions outlined above eventuate into theodicy: a theology that constructs a justification for God's activity in punishing his people, particularly for their sins.

Yet he thinks that this theology misses the primary theological purpose of the book. In his view, Lamentations is not designed “to answer certain questions or to resolve some problems or conflicts. These songs arose as an immediate reaction on the part of those affected by the collapse. Those so affected then expressed themselves in lamentation. The ‘meaning’ of these laments is to be found in their very expression.”<sup>20</sup> The poetry expresses communal pain to God rather than explaining it away or providing a way out of it. The book does not primarily function to construct theodicy but to provide a theology of *lament*. This approach is what Dobbs-Allsopp identifies as “anti-theodicy,” which will be discussed fully in the next chapter, but suffice to say at this point that anti-theodicy refuses to condense Lamentations' theology into a justification of God's actions and a confession of human sin—precisely the opposite.

Westermann comes to his position on lament in part by excising Lamentations 3 from primary consideration. He thinks the chapter is the latest redactional layer of the book as a whole and so cannot be counted upon to provide the theological meaning of the earliest exilic community that used the book.<sup>21</sup> Thus to depend upon the latest addition to

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<sup>18</sup>Antje Labahn, “Trauern als Bewältigung der Vergangenheit zur Gestaltung der Zukunft. Bemerkungen zur anthropologischen Theologie der Klagelieder,” *VT* 52 (2002): 513-27, especially 523-26.

<sup>19</sup>Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 594-5.

<sup>20</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 77 = *Lamentations*, 81.

<sup>21</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 65-71, 137-60 = *Lamentations*, 66-72, 160-93.

the book misses what the other chapters do, namely to lament and express pain, the primary theology of the book.

Westermann's theology of lament has been instrumental in later research, especially in the last fifteen years. In her monograph on Lamentations, Middlemas too excises Lamentations 3 from consideration and sees in the other poems a lament theology that can be further distinguished as protest speech, even "god-slander" (*theo-diabole*), designed to evoke a positive response from God.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, rather than excising Lamentations 3, Linafelt shifts attention away from its centrality for theological discussion on the book. He helpfully elucidates, following Westermann, the scholarly tendency to read the theology of the book as a whole through the central figure of the man (גבר) in Lamentations 3. Linafelt believes that this emphasis, seen particularly in the commentaries of Weiser<sup>23</sup>, Kraus<sup>24</sup>, Childs, Brandscheidt, and Hillers<sup>25</sup>, is attributable to one of three primary factors: "(1) a male bias towards the male figure of the chapter; (2) a Christian bias towards the suffering man of Lamentations based on a perceived similarity to the figure of Christ; and (3) a broader emphasis on reconciliation with God rather than confrontation."<sup>26</sup> Whatever the contributing factor, corporately they lead to a theology for the book that is ultimately (like Westermann) untenable for Linafelt: a theodicy in which God is confirmed as just and the people must submit to his punishment as a direct consequence of their sin.

While he does not believe that this theological thread can be divorced from the poetry, he rather shifts the calculus by looking to the figure of personified Zion in Lamentations 1 and 2, a figure characterised as more theologically confrontational rather than submissive.<sup>27</sup> By focusing upon the speeches of personified Zion in Lamentations 1 and 2 rather than upon the man (גבר) of Lamentations 3, an alternate theological model can be understood. This model is characterised by confrontation against God, anger against his actions, and a denial of the firm linkage between the people's sin and the

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<sup>22</sup>She believes Lamentations 3 belongs to a different "thought milieu" than the other chapters (Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 212, 226-27).

<sup>23</sup>Artur Wieser, *Klagelieder* (ATD 16; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962).

<sup>24</sup>Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Klagelieder (Threni)* (BKAT; Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1960).

<sup>25</sup>Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (rev. ed.; ABC; Garden City: Doubleday, 1992).

<sup>26</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 5.

<sup>27</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 5-18.

Lord's punishment: anti-theodicy.<sup>28</sup> This advances Westermann's initial theology of lament for Lamentations.

While popular in recent research, Westermann's theological impulse towards lament remains unsatisfactory, not because it is absent from the text but because it is too broad a category. If the poems of Lamentations offer "lamentation" and express pain, then what is their nature and how do they go about doing this? The range of appeals to YHWH, and the variety of the ways he is described, raise questions as to the kind of theology Lamentations presents, the manner in which it is presented, and the effects this creates. This range also suggests an assortment of potential purposes for the book: to express grief, to confront the deity, and to confess sin. A degree of theological indistinctness exists in Lamentations that creates difficulties in defining both its theology and the concomitant question of its purpose.

If there has been an over-emphasis upon Lamentations 3—and the concomitant theodicy assumed in it for the theology of the book—to the neglect of the figure of Zion in Lamentations 1 and 2, then recently there has been an overemphasis upon the poems of Lamentations 1 and 2 from Linafelt to the present—and the concomitant "anti-theodicy" assumed with these chapters for the theology of the book—to the neglect of Lamentations 3. No research at present observes how Lamentations 1—3 present its theology in concert, synthetically. The present study aims to mediate this imbalance by assessing the poetry and theology of Lamentations 1—3 to discover how poetry functions to present the theology of the book to the reader. As Lamentations figures and addresses the Lord in and through the poetry, attending to its poetry—how the language functions, its poetic devices, genre, and structure—gives a means to access and assess the theology of the book. As Linafelt suggests, only close analysis, or attention to the "internal workings" of the poetry, sufficiently enables proper elucidation of the book's theology.

There are a number of challenges to this enterprise. First, one must demonstrate as faulty Westermann's suggestion that Lamentations 3 is a later addition to the book and that the three chapters can be understood in concert from a historical basis. This shall be demonstrated in 1.2., below. Second, there is the challenge of focusing upon Lamentations 1—3 to the neglect of Lamentations 4—5. If one chooses to study the theology Lamentations, even the first three poems, then surely the whole corpus would be a better object of study? And finally, why focus on the discreet book of Lamentations,

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<sup>28</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 35-61.

especially when fruitful work has been done on the theological relationships between Lamentations and other portions of the Old Testament canon?

To these questions I offer three responses. First, it is ideally more attractive to assess the five poems together so as to gain insight into the theology of the book as a whole. Yet the extent of analysis that is required for each poem—due to the density and complexity of the poetry—prevents examination of each chapter of Lamentations within the confines of the present study. As a result, only the first three chapters remain in focus.

In the second place, in the recent history of research, it is precisely the first three chapters that have garnered the bulk of attention to assess the theology of the book—formerly by focusing heavily on Lamentations 3 and more recently on Lamentations 1 and 2. Concentration upon Lamentations 3 is due certainly to its central position within the final form of the book, the unique features of its acrostic, and the role the man (גבר) plays in the chapter. Moreover, the factors Linafelt mentions also fund scholarly interest in this chapter. Equally more recent attention on Lamentations 1 and 2 is understandable and attributable to the relatively recent recognition of interchange between voices in the poems,<sup>29</sup> research into the persona of personified Zion, “Dear Zion” (בת-ציון),<sup>30</sup> and the general influence of Westermann’s theology of lament, outlined above. Research into these chapters, however, has not paid enough attention to how Lamentations 1 and 2 prepares the reader for Lamentations 3, and how Lamentations 3 coheres with the previous poems poetically and theologically. As shall be demonstrated in the exegesis portion of Lamentations 1—3 (Chapters 5-7), the poems are interwoven particularly through repetition of language and imagery so they may be considered to be of a piece, working together stylistically and theologically.

Moreover the present study will not wholly disregard Lamentations 4 and 5 from consideration. Their contribution will be seen in the arrangement of the book in Chapter 4 and further consideration of these poems will be discussed in the concluding chapter (8.2.). In contradistinction to the interpretative methodologies of Linafelt, Westermann, and others on the one hand, and Childs, Berges, and Heater on the other, the present study

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<sup>29</sup>William Lanahan, “The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations,” *JBL* 93 (1974): 41-9;

<sup>30</sup>Barbara Bakke Kaiser, “Poet as ‘Female Impersonator’: The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering,” *JR* 67 (1987): 164-82; Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*; Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem,” 129-69; Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (SemSt; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming).



assesses synthetically the poetry of Lamentations 1—3 to gain insight into the way that these chapters present theology, which should give some indications to the theology of the book.

Finally, while much work has been done on the relationship to Lamentations and other portions of the canon (the prophetic books and Isaiah 40—55 in particular),<sup>31</sup> sufficient attention has not been paid to the complexities of poetry and theology in Lamentations itself. Further work on the canonical and theological interchange between it and other books must arise only after analysis of the presentation of poetry and theology within the discreet book of Lamentations. And crucial to such analysis is the relationship between the first three poems in the book, which is the focus of this study.<sup>32</sup> Nor will the present study analyse the placement of Lamentations within the larger canonical corpora, whether Greek or Hebrew. When “canonical” is used, I intend the final form of the work, with five poems, of which Lamentations 1—3 is a part. The focus of the present study is solely upon the discreet poetry of the book of Lamentations.

### 1.2. Composition and Dating of Lamentations

In order to maintain interpretative focus upon the interaction between and presentation of the first three chapters of Lamentations, it is necessary to begin by giving rationale as to why this can be done on a historical basis, especially seen in light of Westermann’s view that Lamentations 3 is later than the first two poems. Despite his position, the present study maintains the book as a whole was composed in a relatively short time, certainly between the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 515 BCE, but quite possibly between 587-

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<sup>31</sup>Middlemas, “Did Second Isaiah Write Lamentations III?”; Boase, *Fulfilment of Doom*; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets* Patricia Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Isaiah 40—55* (SBLDS 161; Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1997); Christopher Seitz, *Word Without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 130-149. Benjamin Sommer argues that Second Isaiah drew on Lamentations 1-4 but was unaware of Lamentations 5. See Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40—66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 130; Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 62-79.

<sup>32</sup>Due to the way the poetics of Lamentations 1—3 function in concert, the interchange between them will be assessed in the course of the study (Chapters 5-7). And, due to the date of these poems (which will be demonstrated in the next section), it is sensible to maintain a focus upon how their poetics function synthetically.

540 BCE. Thus it is reasonable to assess the poetry and theology of Lamentations 1—3 synthetically.

There are at least three ways to arrive at this position. The first comes by assessing its language and perspective then posit historical setting(s) in which the book would fit this overall tone. The second is through linguistic analysis of Lamentations. The third examines intertextual interaction with Lamentations through quotation and response so that its dating can be set in relief against the relative dates of other texts. Each of these will be assessed in turn and then this chapter will demonstrate the plausibility of interpreting the theology of Lamentations set within a sixth century BCE context.

Adopting this conclusion is fruitful for a number of reasons. It precludes one from explaining theological ambiguity through literary development. That is, theological discontinuity noted above need not be explained away as a result of later redactional work stemming from different theological viewpoints. Second, it enables thinking about reasons for the presence of apparently contradictory theology in the book. Third, it focuses the interpreter on the canonical book of Lamentations to answer these questions.

Few scholars argue the book was either composed or compiled after the exile or that dating it remains uncertain.<sup>33</sup> Some argue that portions (especially Lamentations 1, 2, and 4) were composed after the temple's destruction of 587 BCE and prior to its reconstruction in 515 BCE, while Lamentations 3 and 5 are later.<sup>34</sup> If arguing for a date close to the destruction of Jerusalem, scholars believe the raw emotion that Lamentations displays actually reflects a proximity to the events of 587 BCE. As Dobbs-Allsopp summarizes, "A common assumption on the part of many students of Lamentations is that the depictions and images in the poems must correspond in some straightforward way to actual events of history."<sup>35</sup> This indicates the first method for dating Lamentations—to date the book based upon what it seems to depict.

Renkema is reflective of this trend. He states, "The songs leave one with the impression that they were conceived during a period of great misfortune after the fall [of

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<sup>33</sup>Fries and Lachs date the book after the exile, even to the second century BCE [S. A. Fries, "Parallele zwischen den Klageliedern Cap. IV, V und der Maccabäerzeit," *ZAW* 13(1893): 110-24; S. Lachs, "The Date of Lamentations," *JQR* 57(1968): 46-56] while Provan remains agnostic about its date (Provan, *Lamentations*, 14).

<sup>34</sup>For a recent survey of arguments, see Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 171-84, and Dobbs-Allsopp, "Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Lamentations," *JANESCU* 26(1998): 2, note 7.

<sup>35</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, "Linguistic Evidence," 3.

Jerusalem], when chaos reigned throughout the land...One can be sure then that this does not refer to a period decades after the fall of Jerusalem. The people did not need tens of years to arrive at a kind of *modus vivendi* with the downfall.”<sup>36</sup> This is difficult to maintain not least because it has no explicit references to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, or specific leaders of Judah at the time of Jerusalem’s fall. This general ambiguity leaves the poetry sitting somewhat “loose” to history according to Joyce.<sup>37</sup> The lack of specificity has led Provan to argue the date of the book simply remains uncertain.<sup>38</sup> Using language that describes destruction to date a book remains a faulty way to go about assessing its provenance. Often language describing destruction is formulaic.

1 Mac 1.38-40 shares similar language and perspective on the attack on Jerusalem depicted there as does the language describing destruction of Jerusalem in Lamentations, though Maccabees is literary work usually dated to second century BCE.<sup>39</sup> Although they employ similar descriptions of destruction, it does not then follow that Lamentations dates to the second century BCE. There may be a recognised relationship between the books from language and perspective but this does not provide further access into any chronological relationship between them.

This fact becomes relevant when noticing the stereotypical language that Lamentations shares with ANE city-laments, as Dobbs-Allsopp has shown.<sup>40</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp argues that Lamentations shares a number of features with ANE city-laments to achieve description of city destruction: a specific field of themes, motifs, and poetic devices.<sup>41</sup> In light of this, he contends that Lamentations sits in a common ANE tradition that described the destruction of cities in a particular way, through the city-lament genre. And yet although Dobbs-Allsopp reveals how ANE city-laments and Lamentations fit

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<sup>36</sup>Johan Renkema, *Lamentations*, (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 54. For a full list, see Dobbs-Allsopp, “Linguistic Evidence,” 4, note 15.

<sup>37</sup>Paul M. Joyce, “Sitting Loose to History: Reading the Book of Lamentations without Primary Reference to Its Original Historical Setting,” in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (ed., Edward Ball; JSOTSup 300; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1999), 246-62.

<sup>38</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 7-19.

<sup>39</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 14-15.

<sup>40</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (BibOr 44; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993), 30-96.

<sup>41</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 157-63; see also his comments in “Darwinism, Genre Theory, and City Laments,” *JAOS* 120, 4(2000): 625-30.

together typologically, he maintains that this typological relationship does not necessarily bear upon their chronological relationship.<sup>42</sup>

In short, poets can use conventional language to describe something historically far removed from them and it remains methodologically unsound to determine the provenance of a book *solely* on the basis of how it appears to describe a certain historical event. This does not necessarily foreclose upon the possibility that language, which describes destruction like the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, gives an indication of the time of its composition. It simply means that using this criterion alone does not provide sufficient evidence to confirm the dating of the text in question, in our case, the book of Lamentations. As a result of the foregoing conclusion, Dobbs-Allsopp dates Lamentations on the basis of linguistic analysis.

It is important to assess this methodology for at least two reasons. First, at present no such evaluation of his work exists in Lamentations scholarship. Thereby it is somewhat difficult to assess his conclusions. His position becomes prominent by virtue of the fact that no arguments against his methodology have been offered. Second, Berlin makes the bold claim that the methodology represents the most reliable means to date Lamentations and cites Dobbs-Allsopp's work as proof.<sup>43</sup> Obviously Berlin is convinced by the methodology but she offers no evidence of why she is convinced. An evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of linguistic analysis must be made explicit prior to assenting to it; further evaluation of Dobbs-Allsopp's linguistic analysis of Lamentations must be made prior to agreeing with his conclusions about the dating of the book. From this evaluation, the amount of weight that should be placed upon Dobbs-Allsopp's analysis will become apparent.

Generally, linguistic analysis assumes that the Hebrew language developed and altered over time much like every other language that exists. The theory purports that Hebrew was a conservative language from 1000-600 BCE, but the exile served as a major impetus that instigated changes, when social changes and dislocation as well as neo-Babylonian and later Persian linguistic influence brought on developments in Hebrew. Pre-exilic Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) remains identifiable in inscriptional evidence from the monarchic period and can be contrasted against the Hebrew that underwent

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<sup>42</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, "Darwinism," 625.

<sup>43</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 34-5.

alterations due to the effects of exile, or Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH).<sup>44</sup> SBH and LBH can then be differentiated from Mishnaic Hebrew (MH), where specific changes in Hebrew are evidenced in the Mishnah.<sup>45</sup>

In Dobbs-Allsopp's estimation, Lamentations' linguistic profile exhibits language belonging to the exilic period, in which the two dominant phases of Biblical Hebrew were in flux. Lamentations' Hebrew presents seventeen SBH features that are either replaced or fall into disuse in LBH as well as eighteen LBH features. Of these LBH features, seven are limited exclusively to LBH without occurring in SBH. In light of the presence of these seven LBH features, Dobbs-Allsopp asserts that Lamentations cannot have been composed prior to the exile. Yet the percentage of LBH features is far lower than that of other books said to display classical LBH: Qoheleth, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.<sup>46</sup> In light of this, he argues that though the Hebrew of Lamentations displays some features of LBH, compared to the language of other classical LBH texts, the language does not share high enough percentage of LBH features to be considered classically LBH. From this Dobbs-Allsopp contends against dating Lamentations to late Persian or Maccabean periods; it makes little sense to date Lamentations to periods that use classic LBH when the language of the book clearly is not classical LBH. He concludes by describing the linguistic profile of Lamentations as representing a transitional phase in Hebrew and therefore fitting within the exile. By comparison with other biblical books, Lamentations shares linguistic features similar to that of Ezekiel, and was written in the sixth century after 587 BCE and perhaps as late as 520 BCE, in the general period of the exile.<sup>47</sup>

At this point, it remains helpful to evaluate linguistic analysis as a methodology and highlight some of its strengths and weaknesses. One of its strengths is that it does highlight morphological, syntactical, and orthographical differences within and across

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<sup>44</sup>For fuller discussion, see Avi Hurvitz, "The Evidence of Language in Dating the Priestly Code," *RB* 81(1974): 24-56; *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (CahRB 20; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1982); "The Historical Quest for 'Ancient Israel' and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations," *VT* 47 (1997): 301-15.

<sup>45</sup>Ziony Zevit, "Introductory Remarks: Historical Linguistics and the Dating of Hebrew Texts ca. 1000-300 B.C.E.," *HS* 46(2005): 321-6.

<sup>46</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, "Linguistic Evidence," 34.

<sup>47</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, "Linguistic Evidence," 8-9. Middlemas pushes the terminal date down roughly five years prior to the dedication of the second temple in 515 BCE (*The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 178-9).

biblical texts. It also helpfully suggests a way to posit dates of biblical books without resorting to the kind of correspondence theories between textual depiction and actual historical events that Dobbs-Allsopp rejects. Despite this, there are some significant drawbacks to the methodology that cause Young to conclude paradigmatically that biblical texts cannot be dated linguistically.<sup>48</sup> Whether Young is correct in his conclusion still remains uncertain when observing the ongoing work of scholars employing linguistic analysis to date biblical texts.<sup>49</sup>

The weaknesses of linguistic analysis include: the possibility that SBH is not a standardised form, but that pre-exilic Hebrew was in fact quite varied, the possibility that SBH did not cease in the post-exilic period, and the possibility that the differences between SBH and LBH are not due to chronological change but rather differences in oral register. Young argues that pre-exilic inscriptional evidence reveals inscriptional Hebrew from this era “as an independent corpus within ancient Hebrew, rather than a mere adjunct of Standard Biblical Hebrew.”<sup>50</sup> Thus what Hurvitz identifies as SBH may not have been standard at all. Moreover, even if SBH was the benchmark for Hebrew in the pre-exilic period, it does not follow that the use of SBH desisted in the exilic and post-exilic period. There may not be enough evidence to make such a conclusion.<sup>51</sup> Finally, Rendsburg and Young have argued that SBH and LBH coexisted, SBH being “a ‘High’

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<sup>48</sup>Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew* (FAT 5; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993); “Evidence of Diversity in Pre-Exilic Judahite Hebrew,” *HS* 38(1997): 7-20; “Late Biblical Hebrew and Hebrew Inscriptions,” in *Biblical Hebrew Studies in Chronology and Typology* (ed. Ian Young; JSOTSup 369; London: T & T Clark, 2003), 276-311; “Biblical Texts Cannot be Dated Linguistically,” *HS* 46(2005): 341-51.

<sup>49</sup>Mats Eskhult, “Traces of Linguistic Development in Biblical Hebrew,” *HS* 46(2005): 353-70.

<sup>50</sup>Young, “Biblical Texts,” 344. But see the exact opposite conclusion of Mats Eskhult, who states, “The epigraphic texts, albeit few in number and length, show that ancient Hebrew, the language used in central and southern Palestine, is the *same* language as that which we call Biblical Hebrew” (Eskhult, “Traces of Linguistic Development,” 353).

<sup>51</sup>Especially when one considers the analysis of M. Ehrensverd, who argues that some post-exilic texts (Zechariah 1-8 and Haggai) do not display features of LBH. See his “Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts,” in *Biblical Hebrew Studies in Chronology and Typology*, 164-88. See also Davies’ assertion that differences in typology do not necessarily entail chronological development of Hebrew. Philip R. Davies, *In Search of ‘Ancient Israel’* (JSOTSup 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 97-101.

prestige language over the top of diverse local dialects.”<sup>52</sup> Thus differentiation between SBH and LBH may not be due to linguistic change as much as differences in register.

Though not all agree on these points,<sup>53</sup> it does raise questions about the dependability of the method for dating biblical books. One must be careful not to put too much weight on linguistic dating. This does not mean that it should be rejected out of hand as a viable way to date biblical books but that the methodology is not so objective and unproblematic that it reaches certain results. Essentially, it seems that linguistic analysis ultimately depends upon probabilities to make its case; so for dating Lamentations, the question remains whether or not Dobbs-Allsopp’s linguistic analysis has given evidence that raises a higher or lesser degree of probability for the correct dating of the book. As Dobbs-Allsopp has argued his case, the probability of Lamentations fitting within the exile is fairly high. Despite this, it can only take one so far. He does not address any of the drawbacks to linguistic analysis and so his results remain probable, but not in no way certain.

I conclude this discussion by assessing the third option, to see how Isaiah 40—55 and Zechariah (specifically chapters 1-2) respond to Lamentations. Scholars believe these two works to have been composed between 587-515 BCE and they give a helpful control to linguistic analysis so that the relative dating of Lamentations can be set in relief against the dating of these texts. Most scholars agree that Zechariah 1—2 was composed between 520-518 BCE.<sup>54</sup> For example, Boda has argued convincingly for dating Zechariah 1—2 in this timeframe through historical analysis of the text.<sup>55</sup> It appears, then, that the timeframe of Zechariah 1—2, fits within a period in which it could have received and interacted with

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<sup>52</sup>Young, “Biblical Texts,” 346. Young follows Gary Rendsburg on this point. See Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew* (AOS 72; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1990).

<sup>53</sup>Eskhult still argues in favour of linguistic development in biblical Hebrew on the basis of unique aspects of verbal syntax in LBH prose when compared with verbal syntax in SBH prose. See “Traces of Linguistic Development,” 353-70. See also his *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (AUP; SSU 12; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990).

<sup>54</sup>See Mark Cameron Love, *The Evasive Text: Zechariah 1-8 and the Frustrated Reader* (JSOTSup 296; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 17-22; Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1984), 169.

<sup>55</sup>Mark Boda, “Terrifying the Horns: Persia and Babylon in Zechariah 1.7-6.15,” *CBQ* 67(2005): 22-41, esp. 39-41. Alternatively, Edelman sees this as part of a later work composed in the time of Artaxerxes I (445-432 BCE). See Diana Edelman, *The Origins of the Second Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem* (London: Equinox, 2005).

Lamentations. And as to the book of Isaiah, it is commonly attested that the message of Isaiah 40—55, so-called Second Isaiah, is set against the background of the exilic period.<sup>56</sup> Further, many argue that Second Isaiah knew of Lamentations and used it to construct its theological message.<sup>57</sup> Though some envision it as arising later,<sup>58</sup> scholarly consensus assumes that Isaiah 40—55 was written sometime between 550-539 BCE,<sup>59</sup> the earlier date marking the rise of Cyrus II in his establishment of the Medo-Persian Empire, and the later date reflecting the edict of Cyrus (Ez 1.1-2), which enabled the return of the exiles to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple.<sup>60</sup> It is supposedly written in response either to Cyrus' ascension to power or to his famous edict, to give hope to the exiles and to those within the land.<sup>61</sup>

Willey explores the ways that Isaiah 40—55 employs biblical texts to advance its theological message, and theological interaction with Lamentations is crucial for the opening words of Isa 40.1, but also appears in Isa 49.13 and 51.12. The three verses read as follows:

“Comfort, comfort! (נחמו נחמו) my people, says your God” (Isa 40.1)

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<sup>56</sup>See H.G.M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 2-21; Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville: WJK, 2001), 289-91. Barstad agrees that Second Isaiah was written during the exile, but goes further to argue for a Judahite rather than Babylonian provenance. Hans M. Barstad, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Book of Isaiah: "Exilic" Judah and the Provenance of Isaiah 40—55* (ICRHC; Oslo: Novus, 1997). An implication that arises from this work is that Second Isaiah and Lamentations both may have been composed in Palestine in the exilic period, strengthening their association and the theological interaction between them.

<sup>57</sup>Max Löhr, “Der Sprachgebrauch des Buches der Klagelieder,” *ZAW* 14 (1894): 42-50; Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* (SBT 14; London: SCM Press, 1962), 44-6; Willey, *Remember the Former Things*; Seitz, *Word Without End*, 130-149; Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*; Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 62-79.

<sup>58</sup>H.-J. Hermisson, “Einheit und Komplexität Deuterojesajas: Probleme der Redaktionsgeschichte von Jes 40—55,” in *The Book of Isaiah (Le Livre d'Isaïe)* (ed. Jacques Vermeulen; BETL 81; Leuven: University Press, 1989), 287-312.

<sup>59</sup>Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40—66* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969); Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40—66* (Int; Louisville: John Knox, 1995); Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah, Part 3 Volume 1: Isaiah 40—48* (HCOT; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997); Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40—55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (ABC; New York: Doubleday, 2002); John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40—55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

<sup>60</sup>See note 1.

<sup>61</sup>Peter Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B. C.* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 128-37. See also John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1—39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 13-17.



“YHWH has comforted (נחם) his people” (Isa 49.13)

“I, I am he, your comforter (מנחמכם)” (Isa 51.12)

Willey argues that these verses likely respond to Zion’s calls for comfort in Lam 1.2b, 9b-c, 16b, 17a, and 21a.<sup>62</sup> The constant refrain in these verses is the lack of a “comforter” (מנחם) for “Dear Zion” (בת־צִיּוֹן). Fishbane believes the way that Isaiah 40—55 responds to Lamentations is typical of ancient biblical interpretation.<sup>63</sup> This kind of awareness of Lamentations is not secluded to these verses in Isaiah, for Willey shows how Isaiah 40—55 quotes and inverts despondent verses throughout Lamentations to advance its theological message. Among the verses that she deals with are: Lam 1.2-4 and Isa 52.11-12; Lam 3.25-30 and Isa 50.4-11; Lam 4 and Isa 51.17-23; Lam 4.15 and Isa 52.11; Lam 4.17 and Isa 52.8; Lam 5.19-22 and Isa 54.6-8; Lam 5.20 and Isa 49.14.<sup>64</sup> Willey states, “Second Isaiah takes on the terms of Lamentations not to continue their prayers but to answer them, to dispute, reverse, and reinvent them.”<sup>65</sup> If Isaiah 40—55 responds to Lamentations, then it is reasonable to proffer the date of Lamentations’ creation, at the very latest, the edict of Cyrus, which gave an element of hope to the exiles, and probably the Judahite community as well, that Jerusalem’s fortunes would reverse and the temple would be restored.

This time frame also fits with responses in Zechariah 1—2 to Lamentations, as seen in the work developed by Love and Stead.<sup>66</sup> In separate works, Love and Stead argue that Zechariah 1 and 2.1-4 manifest either allusions (Love) or intertexts (Stead) to Lamentations, specifically 2.1-17, arguing these allusions/intertexts advance the theological message of Zechariah by inverting the message put forth by Lamentations in a way that is similar to Isaiah 40—55. Love argues that the prophetic hope Zechariah provides for the exiles in Zech 2.4 is “a partial reversal of the situation in Lamentations 2—the horns (קרנות) of the nations are cast down” where “every horn of Israel” (כל קרן) is cut off in Lam 2.3 and YHWH “raises the horn (קרן)” of Israel’s adversaries in Lam 2.17.<sup>67</sup> Love continues to draw out the connections between Lamentations and

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<sup>62</sup>Willey, 130-2. Michael Fishbane makes similar connections in *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 497.

<sup>63</sup>Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 497.

<sup>64</sup>Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 106-16, 125-32, 155-71, 181-93, 211-41.

<sup>65</sup>Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 265.

<sup>66</sup>Love, *The Evasive Text*; Michael Stead, “Sustained Allusion in Zechariah 1-2,” in *Haggai-Zachariah 1—2* (eds. M. Boda and M. Floyd; LHBOTS; London: T & T Clark, forthcoming).

<sup>67</sup>Love, *The Evasive Text*, 182, 185.

Zechariah in the theme of YHWH remembering Israel. In Lamentations he does not remember his footstool (Lam 2.1) whereas “Zechariah also portrays the deity once again remembering his footstool and presumably ending his anger” demonstrated extensively in Zechariah 1.<sup>68</sup>

Stead’s article reveals how Lamentations 2 serves as an intertext to Zechariah 1-2. He confirms Love’s analysis of Zech 2.4 and Lam 2.3, 17 but also highlights other connections as well. In particular, he notes that similarly to Isaiah 40—55, Zechariah employs the concept of YHWH becoming the comforter to Lady Zion, a concept that is picked up in Zech 1.17b: “And YHWH will again comfort Zion (וּנְחַם יְהוָה עוֹד אֶת־צִיּוֹן) and again choose Jerusalem.” Stead argues that this verse connects to Lam 2.13, “How shall I liken you to comfort you, fair maiden Zion (וְאֵנְחַמְךָ בְחֹלֶת בַּת־צִיּוֹן)?”<sup>69</sup> This is because of the rare usage of the terms נַחַם and צִיּוֹן in proximity (Zech 1.17b, Lam 2.13, and Isa 51.3). Further Stead locates four other instances of Zechariah’s response to Lamentations 2: Lam 2.17a and Zech 1.6b, Lam 2.6 and Zech 1.12b; Lam 2.8 and Zech 1.16b; Lam 2.3, 7-9 and Zech 2.8b-9.<sup>70</sup> Zechariah 1-2 was probably composed between 520 BCE and 518 BCE, and if Zechariah does quote Lamentations, then Lamentations would have to be written prior to Zechariah, pushing the terminus ad quem of Lamentations to at least 520 BCE, but probably earlier.

The difficulty with accepting this last method lies in the fact that one must accept that Isaiah 40—55 and Zechariah actually respond to Lamentations and not vice-versa! This remains the point of contention for Dobbs-Allsopp, especially in the relationship between Isaiah 40—55 and Lamentations, another factor that leads him to linguistic analysis for dating the book. It is unclear which way the direction of influence goes: does the book of Lamentations respond to the hopeful tone of Isaiah 40—55 with a negative response or does this corpus provide a hopeful response to Lamentations?<sup>71</sup> Leaving this question aside, at least Zechariah’s interaction with Lamentations creates a high degree of

<sup>68</sup>Love, *The Evasive Text*, 185.

<sup>69</sup>Though the Hiphil imperfect of  $\sqrt{\text{נחם}}$  is rare, it occurs in Isa 46.5: “To whom will you liken me and compare me, and make me similar that we may be alike” (לְמִי תִדְמִיּוּנִי (וְתִשׁוּר וְתִמְשְׁלוּנִי וְנִדְמָה).

<sup>70</sup>Stead, “Sustained Allusion.”

<sup>71</sup>This point becomes heightened if one regards Isaiah 40—55 as composed by Isaiah of Jerusalem (8th century BCE): Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999); Oswalt, *Isaiah 1—39*.

probability that it actually *received* the book and interacted with it rather than existing prior to Lamentations.

On the basis of the date of Zechariah, and its apparent theological interaction with Lamentations, it is reasonable to conclude that Lamentations was written between 587 and 520 BCE. If one adopts Willey's arguments, then the terminus ad quem moves up.<sup>72</sup> Noting Dobbs-Allsopp's caveats about the direction of influence between Isaiah 40—55 and Lamentations, the present study concludes that the text of Lamentations was written between 587-520 BCE in response to the destruction of Jerusalem. The dating of Lamentations between 587-520 BCE accords well with Dobbs-Allsopp's conclusions from linguistic analysis and leads one away from dating the book as post-exilic or later.<sup>73</sup> If Lamentations was composed within a period of roughly seventy years, then it follows that by the middle to latter third of the sixth century, the book was being used, in part or in the whole, by the community in Judah. While it remains important to sustain research on how the book developed in the years preceding its completion, the present work examines precisely the theology that arises from the poetry at the book's completion and so shall focus upon the canonical form of the text, specifically Lamentations 1—3.

### 1.3. Conclusion

Once it is settled that Lamentations 1—3 can be assessed synthetically from a historical basis, the next question centres upon determining its theology. This is difficult due in part to the ambiguity arising from the poetry itself and to the variety of scholarly approaches to the question. Though many responses have been offered, no singular view holds sway. Is the theodic or anti-theodic position more persuasive? In the following chapter, a survey of research will reveal in depth how one frames the question of theology in Lamentations impinges upon what one determines it to be.

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<sup>72</sup> The terminus ad quem moves up to 540 BCE by including the evidence of Isaiah 40—55. At latest, Berlin dates the book is between 550-538 BCE (Berlin, *Lamentations*, 34).

<sup>73</sup> Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 65-71, 137-60 = *Lamentations*, 66-72, 160-93; Enno Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung des Judentums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 10-12. Kaiser is unique in that he meticulously dates each of the poems of Lamentations to sometime between the fifth and fourth centuries. Otto Kaiser, *Klagelieder* (ATD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 103-110.

The worlds “behind,” “within,” and “in front of” the text are metaphors that describe the different interpretative frames used by scholarship in what follows.<sup>74</sup> The world “behind” the text focuses the interpreter upon the history that lay behind the creation of the book of Lamentations: the book’s literary or theological development or, alternatively, the theological traditions that infuse it. This focus is apparent in the monographs of Gottwald, Albrektson, Brandscheidt and Westermann. Renkema’s structural analysis of Lamentations typifies a primary concern for the world “within” the text.<sup>75</sup> The feminist concerns of Guest, Seidman, and O’Connor ground their readings and foremost from a concern for the world “in front of” the text, that is, from a specific set of explicit questions and concerns that shapes how they read and understand the theology of Lamentations, namely, feminist theology.

Implicit preconceptions, however, ground explicit questions in scholarship. Williamson summarizes the role of implicit concerns that colour interpretation: “[H]uman understanding never begins with a *tabula rasa*, a completely blank page. No one comes to the Bible (or any other book bearing truth claims which could affect the life of the reader) with complete objectivity—he or she will carry some preconceptions and be inclined toward one position or another.”<sup>76</sup> These “preconceptions” are the implicit concerns the interpreter brings to the text, which impact ones view of theology. This shall be discussed along with the challenges that the world “in front of” the text poses for interpretation. But with challenge noted, the world “in front of” the text serves as a helpful metaphor that foregrounds the specific set of questions and concerns of readers that shape how they interpret and understand the theology of Lamentations.

Chapter 2 will also demonstrate how Dobbs-Allsopp’s analysis comes closest to integrating all three horizons productively in interpretation. In his work the world

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<sup>74</sup>W. Randolph Tate uses these metaphors to describe the different ways for the interpreter to think about accessing meaning: *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (rev. ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003). Anthony C. Thiselton too uses these metaphors in a similar manner: “‘Behind’ and ‘In Front of’ the Text: Language, Reference and Indeterminacy,” in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (eds. Craig Bartholomew et. al.; SHS 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 97-120.

<sup>75</sup>Renkema, “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” in *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry* (eds. Willem van der Meer and Johannes C. de Moor; JSOTSup 74; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 294-396; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 72-9.

<sup>76</sup>Peter S. Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study on the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (with preface by Albert Vanhoye; *SubBi* 22; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2001), 79-80.

“behind” the text is in full view, though he too argues that Lamentations should be understood as composed in a specific period of time and should be read as a synchronic whole. In his analysis as well the world “within” the text remains prominent: a concern for the poetics of the text and how they function to make theological points. Finally in his attempt to negotiate the theology of Lamentations specifically from a post-Holocaust point of view, following Braiterman, it will be clear that he recognises the importance of the world “in front of” the text; in some way the present context in which Lamentations is received must be brought to bear in ascertaining its theology. Thus, Dobbs-Allsopp’s work embodies what I shall term as an “integrated approach” following Tate’s designation.<sup>77</sup>

In light of the discussion above, significant questions remain. The question regarding the historical justification for reading Lamentations 1—3 synthetically, however, is answered. The present study argues that the book came to exist and be used in its entirety within 50-70 years,<sup>78</sup> then an analysis of the poetry and theology of the first three chapters of Lamentations is justified. There remains, however, a question of method.

The present study employs the aesthetic theory of Umberto Eco. This decision stems in part from a belief, following Linafelt and Dobbs-Allsopp, that the theology of Lamentations is wholly enmeshed with its poetic quality. Stated another way, the theology of the book cannot be known without working through the poetry—its style, structure, and poetics. Theology only arises as one works through the poetry “successively, progressively.”<sup>79</sup> Eco’s aesthetic analysis presents a theory to assess productively the poetics of Lamentations from the cultural world in which the book was created through the concept of the “encyclopaedia,” makes a helpful distinction between “open” and “closed” textual strategies for model readers, and advances a hermeneutically sophisticated interpretative model. And, Eco’s sophisticated philosophy of language and communication provides a more comprehensive means to access Lamentations 1—3 in a manner somewhat different to the more limited (but useful) scope of recent research employing Bakhtinian theory of polyphonic voices in Lamentations; thus Eco’s model is

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<sup>77</sup>Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, xxiv-xxvi.

<sup>78</sup>See 1.2., above.

<sup>79</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 23-48.

preferred here.<sup>80</sup> It is hoped that by assessing its poetry with Eco's aesthetic analysis, the theology of Lamentations 1—3 will come more clearly into view.

In order to do justice to the “internal workings” of the poetry, a chapter is devoted to discussing the crucial elements of genre, structure and poetics in Lamentations and relates this information to encyclopaedic knowledge (Chapter 4). This information will be incorporated in the exegesis of Lamentations 1—3, which occurs in Chapters 5-7. Finally I offer conclusions concerning both the poetry and theology of the poems and further offer suggestions for such theological portrayal within the context of Judah in the sixth century BCE (Chapter 8). Thus in the present study I will assess the poetry of Lamentations 1—3 synchronically, employing the aesthetic theory of Umberto Eco to discern the theology of these chapters.

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<sup>80</sup>For the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin and his employment in Lamentations research, see Boase, *Fulfilment of Doom?*; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*.

## **CHAPTER 2: SURVEY OF RESEARCH ON THE THEOLOGY OF LAMENTATIONS**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This present chapter will not provide an exhaustive survey of research. That kind of work would constitute a monograph in its own right and miss the primary goal of the present study, namely, to assess the theology of Lamentations 1—3 in and through its poetry.<sup>81</sup> However, it is in place to mention research that revolves around the question of theology in Lamentations. With this in mind, this survey includes further analysis of some of the views offered above (1.1.) as well as others in the field.

The metaphors of the worlds “behind,” “within,” and “in front of” the text orient this survey, which then concludes with an “integrated approach,” embodied by Dobbs-Allsopp. The monographs of Gottwald, Albrektson, Brandscheidt, and Westermann have a focus upon the world “behind” the text to frame the theology of Lamentations, using tradition-history (Gottwald and Albrektson), form (Westermann), and redaction-critical (Brandscheidt) methodologies to address theological questions in the book. Though not alone in his emphasis upon the world “within” the text to get at the theology of the book,<sup>82</sup> Renkema’s structural analysis of Lamentations represents the most recent and extensive display with such an emphasis. He assesses how the text of Lamentations is structured, working from the rules of Canaanite and Hebrew poetry identified by the Kampen School. Finally those that frame the question of theology with a concern for the world “in front of” the text will be addressed. The analyses of Guest, Seidman, and O’Connor are reviewed to see how their feminist concerns address the theology of the book. Finally, the works of Dobbs-Allsopp will be explored; his work has advanced research into Lamentations’ theology greatly. His cumulative body of work to this point

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<sup>81</sup>For a recent survey of research, see C. W. Miller, “The Book of Lamentations in Recent Research,” *CBR* 1 (2002): 9-29.

<sup>82</sup>The works of Johnson, Nägelsbach, Kaiser, and Shea will be explored in 4.3., below, in the analysis of the proposed structures of Lamentations offered in the history of scholarship on the book.

represents what I identified as an “integrated approach” for interpretation in the previous chapter (1.3.).

## 2.2. “Behind” the Text

### 2.2.1. Gottwald and Albrektson

Historical critical research ascertains disparate views of God and certain theological concepts in the OT and then charts variations on a historical trajectory. In this way, theological variance is seen to be embedded within different historical strata of text. Through rational assessment, the historian traces textual development and then maps out theological development along with the growth of the text.<sup>83</sup> For this methodology, historical reconstruction is the clue for theological interpretation.

Two influential monographs on Lamentations come from this general perspective, though with different emphases. The monographs of Gottwald and Albrektson centre upon the presence and nature of hope in Lamentations, and how it arises theologically in the text.<sup>84</sup> Gottwald looks at this question from the perspective of both the history of Jerusalem and the presence of the Deuteronomic tradition in Judah at the time of Jerusalem’s destruction. While situating the question from the history of Jerusalem as does Gottwald, Albrektson looks at another purported tradition thought to have existed in Judah to gain insight into the theology of Lamentations. Both, however, deal with the issue of hope. Gottwald’s argument has been influential in relation to the nature and origin of hope in Lamentations.

He argues that the book’s theology derives from a theology of hope and doom, which originated in Deuteronomic prophetic circles prior to Jerusalem’s destruction; this theology teaches retribution and reward.<sup>85</sup> The logic of this Deuteronomic theology is as follows: if Judah follows YHWH, then they will receive blessing; if they disobey him, then they will receive his punishment. And yet King Josiah, whom the book of 2 Kings affirms as a great reformer who encouraged the people to follow the Lord, died in 609

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<sup>83</sup>For a discussion on how historical critical research treats theology, see Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1997), 9-42.

<sup>84</sup>The monograph of Johan Renkema raises this theological emphasis: “*Misschien is er hoop...*”: *Die theologische vooronderstellingen van het boek Klaagliederen* (Franeker: Wever, 1983). Renkema’s ideas are later expanded in his commentary, which will provide the place for my critical engagement. The concern for hope is central in Krašovec’s article, “The Source of Hope,” 223-33.

<sup>85</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*.



BCE at the hands of Egyptian Pharaoh Neco I. Political instability ensued after his death and contributed to the subsequent events of deportation of leaders of Judah (597 BCE) by the Babylonians and finally destruction of the capital city, Jerusalem, in 587 BCE at the hand of the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar I. This serial trauma, according to Gottwald, has shaken Judah's confidence and leaves the nation in theological crisis that can be summarised in a question: if Josiah had accomplished such a great Yahwistic reform movement in the nation, then why has the nation received retributive judgment rather than reward? According to Gottwald, the gap between historical reality and Deuteronomic faith marks the "key" to the theology of Lamentations.<sup>86</sup>

But the retributive theology gives way to a theology of hope, according to Gottwald, a theology derived from "the unshakable nature of [YHWH's] justice and love," reflected in the central section of Lamentations, specifically 3.19-33. He contends that God's "constancy guarantees that the disappointments and defeats are not ultimate inasmuch as sovereign grace stands behind and beyond them (3.36-39)."<sup>87</sup> The hopeful section of Lamentations 3, where YHWH's justice is affirmed and trust in him is maintained, and not coincidentally sits at the structural centre of the book, ameliorates theological complexity and tension in Lamentations.

Different from Gottwald's Deuteronomic theology, Albrektson argues that Lamentations' theology derives from royal Judahite ideology, specifically known as Zion theology, as the key to understanding its theological presentation and the source of hope. Zion theology promotes that YHWH has elected Jerusalem as his home (eternally), commits himself to the Davidic royal line, and that this election and commitment makes Jerusalem impenetrable.<sup>88</sup> This is evidenced in Pss 46.6 and 87.2, among other texts (Pss 48, 76, 84; Isa 37.33-5): "YHWH loves the gates of Zion more than any other of the

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<sup>86</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 47-62.

<sup>87</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 109.

<sup>88</sup>Bertil Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations: With a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Text* (STL 21; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963), 219-30. Edzard Rohland gave full attention to the motifs and themes that distinguished the Zion tradition in his dissertation under the supervision of Gerhard von Rad: *Die Bedeutung der Erwählungstradition Israels für die Eschatologie der alttestamentlichen Propheten* (Dissertation: University of Heidelberg, 1956); cited and assessed in Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol for the Jerusalem Cult* (JSOTSup 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 15-19. For work prior to Rohland, see Gerhard von Rad, "Die Stadt auf dem Berg," *EvT* 9 (1948/49): 439-47; Martin Noth, "Jerusalem und die israelitische Tradition," *OtSt* 8 (1950): 28-46; Hans Schmid, "Jahwe und die Kulttraditionen von Jerusalem," *ZAW* 67 (1955): 168-97.

dwelling of Jacob,” אהב יהוה שְׁעָרֵי צִיּוֹן מִכֹּל מִשְׁכְּנוֹת יַעֲקֹב (Ps 87.2); “God is in her midst—it cannot fail,” אלהים בקרבה בליתמוט (Ps 46.6a). Albrektson believes that the key to Lamentations’ theology is found in the tension “between the confident belief of the Zion traditions in the inviolability of the temple and city, and the actual brute facts” of history.<sup>89</sup>

Yet Albrektson agrees with Gottwald that there is an element of Deuteronomic faith present in Lamentations, and this theological strand emphasises the justice of YHWH’s punishment, in line with the curses of Deuteronomy 28.<sup>90</sup> God is not bound to his temple as Zion theology claims, but rather is “unfettered by the fate of his cult-centre, reigns supreme in history.”<sup>91</sup> Thus theological tension in the book is explained as tension between Zion theology and Deuteronomic faith, two separate traditions that coalesce in the book. For Albrektson, the strand emphasising the royal ideology of Zion provides the backdrop of pain and questioning in Lamentations, while the Deuteronomic strand actually explains, justifies, and offers a way out of the pain of the historical moment.<sup>92</sup>

The monographs of Gottwald and Albrektson rightly ask questions about theological traditions which lie behind the text that may infuse the theological portrait of the book; yet their monographs fail to convince in that they consider these theological traditions to be *determinative* for Lamentations’ theology. Gottwald’s attempt to explain the theology through the Deuteronomic theology of retribution and reward and the reality of Jerusalem’s destruction remains unconvincing. Recent research into the *Urrolle* of Jeremiah demonstrates that after Josiah’s death in 609 BCE, the prophet Jeremiah portrays a highly critical attitude towards the leadership of Judah, especially the religious leaders, for their continued sinfulness and waywardness apart from YHWH.<sup>93</sup> Seen in this light, Gottwald’s historical portrait of a people questioning how the Lord could bring

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<sup>89</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 230.

<sup>90</sup>In fact, Albrektson sees connections between Lam 1.3 and Deut 28.58; Lam 1.5 and Deut 28.13, 41, 44; Lam 1.9 and Deut 28.43; Lam 3.54 and Deut 28.37; Lam 4.10 and Deut 28.53; Lam 4.16, 5.12 and Deut 28.50 (Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 231-4).

<sup>91</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 239.

<sup>92</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 237-9.

<sup>93</sup>See Mark Leuchter, *Josiah’s Reform and Jeremiah’s Scroll: Historical Calamity and Prophetic Response* (HBM 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006). Leuchter argues that Jeremiah was part of Josiah’s reform movement and helped create the Deuteronomistic theology during Josiah’s reign. After Josiah’s death, Jeremiah took a radical theological position.

retribution instead of reward simply no longer remains tenable. In reality, after Josiah's death in 609 BCE, Jeremiah took his stance against the political Jerusalemite establishment and demarcates a radical theological position in his first temple sermon (Jeremiah 7), in which Judah will not be saved from disaster as long as the people continue in wickedness—religious leaders included. His second temple sermon (Jeremiah 26) also reflects this perspective as well. This confrontation with the post-Josianic political establishment, with their rebellion and injustice, worship of foreign gods, and resistance to the word of God provides support to the notion that, at least in the mind of Jeremiah, Judah's activity warranted retribution, *not* reward. Leuchter correctly assesses Jeremiah's perspective on the political establishment, and his belief that they deserved judgment especially highlighted in Jeremiah's temple sermons.<sup>94</sup> In light of this, Gottwald's thesis simply does not hold. The strong public confrontation between Jeremiah and the Judahite populace in his temple sermons reveals YHWH's activity was justified in the post-Josianic Judahite era in the mind of Jeremiah. There can be little doubt that others viewed the situation in this manner as well.<sup>95</sup>

Moving to Albrektson, though linking Lamentations and Psalms about Zion is warranted, his supposition that this focus determines or explains the theology of Lamentations is tenuous. First, methodologically it is more fruitful to talk about texts and their relationship to Lamentations rather than attributing these texts to a larger theological tradition. More will be said of this in 3.4., below. But assessed on Albrekton's terms, from a tradition history methodology, one recognises Lamentations reflects a multitude of traditions and each of these bears upon the theology of the book.

No single tradition adequately covers the book's theological diversity. What have been identified as broadly Deuteronomic, prophetic, or Zion traditions may be reflected in the book, but any one on its own does not determine or exhaust the theology of the whole. For example, though these threads weave through the theological fabric of Lamentations, Berlin has exposed purity paradigms that derive from (generally) priestly traditions as well.<sup>96</sup> The language that is connected with systems of purity and impurity arrives in Lam

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<sup>94</sup>In my view, Leuchter overdraws the evidence that links Jeremiah's relationship to the creation of Deuteronomistic theology in the Josianic court.

<sup>95</sup>Jer 26.20-24 reveals that Uriah the prophet also prophesied with similar reasoning against the Jerusalemite establishment and Judahite populace. King Jehoiakim actually pursued Uriah to kill him. Uriah fled to Egypt; Jehoiakim brought him back to Judah by force and killed him.

<sup>96</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 19-22.

1.9, 17 as well as 4.13-15.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, the paradigm of mourning plays into the theology of Lamentations and cannot be counted out.<sup>98</sup> The act of mourning identifies one with the dead, inverts the ordered world, and separates one from vitality, life, and YHWH himself.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, grief and painful emotion is displayed in ancient Israel through phenomenological expressions. In Lamentations, the phenomenology of mourning paves the way for both expressing pain and sometimes enacting penitence.<sup>100</sup> Albrektson may correctly recognise Zion ideology in Lamentations, but this in no way exhausts the book's theology or isolates the "key" to unlocking its purpose. Attempts to reduce its theology into a specific theological tradition, or couple of traditions, do not fit the intricacies of the book.<sup>101</sup>

### 2.2.2. Westermann and Brandscheidt

Although they both focus upon the world behind the text, Westermann and Brandscheidt do not arrive at the same theological position. Through form criticism, Westermann concludes the book's theology is to be found in its earliest oral formulation rather than its artificial acrostic pattern witnessed in the text at present. He views Lamentations as an aggregate work of individual poems and seeks to determine the theology of the book by investigating its historical development. As such, he argues that the poems originally were *not* governed by the acrostic structure and first were arranged in the form of communal laments. Westermann argues that if one reads and interprets the text according to the artificial acrostic design,

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<sup>97</sup>This includes the terminology for the menstruant, נדה (Lam 1.17), as well as the language of impurity that comes from contact with blood: טמאתה as well as טמא (Lam 1.9, 4.14-15).

<sup>98</sup>Xuan Huang Thi Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Bible* (JSOTSup 302; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

<sup>99</sup>Emmanuel Feldman, *Biblical and Postbiblical Defilement and Mourning: Law as Theology* (LJLE; New York: KTAV, 1977); Gary Anderson, *A Time To Mourn, a Time to Dance* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991); Paul Kruger, "The Inverse World of Mourning in the Hebrew Bible," *BN* 124 (2005): 41-9.

<sup>100</sup>For mourning as expressing pain, notice the acts of crying out, "אִיכָה," a hallmark of mourning (Lam 1.1; 2.1; 4.1), the act of wailing and crying out (Lam 2.19), the act the act of sitting upon the ground in isolation (Lam 1.1), and weeping (Lam 1.16). But notice as well Lam 3.28, "Let him sit alone and be silent"; here this typical act of mourning is transformed into a penitential act.

<sup>101</sup>See the similar critique of Michael S. Moore, "Human Suffering in Lamentations," *RB* 90(1983): 536-7.

“proceeding on a verse-by-verse basis and disregarding the changes that could have been introduced under the necessity of adhering to alphabetic form, one constantly runs the risk of inferring conceptual relationships between sections, lines, or even clauses, where such are simply not present.”<sup>102</sup>

In his view, the acrostic remains derivative and purely stylistic, an aesthetic frame that hinders an accurate understanding of the theological meaning of Lamentations. In response to this he proposes to redeem the meaning of the book through form criticism and comparative analysis of the genre of communal laments. He has determined that the poems should be read and interpreted apart from one another and believes that Lamentations 3 (specifically through the parenetic section in Lam 3.25-39) is the ultimate redactional stage of Lamentations and dilutes the potent force of the lament genre that the poetry evinces in chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5. To interpret the book from the view of the latest redactional stage misses the lament theology that occurs in earlier oral formulations of the book. In fact the poems must be reformulated so as to highlight the formal elements of the communal lament genre rather than following their final form. After this reformulation, he argues Lamentations, at least in its earliest stages, is best seen as an expression of pain, lament, and grief to God rather than developed theology. While Westermann may be methodologically justified in looking at the oral stages of the lament imbedded in the text of Lamentations (such analysis is certainly defensible), this methodology is not particularly equipped to deal with the theological interpretation of the text in its final form.

Westermann’s monograph fails to fully convince when he argues that the poems should not be read together but assessed on their own. The results of section 0.2., above, reveal that Second Isaiah and Zechariah employed Lamentations—and the whole of Lamentations in the case of Second Isaiah—to construct their theological messages. This external evidence from Lamentations’ usage by other biblical texts challenges Westermann’s assumption of literary development. His view also faces the challenge of internal evidence in Lamentations. The book itself reveals internal clues that suggest that it was designed to be read together; internal clues bind the poems, inviting the reader to engage with them as a whole. These clues have been mentioned above and include the repetition of formulaic address<sup>103</sup> and terminology, the repetition of the acrostic structure, as well as repetition of divine representation within and between chapters all work to hold

<sup>102</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 92 = *Lamentations*, 100.

<sup>103</sup>The vocative of יהוה + dual imperative (ראה וחביטה, “look and consider”) or ראה + the vocative of יהוה: Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a; 2.20a; 3.59; 5.1b.

the reader, opening avenues of engagement with them.<sup>104</sup> It is one thing to explain theological discrepancies along historical lines; it is another thing to explain what happens when the book comes together in its final form, and what theology emerges as a result of this.

Another way of approaching the question of theology historically is by observing its redactional layers to see how its theological outlook developed in the book. This may seem an advance compared with Westermann's work, to shore up the methodological deficiency of form criticism. Brandscheidt's monograph represents such an approach. It centres upon Lamentations 3 as the high point of the book's theology. In accord with Westermann, Brandscheidt views Lamentations 3 as the final (Deuteronomic) redactional layer in the development of Lamentations as a whole and the structural centre of the book. On the basis of the varying views of the future of Zion in each of the poems, Brandscheidt argues that the final corpus developed as follows: Lamentations 2, 1, 5, 4, and then 3.<sup>105</sup> The central chapter corrects the gross pain, suffering, and laments that Lamentations 1, 2, 4, and 5 present. The theology of this redaction espouses a penitent stance for the believing community, justifies the Lord's activity against his people, confirms his mercy and lovingkindness, and hopes in him on the basis of his beneficent nature.<sup>106</sup>

The Deuteronomic redactor compiled three pre-existing, separate poems (Lamentations 2, 1, 5) and added Lamentations 4 to the corpus; he adjoined Lamentations 4 to contrast the hopelessness of Lamentations 2 and provided a glimmer of hope through the addition Lam 4.22. The same redactor then completed the book by inserting the central chapter, Lamentations 3. Thus this chapter represents "der Mittelpunkt des Buches

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<sup>104</sup>A number of repeated terms bind the poem. In conjunction with the instance of פשעו in Lam 1.5. See פשענו, "we have transgressed" (Lam 3.42). Other terms in his list, that also appear in Lamentations, are חטא חטאה חטאת, "she sinned grievously," Lam 1.8a; חטאו, "his sin," Lam 3.39; מחטאת, "than the sin/punishment," Lam 4.6; מחטאת, "on account of the sin/punishment," Lam 4.13a; חטאתיך, "your sins," Lam 4.22; חטאו, "they sinned," Lam 5.7; חטאנו, "we have sinned," Lam 5.16), מרהי מרהי, "I have rebelled," Lam 1.18a; מרו מרהי, "I have rebelled exceedingly," Lam 1.20b; ומרינו, "we have rebelled," Lam 3.42), עוןך (על-עונך), "your sin," Lam 2.14b; עון, "sin," Lam 4.6a; עונות, "sins," Lam 4.13a; עונך, "your sin/punishment," Lam 4.22a, עונתיהם, "their sin/punishment," Lam 5.7). Previous work has been done on the fertile field of recurrent terms in Lamentations: specifically Albert Condamin, *Poèmes de la Bible avec une Introduction sur la Strophique Hébraïque* (2nd ed.; Paris: Beauchesne, 1933), 47-50; Renkema, *Lamentations*.

<sup>105</sup>Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenleid*, 202-35.

<sup>106</sup>Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenleid*, 350-1.

und der Kristallisationspunkt seiner theologischen Aussage."<sup>107</sup> With a parenetic section lying in the centre of it, the poem is structured concentrically<sup>108</sup>:

Bericht eines Einzelnen	3.1-16
Klage eines Einzelnen	3.17-20
Aufforderung zum Vertrauen	3.21-4
Belehrung	3.25-33
Belehrung	3.34-9
Aufforderung zur Umkehr	3.40-7
Klage eines Einzelnen	3.48-51
Bericht eines Einzelnen	3.52-66

Thus the centre of the poem, and the book as a whole, functions as parenesis, teaching worshippers the appropriate manner to behave during the exile and in times of judgment on sin.<sup>109</sup> Lam 3.21-41, especially the confession in vv. 40-1, offers proper response to the suffering Lamentations (repentance) as well as a basis for future hope (YHWH will deliver). This hope overrides the impulse towards lamentation. In her reading of Lam 3.39—"why should a living human complain, a man, on account of the punishment for sin?"—Brandscheidt argues that the poet rejects lamentation and expression of pain (embodied in Lam 3.1-20) as appropriate means of religious behaviour: "Damit sind die anklagenden Partien v. 1-16 und 17-20 als ein für den Frommen inadäquates Verhalten erwiesen worden."<sup>110</sup> The Deuteronomic redactor shapes the central chapter so that the parenetic section, urging hope in God, overrides the lamentation of 3.1-20. This theological hope follows to the end of the chapter, from which Brandscheidt concludes: "Jahwe, der schon immer den Gerechten erretet hat (v. 52-63), wird zur Hoffnung für das im Gericht zerschlagene Volk (v. 64-66)."<sup>111</sup> Thus the chapter determines the theological outlook and the appropriate theological response to YHWH for the community; through confession of sin and trust in him, despite the emotional laments in the other portions of the book, the community can have hope that God will deliver as he has done throughout Israel's history. In sum, Lamentations' literary history culminates with a Deuteronomic redactor ultimately controlling the theological significance of the book; this editor afforded Lamentations a pious, submissive, and hopeful theology to contravene the raging despondency of the expression of pain found in other chapters of the book as well as 3.1-20. Brandscheidt, then, brings attention to the final stage of theological development and

<sup>107</sup> Brandscheidt, *Das Buch der Klagelieder*, 157.

<sup>108</sup> Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenleid*, 48.

<sup>109</sup> Brandscheidt, *Klagelieder*, 157.

<sup>110</sup> Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenleid*, 66.

<sup>111</sup> Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenleid*, 234.

its value for theology in contrast to Westermann, who highlights the earlier, oral formulations and their value for theology.

Brandscheit's monograph rightly calls attention to the themes of suffering and sin, divine anger, and instruction in times of disaster. All of these comprise essential threads in the poetic tapestry of Lamentations. Likewise, her work appropriately views chapter three as a fundamental portion of the book, though she overestimates its value as a corrective for the other poems. Where Brandscheit's work fails to convince lies in her understanding of a Deuteronomic redaction. Determining what is, what is not, and what one means by Deuteronomic is notoriously difficult,<sup>112</sup> and her lack of precision flaws her understanding. From which Deuteronomic group does this redactor come and why is the redactor necessarily hopeful in YHWH's future deliverance for Judah?<sup>113</sup> When does this redactor write, and why? These questions are not sufficiently answered. Finally there is the issue of why a pious redaction is necessarily aligned with a Deuteronomic perspective over and above any other theological tradition.<sup>114</sup> Her failure to sufficiently address these issues is detrimental to her argument.

There also seems to be a general depreciation of honest prayer over and against her construal of Deuteronomic piety. She argues that the theology of hope is a Deuteronomic redaction designed to correct "inadäquates Verhalten" of lament in 3.1-20 and indeed the remainder of the poetry, assuming that this is something that godly worshippers (die Frommen) would not do. But it is not at all clear why the Deuteronomic redactor would need to correct the tone of 3.1-20 or the previous chapters; what about them is theologically problematic to the degree the redactor was forced to "correct" them?

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<sup>112</sup>See Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973 [1997]), 274-89; J. Gordon McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study of Deuteronomic Theology* (SOTBT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 33-44.

<sup>113</sup>The last question is significantly elevated in Cross' understanding of the exilic Deuteronomic redactor (Dtr2), who held out *little* hope for Judah in the exilic period. This goes exactly in the opposite direction of Brandscheit's dating and argument. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 285-9. For a recent discussion of the DtrH, see Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T & T Clark, 2006).

<sup>114</sup>So the critique of Renkema, who argues that the theology that Brandscheit favours could have just as easily derived from pre-exilic prophecies of judgment in Hosea or Amos, adapted to the Judahite community (Renkema, *Lamentations*, 37).



Westermann critiques her argument here and reveals the value of lamentation for the people of God, both in ancient Israel and in the present day.<sup>115</sup> Far from “impious,” lament remains fundamental to the religious life of ancient Israel (especially in pre-exilic and exilic periods) as honest expression of pain to God.<sup>116</sup> Whether the source of pain derives from enemies, one’s own sin, God’s punishment, or his apparent lack of attention, through the lament prayer one faithfully brings that hurt to God vocally in worship.<sup>117</sup>

In her devaluation of lament, Brandscheidt adopts an implicit understanding that lamentation is incompatible with proper religious expression.<sup>118</sup> But Westermann rightly argues that lament should not be seen “outside the domain of prayer” and impious. Moreover, she neglects the “intrinsic” value of lament as a “component of prayer, as is shown in the Psalter with its high percentage of psalms of lamentation.”<sup>119</sup> Expressing pain and questioning God are part of faith and worship.

Despite their differences, both Brandscheidt and Westermann commit to a hermeneutic which leads them to assess the theology of the book largely from historical grounds. Westermann assesses the book’s theology from the perspective of early oral formulations while Brandscheidt focuses on the final redaction and its impact on the theology of Lamentations. Their assessments of the theology of the book, however, will be assessed in the exegesis of the text in Chapters 5-7.

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<sup>115</sup>Westermann, “Struktur und Geschichte der Klage im Alten Testament,” ZAW 66(1954): 44-80; “The Role of Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament,” *Int* 28(1974): 20-38; *Die Klagelieder*, 78-87, 188-92 = *Lamentations*, 81-91, 230-5.

<sup>116</sup>Richard Bauckham shows how communal laments transformed into penitential prayer after the exile. Communal lament, typified by a distinctive lament-petition-motive structure develops into penitential prayer in the late exilic and post-exilic periods, typified by an adapted lament-petition-confession of sin structure. Lamentations evinces elements of both structures through its poems. See his *Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* (SBLAB 7; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

<sup>117</sup>“In the Old Testament, from beginning to end, the ‘call of distress,’ the ‘cry out of the depths,’ that is, the lament, is an inevitable part of what happens between God and man...In the lament of affliction the sufferer reaches out for life; he begs that his suffering be taken away; it is the only possibility in life left for him as long as he has breath...” [Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith Crim and Richard Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 261-2].

<sup>118</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 78 = *Lamentations*, 81.

<sup>119</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 79, 78 = *Lamentations*, 83, 82.

### 2.3. “Within” the Text: Renkema

House’s commentary on Lamentations is the only work to address Renkema’s analysis in depth.<sup>120</sup> Yet if Renkema’s assertions are correct, then interpretation of Lamentations’ theology becomes much more manageable than has hitherto been maintained. He interprets Lamentations’ theology from a proposed concentric logic displayed within the text itself, a structure that follows Canannite and Hebrew poetic convention.<sup>121</sup> Concentric structure is designed to push the reader to the centre of the poem to discover the theological “kernel,” or thrust, of each poem.<sup>122</sup> This is based upon a methodological assumption of the Kampen School which surmises that ancient readers—or more to the point, hearers—of ancient Canaanite or Hebrew poems would expect this concentric structure and suspend interpretation of the poem until the entire work was recited. Renkema’s quote is instructive:

“Subconsciously we usually assume that they [Hebrew poets] wrote their songs in the same way as we read them: from the beginning to the end, that is linearly...However it is highly questionable whether such an idea of literature also fits ancient texts, especially when they were meant to be recited and heard in a liturgical context, as were the Psalms and probably also the songs of Lamentations.”<sup>123</sup>

What I identify as the Kampen School, within whom Renkema’s analysis fits, represents the group of scholars that give rise to the methodology of structural analysis, mainly from the Kampen School of Theology.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>House, *Lamentations*, 336-43; 374-6. House quotes Renkema no less than eighty-five times, in comparison with Berlin, who quotes his work fourteen times in her commentary, which is a typical trend in modern commentaries on Lamentations.

<sup>121</sup>Repetition of terms or synonymous pairs of terms in opposing verses exhibits the structure. He argues that some poems are more *explicitly* concentric in structure than others. For instance Lamentations 2 has more of a concentric, or “concatenated,” structure than does Lamentations 1 (Renkema, “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” 309). The concentric structure of Lamentations 3 has already been mentioned in 0.3., above, in which two mirroring-panels exist: Lam 3.1-33 and Lam 3.34-66. The structural core of the poem is a combination of Lam 3.17, 50.

<sup>122</sup>Renkema, “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” 294-396; *Lamentations*, 72-9. He uses the term “kernel” to describe the thrust of the poem in: “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” 321.

<sup>123</sup>Renkema, “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” 294.

<sup>124</sup>Now called Kampen Theological University. Oesch likewise identifies this group as the “Kampener Schule.” See Josef M. Oesch, review of Pieter van der Lugt, *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: With Special Reference to the First Book of the Psalter*, *RBL* 2(2007). Its initial momentum derived from the various publications of Johannes C. de Moor but developed methodologically in the doctoral dissertation of de Moor’s student, Pieter van der Lugt. After van der Lugt’s dissertation, various Dutch

The Kampen School created a rule-based process of analysis to assess structures of Hebrew and Canaanite poetry. These rules (or laws) derive from empirical analysis of Northwest Semitic poetry—specifically Ugaritic and Hebrew verse. One benefit of such analysis lies in its supposed level of objectivity. That is, its laws give a framework by which a modern reader can understand how Northwest Semitic poets structured their poetry given that the modern reader is unfamiliar with a creative literary process that was certainly more intuitive for the ancient hearer of Northwest Semitic poetry. The first law that the Kampen School posits is that Northwest Semitic poetry primarily is governed by a hierarchal structure. Within the hierarchy, the smallest unit is the foot, followed by the colon, verse, strophe, canticle, sub-canto, and canto. They state that the hierarchy of units is governed by another crucial law: each structural unit can expand or contract within certain limits as the singers of the poetry saw fit, adapting the poetic structure to their creative needs. In this “breathing universe” of adaptation, the poets of Northwest Semitic had enormous flexibility within the larger structure of hierarchy.<sup>125</sup> The editors of *The Structural Analysis* offer the following diagram to chart this hierarchy<sup>126</sup>:

<b>Building Block</b>	<b>Smallest</b>	<b>Expandable</b>	<b>Largest</b>
Foot	1 syllable	Yes	8 syllables
Colon	1 foot	Yes	5 feet
Verse	1 colon	Yes	9 cola
Strophe	1 verse	Yes	4 verses
Canticle	1 strophe	No?	5 strophes?
Sub-canto	1 canticle	?	?
Canto	1 sub-canto	?	?

With this as a starting point, one may note trends in Northwest Semitic poetry. A regular pattern is concentric structure, where certain units in the first part of the poem are repeated or mirrored in corresponding places in the latter half of the poem. This observation remains important for biblical exegesis because where modern scholarship may assume a linear development to poetic logic, the exact opposite is the case for Northwest Semitic poetry. According to structural analysis, Northwest Semitic poetry is reflexive, introducing the central message of the poem within its heart. Thus repetitive

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scholars coalesced around his methodology which eventuated into structural analysis. Promulgated primarily in the Netherlands, structural analysis was made available to a wider audience through van der Meer and de Moor, eds., *The Structural Analysis of Biblical and Canaanite Poetry* (1988).

<sup>125</sup>van der Meer and de Moor, *The Structural Analysis*, 2, 60.

<sup>126</sup>van der Meer and de Moor, *The Structural Analysis*, 60.

patterns and allusion provide clues for structure rather than linear progression, as in narrative:

- A: certain elements introduced
- B: another element introduced
- C: the heart or message of the poem
- D: some element of B repeated
- E: some element of A is repeated

Structural analysis offers a ten-step methodology by which the structure of biblical poems can be analysed.<sup>127</sup> The methodology, to be sure, remains far from perfect and van der Meer and de Moor recognise that the methodology will not provide unanimity in results.

Renkema analyses Lamentations with the methodology of structural analysis and argues that the theological focus of each poem lies at its structural heart. Seeing the poems concentrically, Renkema believes that Lam 1.11; 2.11; 4.11; and 5.11 display the central thrust of those poems. Although “built” in a different way than the other poems, Lamentations 3 also is organised by concentric logic between mirroring cantos (Lam 1.1-33 and Lam 1.34-66) which makes the theological core of the poem a combination of Lam 3.17 and Lam 3.50: “My soul goes from peace; I have forgotten the good / Until he

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<sup>127</sup>(1) Delimit a poetic passage on the basis of *pētūhōt* and *sētūmōt*; (2) Translate the passage and do the work of textual criticism; (3) Divide (provisionally) the passage into poetic verses, making use of Masoretic accents as a guide, though not a final authority. This is sometimes called “colometry” or dividing the passage into various cola. Sometimes this division is supplemented by an analysis of rhythm between cola and verse; (4) Describe (provisionally) the content of the larger portions of the passage. Expanding outward, these portions are called strophes, and the combination of strophes, stanzas. This proves to be a contentious step due to the subjectivity at play in assessing content. However, this is a helpful step because it provides an initial and provisional idea of the literary structure of the passage; (5) Produce a concordance of all words used in the passage; (6) Assess markers of separation. Often these markers function to separate strophes and can be indicated by vocatives, imperatives, deictic particles, syntactic constructions attracting attention, and long verses such as tricola or quatrains; (7) Note internal parallelism that binds together verses within cola as well as external parallelism that binds larger structural units together. This external parallelism aids the translator in determining which larger units come together in some way; (8) Identify the strophes then identify the larger units, stanzas. Some call this larger unit a canticule. External parallelism functions to be a most helpful guide in determining strophes and stanzas; (9) Identify the external parallelistic ties that bind canticules to create a larger whole called sub-cantos. Move outward and determine whether these sub-cantos fit into a larger unit, which shall be called a canto; (10) Determine the definitive form of the poem on the basis of accumulated results of the preceding steps. If several possibilities emerge, then the structure that offers the lowest number of counter-indications is most likely the correct one. If still no clear structure emerges, then reconsult step one and consider whether there are redactional glosses that skew the structure. This process is explained fully in van der Meer and de Moor, eds., *The Structural Analysis*, vii-ix; 1-61.

looks down and sees, [YHWH] from the heavens” (נפשי נשיתי טובה עדי־ישקיף ותזנח משלום) (וירא יהוה משמים). Differently from Bo Johnson<sup>128</sup>, who sees the central verses of Lam 1, 2, 4 as transitions to the two halves of the poems, Renkema views the central portion of each poem in the book as interpretive guides; moreover, the poem as a whole is concentric so that the central message of the book arises from its structural heart in Lamentations 3.

From what he identifies as an initial lament (Lam 3.17) and the following prayer (Lam 3.50) Renkema believes that the theology presented in the book rests on a question: “Can [YHWH] continue to allow such agony, can he persist in punishment, when witnessing the pain of his beloved people?”<sup>129</sup> Renkema believes the poetry is designed to appeal to God *against* God in a means to offset the hidden face of God by calling out to him.<sup>130</sup> Compared to the historicist oriented paradigms offered above, it is important to note that Renkema does not neglect questions about Zion, Deuteronomic, or any other historical theological tradition of Israel impacting the theology of the book.<sup>131</sup> But instead of beginning there and then moving to the text, he rather focuses primarily upon the style and structure of the poetry to then focus upon the question of theology for the book. Only after this first move does he enjoin historical questions as to what theological tradents could have informed such theology. Renkema’s methodology is sound because it begins with the hard evidence first.

Yet to arrive at his theological thrust for Lamentations, Renkema perhaps overdraws the evidence. Significant weaknesses exist in evidence he provides to posit his mirroring-panel structure of Lamentations 3. He adroitly identifies words that occur in opposing strophes in the panels, such as יד, “hand,” in Lam 3.1-3 (strophe 1) and Lam 3.64-66 (strophe 22).<sup>132</sup> He does this with opposing strophes throughout Lamentations 3, but how significant this repetition of terminology actually is in the text remains unclear. It is not certain that concatenation carries the pragmatic force (the intended effects) that Renkema points out.<sup>133</sup> It may only suggest that the poem is intentionally and artfully designed.

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<sup>128</sup>Johnson, “Form and Message in Lamentations,” 58-73.

<sup>129</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 58-71; 337-43.

<sup>130</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 70-1.

<sup>131</sup>He specifically addresses these and other theological traditions and their potential impact upon the theology of Lamentations in his commentary: *Lamentations*, 57-71.

<sup>132</sup>Renkema, “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” 321-34.

<sup>133</sup>Set in speech-act theory, the locutionary and illocutionary force of the act of repeating terminology in opposing strophes does not then guarantee the perlocutionary

Moreover, his recognition of concatenation between strophes in Lamentations 3 is inconsistent. He makes vague connections between within and between canticles; further, no linkages exist between strophes 5 and 18. He argues that song response exists in strophes and canticles and is ascertained on the basis of repetition of terms or content.<sup>134</sup> The difficulty arises in that what counts as response remains too vague to be useful as a structuring device: it can be repetition of terms or synonyms or conceptual content. The repetition of terminology remains helpful because it is at the very least measurable. The main problem is the repetition of conceptual content. A brief example: Renkema links “who has seen affliction” (ראה עני) with “He has consumed my flesh and my skin” (בלה (בשרי ועורי). While it is true that God consuming one’s flesh and skin would count certainly as affliction, it is not clear that the latter responds to the former or why one should take it as a response. It appears that this connection is made intuitively, but not in terms of firm structural evidence like repetition of terminology. Moreover, one sees that the concatenation of strophes does not completely hold in Lamentations 3. No unifying term exists between Lam 3.13-15 (strophe 5) and Lam 3.52-54 (strophe 18).<sup>135</sup>

Though space does not allow full investigation of Renkema’s conclusions on the concentricity of each of the poems pointing to the theological “kernel” of each poem, especially in Lamentations 3, it is enough at this point to note strong caution taking his structural argument wholesale. His concentric structures do not hold completely at the level of strophes, canticles, or cantos. In my view there is a tendency to make certain elements fit within a structure that otherwise is not necessary. But in focus here is his construction of the theology of Lamentations on the basis of the world “within” the text rather than primary emphasis upon the worlds “behind” or “in front of” the text.

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effect of bringing the reader to the centre of the poem to recognise the theological thrust of the poem. The distinction between illocutions and perlocutions remain the area that speech-act theory’s originator, J. L. Austin, identified as the most problematic. See Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (2nd ed.; eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 110. See also Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 44-103.

<sup>134</sup>Renkema, “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” 322. Responses are responses to statements made in previous strophes or canticles.

<sup>135</sup>Renkema, “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” 321.

## 2.4. "In Front of" the Text

### 2.4.1. Seidman

Historicist and structural orientations, however, do not comprise the only way to frame the question of theology for the book. Seidman, Guest, and O'Connor all share certain concerns about the violence enacted to the feminine in Lamentations and this concern becomes crucial for their inception point of interpretation. They argue the poetry vindicates the Lord at the expense of the female in Lamentations, personified Jerusalem or "Dear Zion" (בת-ציון); the reader must in turn resist and contravene divine vindication. The supposed divine complicity in violent destruction of the personified feminine city of Jerusalem leads Seidman to state of God: "If we forgive him, it is because we are too exhausted to do otherwise."<sup>136</sup> Her ultimate desire is not to forgive God but to abandon him, in a sense. Her rage against God's violence, and her perception that Lamentations justifies it, leads her to wish for a bonfire in which all the books of lamenting and violence, destruction and abuse, could be thrown: the book of Lamentations included. From this she gains the title of her essay, "Burning the Book of Lamentations."

### 2.4.2. O'Connor

O'Connor, too, believes Lamentations theologically justifies YHWH's violence at the expense of the feminine, though she hopes the poet is simply wrong about YHWH's violence. She draws out a concept of protest against the Lord from the poetry, especially in Lam 2.20, where it appears that God's justice in his acts of slaughter and punishment is profoundly questioned. Far from allowing what she terms as Jerusalem's "abuse" to go unchecked, O'Connor argues that

"the book's speakers stand up, resist, shout in protest, and fearlessly risk further antagonizing the deity. They do not accept abuse passively. They are voices of a people with nothing left to lose, and they find speech, face horror upon horror, and resist unsatisfactory interpretations offered by their theological tradition. From the authority of experience, they adopt a critical view and appraise and reappraise their situation. The result is a vast rupture in their relationship with God, yet they hold on to God, and in that holding they clear space for new ways to meet God."<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>Naomi Seidman, "Burning the Book of Lamentations," in *Out of the Garden: Women Writers on the Bible* (eds. Christina Buchmann and Celina Spiegel; New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1995), 288.

<sup>137</sup>O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 123.

Like Westermann, O'Connor's reading of Lamentations is grounded in the view that Lamentations ultimately expresses the pain felt from the abuse of exile. The speakers of Lamentations, unable to see that this abuse could come anywhere but from YHWH, express pain and protest against Him. She says of Lam 1:17: "Like a woman in an abusive relationship, she agrees YHWH is justified in his treatment of her because she has 'rebelled against his word' (Lam 1:18a)."<sup>138</sup>

O'Connor herself wishes that the Lord is not abusive and violent, but rather powerless to prevent the violence. She sees a monistic theology in Lamentations—that both good and evil come from YHWH (see Lam 3:38)—and she hopes that this theology is culturally conditioned and not true of God's character. Thus the speaker of Lam 3:38 would be wrong in his monistic theology of suffering: God has not *caused* abusive violence—he is simply unable to halt it. O'Connor favours Lam 3:33, "For he [God] does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of humans."<sup>139</sup> From O'Connor's analysis, Lamentations gives voice to pain and accuses God of violence, and the role of the modern interpreter is to construct theology out of the protest.

#### 2.4.3. Guest

Likewise, Guest's analysis of theology in Lamentations derives from her concern to counter what she sees as a cycle of degradation of the feminine in the book. Guest judges that the explicit justification of divine violence (theodicy), as well as masculine concealment behind the naked, abused, raped, and humiliated image of the woman, persists in the ideology of the author of Lamentations, the history of (mostly male) commentary of the book, as well as in God himself. This must be contravened. She says: "Evading blame by hiding behind a woman's figure is nothing new... The damaging ramifications for women ever since [Adam hiding behind Eve in Gen 3.12] cannot be overstated."<sup>140</sup>

Hers is an addition to the well-known debate over "porno-prophets," which turns on the view that God justifies himself at the expense of women in the Old Testament, often described as loose women or whores in the prophets.<sup>141</sup> She traces how personified

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<sup>138</sup>O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 27.

<sup>139</sup>O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 122.

<sup>140</sup>Deryn Guest, "Hiding Behind the Naked Women in Lamentations: A Recriminative Response," *BI* 7, 4(1999): 413.

<sup>141</sup>See Athalya Brenner and Fokkeli van Dijk-Hemmes, eds., *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (BIS 1; Leiden: Brill, 1993);



Jerusalem is depicted as battered and the object of blame in Lamentations: she is raped (Lam 1.10), she is accused of guilt (Lam 1.5, 8), and she confesses guilt (Lam 1.14, 18, 20). So the author of Lamentations confirms the image of a battered woman to advance its rhetoric about Jerusalem's sin. She sees that mostly male commentators have reduced the pain and violation of the feminine, especially the rape in Lam 1.10, to advance the theology of just punishment: Jerusalem got what she deserved because of her sin. God too is implicated in abusing the feminine to advance the rhetoric of the city's sinfulness. Within the account of rape of Lam 1.10, Guest argues that God is implicated in this violation and justified for it through a form of theodicy: YHWH is justified, even in rape, because the city deserved punishment for sin.

The persistence of justified violence toward the feminine in Lamentations and in the commentary tradition leads Guest to read against the text, invalidating its claims. She argues "an appropriate response to the personification of Zion/Woman in Lamentations is one of resistance to the text and a female solidarity" with ancient women in the situation of oppressive abuse.<sup>142</sup> She reads against those who created the metaphor of a personified city as female because she feels that these patriarchal "masterminds" justify their own oppressive worldview at the expense of the female, making "Zion/Woman the elected victim, the offering given up on their behalf" in Lamentations.<sup>143</sup> This abuse of the female can then extend outward, to those who read and comment on the text. As a result, Guest concludes that the image of Jerusalem as a battered and abused city, the very personification itself, "must be rejected: literary oppression of women should not be continued."<sup>144</sup> Thus Guest sees in Lamentations' theology a clear affirmation of the city's sinfulness, only to read against it.<sup>145</sup>

Guest rightly brings attention to the pain and destructiveness presented in the book; however she paints far too monochrome a portrait of the book's theology. This becomes apparent when one looks at the issue of "blame" in Guest's analysis. Guest underreads the

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Brenner, "Pornoprophets Revisited: Some Additional Reflections," *JSOT* 70 (1996): 63-86. See also Gerlinde Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship between YHWH and Israel in the Prophetic Books* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 2003), 167-74.

<sup>142</sup>Guest, "Hiding," 427.

<sup>143</sup>Guest, "Hiding," 430.

<sup>144</sup>Guest, "Hiding," 444.

<sup>145</sup>This theological response is very much akin to David Blumenthal's protest theology, in which he recognises God's violent image to resist and refuse it: *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest* (Louisville: WJK, 1993).

complexity of the issue of “blame” by placing blame of the destruction upon the female scapegoat, Jerusalem personified. Guest is certainly correct that Lamentations 1 and 2 present the feminine personification of the city as battered, isolated, and abused. Even so, if one evades blame by hiding behind the female figure in Lamentations, then there are other persons behind whom the poet hides as well. On the basis of the text itself, not leaning upon any other theological tradition or any other canonical OT text, the blame for the disaster is spread around quite a bit and the feminine is not singled out. The man (גבר) of Lamentations 3 is also to blame for the punishment, especially in 3.39: “Why should a living human being, a man [גבר], complain about his punishment for sin?” Lee argues this works to implicate the גבר “man” in blame for the punishment of exile.<sup>146</sup> Lee further argues that Lam 4.13-15 contains an extended tirade against the leaders of Jerusalem, the priests and prophets, who are defiled and impure because they shed innocent blood, enraging the deity; the poetry blames the leadership for the downfall of Jerusalem here.<sup>147</sup> A similar critique is levelled at the prophets in Lam 2.14, in which they have “seen for you [Jerusalem] false and deceptive visions; they did not expose your iniquity so as to restore your fortunes. They saw oracles that were false and misleading.” Thus blame is spread around, not completely isolated to the female figure, though the female figure of Dear Zion certainly is implicated.

In addition, the theological presentation of theodicy is not as straightforward as Guest supposes. The Lord is not necessarily justified *carte blanche* at the expense of the feminine. Rather, there is a strong protest element at work in the theology of the book. As evidenced in O’Connor’s analysis, above, Lam 2.20 at the very least sees Dear Zion confronting YHWH in his activity: “Look, O YHWH, and consider to whom you have done this! Is it right that mothers consume their own fruit, little ones raised to health? Is it right that priests and prophets be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?” The protest impulse weaves into the fabric of verse and raises questions about the justice of God rather than affirming it. The poetry is not so unequivocally oriented towards theodicy that the feminine city must be “re-membered” as Guest suggests. While helpfully elucidating the anguish and pain witnessed in Lamentations as well as the masculine bias in the commentary tradition, Guest obscures the complexity, the ambiguity, of the book’s theology. While feminist hermeneutics remain viable methodologically, Guest’s

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<sup>146</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 175.

<sup>147</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 186-9.

employment of this methodology actually underreads theological data in Lamentations, skewing her results.

### 2.5. An “Integrated Approach”: Dobbs-Allsopp

Dobbs-Allsopp treats the theology of the book as a whole and concludes that it can be described in terms of a relationship between theology and justice. He arrives at this conclusion after careful analysis of the provenance and poetic characteristics of the work.<sup>148</sup> The exile remains a viable and plausible setting for uneasiness about the relationship between theology and justice to appear amongst God’s covenant people. Moreover Dobbs-Allsopp believes Lamentations should be read and theologically interpreted on the basis of this synchronic whole. Through comparative generic analysis between Lamentations and ANE city-laments Dobbs-Allsopp concludes that Lamentations fits in this ancient context and evinces specific generic resemblance to ANE city-laments.<sup>149</sup> His recent research into the poetic usage of enjambment, and how this affects the theology of the book, further points to his synchronic concerns and further differentiates his methodology from that of Westermann.<sup>150</sup>

He arrives at his position on the theology of Lamentations—a relationship between theology and justice—from internal evidence within the text. In Lam 3.58-9, YHWH is called upon to defend the appellant’s cause: “May you defend [רבת], O Lord, the disputes [ריבי] of my life; may you redeem my life. May you see, O YHWH, the wrong done to me; judge [שפטה] my cause [משפטי]!”<sup>151</sup> God is called to judge the ריבי, “disputes,” of the anonymous appellant, though he likely is to be identified with the גבר mentioned in Lam 3.1.<sup>152</sup> YHWH is figured as a judge, and most likely a just judge, who

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<sup>148</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Lamentations,” 1-36. See the fuller discussion in “Dating and Provenance” above.

<sup>149</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*.

<sup>150</sup>F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Enjambling Line in Lamentations: A Taxonomy (Part 1),” *ZAW* 113(2001): 219-39; “The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2),” *ZAW* 113 (2001): 370-85. In these, Dobbs-Allsopp engages the entire book of Lamentations and sees a decreasing use of enjambment as the reader progresses through the poems.

<sup>151</sup>I translate רבת, גאלת, and ראיתה as precativ perfects, following Provan and others. For precativ perfects, see; Provan, *Lamentations*, 105-9; “Past, Present and Future in Lamentations III 52-66: The Case for a Precative Perfect Re-examined,” *VT* 41 (1991): 164-75. See also IBHS §30.5.4c. For my full discussion, see the exegesis of 3.55-66, Chapter 7.

<sup>152</sup>See commentary, Chapter 7.

will rightly “defend” the disputant and “redeem” his very life. And the issue raised is that of justice, which has been perverted in some way and which the Lord must counter, rectifying the situation and placing the appellant back into a restored vitality, thus the notion of YHWH’s redeeming life through a positive decision. So in 3.58-9, the appeal to YHWH exemplifies the issue of justice.

Yet Dobbs-Allsopp projects this issue beyond the confines of 3.58-9 to the book as a whole. And he understands the relationship between justice and theology in the book in terms of polarised perspectives between “theodicy” and “anti-theodicy.”<sup>153</sup> Through the poetry, these perspectives aim to either (1) justify God, or (2) confront and resist God and his actions. Stemming from a concern for a post-Holocaust theology, Dobbs-Allsopp follows Braiterman’s description of theodicy, which attempts to “justify, explain, or find acceptable meaning to the relationship that subsists between God (or some other form of ultimate reality), evil, and suffering. In contrast, *antitheodicy* means refusing to justify, explain, or accept that relationship.”<sup>154</sup> His dependence upon Braiterman reveals his attention to the world in front of the text. That is, in what way does the text of Lamentations engage the present, and how does the present impinge upon interpreting the book?

Dobbs-Allsopp contends that as theodicy, Lamentations explains the destruction of Jerusalem in terms of God’s just punishment for the sinfulness of his people.<sup>155</sup> Theodicy is a well-established theological category in biblical literature and needs hardly any justification as a way to frame the question of theology in Lamentations. Outside Lamentations, portions of OT historiography justify God’s punitive action against his people through their sinfulness, establishing its theological links with theodicy.<sup>156</sup> Job, too, raises the issue of theodicy profoundly. Both of these examples provide external OT evidence by which to confirm that theodicy is a possible way to frame theology for Lamentations.

Moreover, Lamentations offers internal evidence that it conforms to this theological category. Instances of confession come in overt recognition of sinfulness or

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<sup>153</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 29.

<sup>154</sup>Zachary Braiterman, *(God) After Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>155</sup>Moreover, if God is just, then God is to be trusted, and the community may yet experience hope out of his merciful nature.

<sup>156</sup>See Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 89-99. But as to which portions and when they were composed, see Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 274-89.

covenant breach through legal terminology set against Judah and Jerusalem: “on account of her transgressions” (Lam 1.5), “we have transgressed” (Lam 3.42), “she sinned grievously” (Lam 1.8a), “his sin” (Lam 3.39), “on account of the sins,” (Lam 4.13a), “they sinned” (Lam 5.7), “we have sinned” (Lam 5.16), “I have rebelled” (Lam 1.18a), “I have rebelled exceedingly” (Lam 1.20b), “we have rebelled” (Lam 3.42), “your sin” (Lam 2.14b), “sins” (Lam 4.13a). In all of these, YHWH’s activity against his people is affirmed and justified as a result of the people’s sin. Further, confession of guilt and breach of covenantal relationship often comes through a characteristic usage of the term צדק, “just” or “right,” in a nominal phrase from the accused.<sup>157</sup> Such an example occurs in Lam 1.18: “YHWH is right [צדק], for I rebelled against his word.” Certain elements within the poetry of Lamentations justify God through confessions of sin. These confessions in the poetry conform to the category of theodicy.

But Dobbs-Allsopp contends that the book also exhibits anti-theodicy that functions to refuse to justify God’s activity. He says “to read Lamentations as theodicy is finally to misread Lamentations.”<sup>158</sup> Anti-theodicy protests against YHWH’s abusive actions against his people, expressing pain over injustice; more controversially, Dobbs-Allsopp argues that anti-theodicy goes so far as to charge the Lord with crimes. The initial movement of anti-theodicy, protest, gains impetus from Westermann’s theology of lament at work in Lamentations; Dobbs-Allsopp then pushes this observation further.

Lamentations moves from questioning the justice of God (a function of protest speech) to legal accusation or indictment against God for criminal activity. Dobbs-Allsopp sees the indictment of God as part and parcel of anti-theodic elements in the book. He contends that “antitheodic construals of God [in Lamentations] provide eloquent if troubling testimony that God is not always experienced as a beneficent force, and sometimes honest expression of God’s felt oppressiveness is necessary and even healthy.”<sup>159</sup> As I understand it, this quote from his commentary can be interpreted in two ways. In the first half of his statement he invokes language of “testimony” which could be tied to legal semantics, aligning the quote with a juridical concept of anti-theodicy. Or he may mean that Lamentations offers questions to God’s activity, resisting perceived

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<sup>157</sup>Ex 9.27; 2 Ki 10.9; Ez 9.15; Neh 9.33; Dan 9.14; Deut 32.4-5. See Pietro Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice: Legal Terms, Concepts and Procedures in the Hebrew Bible* (trans. Michael J. Smith; JSOTSup 105; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 103-4.

<sup>158</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 29.

<sup>159</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 31.

injustice through the literature without explicit dependence upon a juridical concept of anti-theodicy. It appears from his other writings, however, that Dobbs-Allsopp leans towards the legal function of anti-theodicy for Lamentations. Commenting on Lam 1.10, the well-known description of rape in Lamentations, Dobbs-Allsopp comments with Linafelt,

“We are compelled to compassion by these images of victimization, and in so far as Yhwh is envisioned as the perpetrator of this crime (Thr 1.12b.13c. 22b) we are led by the poet to question the ethics of Yhwh’s actions. Is there anything that can justify such an abhorrent crime? Our answer, and we believe the poet’s answer as well, must be an emphatic No!”<sup>160</sup>

Whether he is correct in his interpretation of these verses in Lamentations, Dobbs-Allsopp’s language is unequivocal and aligns clearly with juridical terminology. In his view, the poet accuses YHWH of a crime. Thus Lam 1.10 refuses to justify YHWH’s activity as a reaction against Judah’s sinfulness (c.f. Lam 1.8-9), revealing a strong anti-theodic stance that works to indict the Lord—and with juridical force.

The theodic and anti-theodic positions remain polarised and difficult to conjoin. Both turn on the question of justice, and a limitation of Dobbs-Allsopp’s approach lies in the fact that he does not offer adequate controls as to how the questions of justice and injustice would have been described and dealt with in ancient Judah in their relationship to YHWH. This limitation appears when Dobbs-Allsopp argues that anti-theodicy in the poetry of Lamentations works to accuse the Lord of criminal activity. He follows Braiterman, whose theology at large, as well as internal distinction between theodicy and anti-theodicy, is grounded in and developed from a post-Holocaust perspective. If Dobbs-Allsopp is correct in his assessment of the *legal* aspect of anti-theodicy in Lamentations, then this legal function against YHWH would represent a novum in Israelite theology, much less Israelite literature.

Westermann himself does not go so far but rather sees it as literature that brings the pain of the moment before the heavenly throne, leaving God to sort out his own relationship to the question of justice.<sup>161</sup> Westermann takes issue with the notion of Israel charging God of injustice through a legal indictment. Due to lack of a formal court in which this charge could actually occur, Westermann precludes the possibility that even the “Anklage des Gottes,” “the accusation against God,” within laments function to

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<sup>160</sup>F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp and Tod Linafelt, “The Rape of Zion in Thr 1.10,” ZAW 113(2001): 81.

<sup>161</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 86-9 = *Lamentations*, 91-5.

legally charge the Lord. He says, “Such a nuance is ruled out because an indictment presupposes a judicial forum, but the existence of any such forum—one before which God could be held accountable—is impossible in the Biblical understanding.”<sup>162</sup>

Westermann’s idea is confirmed within the psalms of lament in the Hebrew Bible, as no formal legal suit can be seen to be brought against YHWH and his activity in this literature. Rather the focus of lamentation calls God’s attention to a specific situation with the hope that he will adjudicate the situation faithfully and fairly as a just judge.<sup>163</sup> The typical movement of psalms of lament, whether communal or individual, moves from grief to praise<sup>164</sup>; there is little to suggest in the Psalter intended legal semantics (lawsuit or legal accusation) against God in its laments. Westermann rightly avers that opposed to offering “objective statements” that can be understood as legal indictments against God, the regularly occurring “Anklage des Gottes” only raises fundamental questions to God.<sup>165</sup> In light of this function of the “Anklage des Gottes” in the psalms of lament, Dobbs-Allsopp’s assertion of the legal aspect of anti-theodicy in Lamentations perhaps goes too far. Put another way, one can query whether the ancient Judahite poet(s) of Lamentations would have recognised its theology as anti-theodic in the sense of legal indictment of the criminal activity of the deity.

## 2.6. Conclusion

This survey of research has highlighted a number of different avenues of interpretation available in the academy for assessing the theology of Lamentations. The historical paradigm with its various emphases upon the world “behind” the text is helpful in that it highlights the essential historicity of the text. Lamentations has been produced in an ancient environment different from the present day. Tate rightly comments, “While it is true that texts exist and are valued independently of their originating circumstances, a

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<sup>162</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 86 = *Lamentations*, 92.

<sup>163</sup>Appeals to YHWH as a just judge, for instance, occur in Ps 7.12; 9.5. The justice of the Lord is confirmed even in the most unusual case in Psalm 82, where YHWH holds gods in the heavenly court into account for their unjust rulings (vv. 1-2). For explanation, see Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60—150* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 152-8.

<sup>164</sup>An obvious exception to this structure is Psalm 88, which remains despondent throughout without moving to praise.

<sup>165</sup>Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 176-8.

knowledge of those originating circumstances will inevitably increase the appreciation of a text.”<sup>166</sup>

Yet the present chapter revealed that the historical analyses offered to this point do not adequately depict the theology of Lamentations. Neither Deuteronomic/istic nor Zion theologies can be argued to determine the theology of Lamentations. Further, Westermann’s literary reconstruction of Lamentations does not explain the theology of this biblical book; evidence points towards the book being a unified whole. Finally, the redactional approach offered by Brandscheidt is not adequate for the same reasons. The discrepancy in the theological portraits between Lamentations 3 and the other texts noted by both Brandscheidt and Westermann need not be explained on the basis of literary or redactional development.

A focus upon the world “within” the text rightly calls attention to reading Lamentations as a synchronic whole, yet caution is indeed in order when dealing with Renkema’s structural analysis of the text. Renkema rightly highlights correspondences of terminology between some strophes and further notices helpful thematic linkages between poems as with the concept of disgrace in Lam 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, and 5.1.<sup>167</sup> Yet in my view, Renkema has overdrawn the evidence to fit into his structural analysis. Moreover, even if he is correct about the concentricity of the text on the repetition of terminology, from the standpoint of philosophy of language, it does not then follow that the pragmatic force of this construction was to move the reader or audience to the centre of the poem to discover its theological kernel. It can be argued that the repetition of terms within and across strophes and canticles first and foremost highlights the literary artistry and well-crafted design of the book. Despite its drawbacks, Renkema’s approach can be rightly understood as constructing theology from a perspective of the world “within” the text.

Finally, this chapter touched upon those who construe the theology of Lamentations with a concern for the world “in front of” the text. The feminist works of Guest, Seidman, and O’Connor rightly draw attention to the themes of abuse, degradation, and pain in the book of Lamentations. Likewise, Guest may be correct in her assumption that interpreters of Lamentations have enforced a paradigmatic reading of Lamentations that degrades the female. Yet it has also been revealed that Lamentations itself does not isolate the feminine figure as a victim of degradation. The גבר of Lamentations 3 was

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<sup>166</sup>Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 3.

<sup>167</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 39.



shown to endure an enormous amount of pain in conjunction with בַּת־צִיּוֹן in Lamentations 1—2. Thus the feminist concerns of these scholars may have contributed to them underreading the text and skewing the theological presentation in Lamentations.

The present study adopts an integrated approach, typified by Dobbs-Allsopp's works. And though adopting an integrated approach, I do not argue that one approach necessarily or generally supersedes another. Rather I simply have endeavoured to indicate and assess the deficiencies of each frame for investigating the theology of one biblical text: Lamentations. Because an integrated approach accounts for the worldview out of which the text was created—the world “behind” the text—some interpretative “guardrails” exist (see 3.2.2.) that encourage certain interpretations and discourage others.<sup>168</sup> In section 3.3.1., below, it shall be demonstrated that Eco calls this knowledge of the world behind the text textual “circumstance.” Factors that touch upon the world “behind” the text certainly include literary conventions but also any data that funds the worldview of the text: sociological data such as mourning rites, penitential rites, or covenant structures, other OT material available at the time of the text's production, other written texts, or generic and poetic conventions. As I shall demonstrate in section 3.2.2., this cumulative data will be identified as “encyclopaedic knowledge” in the semiotics of Umberto Eco.

An integrated approach also brings the world “within” the text to bear upon theological analysis of Lamentations. The structure of Lamentations as well as its poetic features remains vital for theological interpretation. Dobbs-Allsopp has done this in both his various readings of Lamentations—reading it as a tragic structure or a lyric sequence—aids analysis.<sup>169</sup> But this focus requires the text of Lamentations to be treated as a canonical whole so that specific portions can be measured against other portions poetically, so that theological understanding is gained without smoothing over discrepancies through historical deconstruction, as was seen in Westermann. This remains an important point. Apparent theological dissonance highlighted above need not be explained through historical and theological development of the text. Rather these can be read and analysed synthetically. Tate argues the “interpretation of a text is exactly that—

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<sup>168</sup>As demonstrated in the analysis on Dobbs-Allsopp's juridical view of anti-theodicy in Lamentations.

<sup>169</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “Tragedy, Tradition, and Theology in the Book of Lamentations,” *JSOT* 74(1997): 29-60; “Lamentations as a Lyric Sequence” (unpublished manuscript); *Lamentations*, 20-23; “The Enjambling Line in Lamentations: A Taxonomy (Part 1),” 219-39; “The Effects of Enjambment (Part 2),” 370-85.

the interpretation of the whole and not just the stringing together of the interpretations of disjointed individual units.”<sup>170</sup> Focusing on the world “within” the text provides richer understanding of its canonical form and its theology. This shall be discussed further in Eco’s conception of “the intention of the work” (*intentio operis*) in 3.3.1.

Finally, in the integrated approach, the world “in front of” the text is taken into account. The reader’s concerns and preconceptions are brought to bear in the process of interpretation, engaging the “clue” of the text to initiate the interpretative process. There are two aspects of “concerns and preconceptions” of the reader intended here. On the one hand, *explicit* concerns and reading lenses influence the interpretative practice, as evidenced in Dobbs-Allsopp’s characterization of the theology of Lamentations from a post-Holocaust perspective and Guest’s feminist analysis. Reading Lamentations is accomplished with specific questions in mind and these questions necessarily help shape the interpretation of the work. On the other hand, *implicit* concerns and preconceptions also shape the reader as well.

Human understanding never begins as a “*tabula rasa*,” in the terms of Williamson’s quote in the previous chapter.<sup>171</sup> Understanding is shaped by both conscious and unconscious concerns in the reading process. As ancient worldview and ideologies fund the imagination of the ancient text, so too, worldview and ideology do fund the imagination of the reader, unconsciously shaping and colouring the reader’s interpretation of the ancient text. By noting the world “in front of” the text, an integrated approach recognises that the reader, interpreting the text with both explicit and implicit presuppositions, is determinative for instigating the process of interpretation—without the reader, the text remains inert. I will situate this position within Eco’s theory and his differentiation between the empirical and model readers in section 3.3.1., but suffice to say at this point an integrated approach understands that the reader actively seeks meaning from a text. The goal for interpretation is a fusion of horizons between the worlds of the reader and the text so that communication from the text to the reader occurs. This discussion orientates one to previous attempts to discern the theology of

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<sup>170</sup>Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 78. This point is heightened in Lamentations, which not only can be read synchronically, but appears to have been created to be read in this manner. Tate’s conclusion on the literary reading of a text may be overstated especially when considering the diachronic dimension to biblical texts.

<sup>171</sup>Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture*, 79.

Lamentations and reveals both the challenges and prospects for theological analysis of the book.

And yet, if understanding never proceeds value-free, then it is certainly the case that pre-understandings are involved in the interpretation of Lamentations demonstrated in the present study. So presuppositions of a present day Christian, Jewish, or agnostic interpreter may well impact how he or she interprets Lamentations. This is a reality that cannot be escaped, whatever position one adopts concerning either critical or fideistic approaches to the biblical text.<sup>172</sup> And yet, though I am a Christian interpreter, the proceeding analysis of Lamentations 1—3 is not necessarily simply a reflection of the ideology of the present author. Rather, I have adopted an integrated approach in the present study precisely because it appears to be the most balanced way to manage the process of interpretation; the present work follows Tate to integrate these constructively to gain a clearer understanding of the theology of Lamentations, especially Lamentations 1—3. An integrated approach provides a plausible means by which the text can transform the present author's readerly drives so as to become a *better* interpreter and reader of the text.<sup>173</sup> This will cohere with the process of interpretation evinced by Eco, in which the text provides constraints that limit interpretative drives of the reader.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>See Walther Eichrodt, "Does Old Testament Theology Still Have Independent Significance?" In *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, revised edition (ed., Ben C. Ollenburger; SBTS 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 23-5.

<sup>173</sup>See also Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

<sup>174</sup>See 3.2.2. and 3.2.3., below.

## **CHAPTER 3: SEMIOTICS AND AESTHETIC THEORY OF UMBERTO ECO**

### **3.1. Introduction**

As indicated in the previous chapter, the present study examines the final form of Lamentations, with interest to its theology. The diversity of views on the theology of Lamentations has also been demonstrated. It is clear that one's critical starting point plays a role in determining theology in Lamentations. Whether an integrated approach (Dobbs-Allsopp), a focus upon the world "in front of" the text (Guest, O'Connor, and Siedman), the world "within" the text (Renkema), or a focus upon the world "behind" the text (Westermann, Brandscheidt, Gottwald and Albrektson), differing approaches act as critical lenses that colour the way the text is viewed. The present study studies Lamentations with an integrated approach in which all three horizons are informative.

With an integrated approach for interpreting the theology of Lamentations in view, it is appropriate to now turn to the semiotics of Umberto Eco. At present the academy is open to a variety of critical methodologies,<sup>175</sup> opening a number of avenues to assess the biblical text. This kind of pluralism in the academy is beneficial because it allows the text to be scrutinised from a variety of critical perspectives, broadening textual understanding.

One of the ways that the text has been explored is through semiotic analysis. This is a broad critical enterprise, but one of its main theoreticians outside of biblical studies, yet whose theory some biblical scholars have adopted,<sup>176</sup> is Italian semiotician Umberto Eco. Situating Eco in the critical tradition is not an easy task. His positions on text and interpretation remain highly nuanced. Because the critical landscape is diverse, and also his hermeneutical theory may be unfamiliar to biblical scholars, it is important to situate Eco's semiotics critically within biblical studies, move to his aesthetic theory, and finally consider the benefits for Eco's theory for assessing the theology of Lamentations.

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<sup>175</sup>For a representative view of methodologies, S. E. Gillingham, *One Bible Many Voices: Different Approaches to Biblical Studies* (London: SPCK, 1998); Robert Morgan and John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (OBS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>176</sup>See, for instance, Edgar Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism* (JSOTSup 376; London: T & T Clark, 2003).

I employ the aesthetic theory of Eco for a number of reasons. Hermeneutically, it coheres with the integrated approach. But also Eco's theory takes literature like Lamentations as a purposefully crafted artefact designed for communication, and this distinction remains a helpful premise for Lamentations interpretation. Moreover, his theory offers a way to analyse specifically aesthetic texts, of which Lamentations is one, if by aesthetic one intends "artistic" literature created to elicit reactions to it rather than providing straightforward reportage. Recognising Lamentations as an aesthetic text should aid understanding of the theology of chapters 1-3. Finally, Eco gives a framework to assess the pragmatic dimension of aesthetic texts, and by this I mean how a text is designed to create different effects for its readers.

Eco's aesthetic theory derives from his larger semiotic project, which provides a way of thinking about how communication works in general and a framework by which to assess how specific communication functions and to what effects. To this end, his semiotics deals with communication and pragmatics. In Eco's understanding, pragmatics has to do with the expected effects generated by textual discourse.<sup>177</sup> "Open" and "closed" texts are the models that he uses to describe different pragmatic functions of texts, and this distinction will prove helpful for assessing indistinctness of theological portrayal in Lamentations 1—3.

Contextualized within the realm of biblical studies, Eco's aesthetic analysis connects with both poetic and rhetorical analyses. As in poetic and much rhetorical analysis, the text is assessed as a synchronic whole, engaging with the stylistic devices that are employed for communication. There are a number of critical methodologies which can be identified as poetic,<sup>178</sup> but I intend here poetic analysis that begins with the text, delimits its passages, analyses its genre, structure, conventions, and stylistics, then explains them. In short, poetic analysis that looks "not only for *what* the text says, but

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<sup>177</sup>Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (AS; London: Macmillan, 1984), 68-80.

<sup>178</sup>These include more theoretical analyses that take critical methodologies from literary theory and then apply them to biblical studies. This can be done in the veins of structuralist analysis, speech-act theory, or new criticism. These are properly poetic analyses in that they attempt to formulate general rules according to which the text as a synchronic whole was composed and what it means. See John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (London: DLT, 1984), 104-39.

also *how* it says it.”<sup>179</sup> Aesthetic analysis has much in common with poetic analysis in that it observes genre, structure, and stylistics in a text and explains how these function.

Eco’s aesthetic analysis also pays close attention to the pragmatics of style: how style produces effects (in terms of expectation and actual functioning) for the reader, and why. In this way, aesthetic analysis shares common ground with rhetorical analysis. Rhetorical criticism’s founder in biblical studies is Muilenburg,<sup>180</sup> and his students<sup>181</sup> took up his programme and developed it to observe the pragmatic force of biblical texts. Rhetorical criticism is concerned with both the style of a text as well as how style impacts an audience.<sup>182</sup> And this is what I intend when I connect the concerns of rhetorical criticism to Eco’s aesthetic analysis. It diverges from the former methodologies in its hermeneutical sophistication and its critical depth in dealing with pragmatics of aesthetic texts. In the remainder of the present chapter, I shall address his semiotics and aesthetic theory and distinguish its usefulness for assessing the poetry and theology of Lamentations 1—3.

### 3.2. Semiotics of Umberto Eco

#### 3.2.1. Introduction

Semiotics studies signs and the title of the discipline derives from the Greek word *σημειον*, “sign.” Understood in Eco’s theory, signs are both linguistic and extralinguistic markers that point to meaningful bits of information.<sup>183</sup> Aichele describes semiotics as

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<sup>179</sup>Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 20. See also Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984); Meier Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Luis Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (*SubBi* 11; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988).

<sup>180</sup>James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” in *Beyond Form Criticism* (ed. Paul R. House; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 49-69.

<sup>181</sup>Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

<sup>182</sup>Dale Patrick and Allen Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation* (JSOTSup 82; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 14.

<sup>183</sup>Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (AS; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 30, n. 1. Signs may be words or language but they may also extend to phenomenal objects that signify something meaningful such as a semaphore, for instance, or a gesture (Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 9-13).

“the study of the possibility and conditions of meaningful communication,”<sup>184</sup> and as this definition implies, semiotics is associated with communication theory. Eco wants to discover how information goes out from a sender along a channel to a receiver as meaningful communication. His semiotics accounts for (1) a theory of codes, that is, the structures available to produce messages for communication, and (2) a theory of sign-production, that is, the contextual circumstances in which specific communicative acts are created and transmitted through signs.<sup>185</sup> These two sides of his semiotics address the framework and possibility of potential communicative acts (a theory of codes) and the generation and structuring of specifically instantiated communicative acts, such as texts (a theory of sign-production).

A well-known model garnered from communication theory<sup>186</sup> (sender → channel → receiver) grounds his analysis. Communication theory gives a frame for communication between human beings. The basic model proposes that senders produce certain messages and transmit them along channels; at the other end of the channels, receivers await the messages, obtaining them (or not, whatever the case may be). And yet, the relative simplicity of this model conceals the difficulty associated with real communication, especially between human beings. Eco argues that the simple model does not sufficiently “describe the actual functioning of communicative intercourses.”<sup>187</sup>

In reality, communication involves a complex process of production and interpretation that exploits signification systems. A signification system is an abstract network of cultural data available to be used to encode meaningful messages; it is “an autonomous semiotic construct that has an abstract mode of existence independent of any possible communication act it makes possible.”<sup>188</sup> Signification systems enable potential communicative acts and human beings employ elements from them to produce *meaningful*, or significant, communication. A sender produces a message and then the

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<sup>184</sup>George Aichele, *Sign, Text, Scripture: Semiotics and the Bible* (Interventions 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>185</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 3-5.

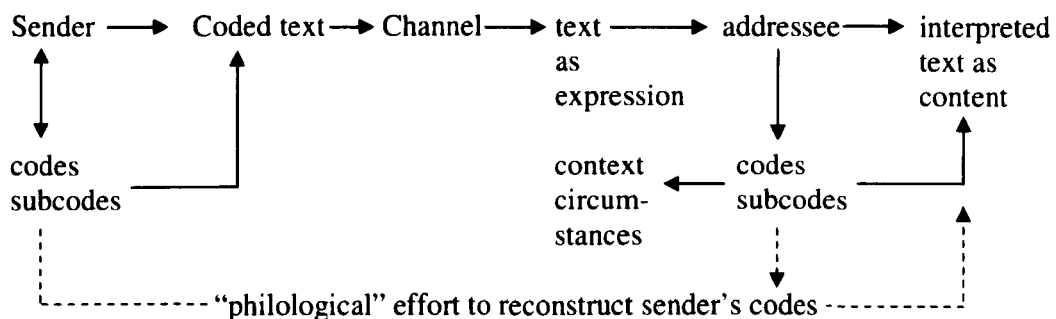
<sup>186</sup>A model first proposed by C. E. Shannon and W. Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1949). Eco relates the model to his theory in *A Theory of Semiotics*, 32-47.

<sup>187</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (AS; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 5. These “communicative intercourses” include oral and written communication, and the focus of the present study is upon written communication.

<sup>188</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 9. See also Michael Caesar, *Umberto Eco: Philosophy, Semiotics and the Work of Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 81.

receiver begins to interpret this message. If the receiver is unacquainted with the world in which the sender produces the message, or the data from the signification system employed by the sender, then communication may fail or misunderstanding may occur; however the converse may occur as well. Eco modifies the basic communication model and incorporates various other elements:

Figure 3.1.: Eco's Modified Communication Diagram<sup>189</sup>



From this diagram, it is apparent that the traditional sender-to-receiver model has been advanced considerably. Eco has taken into account the codes and subcodes of the sender and how the sender codes a text. He also takes into consideration the context and circumstances in which the text is created. Moreover, he takes seriously the text as a created expression (important for aesthetic texts especially) and how this expression impinges upon the addressee. Finally, Eco relates the codes and subcodes of the addressee, as well as the context and circumstances of the addressee's reception of the text, into consideration. The dashed lines that extend downward from the sender and addressee point towards the addressee's attempt to reconstruct the codes and subcodes of the sender so as to gain greater understanding on the actual content of the message. In agreement with the integrated approach adopted in the present study, Eco acknowledges the world behind the text (codes/subcodes of sender, how the text was coded), the world within the text (text as expression), and the world in front of the text (codes/subcodes of addressee, context and circumstances of addressee's reception of the text). Thus the integrated approach adopted in the present study fits well with Eco's presentation of the communication process.

<sup>189</sup>Diagram adapted from Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 5. The diagram in *The Role of the Reader* is a revised version from *A Theory of Semiotics*, 141.



## 3.2.2. Eco's Theory of Codes and Encyclopaedia

It is in place to explain Eco's theory of codes. In common parlance, the term "code" remains ambiguous, for at least three different plausible senses arise with the term: paleographic, correlational, and institutional.<sup>190</sup> In the first sense, paleographic, the code is written to refer to something else; Eco's example is the *codex*, nomenclature derived from Latin roots for wooden tablets smeared with wax and that came to be known as parchment or paper books. In this sense, code denotes something designed to tell about something else. In the second sense, a code is a correlational system that connects two other systems. His example is Morse code, in which electric signals are related to specific letters in the alphabet. The third sense of the term arrives in the idea of legal codes; institutional codes are systemic and conventional rules designed to govern a specific subject. While his example is legal code, other codes are understood in this sense as well: codes of etiquette, chivalry, and social systems (systems of mourning or shame).<sup>191</sup>

Along with the semantic range associated with the concept of a code, Eco distinguishes between s-codes and codes proper. Eco says that a code is "a system of signification, insofar as it couples present entities with absent units. When—on the basis of an underlying rule—something actually presented to the perception of the addressee *stands for* something else, there is *signification*."<sup>192</sup> S-codes (or "system-codes") however, are structures that exist in cultures independent of communicative processes but essential to them. S-codes are systems of possibilities designated in syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic structures that are potentially useful for signification, or meaningful communication. These can be (a) syntactic structures (such as language), or combinatory possibilities yet to be activated in a communicative act, (b) semantic structures or sets of possible meaningful states or notions which are conveyed through signals but as yet not realized, or (c) pragmatic structures, systems of possible behavioural responses anticipated from any communicative process.<sup>193</sup> Alternatively, a code couples any of the s-code possibilities designated by (a), (b), or (c). Eco argues that s-codes only garner attention when they are inserted in an intentional communicational framework—a code. Through a code, a message is produced and this message can convey both information

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<sup>190</sup>Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 164-6.

<sup>191</sup>Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 164-6.

<sup>192</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 8.

<sup>193</sup>Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 165.

and possible instruction for the receiver. This message is encoded in a sign or a text; the receiver actively interprets the text so as to understand the message and respond to it.

Also associated with his theory of codes is Eco's important concept of the encyclopaedia. The encyclopaedia encompasses s-codes and can be related to Eco's understanding of the signification system. If a theory of codes frames how one might understand the structure of potential communicative acts, then the encyclopaedia proffers a way to describe the global material from which s-codes and codes are constructed that give insight to specific communicative acts. The encyclopaedia is a descriptor of the cumulative amount of cultural knowledge present to a creator of a message at the time of its genesis. Set in terms of biblical studies, the encyclopaedia represents all cultural information available to the creator of Lamentations in the period of its creation: social discourse, ritual practices (such as mourning, liturgy, sacrifice, worship, festal celebrations, etc.), theology, language, history, historical realities, literary genres, poetics, and conventional understandings. In short, the encyclopaedia comprises the total repertoire of cultural knowledge available to the creator of a text.

Eco illustrates the encyclopaedia with the model of a "rhizomatic structure." A rhizome is a "tangle of bulbs and tubers" that appear in a mesh of interconnected points.<sup>194</sup> The qualities of a rhizome are: that every point of the rhizome must be connected with every other point, that it can be broken off at any point and reconnected, that it has neither recognizable beginning or end, that it has neither outside nor inside, it is susceptible to continual modifications, that it can grow outward or be cut off, that it cannot give a global description of the whole but rather only localized description due to the fact that it is always growing or changing.<sup>195</sup> Seen in this light, the encyclopaedia is a net or tangle of cultural information, with each point of information intertwined with all other points. The encyclopaedia, like the rhizome, grows and expands as culture expands; broadening the connections between information points however disparate they might appear from one another. Moreover, describing the encyclopaedia (or any point of cultural information) can only be accomplished from a localised level, and there is no etic perspective by which to empirically perceive and assess the whole. The encyclopaedia, then, remains theoretical yet knowable via localised descriptions of it.

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<sup>194</sup>Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 81.

<sup>195</sup>Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 81-2.

Taking this discussion to a practical level for communication, though all possible points in the encyclopaedia are available to be actualised in a communicative act, the sender of the message only “blows up” or actualises a particular point through one’s cultural knowledge and social location and “narcotises” other points.<sup>196</sup> Eco states, “[T]he knowledge represented by an encyclopaedia is a ‘cultural’ knowledge.”<sup>197</sup> Encyclopaedic knowledge is therefore local to whatever individuals are creating and receiving communicative messages. This has the effect of shattering the “crystal-like perfection” of dictionary models of semantic representation that demand universal semantics of terms grounded upon differentiae.<sup>198</sup> The benefit of an encyclopaedic model arises in the fact that meanings of things are “common social beliefs, sometimes mutually contradictory and historically rooted, rather than atemporal and theoretically fixed constructs.”<sup>199</sup> Thus interpretation can begin productively from a specific and localised level within the encyclopaedia and then move outward to discern meaning in a text. In this way the concept of the encyclopaedia becomes a “‘regulative idea’; it is only on the basis of such a regulative idea that one is able actually to isolate a given portion of the social encyclopaedia so far as it appears useful in order to interpret certain portions of actual discourses (and texts).”<sup>200</sup>

But the quality of localisation of encyclopaedic knowledge creates a fundamental challenge as well. If all encyclopaedic knowledge is cultural and localised, there is no guarantee that the receiver of a message will have the same encyclopaedic competence as the sender; in Eco’s conception of the encyclopaedia there always exists the danger of misunderstanding. Set in terms of his theory of codes, the codes employed by the sender to encode a message may not be the same codes employed by the receiver to decode the message. Eco agrees that the potential for code “mismatching” is ever present in communication, yet this in no way diminishes the force of his concept of encyclopaedia. Rather, he argues that this concept best reflects the actual act of understanding any communicative act. Thus in the rhizomatic labyrinth of the encyclopaedia “every local description of the net is a *hypothesis*, subject to falsification, about its further course; in a

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<sup>196</sup>Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 79-80.

<sup>197</sup>Umberto Eco, “Dictionary vs. Encyclopaedia,” pages 201-6 in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Semiotics* (ed. Thomas Sebeok; 3 vols.; Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 1: 206.

<sup>198</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 100.

<sup>199</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 99.

<sup>200</sup>Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 84.

rhizome blindness is the only way of seeing (locally), and thinking means *to grope one's way*.<sup>201</sup>

Yet “groping one's way,” or what he calls more technically “abduction,” remains positive and constructive rather than negative and deconstructive, so that knowledge and ultimately understanding of the specific communicative act is garnered through it. This separates Eco from other postmodern philosophers, notably Fish, Rorty and Derrida. Eco believes that texts are meaningful in an engagement between the reader, the text, and the encyclopaedia. He argues that this standpoint is theoretically “moderate” compared to other reader oriented theories of interpretation:

I shall take a ‘moderate’ standpoint, arguing against some intemperance of so-called reader-response criticism. I shall claim that a theory of interpretation—even when it assumes that texts are open to multiple readings—must also assume that it is possible to reach an agreement, if not about the meanings that a text encourages, at least about those that a text discourages.<sup>202</sup>

In contrast to this view, Fish argues that readers of texts determine textual meaning specifically through “the authority of interpretative communities.”<sup>203</sup> Fish's reader-response theory argues that there is no “meaning” in the text at all; meaning is a construct of the communally-constructed reader: “The reader's response is not *to* the meaning; it *is* the meaning”<sup>204</sup> of a text. Fish understands that the reader, and one's interpretation of a text, is determined by one's community. Eco, on the other hand, firmly argues that meaning of a text can be adduced through a process of abduction through the encyclopaedia.

Rorty argues that texts cannot be interpreted but only used.<sup>205</sup> Rorty avers, “[Eco] insists upon a distinction between *interpreting* texts and *using* texts. This, of course, is a distinction we pragmatists do not wish to make. On our view, all anybody ever does with anything is use it. Interpreting something, knowing it, penetrating to its essence, and so on are all just various ways of describing some process of putting it to work.”<sup>206</sup> Here Rorty

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<sup>201</sup>Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 82.

<sup>202</sup>Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 45.

<sup>203</sup>Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 538.

<sup>204</sup>Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 3.

<sup>205</sup>Richard Rorty, “The Pragmatist's Progress,” in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation: Umberto Eco* (with Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler and Christine Brooke-Rose; ed. Stefan Collini; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 89-108.

<sup>206</sup>Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (AS; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 93.

firmly disagrees with Eco's theory due to its insistence on the discovery of meaning in a text, or *interpretation*. As Eco defines it, usage means "to start from it in order to get something else, even accepting the risk of misinterpreting it from the semantic point of view."<sup>207</sup> As Eco states of *usage*, "I can read a text to get inspiration for my own musing," but to interpret a text, "I must respect [its] cultural and linguistic background."<sup>208</sup> Thus, Eco believes that interpreting a text for its meaning (or meanings) comes from analysing the text itself, with rigor. Usage, on the other hand, comes from a belief that textual meaning only arises from the reader himself, as one finds in Rorty's "The Pragmatist's Progress,"<sup>209</sup> and Derrida's deconstructive theory.

Derrida argues that while texts may be interpreted, these interpretations are always provisional and never arrive at "meaning" of a particular text in terms of original sense.<sup>210</sup> Reading for Derrida is always something done behind the back of the author, something "unperceived by the writer" and thereby something foreign to the author's original sense.<sup>211</sup> Though too expansive a discussion to explore here, this has to do with Derrida's fundamental dissolution of both the concept of, and relationship between, the subject and the object in his philosophy. In consequence, there is never a stable object that a controlling subject can analyse and assess.<sup>212</sup> Thus the text, like the author (and reader), remains temporally in flux and fixed meaning cannot be gained.

Derrida avoids claims to concretised meaning and prefers openness, though an openness quite different from what Eco describes. For Derrida, the free play of reading does not hope to heighten emphasis on an ambiguous or ironic point within the structured framework of a text's unified meaning; rather Derrida's deconstructive reading collapses the whole system upon which the text's supposed "unified meaning" stands.<sup>213</sup> Reading actually defers meaning, always revealing the absence of original meaning of a text.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>207</sup>Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 57.

<sup>208</sup>Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 69.

<sup>209</sup>Rorty, "The Pragmatist's Progress."

<sup>210</sup>See especially Jacques Derrida, "Difference," in *The Margins of Philosophy* (trans. Alan Bass; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 2-27; *Limited Inc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

<sup>211</sup>Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (trans. Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1974), 158; 159-64.

<sup>212</sup>Derrida, "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject," in *Points...Interviews, 1974-1994* (trans., Peggy Kamuf; ed., Elisabeth Weber; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 255-87.

<sup>213</sup>Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in *Of Grammatology*, lxxv.

<sup>214</sup>Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 21.

Beardslee argues that in Derridean theory, “significant reading is not ‘reproduction,’ not reactualizing of a meaning that was once expressed by the author of the text or that is resident in the pattern of the text. Rather it is reading that challenges the reader, throws open the reader’s world to creative discovery, to new associations that may be suggested as much by irrational or chance associations as by the logical relations so carefully studied.”<sup>215</sup> Thus, Derrida dismantles the “seeming coherence of the text” and reads it in a manner that avoids closure (final meaning) at all costs.<sup>216</sup>

Eco firmly distances himself from such tendencies. In contrast to these, Eco says: “The semiotic theories of interpretative cooperation, such as my theory of the Model Reader (Eco 1979), look at the textual strategy as a system of instructions aiming at producing a reader whose profile is designed by and within the text, can be extrapolated from it and described independently of and even before any empirical reading... In a totally different way, the most radical practices of deconstruction privilege the initiative of the reader and reduce the text to an ambiguous bunch of still unshaped possibilities, thus transforming texts into mere stimuli for the interpretative drift.”<sup>217</sup>

Eco believes that cooperation between the text, the reader, and the encyclopaedia strengthen interpretations and give “guardrails” by which to ascertain good from bad interpretation of texts, distinguishing his theory from Rortian or Derridean positions.

In Eco’s theory of codes the encyclopaedia remains crucial. The encyclopaedia is the global universe of data available for a human being to fashion a code (through the use of s-codes within one’s own localized position within the encyclopaedia). But it is also apparent in the discussion up to this point that the act of selecting and employing specific data from that encyclopaedia so as to produce codes presupposes a certain kind of work done by both a sender and receiver of a message, and this work is explained in Eco’s theory of sign-production.

### 3.2.3. Eco’s Theory of Sign Production and Aesthetic Texts

Caesar identifies Eco’s theory of sign-production as relating to both labour and pragmatics (the effects of encoded messages).<sup>218</sup> Primarily Eco’s theory of sign-production assesses acts of *labour*: the labour involved when the sender encodes the

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<sup>215</sup>William L. Beardslee, “Poststructuralist Criticism,” in *To Each its own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application* (rev. and expanded ed.; eds. Stephen L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes; Louisville: WJK, 1999), 254.

<sup>216</sup>Beardslee, “Poststructuralist Criticism,” 256.

<sup>217</sup>Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 52.

<sup>218</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 90.

message to send it out as well as the labour involved in the decoding of that message by the addressee.<sup>219</sup> When a human being creates a text with a message designed to arouse “interpretative response in the addressee”<sup>220</sup> then what is involved to describe and analyse this procedure is a theory of sign-production. But the actual interpretative response of the addressee is brought to bear into his theory of sign-production as well. In this way sign-production also engages the field of pragmatics.

Eco’s theory of sign-production also describes the production of aesthetic texts.<sup>221</sup> Aesthetic texts require a specific type of labour for both creation and interpretation. They are identifiable by the fact that *an aesthetic text manipulates language so that both semantic density and poetic quality exist in their expression rather than straightforward reportage, mentioning, or explanation.*<sup>222</sup> *Aesthetic texts employ language primarily to stimulate reactions and open horizons for the reader rather than to only convey content.* These reactions, however, are stimulated according to a particular order that “focuses my attention [through the text] and urges me to an interpretive effort (while at the same time suggesting how to set about decoding) it incites me toward the discovery of an unexpected flexibility in the language with which I am dealing.”<sup>223</sup> Aesthetic texts actually reveal themselves as “poetic” or “aesthetic” in the way they surprise the addressee by “violating” the norms of convention (whether a genre, an idiom, a concept, or such devices), so that the addressee’s expectations are not met, providing a sense of bewilderment and creating space for further interpretation on the part of the addressee.<sup>224</sup> Thus the aesthetic text is simultaneously *ambiguous* (through the flexibility and density of

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<sup>219</sup>Caesar helpfully identifies and distils Eco’s discussion on the various types of labour involved in the act of producing and interpreting messages in communication (*Umberto Eco*, 91). For Eco’s full explanation, see *A Theory of Semiotics*, 154-354.

<sup>220</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 8.

<sup>221</sup>For a fuller discussion of his theory of sign-production, including the differences between semiotic and factual statements, mentioning, the problem of a typology of signs, and models of iconism, see Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 151-314. See also the helpful distillation of Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 76-99.

<sup>222</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 261-76.

<sup>223</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 263.

<sup>224</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 264. This trait of aesthetic texts in Eco’s theory derives from the concept of “defamiliarisation” known in the work of Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky. In Shklovsky’s understanding, the function of aesthetic texts is to make strange what has become habitual, conventional and unexciting. This can be conventional literary devices or move outward to social systems. See Shklovsky, “Art as Technique,” in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends* (ed. David H. Richter; Boston: Bedford Books, 1989), 738-48.

its language as well as the way that it confronts the addressee's expectations) and *self-focusing* (as it directs "the attention of the addressee primarily to *its own shape*").<sup>225</sup> The producer of an aesthetic text constructs an ambiguous and self-focusing text *so that* the receiver might interpret it in this way: as a piece of art.

### 3.3. Aesthetic Analysis of Umberto Eco

Eco's focus upon the labour required to actually interpret that message reveals his theory of sign-production as hermeneutical. This fits well with his understanding of the nature of the localised encyclopaedic knowledge and the process of "groping" one's way through the encyclopaedia (abduction) to build understanding about meaning in a text. The clue that guides the interpreter through the encyclopaedia, validating or repudiating the interpreter's efforts, is the text: "Thus, more than a parameter to use in order to validate the interpretation, the text is an object that the interpretation builds up in the course of the circular effort of validating itself on the basis of what it makes up as a result. I am not ashamed to admit that I am so defining the old and still valid 'hermeneutical circle'."<sup>226</sup> This hermeneutical quality of his theory is a vital clue to introduce the discussion on aesthetic analysis.

The terminology "aesthetic theory" or "aesthetic analysis" is shorthand for Eco's semiotic analysis of aesthetic texts, and aesthetic analysis is a means by which to analyse artistic texts.<sup>227</sup> Eco's aesthetic analysis takes into account the worlds of the text, reader, and author. Thus the model proposed in Figure 3.1. above is again highlighted. Two aspects remain fundamental for aesthetic analysis. The first is understanding that interpretation is a cooperative act between three entities: (1) the *intentio auctoris* (what the author "tries to say" as one is bound up in the world and ideology which fund one's imagination, hereafter "the intention of the author"<sup>228</sup>), (2) the *intentio operis* (the

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<sup>225</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 264.

<sup>226</sup>Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 64.

<sup>227</sup>For his discussion of aesthetic theory, see his *A Theory of Semiotics*, 261-98. Aesthetic analysis encompasses all artistic discourses. Visual and music arts also fit within the range of analysis. I focus upon the literary text.

<sup>228</sup>The world and ideology of the author shapes how she understands reality and how she comes to create what she writes "about." Terms like "the world" and "ideology" are broad, highly debated, and ill defined. These can include almost anything from familial relationships, social location, or cultural matrices, and theology. All of these different threads work to comprise the personhood of the physical real-world author and help fund the creative impulse, what one "tries to say," in and through the text.



physicality of the artefact, the literary text, and its importance as a communicative device, hereafter “the intention of the work”), and (3) the *intentio lectoris* (what the receiver or reader sees as “text” as he or she is bound up in the world and ideology which fund his or her imagination, hereafter “the intention of the reader”).<sup>229</sup> The second aspect is his distinction between “open” and “closed” texts. I shall return to this pragmatic distinction below, and its potential for assessing the poetry and theology of Lamentations 1—3.

### 3.3.1. The Intentions of the Author, Work, and Reader

At the outset, it is in place to note that for Eco, the concept of “author” remains useful but fundamentally altered so that the “author” becomes “the intention of the author.” This is a readerly construct generated by a real reader to attempt to describe the producer of a message. Eco builds upon his views of authorship from his mentor, Luigi Pareyson.

Contrasting with the Italian Romantic theorist Benedetto Croce, Luigi Pareyson’s aesthetic was material and not ideal. Pareyson differed from Croce, whose theory was the mainstream and idealistic trend in 1950’s Italy. Pareyson’s aesthetics centers on the concept of formativity, a term which emphasizes “the twofold dynamism of the artistic form.”<sup>230</sup> In the first place, the artistic form is something that is *made* or *done* rather than an idealistic notion of art as transcendent vision in the mind of the artist. In other words, Pareyson saw the work of art as a *production* rather than a pure *expression*. As such, the produced work of art needs to be interpreted rather than intuited. Secondly, the artistic form is *organic*, that is, “formed physicality with a life of its own.”<sup>231</sup> Formativity describes how knowledge about a work of art arises from the “continual exchange between the stimuli offered by reality [the work of art] as ‘cues,’ and the hypotheses that the person [interpreter] puts forward in response to the cues in order to give them a shape and meaning.”<sup>232</sup> In this way, the concept of formativity affords weight to both the production and individuality of a work of art. He clings to the role of the author as the *producer* and the role of the reader as the *interpreter*. The text, then, is the object of production and springboard for interpretation, so that for Pareyson, there is “a very close

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<sup>229</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 3-7; *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 63-88.

<sup>230</sup>Eco, *The Open Work* (trans. Anna Concogni; intro. David Robey; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 7.

<sup>231</sup>Eco, *The Open Work*, 58.

<sup>232</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 8.

link between the genesis of the work, its formal properties, and possible reactions on the part of the receiver.”<sup>233</sup>

Eco’s conception of author draws upon Paryeson. The author is the producer of a text, which is embedded with specific encyclopaedic content. So one must respect this fact and realise that the text is in fact produced by someone. Yet when one deals with a text, especially an ancient text, it necessarily means that the text has lived on while its author has not. The implication of this for Eco is that the artefact exceeds the controlled intentions of its author.<sup>234</sup> This does not mean that the author is somehow irrelevant to discern the meaning of a text, for one must trust that an author has created the text and actualised a specific range of encyclopaedic knowledge to make it communicative; interpretation, then, becomes a process of discovering and matching codes of encyclopaedic competence between the reader and the author so that the text becomes communicative.<sup>235</sup> The difficulty here comes in the text itself. Because the text has outlived the author, the author can in no way correct misreading or misinterpretation. The most significant guideline for interpreting a text *is* a text. Eco conceives of an author as a “textual strategy,” imputed by a real reader (which he calls an “empirical reader”) of a specific text, to instigate the process of interpretation of that text.<sup>236</sup> Whatever the reader identifies as “author” or “authorial intention” is tied to empirical evidence adduced by the reader and verified by the text itself.<sup>237</sup> Eco’s “intention of the author” then, is a readerly projection.

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<sup>233</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 9.

<sup>234</sup>Texts exceed the control of their authors in that (1) they are no longer kept private by the author...they are public domain and open to aberrant decoding, (2) they (may) outlive their creator, and (3) they may display structural characteristics that evince interpretations which go beyond what the author wished to convey.

<sup>235</sup>I say “communicative” rather than “meaningful.” A text can be meaningful without being communicative of something particular, at least in the sense of communicating something foreign to the reader.

<sup>236</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 10-11.

<sup>237</sup>Poems like George Herbert’s “The Altar” and “Easter Wings” reflect the principle of Eco’s emphasis on the physicality of the text. The wing-like qualities of “Easter Wings” as well as the structure of “The Altar” immediately alert the reader to the mere physicality of the text. These “shape poems” leave the reader (somewhat unambiguously) questioning the purpose of the shape of the poems and their relationship to what each of the poems is about. The reader must first recognise this artistic device of shaping, however. One may not recognise the shape of the wing as a //wing// at all but rather a skewed hourglass. Because Herbert has died, he cannot hope to correct the error.

Eco describes this second hinge of the triad of cooperation as “the intention of the work.” This concept is controversial and sounds embarrassing, for anyone can see that inanimate objects *have* no intentions! But in the concept of “the intention of the work” Eco demonstrates that because texts exceed the control of their authors, the text may in fact support a reading that goes beyond what the real author wanted to say—if an author is dead, real readers cannot ask the author to verify their interpretation. The concept of an “intention of the work” conceptually describes an interpretation that is grounded and demonstrated from structural, semantic, or pragmatic characteristics from the text. It is not that these characteristics are “not there.” Rather they *are* there in the text. But the author never may have intended them as such. Interpretations that occur based upon certain textual phenomena from the physicality of the text remain justifiable in the absence of the author.<sup>238</sup> In this way, Eco defends his view of textual intention. The reader has much, but not total, control in the reading process; the text remains something distinct from the reader. Thus the reader must begin to make “sense” of this unique and created object. So the reader becomes a fundamental key to the interpretative act.

Finally, Eco speaks of “the intention of the reader” in the triangular relationship between text, author and reader. This is the active “seeking of sense” from the text on the part of the reader. Eco avers that a producer of a text creates it according to specific codes and subcodes for a model reader who employs the same codes and subcodes to decipher the text. He states

“To make this text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them.”<sup>239</sup>

The model reader, however is different from the real reader who picks up a text and begins to read it, so it is in place to note Eco’s distinction between the empirical reader and the model reader to fully understand how Eco conceives how the reader seeks sense from a text.

Eco makes firm distinctions between the model reader and the empirical reader. As intimated above, the model reader is “a set of textual instructions, displayed by the

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<sup>238</sup> Interpretations that occur based upon certain textual phenomena are justifiable in the absence of the author, though the author may never have *intended* them as such. See Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 73-4.

<sup>239</sup> Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 7.

text's linear manifestation precisely as a set of sentences or other signals."<sup>240</sup> In this way, the model reader is a construct of the text, generated in the text by the producer who anticipates the interpretative moves of the empirical reader. As Caesar describes:

To generate a text means putting into action a strategy which foresees the other side's moves, as in war or chess. The only difference is that generally (not always) the author wants his or her 'adversary' to win. The author must foresee accidents or mistakes or lack of information on the part of the reader and deal with them sooner or later. It seems, therefore, at this point that the author has to refer to a series of competences (a phrase which Eco describes as being 'wider' than 'a knowledge of codes') which confer content on the expressions which he uses...So he foresees a Model Reader capable of making interpretative moves which correspond to his, the author's, generative moves. This sort of reader required is signaled by a number of different means: language, the choice of a particular kind of encyclopaedia or ensemble of cultural references, particular vocabulary or style, genre.<sup>241</sup>

From this insightful quote, Caesar identifies Eco's placement of the author, the text, and the reader (at least the model one).

The model reader and "the intention of the work" are constructed initially through the work of the empirical reader. For Eco, the empirical reader is the real "flesh and blood" reader that picks up a text to read it. This reader cannot hope to have the level of encyclopaedic competences of the model reader. But when faced with "linear text manifestation," the empirical reader moves through the text in a linear fashion, following its movement and "makes conjectures" about the model reader to help him grasp the text.<sup>242</sup> These conjectures are the "overgeneralised assumptions" mentioned above, and are summarized as follows: (1) the empirical should assume the text displays coherent message(s) and is communicative, else there is no point of communicating via written text anyway; (2) the empirical reader should assume that the text coheres; (3) the text is structured and it works according to a code.<sup>243</sup> This function of a text makes good sense because "internal textual coherence controls the otherwise uncontrollable drives of the reader."<sup>244</sup> The empirical reader "*posit[s]* a structure [garnered through his own encyclopaedic competences], inventing it as a hypothesis and a theoretical model in such a way as to leap ahead of the interminable work of empirical verification."<sup>245</sup> By

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<sup>240</sup>Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 15-16.

<sup>241</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 123.

<sup>242</sup>Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 64.

<sup>243</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 62.

<sup>244</sup>Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 65.

<sup>245</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 62.

imposing his own structure on the text, the empirical reader then uses it as a heuristic device, and permits the text to “correct” his imposed structure. The empirical reader determines textual structure and coherence through flexibility and a heuristic device (his imposed structure) rather than a rigid method. It is a process of dialogue rather than monologue, and this insistence remains crucial to understanding Eco’s theory.

Eco avows confidence that the empirical reader can grasp meaning in a text through the text, but it requires “a process of temporally progressive feedback.”<sup>246</sup> To make the dialogue as productive as possible, the empirical reader should familiarise himself with the s-codes (as much as possible) underlying the text. This includes linguistics, philology, history, literary genre, sociology of the text—anything that contributes to the encyclopaedia available to the model author of the text. By knowing as much as possible about the code underlying the structure, the empirical reader has some guardrails that prevent aberrant “decoding,” or “misreading.”<sup>247</sup> The empirical reader tries then to “act” like the text’s model reader, as Eco’s statement makes clear, “The empirical reader is only an actor who makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text.”<sup>248</sup> Thus, the empirical reader tries to transpose himself into the position of the model reader to discern “the intention of the work.” How does one accomplish this?

Caesar lucidly explains how context or what Eco calls “circumstance” helps discern structure, and thereby, the communicative act. Caesar states, “Messages can be ambiguous, polysemous, but this polysemy can be limited by various factors such as the internal context of the syntagm, the circumstance in which the communication is made, or an explicit indication of the code to be adopted.”<sup>249</sup> In this way, “circumstance” is a combination of the context without and within the text, available generic conventions for the production of the text, and the world in which the text was created. Thus, as the empirical reader familiarises oneself with “circumstance,” one positions oneself to more readily adopt the persona of the model reader and thus make interpretive judgments on meaning in the text. Obviously, Eco’s theory suffers at this point if the empirical reader is

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<sup>246</sup>John Llewelyn uses this terminology in his discussion of the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, though there are similarities between Gadamer and Eco here (*Beyond Metaphysics? The Hermeneutic Circle in Contemporary Continental Philosophy* (CSPHS; New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1985), 103.

<sup>247</sup>For examples of misreadings Eco himself has done in parody, see his *Misreadings* (London: Picador, 1994).

<sup>248</sup>Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 64.

<sup>249</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 63.

limited by the lack of knowledge of the encyclopaedic knowledge actualised in the s-codes of the text.<sup>250</sup> But if the reader is acquainted with the codes of the text, then reading becomes productive towards *interpretation*.

In this way the reader engages the text and posits both a possible author (model author) who could have created this work, and a possible person or group of persons to whom the text was written (model reader). To construct model author and reader, the real reader makes sense of the text on the basis of conjectures. Eco says, "Thus it is possible to speak of text intention only as the result of a *conjecture* on the part of the reader."<sup>251</sup> Conjectures are formulated by abductions through the encyclopaedia; these abductions can only be proved through structural, semantic, and syntactic affirmations of them from the text itself. Conjectures, of course, are open to critical debate and sometimes endless debate. But "making conjectures" remains the best way to describe what happens when readers attempt to understand a text.<sup>252</sup> Out of conjectures, checked "against the text as a coherent whole,"<sup>253</sup> the reader will prove warrant for what will ultimately become the interpretation of the text. Eco says that the initiative of the "intention of the reader" only "starts to become exciting when I discover that my intention could meet the intention of the text."<sup>254</sup> For Eco, the reader is a fundamental key to the interpretative act. Aesthetic sense is only recognised or "activated" within an engaged dialectic between "the intention of the work" and "the intention of the reader" so that the model reader is built up and the understanding of the meaning of a text becomes strengthened.

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<sup>250</sup>This is certainly the case for some texts, but for Lamentations, a good deal of available data from the encyclopaedia has been assessed. Among this data, one can include: possible theological traditions (Deuteronomic, Zion, Priestly paradigms), biblical material (in terms of allusion), ANE material (city-lament genre and other pertinent lament categories), sociology of mourning in the ANE, poetics, poetic structures, liturgy, and worship practices. Available encyclopaedic content for Lamentations interpretation will be discussed in Chapters 4-7 with special reference to how these impact the book's theology. Chapter 4 will provide access to genre, structure, and poetics, while the other encyclopaedic knowledge will be addressed in the exegetical portions of the present study.

<sup>251</sup>Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 58.

<sup>252</sup>Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 59.

<sup>253</sup>Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 59.

<sup>254</sup>Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 59.

## 3.3.2. Pragmatic Distinctions between Open and Closed Texts

As we come to Eco's perspective on interpretation, it is apparent that Eco has specific concerns for the reader but that one does not have complete autonomy in the act of interpretation. Readers remain important to Eco's hermeneutics but still are constrained by the text. That is, texts can move readers in different ways. Here, Eco makes a distinction between open and closed texts. It is important to note that the conceptions of "open" and "closed" have nothing to do with canonicity (an open versus closed canon) or generic distinctions (such as lyric, lament, hymn, etc.) but rather with text pragmatics—how texts involve their model readers so as to elicit different types of responses from them. It is possible for texts to be constructed in different ways for their model readers. Whether open or closed, texts are "syntactic-semantic-pragmatic" devices "whose foreseen interpretation is a part of [their] generative process[es]." <sup>255</sup> Readers understand texts along "syntactic-semantic-pragmatic" relationships within them—which are governed by codes. Eco's open/closed distinction advances a textual theory where texts can be distinguished (semantically, syntactically, and pragmatically) as functioning differently for their model reader.

"Closed texts" contain monotonous strategies for their model reader. They "obsessively aim at arousing a precise response on the part of more or less precise empirical readers." <sup>256</sup> Eco typifies this tendency in his analysis of the myth of Superman comics. In his description of a hero like Superman, Eco states, "The mythic character embodies a law, or a universal demand, and therefore must be in part *predictable* and cannot hold surprises for us." <sup>257</sup> Eco is not making generic distinctions here as much as he is making pragmatic distinctions. Superman will always get away from the villain because he is *Superman*. The empirical reader fully anticipates Superman's escape from the disastrous situation because this is how the heroic comic strip genre plays out. The author exploits the expectation of the addressee, anticipating one, and only one, response from the empirical reader; through convention, the empirical reader is conditioned to make only that one response at that time. Thus Eco says that closed texts are structured "according to an inflexible project" <sup>258</sup> and demand the reader know the textual strategy in order to make sense of the work. James Bond stories also fit as examples of closed texts.

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<sup>255</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 3.

<sup>256</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 8.

<sup>257</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 109.

<sup>258</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 109.

They aim at *one* kind of reader, *one* response, under *one* textual strategy. Readers know that Superman will always win in the end, as will Bond. They feel the excitement of the heroes' various dangers just when the text wants them to as well as the elation of their escape. The model reader of a closed text is manipulated to only one textual outcome of the hero: Superman wins in the end<sup>259</sup> and Bond defeats the madman and gets the girl.<sup>260</sup>

Opposed to such texts are open texts which are designed in order to arouse a *variety* of interpretative options for the model reader. The open text is intentionally ambiguous, designed "at the moment of its generation" to elicit and negotiate meaningful interaction between the text and the reader.<sup>261</sup> Open texts contain among their "major analyzable [*sic*] properties, certain structural devices that encourage and elicit interpretative choices" on the part of the model reader. These depend upon "a system of psychological, cultural, and historical expectations on the part of their addressees."<sup>262</sup> The choices enact an interpretive "ideal insomnia" for the model reader. This means that "the intention of the work" demands the model reader follow its textual project in such a way that one faces uncomfortable and sometimes incommensurable realities, which one must interpret in *some* way, though not *one* way. The model reader is surprised and set off-guard by the unexpected interpretative horizons afforded by the open text.<sup>263</sup> Eco states, "The type of cooperation requested of the reader, the flexibility of the text in validating (or at least not contradicting) the widest possible range of interpretative proposals—all this characterizes [*sic*] narrative structures as more or less 'open'."<sup>264</sup> In this way, the reader has a degree of "autonomy" in interpreting the work.<sup>265</sup>

It is important to note, especially for biblical scholars, that Eco understands open texts to be finished texts in the sense that they are in their final form. This fixity of form, however, does not then correspond to fixity in meaning. He says that open texts, "though organically completed, are 'open' to a continuous generation of internal relations which the addressee must uncover and select in his act of perceiving the totality of the incoming stimuli."<sup>266</sup> And there are varying degrees of openness according to Eco. Some texts, like

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<sup>259</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 107-24.

<sup>260</sup>Eco, "James Bond: une combinatoire narrative," *Communications* 8 (1966): 83-99.

<sup>261</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 3.

<sup>262</sup>Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 49-50.

<sup>263</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 33.

<sup>264</sup>Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 33.

<sup>265</sup>Eco, *The Open Work*, 1.

<sup>266</sup>Eco, *The Open Work*, 21.



James Joyce's *Ulysses*, are designed to elicit a plenitude of unforeseen connections of meaning. This is part of the point of the work. On the other hand, there are open texts that are open in the sense that they are aesthetic texts and forever open to interpretation due to the density of form, variation of imagery, and metaphorical mode of discourse. In this sense, there is a range of texts that vary in their degree of openness.<sup>267</sup>

But however they fit on this range of openness, open texts are not open to endless inventions of meaning, as the term "open" might imply. Rather, because open texts are created with possible responses of the addressee in mind, the open text remains intelligible, meaningful, and resists misinterpretation or endless deferral. Two features constrain moves against textual meaning for open texts: ambiguity and self-reflexivity. Ambiguity is the first clue to discovering clarity and sense in the text. Ambiguity is an intentional distortion of the code, and thus, the reader can place limits as to what the object of ambiguity might be. In this way, "productive" ambiguity "awakens one's attention and induces one to try to interpret it, but at the same time suggests directions in which one might go" within the encyclopaedia to begin to interpret it.<sup>268</sup> Ambiguity helps define the reader's limits of interpretation and point toward meaning. Likewise, Eco's discussion of the self-reflexive structure of poetic language limits interpretation and gives shape to the poetic message. The language of an artistic text is referential to itself; that is, it operates within the interplay of repetition of language and gives clarity and interpretative direction. Again in Eco's aesthetic theory one can see that the reader has autonomy in interpreting the work but not complete autonomy. The following quote by Eco in his earliest essay on open texts is helpful at this point. For an open work:

"The *possibilities* which the work's openness makes available always work within a given *field of relations*. As in the Einsteinian universe...we may well deny that there is a single prescribed point of view. But this does not mean complete chaos in internal relations. What it does imply is an organizing [*sic*] rule which governs these relations...[the open text] is the possibility of numerous different personal interventions, but it is not an amorphous invitation to indiscriminate participation. The invitation offers the performer the opportunity for an oriented insertion into something which always remains the world intended by the author...In other words, the author offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee a work *to be completed*."<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup>Eco, *The Open Work*, 20-1.

<sup>268</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 64.

<sup>269</sup>Eco, *The Open Work*, 19.

Though Eco later modifies his language about authorial intention to speak of “the intention of the work,” for instance in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992), the basic contours of his aesthetics of openness are already present.

### 3.4. Conclusion

The semiotic project of Umberto Eco coheres with the integrated approach adopted in this study and his aesthetic analysis frames how to explore the theology of Lamentations, so that the worlds “behind,” “within,” and “in front of” the text are met in the intentions of the author, work, and reader. Eco’s focus upon these intentions has revealed that the focus of aesthetic analysis begins with an empirical reader reading a text. Working from the basis of the linear manifestation of the text, believing that its message coheres and operates according to a code (produced by a model author), an empirical reader begins the process of reading and interpreting from one’s own setting within the cultural encyclopaedia and then makes “conjectures” about the text under investigation. These conjectures strengthen the model reader and clarify questions concerning the meaning of the text on the basis of “the intention of the work.” As such, dialectic between the intentions of the author, text, and reader provides an interpretative frame for the aesthetic analysis of the present study.

This frame for interpretation remains productive and carries with it implications for Lamentations research. Most importantly it implies a primary emphasis upon the interchange between the reader (along with one’s own encyclopaedic knowledge) and the text (along with the cultural encyclopaedia of the text).<sup>270</sup> Secondly, there is an emphasis

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<sup>270</sup>The interchange between reader and text, it is admitted, occurs at two levels. On the first level, the present author has engaged the text along the integrated approach, so the philosophical presuppositions that I possess may be productive as I listen to the text so as to become transformed into the model reader. Thus it is entirely plausible (even likely) that my own presuppositions are latent and interwoven with the present understanding of poetry and theology in Lamentations 1—3 (and thereby my understanding of how this text impacts a putative historical community in the sixth century BCE), but this is a reality of any act of interpretation or critical analysis (see Walther Eichrodt, “Does Old Testament Theology Still Have Independent Significance?” 23-5). On the second level, the present study focuses upon how the model reader is constructed for a sixth century BCE Judahite context. The model reader is flexible enough as a concept to encompass both ideas, but the purpose of this study is not primarily self-reflective (the former position) but is rather interested in the poetry and theology that arise in respect to real readers interpreting this text in an ancient Judahite context—how individuals within the Judahite community become the model reader and then how the text moves these to respond to the work. It is conceivable that through some poetics (notably

upon the interchange between text and reader rather than upon a putative empirical author. Methodologically, then, it remains sensible to argue first for “the intention of the work” in Lamentations 1—3 before speaking about any real author, though other works investigate this field of study.<sup>271</sup> The LXX, Vulgate, Aramaic version (Targum) of Lamentations,<sup>272</sup> and Lamentations Rabbah<sup>273</sup> all conclude Jeremiah the prophet of the sixth century BCE is the author of the book; this study does not intend to contravene that tradition. But there is a methodological difference between ascertaining the author of a particular work and identifying its textual intention, much less its theology. In the direction that Eco’s aesthetic analysis affords, the process of interpretation of Lamentations’ theology moves from the empirical reader to the model reader through the “intention of the work.” Only after this is given full attention can questions of authorship be explored.

A brief word is in order about the present study’s understanding of the text of Lamentations. Hillers believes the “Hebrew text of Lamentations is in a relatively good state of preservation” and thereby is relatively trustworthy to represent a hypothetical Hebrew Vorlage.<sup>274</sup> The oldest extant manuscript evidence for Lamentations comes from a few Qumran texts (3QLam, 4QLam, 5QLam<sup>a</sup>, and 5QLam<sup>b</sup>)<sup>275</sup>, and the most significant of these, 4QLam<sup>a</sup>, contains Lam 1.1-17, part of verse 18, and a small fragment of Lam

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personification) the model reader can serve as a way to describe a collective (that is “community”) of individual readers actualising the text of Lamentations. Thus in Lamentations, the individual reader *and* the community of readers are encompassed productively in the concept of the model reader.

<sup>271</sup>Nor does the present study wish to maintain that the concept of authorship is unimportant. Rather it is a vital reality of any text. Lee argues that the authors of Lamentations are the prophet Jeremiah and female temple singers (*The Singers of Lamentations*). Renkema believes pre-exilic temple singers originated the poems (*Misschien is er hoop*). The present study is content to suggest with LXX and TgLam that Jeremiah is the author of the work, though primary emphasis should be given to the work rather than a supposed author.

<sup>272</sup>Étan Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations* (New York: Hermon, 1981); Christian M. M. Brady, *The Rabbinic Targum of Lamentations: Vindicating God* (SAIS 3; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 18-21.

<sup>273</sup>Jacob Neusner, *Lamentations Rabbah: An Analytical Translation* (BJS 193; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

<sup>274</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 39.

<sup>275</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 41-59; Berlin uses other notation, 3QLam = 3Q3, 4QLam = 4Q111, 5QLam<sup>a</sup> = 5Q6, and 5QLam<sup>b</sup> = 5Q7. See DJD 3:95; 3:174-7; 178-9. Other nonbiblical Qumran poems quote Lamentations: 4Q179, 4Q501, 4Q282 [formerly 4Q241], 4Q439, 4Q445, and 4Q453 (Berlin, *Lamentations*, 36-7).

2.5.<sup>276</sup> Hillers thinks 4QLam<sup>a</sup> followed the Hebrew Vorlage but altered it in a number of places to either smooth out translation or shift the focus of the poem toward explicit liturgical use, as it is sometimes addressed to God where it otherwise is not in the MT.<sup>277</sup>

One example in Lam 1.7a reveals this. For a full explanation of divergences between the MT and 4QLam<sup>a</sup> on this verse and others consult Cross and Hillers; the main aim here is to show how the translator likely diverges from the Hebrew Vorlage to make a point. Lam 1.7 in the MT reads:

זכרה ירושלם ימי עניה ומרודה  
 כל מחמדיה אשר היו מימי קדם  
 בנפל עמה ביד־צר ואין עוזר לה  
 ראוה צרים שחקו על־משבתה

“Jerusalem remembers the days of her miserable homelessness  
 All of her precious things, who were from the days of old,  
 When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, but there is no helper for her.  
 The foes look on mockingly over her destruction.”

Using Cross’ reconstruction of 4QLam<sup>a</sup> column II, Lam 1.7, the text reads differently:

זכ(ו)רה יהוה...	line 2
ל[כו]ל מכאובנו אשר היו מימי קדם בנפל	line 3
ל[עמ]ה ביד צר ואין עוזר צריה שחקו על	line 4
ל[כו]ל משבריה...	line 5

“Remember, O YHWH,  
 All our pain which were from the days of old when they fell—  
 Her people—into the hand of an enemy, and there was no helper;  
 her foes mocked over  
 all of her destructions.”

The observer’s description of Jerusalem in the MT Lam 1.7a uses a Qal 3 fem. sg. verb (זכרה ירושלם) but the Qumran translator changes this to fashion a communal address to YHWH: “Remember, O YHWH, all our pain.” In this permutation, זכ(ו)רה translates as emphatic imperative<sup>278</sup> and the Tetragrammaton is set in place of ירושלם. Here the observer appeals to YHWH directly and anticipates the appeals by personified Jerusalem in Lam 1.9c, 11c, and 20a. The change from “all her precious things” (כל מחמדיה) to “all our pain” (כול מכאובנו) anticipates personified Jerusalem’s focus upon misery in Lam 1.12

<sup>276</sup>Frank Moore Cross, Jr., “Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Verse: The Prosody of Lamentations 1:1-22,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall go Forth: Essays in Honour of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (eds., Carol L. Meyers and M. O’Connor; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 129-55.

<sup>277</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 41-6.

<sup>278</sup>The ן is unclear, but if it does actually appear on the manuscript, then it is explainable through equivalence to the Tiberian זכרה, according to Cross, “Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Verse,” 140.

(מכאוב כמכאבי) and makes the speaker a participant in communal suffering. The divergences mark a shift away from pure description by the speaker (as in the MT) to a communal appeal to YHWH, heightening pain and suffering and the desire for the deity to change it. Lam 1.7 will be explored further in Chapter 5, but it is evident that 4QLam<sup>a</sup> takes liberties in transforming the Hebrew Vorlage and diverges from the MT, likely to emphasise pain and suffering and focus appeal to YHWH to alter the situation.

Other versions, the MT, LXX, and the later Peshiṭṭa and Targum, presuppose a hypothetical Hebrew Vorlage on which the LXX and Peshiṭṭa depend, which is almost identical to the MT.<sup>279</sup> The Masoretes made decisions about how the text of Lamentations should be understood and what was (or not) theologically appropriate. One example suffices. In Lam 1.21b, the text reads, “All my enemies heard of my misfortune—they rejoiced; for You had done it” (כל־איבי שמעו רעתי ששׁו כי אתה עשׂית). Renkema recognises that the Masoretes were uncomfortable with the enemies being able to rightly identify the work of God and thereby place a *zaqef qaton* above ששׁו, dividing the line there; the consequence of this notation relates the enemies’ delight with dear Zion’s misfortune (רעתי) rather than their recognition of YHWH’s activity (כי אתה עשׂית). “If we ignore the division [given by the Masoretes] we are left with a situation in which the enemy also recognises YHWH as the *auctor intellectualis* of the downfall of his people.”<sup>280</sup> Yet this is an interpretation of the Vorlage that forecloses upon another possibility: that the enemies rejoice *that* God had done what he had planned. As such the translation reads, “All my enemies heard of my misfortune; they rejoiced that you had done it” (Lam 2.21b). It is important to realise how the MT interprets the Hebrew Vorlage which impinges upon how one understands the book theologically.

The LXX interprets the Hebrew Vorlage with a generally literalistic translation. Contra Rudolph, Albrektson believes the LXX is a “quite literal” and at places “extremely slavish” translation of the MT; he believes the LXX translator was rather unskilled.<sup>281</sup> Even so, the LXX translator interprets in a different direction from the MT in places, some significant. Perhaps the most obvious case of this lies in the prologue in the LXX that ascribes the book to Jeremiah and promotes a general tone of lament.<sup>282</sup> Jeremiah is

<sup>279</sup> Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 210.

<sup>280</sup> Renkema, *Lamentations*, 194.

<sup>281</sup> Wilhelm Rudolph, “Der Text der Klagelieder,” *ZAW* 56(1938): 101-22; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 208-9.

<sup>282</sup> Similar prologues appear in the Targum and Vulgate.

sometimes called the weeping prophet because of his grief over the realisation that YHWH's judgment was sure to come, despite his best efforts to preach repentance.<sup>283</sup> By directly linking Lamentations to Jeremiah, the LXX translator provides theological commentary immediately into its translation—that of judgment enacted by God's hand. This theologically shapes the first few verses of the LXX in a manner somewhat different to the MT.

Similarly, the Targum Lamentations interprets (or reads against) the Hebrew text as a judgment for Jerusalem's sins. In his extensive analysis of the Targum, Brady summarises:

TgLam [Targum Lamentations] makes it explicit that Jerusalem deserved her fate because of the sin of her people. Thus TgLam [Targum Lamentations] contains many statements such as Jerusalem was punished "because of the greatness of her rebellious sin which was within her" (1.1) and "the LORD commanded the House of Jacob to keep the Commandments and Torah, but they transgressed the decree of his Memra" (1.17). Furthermore, our targumist makes it clear that this punishment from God was not capricious, but was the fulfillment of the promise he made with Israel in the wilderness. "The LORD has done what he planned...that if the children did not keep the Commandments of the LORD he was going to punish them" (2.17).<sup>284</sup>

The Targum achieved this theological emphasis through its structure, translation technique, and use of specific language. As in the LXX, it opens with a theological prologue that vindicates God by ascribing the blame for the destruction of Jerusalem to the sins of the people.<sup>285</sup>

Each of the versions contributes something to the way one reads the Hebrew text. The present study will follow the MT but will recognise where Masoretic notation impinges upon the interpretation of the Hebrew text in a significant way. I will also note where Qumran material, LXX, Targum, and Lamentations Rabbah (less so the Peshiṭṭa) reads differently to the MT. This comparative process will help distinguish places where interpreters "close" or leave "open" interpretative possibilities in the text, especially in regards to the theology of the book.

Also important for Lamentations research is Eco's concept of the encyclopaedia. Ideally, the encyclopaedia provides a way to compare theological traditions, genres,

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<sup>283</sup>J. G. McConville, *Judgment and Promise: An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 155-56.

<sup>284</sup>Christian M. M. Brady, "Targum Lamentations' Reading of the Book of Lamentations," (D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1999), 247-48.

<sup>285</sup>Brady, "Targum Lamentations' Reading of the Book of Lamentations," 248.

poetics, and politics to Lamentations to see how the poetry exploits it to make textual meaning. However, the undetermined nature of the origins and subsequent modifications of theological traditions in Israel's history undermines its value for theological traditions that have been studied before, as in the work of Albrektson, Gottwald, and Brandscheidt. Much of what is known of theological traditions in ancient Israel simply remains uncertain so the demonstration of certain theological traditions as "encyclopaedic" material available for Lamentations' construction remains difficult. This applies to Deuteronomic/istic theology (Gottwald, Brandscheidt) as well as Zion theology (Albrektson), all of which have been seen to determine the theology of the book.<sup>286</sup>

Scholars remain divided about the nature of these theologies, their traditions, development, authors, and purpose(s). However scholars may conceive of Deuteronomic/istic theology, such conceptions usually depend upon assessing a span of material from Deuteronomy to Kings, some portions of Jeremiah, and perhaps other texts as well; assessing this material has elicited a broad range of suggestions as to the origin, nature, and development of the theological tradition.<sup>287</sup> Views range between a single redaction, a double redaction, or multiple redaction view of the Deuteronomistic History and it becomes quickly apparent that the contours of the theology are undetermined.<sup>288</sup> This creates unease about attributing a specific concept in Lamentations to a particular aspect of Deuteronomistic theology when the latter itself is under dispute.

Zion theology, too, derives from a series of texts from both Psalms and Isaiah, though there is open discussion as to its tenets and development.<sup>289</sup> It is unclear whether there was always a belief that YHWH was unconditionally bound to Zion, or if Isaiah of Jerusalem (the prophet of the eighth century BCE) modified this theological view to

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<sup>286</sup>See 2.2.1. and 2.2.2.

<sup>287</sup>These other texts may include portions of Genesis-Numbers and possibly portions of Isaiah. All of this, however, remains disputed. For a helpful discussion of the debate on Deuteronomistic history and theology, see Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 3-43.

<sup>288</sup>For a range of the range of views, see Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 13-43, who argues that at present there Nothian and "Neo-Nothian proponents who adopt a single-author theory (Martin Noth, Steven L. McKenzie, John Van Seters), proponents who adopt a double redaction of the Deuteronomistic History (Frank Moore Cross, Richard Elliott Friedman), and then proponents of multiple redaction of the Deuteronomistic History (Rudolph Smend, Walter Dietrich).

<sup>289</sup>See Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion, The City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (JSOTSup 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 15-19.

accommodate a conditional basis of YHWH's allegiance to the capital city of Judah.

Albrektson assumes that Zion theology always entailed the Lord's unconditional promise to protect Zion and interprets "Zion" elements within Lamentations accordingly.<sup>290</sup>

Conversely, J. J. M. Roberts argues that prophetic critique, specifically the eighth century BCE prophetic critique of Isaiah of Jerusalem (Isaiah 28 and 30) corrects an oppressive monarchy and transforms the Zion tradition at that point.<sup>291</sup>

Roberts' perspective proceeds after the publication of Albrektson's work, but the complications arising from identifying Zion theology in Lamentations as Albrektson has done in light of Roberts' understanding are immense. A line that follows Roberts' in relation to Lamentations' theology may imply that YHWH is justified in abandoning his sanctuary due to the sins of the people (especially the priests and prophets). Either way, the present study is left with a problem: how can one attribute a specific theological tradition to the theology of Lamentations when the contours of this theological tradition remain unclear?

This problem can be carried over between the relationship between Priestly theology and Lamentations as well. Priestly theology depends primarily on Leviticus 1-16,<sup>292</sup> yet again there is no consensus as to who produced this material or when. Traditionally, this body of literature, and the theology it promulgates, is dated to the exile or after.<sup>293</sup> But others contend against this line of thought, believing the corpus to be from

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<sup>290</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of Lamentations*, 214-39. Similarly, Brueggemann states of Lamentations, "The theological implication of the destruction of [Jerusalem] that produced such profound grief is that the liturgical tradition of the inviolability of the city—a notion fostered in temple-monarchy ideology—is shown to be false" [Walter Brueggeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: WJK, 2003), 334].

<sup>291</sup>Roberts addresses the Isaianic transformation in these chapters: "The 'poor of his people' in Isa 14:32 corresponds to the 'one who trusts' in 28:16, and this touches the point at which Isaiah corrected the Zion tradition in which he was steeped. He made the promise contingent upon trust and behavior appropriate to trust" [J. J. M. Roberts, "Yahweh's Foundation in Zion (Isa 28:6)," *JBL* 106 (1987): 39-40].

<sup>292</sup>Exodus 25-31, 35-40 and Numbers 1-10 is sometimes included in this corpus as well (Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 662).

<sup>293</sup>For traditional arguments see Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel, with a Reprint of the article "Israel" from Encyclopaedia Britannica* (preface, W. Robertson Smith; forward, Douglas A. Knight; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 8-13, 34-8; Albrecht Alt, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Garden City: Anchor, 1968), 105-7.



the pre-exilic period.<sup>294</sup> This discrepancy points to the difficulty of relating this theology as viable encyclopaedic content for Lamentations' theology.

There is no doubt that certain theological traditions were available to the authors of Lamentations at the time of its construction. And it may be that there were Deuteronomic, Zion, or Priestly theologies that impacted its theology. But any further research in this field would demand thorough demonstration and space to allow such argumentation; the space constraints of the present study preclude this. Rather than attempting to reformulate how theological traditions have been used in Lamentations, the present study will rather isolate OT *texts* as data for encyclopaedic content without then making the move to identify the trajectory out of which such content stemmed.<sup>295</sup>

Beyond OT texts, the encyclopaedic model structures comparative analysis between other cultural data and Lamentations. In the encyclopaedic rubric, one can expand the range of data beyond the confines of OT literary material to include other ANE elements that become pertinent data to compare with Lamentations. This includes social rites such as mourning, worship practices, genre, style, and poetic structures.

For both OT and ANE elements, comparative method will be used in a heuristic manner to “grope” our way through the rhizomatic labyrinth of the encyclopaedia to discover instances where Lamentations “blows up” items in the cultural encyclopaedia to advance its theology. The comparative method opens a way to chart typological relationships and differences between Lamentations and extant ANE elements to address how the book constructs theology. I am arguing, where appropriate, for fruitful comparisons between extant ANE and OT genres, poetics, and structures and Lamentations on the basis of the interchange between “the intention of the work” of Lamentations and the ANE cultural encyclopaedia in which Lamentations sits. This comparative research in fact partly fulfils Berlin’s plea:

“Future studies should ask: How did the poet of Lamentations use the common or stereotypical motifs at his disposal? In what ways do the distinctive history and religion of Israel affect the use of shared ancient Near Eastern forms of expression?”

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<sup>294</sup>See Avi Hurvitz, “The Evidence of Language in Dating the Priestly Code”; *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel*; Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly Code* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* (3 vols.; ABC; New York: Doubleday, 1991-2000); Israel Knol, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

<sup>295</sup>Berlin, however, does such research in her commentary.

These are questions about cultural contexts and comparisons, rather than questions about the lineage of laments.”<sup>296</sup>

From this basis, one must query which genres were in existence by the sixth century BCE that might be pertinent for Lamentations. Most scholars have argued that city-laments, dirges, individual and communal laments from both OT and ANE literature were available during this period. Ferris unequivocally states that there existed both individual and communal laments, as well as dirges in pre-exilic Israel.<sup>297</sup> And for ANE literary texts, Dobbs-Allsopp, Bouzard, and Emmendörffer believe the biblical lament tradition was influenced by Mesopotamian paradigms of lamentation, especially city-laments, in the pre-exilic period.<sup>298</sup> It stands to reason, then, that these texts were available in the sixth century BCE.

Yet Morrow’s recent research tempers this assertion.<sup>299</sup> Like Ferris, Morrow allows the existence of both individual and communal laments—or protests of national defeat—in the pre-exilic period.<sup>300</sup> But he counters the idea of direct Mesopotamian literary influence upon biblical literature until the exilic and post-exilic periods (especially after 570 BCE).<sup>301</sup> Direct influence between Mesopotamian and Israelite literature is tenable only after the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>302</sup>

In light of this, it is reasonable to argue for biblical *and* Mesopotamian generic forbears available to the cultural milieu for Lamentations’ construction. The dating for Lamentations proposed in section 1.2. fits with Morrow’s findings and so can be included as viable data for the cultural encyclopaedia of Lamentations. This means that dirges, communal laments, individual laments, and Mesopotamian city-laments are available for use in the construction of Lamentations; other generic material likely was available as well. Re’emi has rightly argued that complaints, thanksgiving songs, and wisdom material

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<sup>296</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 28.

<sup>297</sup>Paul Wayne Ferris, Jr., *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (SBLDS 127; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 158.

<sup>298</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “Darwinism,” 625-30; Walter C. Bouzard, *We Have Heard with our Ears, O God: Sources of the Communal Laments in the Psalms* (SBLDS 159; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 154-55, 201-11; Michael Emmendörffer, *Der ferne Gott: Eine Untersuchung der alttestamentlichen Volksklagelieder vor dem Hintergrund der mesopotamischen Literatur* (FAT 21; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), 17-38, 294.

<sup>299</sup>William S. Morrow, *Protest Against God: The Eclipse of A Biblical Tradition* (HBM 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

<sup>300</sup>Morrow, *Protest Against God*, 82-105.

<sup>301</sup>Morrow, *Protest Against God*, 82-105.

<sup>302</sup>Morrow, *Protest Against God*, 82-105.

also impinge upon Lamentations as well; this material should be considered as available content.<sup>303</sup> How Lamentations may exploit or deviate from its cultural encyclopaedia shall be explored in 4.2. and in the exegesis sections of Chapters 5-7, below.

Moving to poetics, evidence exists of various extant poetics in the OT and ANE used in Lamentations prior to its construction. Among these are: repetition and parallelism,<sup>304</sup> rhetorical questions and direct address,<sup>305</sup> speaking voices,<sup>306</sup> imagery and personification,<sup>307</sup> alphabetic arrangement,<sup>308</sup> strophic structures,<sup>309</sup> allusion,<sup>310</sup> and a number of other stylistic devices. This field of data can and should be counted as relevant encyclopaedic content for this study and will be addressed in Chapter 4.<sup>311</sup> Moreover, in the exegesis portions of the present study (Chapters 5-7, below) I will address how sociological elements—especially mourning rites—are “blown up” with a concern upon how they contribute to the theology of Lamentations 1—3.

Finally, Eco’s theory remains helpful to assess pragmatic questions. Eco’s distinction between open and closed texts provides a way to think about how the model reader of Lamentations is projected from its “intention of the work,” and how the model reader responds to the poetry of Lamentations 1—3. Namely, does the model reader interpret Lamentations in *one* manner (as in a closed text) or are there a variety of

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<sup>303</sup>R. Martin-Achard and S. Paul Re’emi, *God’s People in Crisis: Amos & Lamentations* (ITC; Edinburgh: Handsel, 1984), 79.

<sup>304</sup>Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 112-44; Barbara Kaiser, “Reconsidering Parallelism: A Study of the Structure of Lamentations 1, 2, and 4” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1983).

<sup>305</sup>W. C. Gwaltney, Jr., “The Biblical Book of Lamentations in the Context of Ancient Near Eastern Literature,” in *Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method* (eds. William W. Hallo, James C. Moyer, and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 206; See also Thomas, “Aesthetic Theory of Umberto Eco”; “The Liturgical Function.”

<sup>306</sup>Gwaltney, “The Biblical Book of Lamentations,” 206; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 36.

<sup>307</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 75-89.

<sup>308</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 23-32.

<sup>309</sup>Renkema, “The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV),” 294-396; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 72-9.

<sup>310</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 62-79; Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*; Willey, *Remember the Former Things*; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*; John Day, “Pre-Deuteronomiac Allusions to the Covenant in Hosea and Psalm LXXVIII,” *VT* 36(1986): 1-12; Michael de Roche, “Zephaniah I 2-3: the ‘sweeping of creation’,” *VT* 30(1980): 104-9; David M. Gunn, “Deutero-Isaiah and the Flood,” *JBL* 94(1975): 493-508.

<sup>311</sup>Iconography of the ANE also is pertinent encyclopaedic content.

interpretative horizons that the model reader may be able to actualise due to the nature of Lamentations as an open text? This question becomes more pertinent in light of Conrad's research into prophetic materials. He argues the prophetic materials are closed texts and later states, "I agree with Barthes' observation...that 'classical' works are 'closed texts', and I would include the Bible as just such a classical work."<sup>312</sup>

Here Conrad makes a claim about the textual properties of the entire canon from observation of specific prophetic books. According to Eco's theory, if a closed text, then the OT brings the empirical reader along a "monotonous" pre-scripted (and often anticipated) course so as to elicit from the reader "precise responses." To be able to identify a text as being open or closed, the reader must know something about the properties of the text under investigation. It is not clear to me how Conrad can argue that every text in the OT (or the "Bible" at large) is indeed a closed text unless he has made some observation about the textual properties of each text in the canon. Since he has not demonstrated this with Lamentations, then the question whether the book is an open or closed text remains open.

This point is heightened when considering Heim's analysis. Heim argues the use personification in Lamentations reveals it to be an open text.<sup>313</sup> Personification of Jerusalem (בת־צִיּוֹן, "Lady Zion") provides "a powerful cultural icon with which the community can identify."<sup>314</sup> As such, she can embody the sufferings of the entire community and express their varied emotional states. Further, dialogical interchange between the narrator and בת־צִיּוֹן contributes to "communal discourse" so that Lamentations offers various avenues for approaching the tragedy of destruction.<sup>315</sup> Confirmation of Heim's conclusion about Lamentations as an open text as a whole exceeds the scope of this study, but determining whether Lamentations 1—3 is open or

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<sup>312</sup>Specifically Isaiah and the Twelve; see Edgar Conrad, "Yehoshua Gitay: 'What is He Doing?'" *JSOT* 27 (2002): 239-40. See also *Reading the Latter Prophets*; "Forming the Twelve and Forming Canon," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 325; eds. Paul L. Redditt and Aaron Scharf; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 90-103; *Reading Isaiah* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

<sup>313</sup>Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem." He states in his concluding paragraph, "It appears, then, that Lamentations is a consciously 'open' text which gives *multiple* answers to complex questions related to Jerusalem's destruction" (Heim, "The Personification," 169). The main deficiency of Heim's assertion is that it has not been proved through aesthetic analysis nor has he delineated the differences between open and closed texts. The present study aims at rectifying this.

<sup>314</sup>Heim, "The Personification," 168-9.

<sup>315</sup>Heim, "The Personification," 169.

closed demands assessment. This can only arise from aesthetic analysis of the text, which occurs in Chapters 5-7, below. But whether open or closed, Eco's pragmatic distinction aids thinking about how the poetry brings the model reader along to respond to the book as a whole. Determining how the empirical reader becomes the model reader depends upon familiarity with circumstantial evidence including genre, structure, and poetics, which are addressed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: GENRE, STRUCTURE, AND POETICS IN LAMENTATIONS

### 4.1. Introduction

“[Eco] foresees a Model Reader capable of making interpretative moves which correspond to his, the author’s, generative moves. This sort of reader required is signaled by a number of different means: language, the choice of a particular kind of encyclopedia or ensemble of cultural references, particular vocabulary or style, genre.”<sup>316</sup>

Caesar’s quote above highlights the importance of the competences employed by the producer of a text in its production for Eco’s aesthetic theory; likewise the competences of the model reader enable one to make “interpretative moves” that mirror those of the producer of the work. Caesar highlights a few of these competences that should be analysed in determining how any text goes about creating meaning for its model reader. He includes genre, style (or poetics), language, and encyclopaedic knowledge, but these can include the micro and macrostructure of a text as well: both at the verse level and in the shape of the whole book.

By way of exploration into questions of genre, structure, and poetics which may be pertinent for Lamentations 1—3, the present chapter will identify important “cultural references” within its encyclopaedic world. This includes, as indicated in the previous chapter, material from the OT (dirges, individual and communal laments, wisdom material) as well as ANE material (city-laments and related genres). The various structures offered by previous scholarship for Lamentations will be explored including the more recent Dutch research assessing the structure of Northwest Semitic poetry. I then come to conclusions on these proposals and reassess the usage of the alphabetic acrostic as the structuring device for Lamentations. Finally, I will attend to some poetic techniques at work in Lamentations. Following Eco’s aesthetic theory, the empirical reader becomes the model reader only after research into the “language,” “ensemble of cultural references,” “style,” and “genre” available in the encyclopaedia of Lamentations (or “circumstance”) while keeping in mind the difference between open and closed texts.

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<sup>316</sup>Caesar, *Umberto Eco*, 123.

Understanding the encyclopaedic world of Lamentations will assist in the exegetical focus in Chapters 5-7 whereby the theology of Lamentations will be ascertained.

#### 4.2. Genre

The OT contains a variety of extant lament material pertinent to Lamentations: individual and communal laments, city-laments, dirges, wisdom material, and thanksgiving songs.<sup>317</sup> ANE city-laments too share similar characteristics with the book.<sup>318</sup> Comparative analysis between this generic material within the cultural encyclopaedia of the OT and ANE and Lamentations reveals how Lamentations diverges from, and converges with, these texts. Albertz argues that Lamentations marks a generic development in the literary history of Israel.<sup>319</sup> Morrow affirms Albertz' contention; Berlin identifies the book as one of a number of texts falling under a new generic category of "Jerusalem Laments" arising after the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>320</sup>

Though correct in noting the distinctive character of Lamentations, it is beyond the scope of the present study to confirm their views that it represents a generic development. The poetry uses available encyclopaedic material for its own purposes. Traditional research into the genre of Lamentations has focused upon individual poems rather than the book as a whole, following Gunkel's lead in form-critical research.<sup>321</sup> He

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<sup>317</sup>See 2.4., above as well as: Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep O Daughter of Zion*, 25-6; Martin-Achard and Re'emi, *God's People in Crisis*, 79.

<sup>318</sup>For critical editions of Mesopotamian city-laments, see Samuel N. Kramer, "A Sumerian Lamentation" and "Sumerian Lamentation" translated by Samuel N. Kramer (*ANET*, 455-63; 611-19). All references for the "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur" (hereafter LU) and "Lamentations over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur" (hereafter LSU) derive from Kramer's translation in *ANET*. For the Curse of Agade, see Jerrold S. Cooper, *The Curse of Agade* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Piotr Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (MC 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989). For *balag* and *eršemma* see Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament*, 38-53; For comparative analysis between the ANE texts and Lamentations, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 30-96.

<sup>319</sup>Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Studies in Biblical Literature 3; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 158-9.

<sup>320</sup>Morrow, *Protest Against God*, 107; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 24-6.

<sup>321</sup>Gunkel isolated the variety of distinct oral forms of poetry in ancient Israel by assessing the different Gattungen, "genres," in the corpus of the Hebrew Bible. See Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D. Nogalski; MLBS; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998).

classified Lamentations 1, 2, and 4 as an assemblage of communal dirges<sup>322</sup>, Lamentations 3 as a mixed genre poem that contains elements of both the individual lament (Lam 3.1-17, 48-66) and communal lament (Lam 3.40-7) as well as wisdom material (Lam 3.25-39); Lamentations 5 is a communal lament.<sup>323</sup> At present four views hold sway: communal dirges, communal laments, city-laments, or mixed genre poems.<sup>324</sup>

However, other positions have been offered. Kraus believes Lamentations represents a genre to mourn the destroyed sanctuary which was sung at the restoration of the temple in 515 BCE. Akkadian songs sung at the restoration of the temple are its generic forbears.<sup>325</sup> Boecker and Wieser diverge slightly from Kraus, considering Lamentations to be liturgical poetry, sung at an *unspecified* lament festival.<sup>326</sup> Lee believes Lamentations 1–4 are “mixed genre” poems that combine the communal lament and communal dirge genres; Lamentations 5 is a communal lament.<sup>327</sup> Re’emi thinks Lamentations 1, 2, and 4 share elements with the dirge genre, though “different elements in the contents of these songs”—including national laments, individual laments, complaints, and confessions of sin [...] make generic identification uncertain.<sup>328</sup> Berlin’s view already has been mentioned.<sup>329</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp cuts against the grain and argues that Lamentations is a lyric sequence. These options are evaluated below.

#### 4.2.1. Lamentations as Communal Dirges

If Lamentations represents a set of communal dirges, then the poetry functions to mourn the destruction of Jerusalem and appeal to YHWH to counteract this disaster.

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<sup>322</sup>Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 94-6. Jahnow employs different terminology, namely “Leichenlied,” or “funeral song” [Hedwig Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung* (BZAW 36; Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1923)].

<sup>323</sup>Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 94-6, 308; Jahnow calls Lamentations 3 an individual lament (*Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 168-9). Among those who follow Gunkel are Nötcher and Rudolph. See Friedrich Nötcher, *Die Klagelieder* (EB; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1947), 1; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Die Klagelieder* (KAT; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1962), 191-2.

<sup>324</sup>Most of these positions, except for Dobbs-Allsopp on city-laments, are based upon form-critical research.

<sup>325</sup>A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete: Einleitung und Übertragung* (Zürich: Artemis, 1953).

<sup>326</sup>Hans Jochen Boecker, *Klagelieder* (ZB 21; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985), 12-13; Weiser, *Klagelieder*, 298-300.

<sup>327</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 33-7.

<sup>328</sup>Martin-Achard and Re’emi, *God’s People in Crisis*, 79.

<sup>329</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 24-6.



Through comparative analysis between dirges in folk literature of various cultures and analogous texts in the OT, Gunkel's student, Hedwig Jahnow, discovered mourning customs in ancient Israel—formal elements associated with the dirge, ritual acts in mourning, and occasions of recitation. She recognised that mourning in Israel demanded not merely emotional states but rather behavioural expressions<sup>330</sup> and concluded that a privatised “Leichenlied,” “funeral song” (identified also as “Totenklage,” “dirge”) was sung around the funeral bier by the family and friends after a bereavement in Israel.<sup>331</sup> The dirge was one of a number of Trauerbräuche, “mourning customs,” associated with mourning that provided the community a way to express pain and deal with death.<sup>332</sup>

The privatised Leichenlied evinces certain elements. Lee summarises them.<sup>333</sup>

1. Proclamation of death (often with the use of term אֵיכָה or אָךְ<sup>334</sup> composed in the broken, stilted 3+2 *qinah* meter reflective of loss and mourning<sup>335</sup>)
2. Complaint (Klage) over death/destruction often accompanied by weeping
3. Melancholy over the transitoriness of the deceased/destroyed city
4. An accusation (Anklage) against the perpetrator of the crime<sup>336</sup>
5. Dialogic performative style of different speakers in the poetry
6. A brief question
7. Summons for others to mourn
8. Enacted mourning over the incomprehensibility of the event
9. Impact of the death on the survivors
10. Mention of the manner of death
11. Reconciliation in which the survivor makes peace with the death in that the death was noble, brave, or honourable
12. Contrast motif expressed in reversal
13. Prayer to God

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<sup>330</sup>She anticipated later comparative anthropological studies between the OT and ANE: Gary Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*; Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*.

<sup>331</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 73-86.

<sup>332</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 2-11. See also the discussion of Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, 49-97.

<sup>333</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 13-14.

<sup>334</sup>According to Jahnow, the word אֵיכָה, often translated ‘how’ or ‘alas,’ represents the hallmark of the funeral song in ancient Israel.

<sup>335</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 2-11; For the *qinah* meter, see Karl Budde, “Das hebräische Klagelied,” *ZAW* 2(1882): 1-52. The *qinah* meter has come under scrutiny recently. Whether the 3 + 2 *qinah* meter actually exists, the present study omits it from consideration.

<sup>336</sup>At the funeral, dirge singers accused the perpetrator of death, especially in the case of murder, and “ertönt von den Lippen der Leichensängerin zum ersten Mal der Name des Mörders” (Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 88). The funeral bier was a place, like the city gate, where justice was demanded, though it is unlikely that justice was achieved there. See Lee on the relationship between this motif and possible OT parallels (Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 35-6).

In Jahnow's view the Leichenlied was later used in a transferred sense ("im übertragenen Sinne") by the prophets to a religious and public setting.<sup>337</sup> These metaphorical, communal Leichenlieder, henceforth called "communal dirges," did not mourn an individual but rather "eine personifizierte Gesamtheit (Land oder Stadt)."<sup>338</sup> In the communal dirge, a typically non-cultic genre is transformed into religious poetry. For Jahnow, Lamentations 1, 2, and 4 represent the most extensive evidence of the communal dirge.<sup>339</sup>

Jahnow believes Lamentations reveals a number of elements revealing it as a communal dirge. In Lam 1.1; 2.1; 4.1, the term אֵיכָה is used, about which she says, "In diesem Wort hat sich die wehmütige Grundstimmung des Leichenliedes zu einer festen Stilform verdichtet."<sup>340</sup> Thus, for the hearer of the Leichenlied, as well as those singing it, the recitation of אֵיכָה conditioned the audience for what was about to come: melancholy and mourning over death. Lamentations also presents Jerusalem's reversal from glory to shame, evincing the contrast motif, as in Lam 1.1.<sup>341</sup> The personified city also identifies the one(s) who have caused the bereavement, among them enemies and God.<sup>342</sup> Jahnow notes that the typical call for public justice is "in der Form der Leichenklage. Hier wird die Klage zur Anklage."<sup>343</sup> If the city personified becomes the dirge singer in the communal dirge, then it follows that the "widow" of Lam 1.1 or בַּת־צִיּוֹן, "Dear Zion," of the remainder of the book becomes the "klagende Hinterbliebene," the lamenting survivor who demands justice over the death of her children, the inhabitants of the city itself.<sup>344</sup> These elements lead Jahnow to identify Lamentations 1, 2, and 4 as communal dirges.

#### 4.2.2. Lamentations as Communal Laments

Westermann concurs with Jahnow that the dirge is a profane (non-cultic) genre and that elements of the dirge appear in Lamentations. But because Lamentations

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<sup>337</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 162. Lee summarises Jahnow: *The Singers of Lamentations*, 12-37.

<sup>338</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 164.

<sup>339</sup>Am 5.2 and Isa 23.1-14, as well (Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 165-97).

<sup>340</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 136, 168.

<sup>341</sup>Jahnow calls this "Einst und Jetzt" motif "ein wesentliches Merkmal des alten Leichenliedes" (*Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 170).

<sup>342</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 171-2.

<sup>343</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 88.

<sup>344</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 172.

addresses God, these poems function differently than dirges and so cannot be called communal dirges. They are laments. Lamentations 3 is a mixed genre poem, Lamentations 5 is a communal lament, and Westermann identifies Lamentations 1, 2, and 4 as “communal laments” with elements of the dirge interspersed throughout them.<sup>345</sup>

A number of distinctions exist between the genres. The dirge is not addressed to God and the name of YHWH never occurs in it. The address to the dead, the call for lamentation, the announcement of death, and the description of suffering are elements that characterise the dirge. The communal lament has a future oriented supplication for deliverance within it while the dirge confronts the fact of death and looks to the past.<sup>346</sup> The dirge expresses loss is a vehicle for the family to voice pain while the communal lament functions to direct pain heavenward, typically requesting the deity to intervene in the time of extreme pain or hardship. The melancholic mood expressed in the dirge is felt too in the communal lament, but here that feeling is directed to the deity, which remains the key point. No where in the privatised dirge does the complaint go to the deity.

Direct address to the deity is crucial for laments because it focuses the prayer, notably in the *Klage*, “complaint,” to God and appeals for relief from whatever oppression. The complaint contains three interchangeable aspects that always occur within a lament: an accusation or a call upon God to look at the suffering (*die Anklage des Gottes*), an expression of pain the sufferer endures (*die Wir-Klage*), and the act of naming and describing the enemy and their mockery (*die Feindklage*).<sup>347</sup>

Westermann argues that the *Anklage*, “complaint” serves as the nerve centre or heart of the lament and brings the suffering community’s issue directly to the one who has allowed (or even caused) this suffering. Westermann states: “Die an Gott gerichtete *Klage*, die *Anklage Gottes* ist in den Psalmen der Nerv aller *Klage*: irgendwo stößt jede *Klage* auf den, der als der Schöpfer und Herr seiner Kreatur das Leid zuließ. Die *Klagen* des Alten Testaments suchen den Urheber des Leides nicht bei einer gottfeindlichen Macht, sondern in Gott selber.”<sup>348</sup>

<sup>345</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 15-22 = *Lamentations*, 1-11.

<sup>346</sup>Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 167-8, n.12.

<sup>347</sup>Claus Westermann, *Der Psalter* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1967), 30-5. Westermann states, “Sie ist an Gott gerichtete *Klage*, als *Wir-Klage* (bzw. *Ich-Klage*) klagt sie das eigene Leid, als *Feindklage* klagt sie, was der Feind angerichtet hat. Diese drei Glieder der *Klage* stehen in einer lebendigen, vielfältigen Beziehung zueinander. Nicht alle brauchen in jedem Psalm zu erscheinen, aber jede *Klage* hat ihrem Wesen nach diese drei Richtungen, diese drei Aspekte” (Westermann, *Der Psalter*, 35).

<sup>348</sup>Westermann, *Der Psalter*, 31.

The Anklage des Gottes strikes out at God, demanding his attention. This demand may focus upon an enemy, may question the length of suffering, but in any case it demands the Lord recognise present suffering, and then do something to change it. Differently to Jahnou, who views, for instance, Lam 2.20-1 as the accusation against the perpetrator of the crime in the communal dirge, Westermann views these verses as an Anklage des Gottes within a communal lament.<sup>349</sup> These verses do not formally “indict” God over injustice but rather ask the poignant question “How could you have allowed this to happen, Lord?” within the context of a people who are at a loss for explanation.<sup>350</sup> Westermann’s reasoning here is based upon the logic that no public judicial forum existed in Israel by which one could indict the Lord for injustice. This fact notwithstanding, however, the Anklage des Gottes appears to raise significant questions about the justice of God. Westermann argues that the Anklage goes “before the heavenly throne.”<sup>351</sup> The fact that communal laments often raise the question of “How could you have allowed this suffering to happen?” seems to indicate that worshippers could question God’s justice.

It is plausible to surmise, then, that communal laments may function as protest speech, raising the issue of God’s justice, without reverting semantically to a form of legal indictment.<sup>352</sup> It appears that protest speech raises the issue of God’s justice without making further indictment with juridical overtones. The theology of Lamentations in the communal lament, then, is that of complaint and lament to God.

#### 4.2.3. Lamentations and City-Laments

Many have attempted to make connections between the ANE laments and related genres and Lamentations.<sup>353</sup> Kramer and Kraus argue that there is direct linkage between ANE texts and Lamentations. Kramer argued that Sumerian poets originated the lament genre which directly influenced the OT book of Lamentations.<sup>354</sup> Kraus believed that the

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<sup>349</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 134-6 = *Lamentations*, 158-9.

<sup>350</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 86-7 = *Lamentations*, 91-2.

<sup>351</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 86 = *Lamentations*, 92.

<sup>352</sup>But see Carleen Mandolfo, *God in the Dock: The Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament* (JSOTSup 357; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>353</sup>The view of the present study was hinted at in 3.4. in the application of Eco’s model of the rhizomatic encyclopaedia to understand relationships between Lamentations and other ANE texts. It is possible to argue for the availability of certain genres in the cultural encyclopaedia for the creator of Lamentations to “blow up” for various purposes.

<sup>354</sup>Samuel N. Kramer, *Sumerian Literature and the Bible* (*AnBib* 12; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1959), 185-204.

genre of the book fits not with the city-lament genre but rather with the “Klage um das zerstörte Heiligtum,” or “lament over the destroyed sanctuary.”<sup>355</sup> The supposed Sitz im Leben for the pronouncement of this lament was at the restoration of the second temple in 515 BCE.<sup>356</sup> He arrived at this position by building upon research in Sumerian and Akkadian literature in which festal texts were read at the reconstruction of temples.<sup>357</sup> In this he affirms direct influence between Mesopotamian laments and Lamentations.<sup>358</sup> The main difficulty with Kraus’ generic identification lies in the fact that Lamentations speaks little of the destroyed sanctuary compared with the frequent descriptions of plight of Jerusalem and its inhabitants as well as the land and inhabitants of the surrounding region of Judah. The focus for his generic identification—the destroyed sanctuary—remains too narrow. Kaiser summarises, “Kraus’ attempt to determine the type [or genre of Lamentations], with the help of Sumerian parallels, as a lament for the destroyed sanctuary clearly does not do justice to the actual concern of the poems.”<sup>359</sup>

Rudolph and McDaniel argue against the line taken by Kramer. Rudolph denies direct linkage believing instead that similar situations depicted in both the Sumerian Lamentations over Ur and Akkad and the book of Lamentations explains their similarities without having to attribute direct influence of the former on the latter.<sup>360</sup> McDaniel most extensively questions direct influence of Mesopotamian laments. He cannot see how the writer of Lamentations could have been exposed to Mesopotamian laments so he could not have imitated their style.<sup>361</sup> Rather, similar circumstances created similar styles.

However, if Lamentations was composed some time between 587-520 BCE, it is thoroughly possible that the composer of this text could have come in contact with the Mesopotamian lament traditions. Morrow’s research shows the connection is at the very least tenable and at best likely.<sup>362</sup> Recognising that the connection between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian city-lament genre are likely, Dobbs-Allsopp employs a

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<sup>355</sup>Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 9.

<sup>356</sup>Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 12-13.

<sup>357</sup>Falkenstien and von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*.

<sup>358</sup>Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 9-10.

<sup>359</sup>Otto Kaiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Presentation of its Results and Problems* (trans., John Sturdy; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975); 356; *Klagelieder*, 101-3.

<sup>360</sup>Rudolph, *Klagelieder*, 9.

<sup>361</sup>Thomas F. McDaniel, “The Alleged Sumerian Influence Upon Lamentations,” *VT* 18 (1968): 198-209.

<sup>362</sup>Morrow, *Protest Against God*, 82-105.

comparative method to uncover corresponding characteristics between them. Secondly, he wonders whether Lamentations is a Judahite equivalent of the city-lament genre.

This city-lament genre appears in primary and secondary production in Mesopotamia in, among other examples, the Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur, Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur and Sumer, The Lament for Nibru, The Lament for Unug; the city-lament genre is similar to the Curse of Agade and shares family resemblances with other Mesopotamian lament genres.<sup>363</sup> After comparative analysis of the texts, Dobbs-Allsopp discovers nine distinguishing generic features between Lamentations and the Mesopotamian city-laments<sup>364</sup>:

1. Unified subject and mood—that of mourning over the destruction of a city
2. Unique structure and poetic technique
  - a. Authorial point of view and speaking voices
  - b. Contrast and reversal motifs
  - c. Focus on destruction
  - d. So-called *qinah* meter in Lamentations
3. Motif of divine abandonment
4. Assignment of responsibility for the disaster
5. The divine agent of destruction
6. Description of destruction
  - a. City and environs
  - b. Sanctuary
  - c. Persons
  - d. Social, religious, and political customs
7. The image of the weeping goddess
8. Lamentation
9. A hope for restoration of the city and return of the gods

From this he concludes that Lamentations exhibits characteristics congruent with the ANE city-lament genre, though it is probably an imitation of the city-lament prototypes.<sup>365</sup>

Some of the motifs Dobbs-Allsopp notices share crossover traits with the lament and dirge. Motif four—the assignment of responsibility—mirrors Jahnow's fourth element of the communal dirge: the accusation against the perpetrator. The obvious crossover trait, however, is that of the unified subject and mood of the city-lament and the communal dirge: that of mourning over the destruction. Another crossover motif is the emphasis on reversal of former glory to present abjection, what Jahnow calls the "Einst

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<sup>363</sup>Such as *balag* and *eršemma* compositions and the Curse of Agade. See note 318, above.

<sup>364</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 31-94.

<sup>365</sup>Like imitative *balag* and *eršemma* compositions (Dobbs-Allsopp, "Darwinism," 629-30).

und Jetzt” motif and Dobbs-Allsopp identifies as, “contrast and reversal.”<sup>366</sup> Finally, both Dobbs-Allsopp and Jahnow identify different speaking voices as typical of the city-lament and dirge genres, respectively, and suggests examples from Lamentations. The appeal to God, associated with the communal lament, is combined in the city-lament mode in motif eight and nine: lamentation and a plea for restoration and a return of the gods. Lam 5.21 is the most explicit prayer to God for restoration that Dobbs-Allsopp mentions, though Lamentations 5 is unequivocally held as the only pure communal lament in the book.<sup>367</sup> Crossover traits raise questions about classifying Lamentations to one genre: it shares traits characteristic to the city-lament, lament, and dirge genres.

#### 4.2.4. Other Proposals: Jerusalem Lament and Lyric

Most recently, Berlin argues that Lamentations reflects a type of lament genre that arose in the history of Israel only after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, the “Jerusalem Lament.”<sup>368</sup> This lament questions how one sings about Zion when the city, temple, and environs are destroyed. The opposite of the Jerusalem lament is the “Zion song.”<sup>369</sup> After the fall of Jerusalem, theological and historical changes necessitated the creation of the new genre that would express the dismay over the destruction. Lamentations is this new genre that functions to mourn Jerusalem’s destruction.<sup>370</sup>

Gottwald, Lee, Re’emi, and Provan identify Lamentations as mixed genre poems. Gottwald thinks the lament is the primary mode of Lamentations but that various literary types are interwoven as well.<sup>371</sup> Lee, too, sees Lamentations as a series of mixed poems; they combine the communal dirge of Jahnow and the communal lament for specific reasons. The communal dirge begins Lamentations 1, 2, and 4 and then morphs into communal lament towards the latter half of each of these poems. The poetry cannot be understood properly without recognising the usage of both genres within it.<sup>372</sup> Re’emi believes the mixture elements from communal lament, dirge, individual lament, and wisdom material leave one unable to assign the poems to a specific genre beyond a broad

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<sup>366</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 170; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 38-41.

<sup>367</sup>House, *Lamentations*, 455.

<sup>368</sup>Other than Lamentations, Berlin identifies Pss 74, 79, and 137 as Jerusalem Laments (*Lamentations*, 24-5).

<sup>369</sup>Pss 46, 48, 50, 76, 84, 87, and 122.

<sup>370</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 24-5.

<sup>371</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 41.

<sup>372</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 33-7.

category of national lament. Provan identifies Lamentations broadly as laments without further specificity.<sup>373</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, Keil anticipated Dobbs-Allsopp's recent identification of the book of Lamentations as lyric poetry. As he discusses the question of Jeremianic authorship of the book, Keil discusses how the alphabetic form points to its classification as lyric poetry. Different from prophetic address that is intended to "warn, rebuke, and comfort," Keil argues that the book of Lamentations is

"lyric poetry, which has its own proper style of language, and this [is] different from prophetic address. Both the subject-matter and the poetic form of these poems, smooth though this is in general, necessarily resulted in this—that through the prevalence of peculiar thoughts, modes of representation, and feelings, the language also received an impress, in words and modes of expression, that was peculiar to itself, and different from the prophetic diction of Jeremiah."<sup>374</sup>

As lyric poetry, Lamentations displays a style of speech fundamentally different from prophetic speech. Distinctive characteristics of lyric are: repetition of specific clauses and terminology (such as *לא חמל* in Lam 2.2, 17, 21; 3.43), specific poetic usage of the divine epithet *עליון*, "Most High" in Lam 3.35, 38, and a formal structure (the alphabetic acrostic) that organises various "chords" of emotion in the poetry.<sup>375</sup>

Dobbs-Allsopp, too, argues that the poetry of Lamentations is lyric, specifically a lyric sequence, though his primary aim lies in assessing how the poetry *functions* rather than identifying *genre* per se. So he speaks of modes of discourse rather than genre classifications.<sup>376</sup> How texts go about generating meaning through language deals with their modes of discourse. Lyric sequences are composite works containing multiple and discreet poems that display a degree of coherence and tell their "story" without recourse to features normally associated with narrative: plot, theme development, or argument.<sup>377</sup> Lyric sequences tell their story through non-narrative and non-representational (non-dramatic) means.

Due to the fact that its mode of discourse is paratactic, imagistic and non-narrative, Dobbs-Allsopp believes Lamentations fits the lyrical mode of discourse more than anything else and can be understood as a lyric sequence.<sup>378</sup> It tells its story through

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<sup>373</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 5.

<sup>374</sup>Keil, K&D, vol. 8, 472.

<sup>375</sup>Keil, K&D, vol. 8, 471-3.

<sup>376</sup>To his claim about the genre of Lamentations, reference is made to his earlier work on the relationship between it and the city-lament genre.

<sup>377</sup>F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Lamentations as a Lyric Sequence," 1-5.

<sup>378</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 12-20.



the poetic usage of language, repetition, and the progression of the acrostic rather than dramatic portrayal or narrative plot development. This point runs counter to the performative aspect noted by Lee, who believes that the communal dirges of Lamentations have oral roots that indicate they may have been performed by the prophet Jeremiah and female temple singers; the alternative speaking voices may represent real singers who sang their alternative perspectives on the disaster of Jerusalem, though this is not her primary point.<sup>379</sup>

Whether these speaking voices represent crystallised dialogue performed between Jeremiah and the temple singers is yet to be proved. In my view, these poems represent a stronger communal focus in which the community was active in the laments rather than merely viewing the performance of the laments between two sets of speakers. In any case, Dobbs-Allsopp is right in noting that lyric functions differently than other modes of discourse. His recognition alerts one to the necessary involvement of the reader in the interpretative process to make ties between disparate parts within the poetry and may give insight as to the discrepancy in divine imagery, sources of blame for the destruction, and the nature of hope in Lamentations. More shall be added to this assertion in the exegesis in Chapters 5-7.

#### 4.2.5. Conclusions

In light of the proposals offered above one recognises the difficulty in assigning Lamentations to a specific genre. Though there are crossover traits between available genres of the day—the dirge, communal lament, and city-lament, among others—Lamentations cannot be reduced to any one of these. Even if one wants to argue that the primary mode of the book of a whole is that of a general lament, as do Provan, Gottwald, and Re’emi, then one still must deal with the fact that other generic elements appear as well, notably dirge motifs as well as wisdom material that occurs prominently in Lam 3.25-39. Identifying the primary mode as lament does not cover all generic aspects of the poetry. This point is heightened significantly if one takes the view that the theological centre of the book is the wisdom material of Lam 3.25-39.<sup>380</sup>

Moreover, I am not persuaded by Jahnou or Lee’s argument for the presence of (or existence of) a communal dirge, though the profane (that is, non-cultic) dirge is a

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<sup>379</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 41-6.

<sup>380</sup>As does Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 96-111.

viable generic category. The communal dirge genre, as Jahnou has identified it, is in fact the mixture of the city-lament and the dirge genres. The texts she identifies as communal dirges in the Old Testament are in fact adaptations of the city-lament genre in Israelite or Judahite contexts.<sup>381</sup> Her recognition of specific elements within the profane dirge, however, is fruitful as a number of them do appear and are exploited in Lamentations: certainly the use of אֵיכָה (Lam 1.1; 2.1; 4.1), summons for others to mourn (Lam 1.18b; 2.18-19), enacted mourning (Lam 1.1-2a, 4; 2.5c, 10, 13; 5.15), impact of death on survivors (Lam 1.4b-c; 2.10, 11c-12; 4.3-5, 9-10, 14) and the general tone of melancholy over death.

Lamentations may represent a generic development in Israelite and Judahite literature, as Albertz maintains,<sup>382</sup> but proving this moves beyond the aim of the present study. The same holds for Berlin's Jerusalem laments and Dobbs-Allsopp's suggestion of Lamentations as lyric poetry. Dobbs-Allsopp does helpfully argue that the *mode* of Lamentations is lyrical rather than narratival or dramatic as he claims something about how the text functions rather than its genre. The present study accepts this modal understanding of how Lamentations' poetry functions. It advances its logic through repetition of language and paratactic imagery through the alphabetic acrostic.

On the evidence, Lamentations is a mixed genre poem. Lament, with the complaint element, is a primary generic influence, though the dirge, city-lament, and wisdom material also play a role. Its precise generic identification however, is something different than each of them. Not only crossover traits between genres establish this view, but also how the present study understands genre analysis. Following Dobbs-Allsopp, genre analysis is a "tool of criticism" that helps the scholar explain interrelations between texts in terms of motifs, imagery, poetic devices, and even structures.<sup>383</sup> In this way, genre analysis is a comparative device that assesses crossover traits occurring between texts.

The fact that Lamentations is a mixed genre poem carries with it theological significance. To associate Lamentations to communal laments (as Westermann does), misses the ambiguity that arises from the variety of grounds for complaint: the sinfulness of the people, the punishment received at the hand of YHWH, abusiveness of the enemies, feelings of distress, and shame and disgrace experienced in the downfall. The basis for

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<sup>381</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 30-96; 100-156.

<sup>382</sup>Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 158-9.

<sup>383</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, "Darwinism," 625.

each complaint is theologically distinct. While it is certainly true that Lamentations mourns the disaster of Jerusalem, as Berlin's Jerusalem Lament or the city-lament genre, this flattens the theological complexity present in the poetry. The theologies that arise from these sources of mourning are distinct from one another in the way they picture both the Lord and the people.

### 4.3. Structure

Moving to the question of structure for the book of Lamentations, like biblical poetry in general, structure and semantics are interrelated.<sup>384</sup> Ridderbos argues that the structure of poetry is like architecture in a building. What the various Psalms want to express are constructed according to a "blueprint," and each poem's architecture frames the meaning it conveys.<sup>385</sup> And yet it is the structure of Lamentations that creates problems for understanding its theology; a brief survey of literature reveals that scholars have seen in Lamentations a number of them at work. In this section, concentric structures, tragic structures, the qinah structure, and the alphabetic acrostic will be assessed to discover if any one of them can rightly be argued to organise the book.

#### 4.3.1. Concentric Structures

Some have argued for concentric structures. Johnson believes that Lamentations was composed to respond to a specific theological question, namely, "How can the events of 587 BCE be associated with a continued and vital faith in [YHWH]?"<sup>386</sup> He argues that the poetry guides the reader to theological response through the structure of the book. For Johnson, with the exception of chapter five<sup>387</sup>, the poetry exhibits the following structure: "fact" in the first half of each of the poems followed by "interpretation" in the latter half;

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<sup>384</sup>J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 34-5.

<sup>385</sup>N. H. Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen: Stilistische Verfahren und Aufbau mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Ps 1—41* (BZAW 117; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), 112-115.

<sup>386</sup>Bo Johnson, "Form and Message in Lamentations," 59.

<sup>387</sup>Lamentations 5 does not follow the structural pattern of the previous chapters even though it touches upon all of the themes and theological ideas that are expressed in the previous poems. Johnson suggests that chapter five is the earliest of all the poems and the themes and theological ideas of the previous poems were based upon this poem (Johnson, "Form and Message," 70-3).

the central verses of each poem (Lam 1.11-12; 2.11-12; 3.21-41; 4.11-12) function as significant transitions between the “fact” and “interpretation” portions.<sup>388</sup>

Lamentations 1 and 2 exhibit this organization. Lam 1.1-11 represents the “fact half” of the poem, describing the state of Jerusalem and her inhabitants while Lam 1.12-22 represents the “interpretation half” of the poem, explaining that this destruction is a result of the Lord’s anger (Lam 1.12) over the transgressions of the people. The day of the Lord’s anger is a crucial theme from Lam 1.12 which chapter two picks up and expounds upon. In Lam 2.1-11, the “fact half,” expands on the day of the Lord theme and describes the actions taken by God on the day of his anger while Lam 2.12-22, the “interpretation half,” reveals the practical causes of God’s wrath: the sin of the prophets and God’s very decision to enact judgment long ago.

Lamentations 3 is the core of the book and the theological answer to the question that the book raises. Lam 3.21-41 focuses upon God’s continued relationship with Judah and the proper attitude and worshipping response from the people and thus responds fundamentally to the theological question the book raises. From these verses, the theological answer of Lamentations comes: God has been angry and punished the people for sin (3.37-9), but this was just punishment and the people must not complain (3.39) but rather “test and examine” their ways in prayer and worship (3.40-1).

Lamentations 4 reiterates concerns which have arisen in the previous poems and is structured similarly to them. Lam 4.1-11 focuses upon hunger and famine in Jerusalem, and the “fact half” of chapter four (4.1-11) focuses upon the reality of famine in the land. The “interpretation half” explains the present famine as a result of the sins of the priests and prophets. Also included in this chapter is a hopeful tone of continued relationship with YHWH (4.21-2) which coincides with the perspective taken in 3.21-41. Lamentations 4 is formally incongruous though it provides a call to repentance as a way for rehabilitating the people’s relationship with God. Johnson concludes, “Ch. 5 is this prayer for forgiveness; it is the lifting up of ‘hearts and hands’ (3,41) to God in heaven.”<sup>389</sup>

Condamin and Renkema too see concentric structures in Lamentations. Through the occurrence of repeated terms in opposing verses, Condamin argues that the  $\kappa$  verse corresponds to the  $\eta$  verse, the  $\alpha$  with the  $\psi$ , etc.<sup>390</sup> Lamentations 1 and 2 display this structure without pressing any further into the remainder of the book. As described in 2.3.,

<sup>388</sup>Johnson, “Form and Message,” 58-73.

<sup>389</sup>Johnson, “Form and Message,” 73.

<sup>390</sup>Condamin, *Poèmes de la Bible*, 47-50.

above, Renkema takes Condamin's general conclusions of the structure of Lamentations 1 and 2 further. He follows the Kampen School and sees a concentric structure emerging in each of the five chapters of Lamentations. This structure is designed to move the reader to the centre of the poems where the theological "kernel," or thrust, of each poem resides.<sup>391</sup> He sees in it a deliberate structural logic where the central portion of each poem, excluding Lamentations 3, promotes the theological thrust of each poem. Lamentations 3, however, is constructed of two mirroring panels (Lam 3.1-33 and Lam 3.34-66).<sup>392</sup> The combination of the central panels culminate in the book's, primary theological concern.

The Kampen School has identified some of the structures of both Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry.<sup>393</sup> It rightly highlights the important use of repetition in Northwest Semitic poetry beyond the level of the verse. Yet as demonstrated above (2.3.), Renkema overdraws the evidence. Recognising the value of observing the repetition of terminology within and across the poems of Lamentations is valuable but does not provide the structure that Renkema proposes.

#### 4.3.2. Tragic Structures

Apart from concentric structures, tragic structures have been suggested as well. Known as Freytag's Pyramid for the theorist who originated it,<sup>394</sup> the tragic structure illustrates how plot develops within a five-act tragedy. Freytag concluded that five-act tragedies contain three essential elements: rising action, climax, and falling action. The climax represents the most significant point or turning point in the action of the work. The rising action remains developmental and secondary to the climax. The falling action

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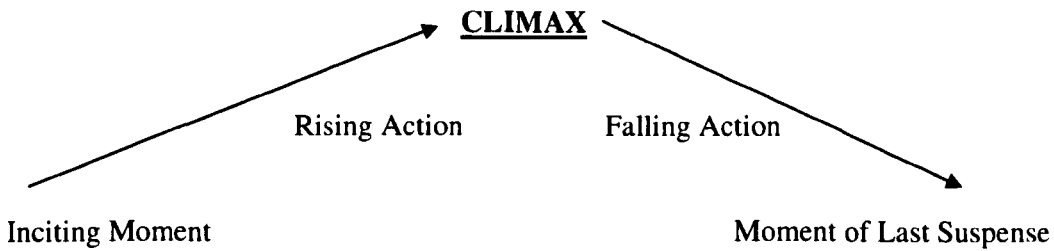
<sup>391</sup>Renkema, "The Literary Structure of Lamentations (I-IV)," 294-396; *Lamentations*, 72-9.

<sup>392</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 337-43.

<sup>393</sup>Johannes C. de Moor, "The Art of Versification in Ugarit and Israel (I)," in *Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East Presented to S. E. Loewenstamm* (Yitzhak Avishur and J. Blau, eds.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978), 119-39; "The Art of Versification in Ugarit and Israel (II)," *UF* 10 (1978): 187-217; "The Art of Versification in Ugarit and Israel (III)," *UF* 12 (1980): 311-15; M. C. A. Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, "Fundamentals of Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetry," *UF* 18 (1986): 173-212.

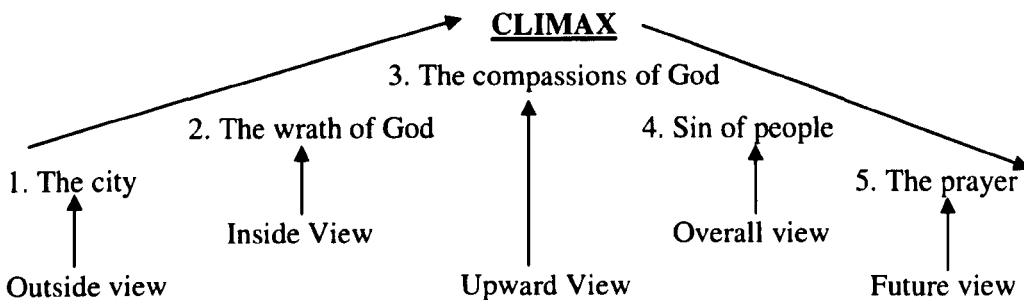
<sup>394</sup>C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (6th ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1992), 153-4, 207-8; Gustav Freytag, *Teknik des Dramas* (Leipzig, 1863) = *Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004).

represents the shift in perspective which comes after the climax, sometimes accompanied by catastrophe or restored order.<sup>395</sup> This can be seen in the diagram below:



Early on, Nägelsbach suggested that the five poems of Lamentations can be read together and evince a structure quite similar to that of Freytag's Pyramid: crescendo (chapters 1-2), climax (chapter 3), and decrescendo (chapters 4-5). Nägelsbach argues that chapter three serves as the climax, or "Spitze," of the poem and says: "Dadurch ist die Hervorhebung des Mittelgliedes und im Zusammenhang damit ein Hinauf- und Herabsteigen, ein crescendo und decrescendo mit deutlich markierter Spitze möglich gemacht."<sup>396</sup> For him, Lamentations 3 is central both stylistically and theologically. The hopeful section (Lam 3.22-42) is the theological core of the book and gives indication of the purpose of the poetry: to give hope to God's people after the events of 587 BCE.<sup>397</sup>

Kaiser, too, envisions a tragic structure for Lamentations. A representation of Kaiser's structure reveals affinities to Freytag's Pyramid:



In his arrangement, Lamentations 1 and 2 focus upon the city and the wrath of God, respectively, and offer the ascent steps up to the climax of the book. Chapter 3 represents that climax by focusing upon the hopeful section that speaks of the compassions of God (Lam 3.18-33). After the climax, Lamentations 4 and 5 represent descent, or for all practical purposes, denouement.<sup>398</sup> After the climax, the intensity of the pain expressed in

<sup>395</sup>Diagram adapted from Holman and Harmon, *Handbook*, 85.

<sup>396</sup>Eduard Nägelsbach, *Die Klagelieder* (THBAT 15; Bielefeld and Leipzig: Belhagen und Klasing, 1868), vi, vii.

<sup>397</sup>Nägelsbach, *Die Klagelieder*, vii-viii.

<sup>398</sup>Kaiser, *Grief and Pain*, 19-22.

the book gradually recedes; he bolsters his opinion by citing the prevalence of third person speech in chapters four and five, which suggests that the raw emotionalism of first person speech in Lamentations 1, 2 and 3.1-17 have receded as a result of the turn to God's compassion in Lam 3.18-33.<sup>399</sup> Both Nägelsbach and Kaiser's tragic structures follow Freytag's Pyramid, though without acknowledging it.

The tragic structure has two positive points that remain suggestive for theological analysis of Lamentations. It highlights the importance of Lamentations 3 and emphasises its value for the interpretation of the book as a whole. This point is also raised by Renkema, Grossberg, and Johnson, who see chapter three as an interpretative key for the book. Next to Psalm 119, Lamentations 3 is the most extensive and elaborate acrostic in the Old Testament. Its length, elaborate design, and placement at the centre of the book bring attention to Lamentations 3. This poem, and the theology it presents, should be considered as a crucial element within the theological portrayal of the book at large. Secondly, the tragic structure rightly takes the canonical form of Lamentations into account. It is entirely proper to treat the book as a coherent set of poems designed to be read and interpreted together.<sup>400</sup>

Yet the difficulties associated with the tragic structure ultimately undermine its value. In the first instance, it is anachronistic to place a nineteenth century CE literary structure over a sixth century BCE text. One must query as to what textual clues drive the reader to conclude that Lamentations 1 and 2 represent something analogous to "crescendo" or "ascent" in the terminology of Nägelsbach or Kaiser and further, what clues drive one to surmise that Lamentations 4 or 5 display "decrescendo," falling action, or resolution as the tragic framework suggests. The argument offered by Kaiser, that the pain of the poems decreases with the shift away from first to third person speech is hardly satisfying. If anything, the level of pain brought to the fore in Lamentations 1 and 2 is redressed once again in the final chapters; and with the unsure conclusion of Lam 5.22, it is not certain that resolution has been achieved when the reader reaches the final verse.<sup>401</sup> In fact, the despondent tone associated with Lam 5.22, "Unless you have utterly rejected us and are exceedingly angry with us," leads Jewish liturgists to repeat the less

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<sup>399</sup>Kaiser, *Grief and Pain*, 21.

<sup>400</sup>See 1.2.

<sup>401</sup>See the explanation of S. Goldman, "Lamentations," in *The Five Megilloth: With Hebrew Text, English Translation, and Commentary* (SBB; ed., A. Cohen; London: Soncino, 1970), 102.

despondent plea of 5.21 in the festal celebration of the Ninth of Ab: "Return to us, O YHWH, and we shall be restored to you; renew our days as of old" (Lam 5.21).

The tragic structure also fails in light of the logic of Lamentations 3. Though prominent theologically, hope that marks the central section of Lamentations 3 may not serve as the kind of climax or change in perspective that Kaiser desires. I will address this in my exegesis of Lamentations 3, below, but at this juncture it is appropriate to highlight Dobbs-Allsopp's opinion on the chapter. Far from offering a climactic point to the book, he believes that chapter three offers a complicated vision of God, where YHWH's justice is "localized, countered, questioned and generally complicated in important ways."<sup>402</sup> The return to lament after Lam 3.18-39 mitigates their role as the theological "core" of the book. The preponderance of the alphabetic form in chapter three prevents the reader from remaining at the central, hopeful, portion of the chapter. Once attained, the hopeful verses then give way to a communal lament and a general plea for God to act on behalf of the people. Seen in this light, the acrostic serves to move the reader up to, but then beyond, the supposed climactic section of hope. Far from ameliorating the pain which has preceded Lam 3.18-39, the remainder of the chapter sustains the immediacy of the pain.

Finally, one must question the use of narrative structure for understanding a non-narrative text like Lamentations. The idea of reading Lamentations with a five-act tragedy assumes that the two in some way parallel one another as narrative modes of discourse: as the five-act tragedy tells its story in a certain manner, so then does Lamentations. This assumption is misleading. Lamentations does not "tell a story" in the same manner of tragedy or many other modes of narrative discourse, as intimated in 4.2.4. and 4.2.5. One of the key features in tragedy is the character development of the protagonist for his/her great fall. Though there are speaking voices in the poetry of Lamentations, they are personae, and not characters. The personae tell their experiences through the language and imagery in the poetry rather than plot or character development. Interpreting Lamentations' poetry through a narrative structure moves beyond what the poetry offers. Hillers summarises, "Neither narrative nor logical sequence is a dominant feature in contributing to the structure of Lamentations."<sup>403</sup>

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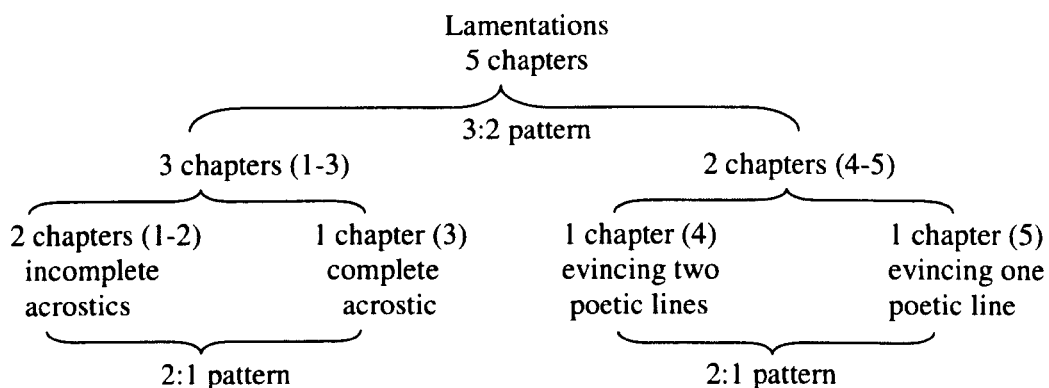
<sup>402</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 48.

<sup>403</sup>Delbert Hillers, "Lamentations, Book of," in *ABD* IV, 137.



4.3.3. William Shea: *qinah* Structure

Shea approaches the question of structure differently, believing the framework of the book to be inspired by its supposed meter, the *qinah* meter.<sup>404</sup> Shea looks at the entire corpus of Lamentations and questions why the poet arranged the book with five poems. He analyses the book on the basis of colometry, and discovers the following: Lamentations 1, 2, and 3 display three poetic lines per verse while Lamentations 4 displays two poetic lines per verse and chapter five exhibits only one poetic line per verse.<sup>405</sup> He then makes the following suggestion: “What we have here then is another 3:2 or *qinah* pattern which is demarcated for us by the acrostics present.”<sup>406</sup> The *qinah* is the limping 3 + 2 meter suggested by Budde.<sup>407</sup> He argues that the third chapter represents the most complete acrostic poem, as the opening word of each poetic line corresponds to a letter in the alphabet, while chapters one and two are “incomplete” in that only the first word in each poetic line corresponds to the alphabet. From this, he argues for a 2:1 pattern in Lamentations 1-3. He sees a similar 2:1 pattern emerge in chapters four and five; chapter four exhibits two poetic lines per verse while chapter five only exhibits single poetic line per verse thus providing a 2:1 pattern. He then diagrams the structure of Lamentations<sup>408</sup>:



Shea's structure however, is inconsistent. His overall 3:2 structure is based on a 2:1 pattern between the first three chapters and the other two chapters. In the first unit, the 2:1 pattern is achieved by observing differences in the acrostics between the three poems: upon two “incomplete” acrostics and one “complete” acrostic. In the second unit, the 2:1

<sup>404</sup>William H. Shea, “The *qinah* Structure of the Book of Lamentations,” *Bib* 60 (1979): 103-7.

<sup>405</sup>Shea, “The *qinah* Structure,” 106.

<sup>406</sup>Shea, “The *qinah* Structure,” 106.

<sup>407</sup>Budde, “Das hebräische Klagelied,” 1-52.

<sup>408</sup>Shea, “The *qinah* Structure,” 107.

pattern is achieved by observing difference in number of poetic lines between Lamentations 4 and 5. This is an almost arbitrary method to accomplish the 2:1 structure between parts and verges upon superimposing structure on the text of Lamentations.

Perhaps the most evident challenge to Shea's argument is the critique of the presence of identifiable meter in Hebrew poetry. In different works, Longman and Vance study the two most prominent metrical systems of Hebrew poetry and conclude that at best, Hebrew meter cannot be known (Longman) and at worst, there is no such thing as meter in Hebrew poetry (Vance).<sup>409</sup> The two basic ways to count meter are (a) the repetition of stressed syllables throughout a span of poetry, and (b) the repetition of the number of words within a poetic line. Longman concludes that in the first option, meter cannot be said to exist in Hebrew poetry if one depends upon counting syllables in an unemended or emended MT.<sup>410</sup> Further, if one employs a syntactic-accentual method for analysing Hebrew meter, then one may arrive at slightly more balanced poems but then not arrive at a consistent number of words throughout the span of the poem, meaning that there is no consistent meter.<sup>411</sup>

Using a more precise methodology, Vance supposes that a *regular* meter in Hebrew poetry would demand that 97% of the lines must display a regular pattern, something that both author and audience would recognise. This is how most metrical systems in other cultures operate.<sup>412</sup> For the *qinah* meter then, in 97% of the lines in the book, the first half of the poetic line (A) must be longer than the second half (B); Lamentations does not fit this standard in either counting method (syllabification or accentual units).<sup>413</sup> Vance thereby concludes that the *qinah* meter does not exist in Lamentations. The question pertinent here is as follows: in light of Longman and Vance's evidence in regards to Lamentations in particular, can one count *qinah* meter as a reliable and probable structuring device for the book as a whole? In light of the evidence, a

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<sup>409</sup>Tremper Longman III, "A Critique of Two Recent Metrical Systems," *Bib* 63(1982): 230-54. Donald R. Vance, *The Question of Meter in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (SBEC 46; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2001).

<sup>410</sup>Longman, "A Critique," 250.

<sup>411</sup>Longman, "A Critique," 253.

<sup>412</sup>Vance studies both Romance languages and Japanese poetry as controls.

<sup>413</sup>Just under 70% of lines have "A" longer than "B" through syllable counting; word counting yields only 51.612%. Thus Vance sees little evidence for regular metre in Lamentations (Vance, *The Question of Meter*, 485-7; 489-97).

positive response remains tenuous. This is not to say that it is not there but rather there is no compelling evidence that warrants it as a means to structure the book as a whole.

#### 4.3.4. Acrostic Structure

Acrostic structures were prevalent in Israelite literature. Aside from Psalm 119, Lamentations 3 is the largest acrostic in the Old Testament. The remaining chapters of Lamentations embody the acrostic in their poems except for Lamentations 5, which has the vestiges of an acrostic with 22 verses. Lamentations 1 follows the normal  $\aleph$ - $\omega$  order of the alphabet<sup>414</sup> while Lamentations 2, 3, and 4 transpose the two, displaying  $\omega$ - $\aleph$ . The meaning of the acrostic is disputed. Early Jewish rabbis argued that holy people kept the Torah from  $\aleph$  to  $\omega$ .<sup>415</sup> Here,  $\aleph$  to  $\omega$  becomes a merismus that conceptualises totality. The acrostic structure becomes a way of expressing completeness of both Torah and the keeper of Torah. For Lamentations, then, the acrostic becomes the means to organize outpouring of pain so as to express grief completely: from  $\aleph$  to  $\omega$ .<sup>416</sup>

However, Wiesmann avers the acrostic remains only a stylistic artifice. He says, "Die Acrostichis ist also nur eine äußere Zugabe für das Auge, eine zierliche Einfassung des Gedichtes, die Andeutung einer äußeren Ordnung; natürlich unterstützt sie auch das Gedächtnis."<sup>417</sup> For Wiesmann, the acrostic serves as an addition that provides an external order. Or it may serve as a memory aid. Westermann agrees, though argues that one should not follow the acrostic to get to the original meaning of the poems as they are secondary additions, put in after the original laments were uttered.<sup>418</sup>

Gottwald counters these dismissive stances. He envisions four possible reasons for the acrostic. First, that the acrostic had magical power. Second, it served as a pedagogical device. Or, it served as a mnemonic device. Finally, the acrostic functions conceptually so that the reader is forced to deal with its physical presence. Writing itself was sometimes imbued with symbolic and magical power,<sup>419</sup> but a magical explanation for Lamentations jars strongly against the theology among the Israelites reflected in the sixth century

<sup>414</sup>The Qumran text of Lamentations (4QLam<sup>a</sup>) follows an  $\omega$ - $\aleph$  order.

<sup>415</sup>*The Soncino Edition Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbath*, vol. 1 (London: Soncino, 1935-1953), 254.

<sup>416</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 29-30.

<sup>417</sup>Hermann Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder: Übersetzt und erklärt* (Frankfurt am Main: Philosophisch-theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen, 1954), 28.

<sup>418</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 91-2 = *Lamentations*, 99-100.

<sup>419</sup>Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (LAI; Louisville: WJK, 1996), 44, 57-8, 81-4.

BCE<sup>420</sup>, which after the reforms of Josiah, would have tended towards monotheistic expression and anti-magical bias. As a result, he jettisons this view. The pedagogic function of the acrostic, too, ultimately fails. In this view, acrostics in Lamentations trained students in the alphabet as well as in the literary style of the funerary lament, an idea purported by Munch.<sup>421</sup> Gottwald rightly follows Rudolph's critique, arguing that it is unlikely the extraordinary grief and emotional outpouring, not to mention the literary artistry of Lamentations, is wasted in a mere "exercise of style" for pedagogy.<sup>422</sup> Indoctrinating students into a style is not a sufficient explanation.<sup>423</sup> Finally Gottwald addresses the view that it serves as a mnemonic device, a theory that supposes the acrostic was an *aide memoire* for the believing community designed to keep the grief it presented fresh on their hearts.<sup>424</sup> Gottwald counters by highlighting the typical proficiency of ancient cultures for memorising literature, most of which is not acrostic literature.<sup>425</sup>

He concludes that the acrostic functioned, then, visually and conceptually. In the recitation and hearing of Lamentations, one may not especially notice the alphabetic structure. But when one sees the textual manifestation of the alphabetic acrostic on the page, the reader is forced to deal with it in some conceptual manner, to explain it. He thinks the acrostic encourages "completeness in the expression of grief, the confession of sin and the instilling of hope."<sup>426</sup> The different orders of the acrostic on display in Lamentations 1, 2, 3, and 4 helped distinguish which poem should be read during and annual five-day mourning ceremony.<sup>427</sup>

Through five poems, the emotional complexities of the poetry could be explored and expressed. Second, in a minimal function, the poems functioned mnemonically, with the caveats that the poems were composed and practiced separately.<sup>428</sup> As a literary form

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<sup>420</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 25.

<sup>421</sup>P. A. Munch, "Die Alphabetische Akrostichie in der jüdischen Psalmendichtung," *ZDMG* 90 (1936): 703-10; cited in Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 26.

<sup>422</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 26. See Rudolph, *Die Klagelieder*, 191.

<sup>423</sup>Likewise Niditch seriously doubts the pedagogical nature of acrostic texts, believing that acrostic texts much more likely hold symbolic, magical, or religious significance (Niditch, *Oral Word and Written Word*, 45, 70).

<sup>424</sup>Goldman, "Lamentations," 68.

<sup>425</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 28.

<sup>426</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 28.

<sup>427</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 27-8.

<sup>428</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 32.

the acrostic presents the “completeness of grief, responsibility and hope” that the poet wished to convey. For the poet coping with the trauma of 587 BCE, “an aspect of grief is not systematically described when it first appears, but is allowed to return again and again in the various poems, thereby contributing immensely to the passion and rugged power of the document.”<sup>429</sup>

I agree with Gottwald that the acrostic functions in a visual and conceptual manner. There is little reason to question the function of expressing the totality of grief and pain in Lamentations. Yet another function of the acrostic appears alongside the conceptual totality role, and it is linked to Gottwald’s view that the acrostic functions visually to do things for the reader. Because of the acrostic, the reader is constantly moved forward through the poems in a linear manner. That is, the reader cannot stop at one point or another; the acrostic moves one from א to ב, from ב to ג, on and on until one arrives at ה. This movement precludes the reader resting at one specific point in the poetry and provides the reader constant movement forward. Once arriving at ה, however, the acrostic begins anew with the next poem reinforcing this forward directionality.

The constant repetition of the acrostic between Lamentations 1—4 only heightens this forward movement and reinforces it until one arrives at Lamentations 5, an abrupt change in the flow of the poetry that is appropriate as a conclusion of a lyric sequence, according to Dobbs-Allsopp. He argues that the repetition of the alphabetic acrostic is reinforced by each succeeding repeated pattern, making it more secure and stable, binding the sequence together. Yet “[t]his experience of starting the alphabet over again noticeably diminishes the closural force experienced at the conclusions of Lamentations 2, 3, and 4, and consequently, further strengthens the feeling of cohesion, the expectation of continuation.”<sup>430</sup> One of the most difficult realities poems governed by repetitive structures face, however, is how to conclude them. The most basic way, Dobbs-Allsopp maintains, is simply to “modify its governing patterns of repetition.”<sup>431</sup>

Such modification occurs in Lamentations 5. After the ה verse in Lam 4.22 the reader encounters Lam 5.1, “Remember, O YHWH, what has happened to us” (זכר יהוה לנו מה־היה לנו). This clearly disrupts the alphabetic pattern evinced in the previous four poems. Lamentations 5 is a communal lament with only the vestiges of the acrostic appearing in the 22 lines of verse; unlike the previous four poems, in Lamentations 5 “there is no

<sup>429</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 31.

<sup>430</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “Lamentations as a Lyric Sequence,” 59.

<sup>431</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “Lamentations as a Lyric Sequence,” 70.

perceptual stanzaic structure given to the poem.”<sup>432</sup> But this does not then detract from its relation to the book as a whole. Rather “[t]he net effect of this formal variation, when viewed retrospectively and as a whole, is to suggest the building to a crescendo through the first three poems and then slowly dying away through the last two poems, the radical change in the dominant patterns of repetition alerting the reader to the sequence's impending conclusion.”<sup>433</sup> Upon encountering the conclusion of Lamentations 5, the reader is not necessarily surprised but rather prepared for the end of the book, as the reader has “been formally prepared for this eventuality”<sup>434</sup> by the modification of the repetitive pattern of the alphabetic acrostic occurring in Lamentations 1—4. For these reasons, it is plausible to see the alphabetic acrostic as a primary, rather than secondary or artificial, structuring device for the poetry.

#### 4.3.5. Conclusions

A wide range of proposals have been offered to understand the structure of Lamentations. The concentric, tragic, and *qinah* structures have been shown to be unsatisfactory. Arguments in favour of the central section of Lamentations 3 as the theological core of the book (Brandscheidt, Nägelsbach, Kaiser, Gottwald) remain deficient. While important, the acrostic structure in Lamentations prevents one remaining there, precluding it from determining the theological meaning of the book.

The present study recognises the acrostic as the most obvious structuring device for Lamentations. Alongside this, the acrostic structure functions to conceptualise the trauma of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE (and subsequent grief of life in the land) and to provide constant, linear movement for the reader. The acrostic structure is evident even in Lamentations 5 with its 22 poetic lines representative of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This chapter evinces only the vestiges of the acrostic, to be sure, but seen with the other four poems, Lamentations 5 fits within the acrostic form. Differences between the acrostics in each of the chapters of Lamentations, as well as alternation of the *y* and *ḏ* strophes between Lamentations 1 and Lamentations 2, 3, 4 will be addressed in the exegesis portions of Chapters 4-6.

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<sup>432</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “Lamentations as a Lyric Sequence,” 66.

<sup>433</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “Lamentations as a Lyric Sequence,” 66.

<sup>434</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “Lamentations as a Lyric Sequence,” 71.

#### 4.4. Poetics

The language and stylistic devices in Lamentations work to tell its story rather than narrative. Some of the poetic devices were mentioned in 3.4., above, as pertinent for Lamentations research. Among these were repetition, parallelism, rhetorical questions, direct address, speaking voices, imagery and personification, alphabetic arrangement, allusion, and strophic structures. I have addressed some of these up to this point, though the present chapter will focus specifically upon repetition, wordplay, speaking voices, imagery and personification, and allusion.

##### 4.4.1. Repetition

Repetition is central in the poetry of Lamentations, though it has been greatly underdeveloped in research into the poetics of the book. As seen above, Renkema is the only developed research specifically exploiting the use of repetition in the book. The present study will pay greater attention to its usage, though come to different conclusions than Renkema. What is repetition in poetry? Jakobson suggests that poetry is characterised by “recurrent returns.” He states:

“We have learned the suggestive etymology of the terms Prose and Verse—the former [...] is ‘speech turned straightforward,’ and the latter [...] is ‘return.’ Hence we must consistently draw all inferences from the obvious fact that on every level of language the essence of poetic artifice consists in recurrent returns.”<sup>435</sup>

Kaiser sees the value of Jakobson’s conclusions for understanding Lamentations and argues:

“In fact the meaning of a poem derives from the various relationships among recurrent elements. It is the major task of the critic to determine what kinds of recurrence function in the poem, which individual elements relate to one another through repetition, and in what specific manner they are related. A critical method for analyzing [*sic*] poetry, therefore, should consist of a way of exposing relationships among recurrent elements.”<sup>436</sup>

From Kaiser’s statement, it follows that repetition can be used to bind poetry together, reminding the reader that this is text coheres. It can emphasise a particular point. It can be used to alter semantics of a term. But however it functions, repetition is constitutive of poetic texts.<sup>437</sup> In Lamentations, repetition works to bind the poem together while creating

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<sup>435</sup>Roman Jakobson, “Grammatical Parallelism and its Russian Facet,” *Language* 42(1966): 399.

<sup>436</sup>Kaiser, “Reconsidering Parallelism,” 1.

<sup>437</sup>Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 10-17.

nuances in the meaning and theology of the poetry. This can be seen in the repetition of formulaic address to YHWH where similarity in form contrasts against the foci of the appeals, causing the reader to read them one against the other.<sup>438</sup> Renkema rightly recognises the importance of repetition as a poetic device, though his conclusions as to how repetition reveals structure are suspect. Poetics of repetition work alongside the acrostic; the acrostic moves the reader forward in Lamentations while the poetic use of repetition drives the reader in a reflexive movement backward. Both reflexive and projective movements are characteristic of the poetics of Lamentations, which will be explored in Chapters 5-7.

#### 4.4.2. Wordplay and Enjambment

Wordplay is prevalent in Lamentations. According to Watson, wordplay is a descriptor of poetic usage of lexical ambiguity, that as a device it exploits the fact that “words can be polyvalent” and have multiple meanings.<sup>439</sup> Lexical polyvalence occurs in two different ways: homonymy (two or more words are sound the same but have different meanings) and polysemy (one in the same word has different meanings). Both these are extensions of the poetics of repetition. In Lamentations, the pun is a common, as is antanaclasis: the repetition of the same term (throughout the course of a poem), which takes on different shades of meaning as it is repeated.<sup>440</sup> The pun is an example of homonymic wordplay while antanaclasis an example of polyvalent wordplay. Hendiadys is another poetic device employed in Lamentations.<sup>441</sup> Hendiadys is understood as the expression of a single idea or concept through two terms linked by a coordinating conjunction.<sup>442</sup>

Another poetic feature that occurs in Lamentations is enjambment, as Dobbs-Allsopp has shown.<sup>443</sup> Though the present study shall focus more on wordplay, repetition, imagery, and personification, it is important to recognise enjambment’s contribution to the poetry. This poetic device is known as the absence of pause or end-stopping at the

<sup>438</sup>See Thomas, “Aesthetic Theory of Umberto Eco”; “The Liturgical Function.”

<sup>439</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 9.6.

<sup>440</sup>Anthony R. Ceresko, “The Function of *Antanaclasis* (*mš*’ “to find”// *mš*’ “to reach, overtake, grasp”) in Hebrew Poetry, Especially in the Book of Qoheleth,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 551-69.

<sup>441</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 4.

<sup>442</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 11.13.

<sup>443</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Enjambling Line in Lamentations: A Taxonomy (Part 1)”; “The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2).”



conclusion of a poetic line. In Lamentations, enjambment creates stylistic cohesion in the poetry, gives it forward motion and pace, heightens specific portions, and impinges upon the meaning of certain verses.<sup>444</sup> This trope occurs in other Semitic literature, especially in Akkadian<sup>445</sup> and Ugaritic<sup>446</sup> poetry. In Lamentations enjambment occurs not only externally between two succeeding poetic lines, but also internally within poetic lines as well.<sup>447</sup> Clause internal enjambment occurs when a crucial element necessary for understanding the sense of the poetic line is shifted to its latter half. Clause external enjambment occurs when a dependent or subordinate clause, in some way reliant (temporally, logically, or syntactically) on the main clause, is shifted to the succeeding line. Two examples reveal the phenomena:

External: לאמתם יאמרו איה דגן ויין  
 “To their mothers they said,  
 ‘Where is the grain and the wine?’” (Lam 2.12a)

Internal: ידי נשים רחמניות בשלו ילדיהן  
 “The hands of compassionate women  
 Boil their children” (Lam 4.10a)

In the external enjambment above, the *rejet* (group of words shifted to the second half of the poetic line) is logically tied to the former half by virtue of the quotation—the words the children uttered to their mothers. In the example of internal enjambment above, the sense of the line cannot be understood until the second half is actually read. The verbal clause is thereby shifted into the second half of the poetic line. Dobbs-Allsopp believes clause external enjambment is the most dramatic and gives the poems “energy and a

<sup>444</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2),” 370-85.

<sup>445</sup>K. Hecker, *Untersuchungen zur akkadischen Epik* (AOAT 8; Neukirchener-Verlag, 1974), 79-121; Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 335. For full listing of Akkadian examples, see Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Enjambling Line in Lamentations (Part 1),” 220, note 7.

<sup>446</sup>J. C. de Moor and K. Spronk, “Problematic Passages in the Legend of Kirtu (II),” *UF* 14(1982): 183; Stanlisav Segert, “Parallelism in Ugaritic Poetry,” *JAOS* 103(1983): 300. For full listing of Ugaritic examples, see Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Enjambling Line in Lamentations (Part 1),” 220, note 8.

<sup>447</sup>His taxonomy of internal enjambment includes: vocative enjambment, adjunct enjambment, subject enjambment, object enjambment, combinations, verb enjambment and appositional enjambment. His taxonomy of external enjambment includes: dependent clauses, syntactically marked sequentiality, quotative frames, and unmarked dependency [“The Enjambling Line in Lamentations (Part 1),” 224-39]. I am using “poetic line” as a way of speaking of the culmination of versets that comprise a line of poetry in Lamentations, following the terminology of Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 8-9.

palpable sense of forward movement.”<sup>448</sup> In Lamentations, this forward movement works alongside the forward movement of the alphabetic acrostic, as discussed in 3.3.4.

#### 4.4.3. Imagery

Imagery is one of Lamentations’ most significant tropes. As a category, imagery encompasses other tropes including metonymy, metaphor, and personification. All of these subsets of imagery occur in one form or another in Lamentations. Personification and metaphor, however, seem to be most prominent.

Metonymy is a kind of imagery in which a word is substituted to describe the word itself. In England, “the crown” is used as a metonym for the monarch or the royal family. Similarly, in Lam 4.9a, “sword” (חרב), is a metonym for war or warfare. Lam 4.9a reads, “Better are those slain by the sword than those slain by famine” (טובים היו חללי-חרב) (מחללי רעב). The immediate slaughter affected by the blow of a sword in warfare is considered better than the slow death of famine.

Metaphor, too, is common in Lamentations, and divine metaphors highlight the significance (and prevalence) of this trope. Bergant contends that “the most significant poetic feature of the book of Lamentations is its use of metaphor.”<sup>449</sup> By this, she means that images applied to the deity as well as explicit comparisons between the deity and other objects (foes, lions, bears, judges, and even a storm) are used in Lamentations to both create a descriptive relationship and create a response from the reader.<sup>450</sup> Her recognition is fecund because it assumes that the metaphor implies an enlarged semantic relationship between two associated objects *as well as* an intended effect for the reader from the association.<sup>451</sup>

Because of its interest in how poetry impacts theology, the present study is interested in how YHWH particularly is described in Lamentations. YHWH is compared to a judge, a warrior, a harvester, a bear, and a lion. Metaphors of God as warrior and judge suffice to reveal how this trope functions in the book, though the other metaphors will be explored in the exegesis in Chapters 5-7. In the OT YHWH is described often as a warrior. This is most prominently displayed in the declaration of Ex 15.3 in Israel’s

<sup>448</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 19; Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Enjambling Line in Lamentations (I),” 237-8.

<sup>449</sup>Bergant, *Lamentations*, 19.

<sup>450</sup>Bergant, *Lamentations*, 19-20.

<sup>451</sup>This understanding of metaphor coheres with Eco’s understanding in his semiotics. See Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 87-129.

victory song over the Egyptian army, “YHWH is a warrior!” Isaiah depicts the deity going to war against Jerusalem complete with siege tactics and technology (Is 29.1-4). Metaphorical depiction of deities as divine warriors is common in the ANE and the OT follows this convention.<sup>452</sup> Kang believes that the divine warrior imagery in Israel was first “a conventional idea in the time of the Davidic Kingdom,” and the image revealed YHWH “as the divine warrior in history, that is, the Lord of history”; later, in the exilic and post-exilic period, the image of YHWH as warrior took on a cosmic significance (as in Canaanite beliefs about Baal) so that he became “the cosmic and mythical Lord beyond history.”<sup>453</sup>

Whatever the historical development, Klingbeil’s analysis of the Psalms and ANE iconography makes clear that ANE understanding of gods as warriors was prevalent: iconography shows various gods holding various battle implements, among them swords, bows, and spears.<sup>454</sup> ANE theologies saw no problem metaphorically depicting some of their deities as warriors.<sup>455</sup> Arising from this context, it is no surprise in Lam 2.1-9 that YHWH is described metaphorically as a warrior: he has a bow (Lam 2.4; 3.12); he has a net to capture people (Lam 1.13b); he burns like a flame (Lam 2.3c), he goes to war, even holy war (Lam 2.17b).<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>452</sup>For comparative analysis between YHWH as warrior and ANE gods as warriors, see D. T. Tsumura, “Ugaritic Poetry and Habbakuk 3,” *TynBul* 40(1988): 24-48.

<sup>453</sup>Sa-Moon Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (BZAW 177; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 204.

<sup>454</sup>Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (OBO 169; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), see especially 38-195, appendix.

<sup>455</sup>Though not exhaustive, listing some of the divine warriors in the ANE proves the point: in Mesopotamia, the deities Ninurta, Ishtar, Marduk and Assur all are pictured as warriors; in Anatolia, the god Teshub and the goddess Arinna are pictured as warriors; in Canaan, the gods Chemosh, Baal, Anat, and Reshep are figured as warriors (Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, 11-110). In Ugarit, the god Athtar, like Baal, is a warrior god with all of the accoutrements of war [Mark S. Smith, “The God Athtar in the Ancient Near East and His Place in KTU 1.6 I,” in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (eds. Ziony Zevit et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 627-40].

<sup>456</sup>This language is similar to description of the divine warrior in Ugaritic texts. See Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (HSM 5; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Moreover, Ballard identifies all of these implements as divine war implements in the OT: Harold Wayne Ballard, Jr., *The Divine Warrior Motif in the Psalms* (BDS 6; North Richland Hills: Bibal, 1999), 39.

The metaphor of YHWH as judge is also employed in Lamentations. This is perhaps best seen in Lam 3.58-59. In this passage the גבר, positioned as a litigant, makes his dispute to the deity:

רבת אדני ריבי נפשי גאלת חיי

“Judge, O my Lord, the disputes of my soul; redeem my life!” (Lam 3.58)

ראיתה יהוה עותתי שפטה משפטי

“May you see, O YHWH, the wrong done to me; judge my cause!”

(Lam 3.59)

This metaphor is set with submetaphors: the divine judge has ears and eyes to both hear the dispute and see the wrong done to the גבר.<sup>457</sup> From what he sees and hears in the dispute, YHWH will give positive response as a just judge.

Gibson argues that this metaphor has two sides to it in OT understanding. It can either be a source of comfort or trepidation to Israel, because it can either express hope in God’s justice and judgment against Israel’s enemies, or express the Lord’s verdict against his own people in judgment, especially in the prophets.<sup>458</sup> Brueggemann believes the comforting side of the judge metaphor “becomes a ground for appeal, even for individual persons who plead their cause before ‘the judge of all the earth’.”<sup>459</sup> Such an understanding is present in Lam 3.58-59, but also throughout other portions of the book as well. However, the association with the other side of YHWH as judge, who enacts a “day” of judgment against his people, is brought to bear in the poetry as well.

Personification, too, is prevalent in the book, especially in Lamentations 1—2. There, the city Jerusalem is personified as a woman, “Dear Zion” (בת־ציון). Personification of Jerusalem as a woman as well as other cities as women is well attested in poetic texts of the OT.<sup>460</sup> Isa 3.26 personifies Jerusalem as a woman, “And her gates and will lament and mourn, and empty she will sit on the ground” (פתחיה ונקתה ואנו ואבלו); Jeremiah personifies Dibon, capital city of Moab, as a woman in Jer 48.18a:

<sup>457</sup>For a discussion on metaphor and submetaphor theory, see Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 21-33.

<sup>458</sup>J. C. L. Gibson, *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 125.

<sup>459</sup>Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 235.

<sup>460</sup>Under various designations: “mother” (אם) (Is 50.1) who has sons and daughters—city inhabitants (Is 47.8-9; 54.13; Ezk 16.20; Lam 1.5, 16); “widow” (אלמנה) (Is 47.8-9, 54.4; Lam 1.1); “princess” (רבתי) (Lam 1.1). Ezekiel explicitly personifies Jerusalem as YHWH’s wife (Ezk 16.8; 23.37). Tarshish is called “Maiden Tarshish” (בת־תרשיש) and Sidon is identified as “Virgin Maiden Sidon” (בתולת בת־צידון), in Isa 23.12. Jerusalem is personified as a woman who sits upon the ground in Is 3.26 and

“Come down from honour, sit on the parched ground, Enthroned Maiden Dibon” ( יָרֵד מִכְבוֹד יֹשֶׁבֶת בַּת־דִּיבּוֹן (מִכְבוֹד יֹשֶׁבֶת בַּת־דִּיבּוֹן).

The practice of personifying cities in the OT may have derived from ANE texts associating goddesses to capital cities.<sup>461</sup> Imagery in the ANE city-laments of weeping goddesses, sometimes called mothers,<sup>462</sup> reveal the potential connection. The goddess Ba’u, (ama<sup>d</sup>ba-ú, “mother Ba’u”) laments over destruction with the refrain, “Alas, the destroyed city, my destroyed temple!”<sup>463</sup> The prototypical example lies in the goddess Ningal’s weeping and lamenting over Ur’s destruction throughout the poem in “Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur.”<sup>464</sup> The motif of the weeping goddess in ANE city-laments “portrays the city goddess grieving over the destruction of her city and temple and the killing, suffering, and dispersment of her people.”<sup>465</sup>

Whether a direct connection should be made between ANE descriptions of city-goddesses and personification of capital cities as female in the OT is yet to be proved.<sup>466</sup> If there is direct linkage, the poet of Lamentations, faithful to the monotheistic religion in Israel, does not afford something as syncretistic as the image of the goddess into his malediction of suffering, but instead appropriates the image as a feminine weeping city, the weeping city of Zion, incorporating the epithet typically used for a weeping goddess.<sup>467</sup> This feminine persona represents a complete expression of suffering.<sup>468</sup> The land cries out and mourns like a human being at the threshold of disaster; the poet

Dibon, the capital city of Moab, is personified through the title “Enthroned Maiden Dibon” (יָרֵד מִכְבוֹד יֹשֶׁבֶת בַּת־דִּיבּוֹן). As with Jerusalem, Dibon too sits on the ground.

<sup>461</sup>So the thesis of Aloysius Fitzgerald, “*BTWLT* and *BT* as Titles for Capital Cities,” *CBQ* 37(1975): 167-83.

<sup>462</sup>Ba’u (LSU 117, 161), Ninisina (LSU 137), Ninlil (LSU 141), Damgalnuna, “mother of the Emah” (LSU 247).

<sup>463</sup>LSU 118, 122.

<sup>464</sup>Samuel Noah Kramer, “The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the *Mater Dolorosa*,” *BA* 46, 2(1983): 71.

<sup>465</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep O Daughter of Zion*, 75.

<sup>466</sup>Peggy Day questions this connection: “The Personification of Cities as Female in the Hebrew Bible: The Thesis of Aloysius Fitzgerald, F.S.C.,” in *Reading from this Place, Volume 2: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* (eds. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 283-302.

<sup>467</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep O Daughter of Zion*, 77; “The Syntagma of *bat* Followed by a Geographical Name in the Hebrew Bible: A Reconsideration of Its Meaning and Grammar,” *CBQ* 57(1995): 451-70.

<sup>468</sup>Kaiser, “Poet as ‘Female Impersonator’,” 164-82. Kaiser argues that the feminine persona capture the completeness and humanness of suffering and pain. In this way, the poet of Lamentations communicates human pain first and foremost.

describes her anguish, “She weeps bitterly in the night and her tears are on her cheeks” (Lam 1:2a).

However it arose, it is clear that Jerusalem is personified as a woman in Lamentations, though her identity ranges. She is personified a princess (Lam 1.1), a widow (Lam 1.1), a slave-labourer (Lam 1.1), a *niddâ* (Lam 1.17), even an adulterous woman (Lam 1.19). This range functions in a unique manner, congruent with Dobbs-Allsopp’s understanding of parataxis within lyric poetry. In essence, images in Lamentations appear and fade as quickly. Often discordant images sit together, leaving the reader to discern the purpose of the parataxis.

Heim’s analysis of personification in Lamentations reveals that it functions in a variety of ways. He identifies four “transformations operative in the personification of Jerusalem”<sup>469</sup>:

1. *ideation*: the translation of humans into an abstract idea
2. *topification*: the translation of humans into a geographical location
3. *personification*: the translation of a nonhuman quantity into a human being
4. *impersonation*: the translation of a group of people into one person who speaks for them.

Through the language of the text, concrete and real people—the residents of Jerusalem—are transformed into abstract ideas. This is first order *ideation*. This serves as a basis for the remaining functions of personification. In *topification*, the city once full of people (Lam 1.1) is now devoid of inhabitants due to destruction. Heim comments, “Through the metaphorical relationship of ‘containment,’ all who are still living within Jerusalem’s geographical limits (the ‘contained’) have now been reduced to a geographical location (the ‘container’).”<sup>470</sup> Transforming from an architectural site as in *topification*, *personification* re-humanises the inanimate city, making it a person, a woman. And finally, *impersonation* functions to distil the individual citizens of Jerusalem into the person of “Dear Zion” (בת־צִיּוֹן). She becomes a representative of the whole. This occurs also in any personification of Jerusalem in Lamentations, whether “Dear Zion” (בת־צִיּוֹן) or “widow” (אַלְמָנָה) or otherwise. *Impersonation* enables every individual to see “his or her sufferings and painful emotions” lived out in the representative’s plight; he states, “This representative function explains why personified Jerusalem can be depicted in surprisingly different roles, which at times appear to be mutually exclusive. She is a wife, prostitute, divorcée, widow, mother, daughter, and so on, thus impersonating the various

<sup>469</sup>Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem,” 135.

<sup>470</sup>Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem,” 136.

individuals suffering distress.”<sup>471</sup> In terms of Eco’s concept of the model reader, it is in *impersonation* where individual readers are subsumed into a collective, and the model reader becomes a conceptual strategy to engender cohesiveness of individual readers as a collective despite the fact that a number of real readers may be reading and using the text.<sup>472</sup> This is at work in the personification of Zion Lamentations 1—2, and to a degree in Lamentations 3, below (Chapters 5-7).

#### 4.4.4. Speaking Voices

Scholars have widely held that speaking voices function as poetic devices in Lamentations. Lanahan’s seminal work addressed the poetic usage of speaking voices in Lamentations.<sup>473</sup> He saw that one of the major stylistic devices in the book was the usage of different personae, or the variety of characterisations “assumed by the poet as the medium through which he perceives and gives expression to his world.”<sup>474</sup> For Lanahan, the use of different personae enables the poet to assume a variety of viewpoints, to exhibit a number of insights into the human experience of destruction. He identifies five major *personae* at work in Lamentations: an objective “reporter” who narrates destruction (Lam 1.1-9b, 10-11b, 15a, 17; 2.1-19), Jerusalem personified as a woman (Lam 1.9c, 11c-14, 15b-16, 18-22; 2.20-22), a soldier, “a veteran who has endured hard use in the war” (Lam 3.1-66), a bourgeois “surprised by the economic upheaval in the fallen city” (Lam 4.1-22), and a choral voice hoping to express misery to God so that he will change his attitude towards them (Lam 5.1-22).<sup>475</sup> Lanahan saw five speaking voices while Wiesmann identified six, Bergant four, and Provan three.<sup>476</sup>

No consensus exists, though his research has been taken up on a variety of fronts. Lee has sought to identify the historical personages making the various speeches while others have not. Lee identifies the main poets in Lamentations as the prophet Jeremiah and a set of female temple singers.<sup>477</sup> Jeremiah and the temple singers sing in response to one another, which reflect the dialogical interchange in the poetry. Pham identifies the

<sup>471</sup>Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem,” 138.

<sup>472</sup>See 3.4., above, note 270.

<sup>473</sup>William Lanahan “The Speaking Voice,” 41-9.

<sup>474</sup>Lanahan, “The Speaking Voice,” 41.

<sup>475</sup>Lanahan, “The Speaking Voice,” 41-9.

<sup>476</sup>Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*; Lanahan, “The Speaking Voice,” 41-9; Bergant, *Lamentations*, 15-16; Provan, *Lamentations*, 6-7.

<sup>477</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 40-6.

narrator as a “comforter” and “Lady Jerusalem” as the bereaved in a mourning ceremony in Lamentations 1—2.<sup>478</sup> On the other hand, Kaiser follows Lanahan in seeing the speaking voices as *personae*: a narrator and then prominently Daughter Zion, whose insertion into the dialogue in Lamentations 1—2 reveals that “distinctively female experience was regarded highly enough to function as the chief metaphor through which the poet expressed his own agony over Jerusalem’s fate and encouraged community catharsis.”<sup>479</sup> Provan recognises not five, but three speaking voices in the book: the narrator, personified Zion, and the people of Jerusalem.<sup>480</sup> He understands rightly that the speaking voices are *personae*, masks put on by the poet rather than real people. Employing speaking voices is a poetic device.

To be fair, it remains very difficult to tell exactly who the speakers are in the poetry and whom they address. The poetry of Lamentations only identifies one speaker explicitly, in Lam 3.1: the poem opens “I am the man (who) has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath” (אני הגבר ראה עני בשבט עברתו). The גבר is the only identifiable speaker, though the speech of personified Jerusalem may be identified by virtue of her description of her children, the people who have been destroyed (Lam 1.16c; 2.20).

Though the methodology used by scholars to identify speaking voices is not always explained,<sup>481</sup> the most common manner by which to assess where speakers begin and end their speech is by observing the “shifts of person and the distinctive content” of the speech.<sup>482</sup> Yet Meier admits that none of the words attributed to personified Zion are “explicitly introduced as belonging to her [...] identifying the speaker and the boundaries of the speech is not always an easy task.”<sup>483</sup> Further, he recognises that speakers within each of the poems need not be identifiable to one another, for instance the “narrator” common to both Lamentations 1 and 2 in Lanahan’s analysis.<sup>484</sup> Though speaking voices do occur in Lamentations their boundaries and identities are rather unclear.

This distinguishes Lamentations from the Mesopotamian city-lament genres. It is true that Lamentations, like the Mesopotamian city-laments, does have a third person

<sup>478</sup>Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 37-147.

<sup>479</sup>Kaiser, “Poet as ‘Female Impersonator’,” 164-82, 182.

<sup>480</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 6-7.

<sup>481</sup>Lanahan, for example, never explains how he identifies the speakers.

<sup>482</sup>Samuel A. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* (VTSup 46; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 34. So too, Mandolfo, *God in the Dock*, 9-103.

<sup>483</sup>Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 34.

<sup>484</sup>Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 35.



narrator who reports the destruction and its aftermath, addresses the motivations of God, and even addresses Jerusalem.<sup>485</sup> Yet unlike city-laments, which often introduces the boundaries of speech (especially the speech of gods and goddesses) by way of explicit discourse markers—the phrases “she wails” or “bitterly she wails” or “she keened a lament” preceding or proceeding direct discourse—Lamentations simply does not afford such tidy borders.<sup>486</sup> This should raise a note of caution when identifying the speakers in the poetry. While it is true that speaking voices are apparent in the poetry, and shifts in person and content are the best way to go about recognising them, the blending of speech boundaries nevertheless creates a certain degree of ambiguity: instances that could be identified as speech from personified Jerusalem can just as easily be attributed to the narrator, or vice versa. Moreover, there is no reason to assume that the narrator is male—the voice could just as easily belong to a female narrator; the linguistic data affords no clues.<sup>487</sup> If nothing else, ambiguity in marked speech highlights another point of divergence between the city-lament genre and Lamentations.

Heim argues that instead of identifying speakers as isolated entities, the reader of Lamentations should instead realise and embrace the ambiguity. One “is confronted by a profusion of utterances, speakers, and voices. These utterances are directed at different audiences within the textual world of the book. They convey different, and often competing, messages, and they struggle for the readers’ attention.”<sup>488</sup> Instead of attempting to identify the personage speaking whichever utterance, or attributing these different voices to different sources or different redactors,<sup>489</sup> an intentionality lies behind the ambiguous and even confused nature of the speaking voices in question: these voices are “distinctive contributions to a discussion of suffering and communal catastrophe *in progress* [...the book] may have been designed to reflect the historical situation of a community going through turmoil and crisis.”<sup>490</sup> The use of speaking voices, then, is an

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<sup>485</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 32-8. This persona, however, should *not* be identified as embodying the perspective or theology of the poet. In the MT Lamentations, as intimated in 3.4., above, “the intention of the work” should not be collapsed into “the intention of the author.”

<sup>486</sup>These examples come from the speech of Ningal (LU, 247, 299-301), the speech of Ba’u (LU, 115-18, 271-77). See Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 75-90.

<sup>487</sup>Bergant, *Lamentations*, 15-16.

<sup>488</sup>Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem,” 146.

<sup>489</sup>Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenlied*.

<sup>490</sup>Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem,” 146.

indicator that the book is not a “reasoned treatise on the nature of suffering” but rather reflects the disintegration of a known world into chaos and the community’s attempt to deal with this crisis, theologically.<sup>491</sup>

#### 4.4.5. Allusion

The discussion on allusion here follows the lines set out by Willey in her monograph; hers is a persuasive argument for the function of allusion and sits well with Eco’s aesthetic analysis.<sup>492</sup> In her understanding, allusion is a poetic device that recalls in one literary text other literary texts independent of it. On the one hand, in Eco’s aesthetics, it has been demonstrated that all texts are interconnected in the rhizomatic structure of the encyclopaedia. Or as Willey describes, “all texts, all systems of communicative symbols, are unavoidably intertextual: they are semiotic patterns created by the reutilization [*sic.*] of previously understood words, signs, or codes.”<sup>493</sup> Willey cites Julia Kristeva, who coined the term “intertextuality”: “Any text is construed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.”<sup>494</sup> Understood in Kristevan terms, any text employs the fabric of other texts to comprise its own tapestry. Yet understood in Eco’s aesthetics, some texts are more explicit in the pattern they use. Quotations and citations embedded within a text indicate to the reader that the text he or she is reading is using a previous text in a specific way. Willey states, “Quotations and citations enlarge the audience’s understanding by putting the immediately present text’s conversational partners on display, making them accessible so that the audience can place, by a strategy of mental triangulation, the thoughts of the present writer.”<sup>495</sup>

Yet sitting in between explicit quotations and the invisible fabric of text that interweaves all writing, there is a realm of intertextuality which is sometimes difficult to trace but nonetheless extant. This, according to Willey, is the realm of “allusion, response, appropriation, recollection, and echo.”<sup>496</sup> Allusion is useful in texts precisely because it awakens to the reader previous texts that enlarge or enhance the text at hand. Hays puts it this way: “Allusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be

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<sup>491</sup> Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem,” 146.

<sup>492</sup> Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 57-84.

<sup>493</sup> Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 59.

<sup>494</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 66.

<sup>495</sup> Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 61.

<sup>496</sup> Willey, *Remember the Former Things*, 61.

understood in the light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed.”<sup>497</sup>

Most scholars have recognised allusion going on in Lamentations. Berlin frequently cites OT passages and incorporates them into her analysis of how Lamentations functions poetically.<sup>498</sup> And as mentioned above, Dobbs-Allsopp has recognised allusions to the book of Exodus and the exodus tradition in Lamentations 1.<sup>499</sup> Albrektson recognised that Lamentations frequently alludes to Deuteronomy 28 and even chapter 32 (Deut 28.13, 44 and Lam 15a; Deut 28.41 and Lam 1.5c, 18c; Deut 28.43 and lam 1.9b-c; Deut 28.53 and Lam 2.20, 4.10; Deut 28.37 and Lam 3.14, 45; Deut 28.50 and Lam 4.16, 5.12; Deut 32.25 and Lam 1.20) and certain Psalms (Ps 48.3 and Lam 2.15c; Ps 50.2 and Lam 2.15c; Ps 76.13 and Lam 4.12). His argument is that the Deuteronomy and Psalms texts actually were available for the creator(s) of Lamentations to actually use and incorporate into its fabric of verse.<sup>500</sup>

Yet allusion is difficult to pin down, and caution is warranted. Williamson correctly admonishes that the scholar searching out allusions must attend carefully to “matters of method” in ascertaining them.<sup>501</sup> Willey adopts Hays’ “tests” for ascertaining allusions.<sup>502</sup> Hays identifies allusion with the criteria of:

1. *Availability*: was the proposed allusion available to the author?
2. *Volume*: what is the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns?
3. *Recurrence*: what is the frequency with which the allusion is used in the text being interpreted?
4. *Thematic Coherence*: does the argument of the allusion cohere within the argument of the text being interpreted?
5. *Historical Plausibility*: does the text identifiable as an allusion exist so the text being interpreted could have used it?
6. *History of Interpretation*: do other interpreters recognise the allusion as such?
8. *Satisfaction*: does the proposed allusion make sense, does it illuminate the surrounding discourse, and does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation?

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<sup>497</sup>Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 20.

<sup>498</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*.

<sup>499</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 16, 58-60.

<sup>500</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 219-37.

<sup>501</sup>H. G. M. Williamson, “Isaiah 62.4 and the Problem of Inner-Biblical Allusions,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 734-39.

<sup>502</sup>Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29-32.

Hays' tests frame how to assess and confirm potential allusions in certain texts. Incidentally, Hays' approach sets itself in the more historicist-oriented theories of inner-biblical *exegesis*, which recognises the historical process of a biblical text using another specific text and (re)interpreting it, rather than inner-biblical *allusion*, which recognises that the Bible is a cumulative corpus of literature, necessarily allusive, irrespective of its historicity.<sup>503</sup>

The present study immediately recognises that identifying the direction of influence and/or interpretation of allusions is notoriously difficult. The subjectivity involved in recognising lines of influence between texts led Dobbs-Allsopp to date the book of Lamentations from linguistic analysis, as explored above.<sup>504</sup> Yet if Albrektson's views on the availability of Deuteronomy and the various Psalms hold, then Hays' conception becomes fruitful for studying allusion in Lamentations. With this in mind, the present work will compare OT texts to Lamentations where pertinent (specifically portions of Exodus, Deuteronomy 28, some Psalms, Isaiah 10, Jeremiah, and some portions of Leviticus, and the Former Prophets). Whether Lamentations alludes to these texts or vice-versa is a question that deserves more study and cannot be accomplished in full here. At the very least, marked allusions in this work, even if not borne out historically, shall point to a need for further comparative analysis.

#### 4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the relevant items to be considered as encyclopaedic content within the cultural world present at the time of Lamentations' construction. It has demonstrated the problems associated with attributing Lamentations to one particular genre within the cultural world of sixth century Judah. In fact the book evinces a number of crossover generic traits between the communal lament, the dirge, and the city-lament genres, which reveal the book to be a mixed genre written in a lyric mode: highly paratactic and non-narrative discourse.

Moreover, in light of the investigation into plausible structures of the book, a number of proposed structures have been seen to be unpersuasive. Specifically Renkema's rigid characterisation of the concentric structure of Lamentations, the tragic

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<sup>503</sup>See for instance Williamson, "Isaiah 62.4 and the Problem of Inner-Biblical Allusions," 734-39; Lyle Eslinger, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category," *VT* 42 (1992): 47-58.

<sup>504</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, "Linguistic Evidence"; see also 1.2., above.

structure which envisions the parenetic section (Lam 3.18-39) as the theological “climax” of the book (Nägelsbach and Kaiser), as well as the supposed *qinah* structure of the book (Shea). However, the acrostic structure has been determined to be the most persuasive structuring device of the book.

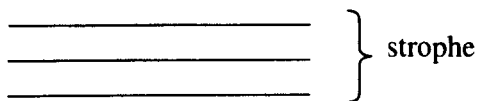
Finally, poetics that occur in other ANE literature (and related genres) has been demonstrated to be active in Lamentations. Some of these poetics move the reader forward, such as the use of enjambment and the linear progression of the alphabetic acrostic. Others, however, create a kind of reflexive arc within the poetry, moving the reader backwards to previous portions of the poetry through the linear progression through the text. This is especially achieved through repetition. The reflexive movement drives the reader to make sense of the repeated items in light of new information garnered. An example of this is the constant formulaic employment of a vocative form of YHWH combined with either a dual imperative “look and consider (ראה וחביטה),” or ראה/ combined with the vocative יהוה (Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a; 2.20a; 3.59; 5.1b). The variety of appeals creates a range of potential foci for the Lord to consider the pleas and figure the deity in different ways. In terms of imagery, personification, and speaking voices, among other poetics identified above, Lamentations sits within the ANE poetic tradition. Allusion moves the reader outwards, into the larger field of available OT textual material, incorporating its message into the fabric of Lamentations. How Lamentations uses these poetics, however, shall prove to be a point of interest in the exegesis chapters below. Recognising and understanding the poetic usage will aid theological analysis.

## CHAPTER 5: LAMENTATIONS 1

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter assesses Lamentations 1 using Eco's aesthetic analysis to discover how the "intention of the work" constructs its model reader. Exegetical attention will be given to the blending of genres, the linear progression of the acrostic, poetics and the "blowing up" of potential encyclopaedic content to see how these elements impact the reader and interpretation of the poem. Rather than summarising its contents, the present chapter will work through the poem to discover how the poetry projects a model reader and presents its theology.

The structure of the poem at large is governed by the alphabetic acrostic,<sup>505</sup> and speaking voices divide the poem roughly in half. Following Longman's conclusions, the present study does not take up the question of *qinah* meter in the poem due to the fact that the very presence of meter in the canons of Hebrew poetry remains doubtful.<sup>506</sup> Each individual strophe contains three poetic lines (except for Lam 1.7, which contains four)<sup>507</sup>:



An outline of the speeches in the poem is as follows:

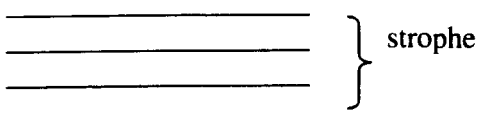
Lam 1.1-9b:	speech of the observer
Lam 1.9c:	appeal of personified Jerusalem
Lam 1.10-11b:	speech of the observer
Lam 1.11c-16c:	speech and appeals of personified Jerusalem
Lam 1.17:	speech of the observer
Lam 1.18-22:	speech and appeals of personified Jerusalem

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<sup>505</sup> See 4.3.4., above.

<sup>506</sup> See 4.3.3., above.

<sup>507</sup> The structure of Lam 1.7 and 2.19 appears as:



In Lam 1.1-11b (with the exception of Lam 1.9c) the voice of an unidentified observer describes a city's pain in terms of motherhood. I understand the speaker to be a literary persona rather than attempting to isolate his identity. His audience in these verses is undisclosed, though it appears that he addresses the reader, introducing and recounting to one the various plights of the city. In Lam 1.9c, 11c-16, 18-22 Jerusalem personified speaks to two parties: YHWH in formulaic language (Lam 1.9c, 1.11c, 1.20a; Lam 2.20-22),<sup>508</sup> and unnamed passers-by (כל-עברי דרך) in Lam 1.12-16; it is unclear whether the passers-by are intended to be the reader or a real party in the sixth century BCE, though the reader can assume the role. Like the passer-by, the reader witnesses and hears the pain of personified Jerusalem, engendering compassion.

### 5.2. Exegesis of Lam 1.1-22

The unidentified observer describes the plight of an unnamed city and region in Lam 1.1-9. The city and region remain nameless until explicitly stated in Lam 1.7a. Lee believes the observer is the persona of Jeremiah,<sup>509</sup> and others identify him as a "narrator,"<sup>510</sup> but as the poem is not narrative, to avoid confusion this anonymous speaker is identified as a persona, an "observer" of destruction.<sup>511</sup> Anonymous observers like the one in Lamentations 1 are typical in the city-lament genre.<sup>512</sup>

In his reportage, the city's straits are brought into a multifaceted portrait of pain through emotively charged personifications in Lam 1.1-2. She is a bereaved mother, a widow, a princess, a slave labourer, an abandoned woman, an isolated woman, a betrayed woman, and a pursued woman. The array of identities presents different aspects of suffering, offering a range of identification points with which the reader can relate to the city. With each new depiction of suffering the reader is prepared to hear Jerusalem's song of suffering that will come in Lam 1.11c-16, 18-22.

Far from offering "objective," dispassionate commentary on the situation, as O'Connor believes,<sup>513</sup> the observer's intimate portrayal of the city's sufferings reveals that he mourns alongside her. In city-laments, "The poet often abandons his role as

<sup>508</sup>Thomas, "Aesthetic Theory of Umberto Eco"; "The Liturgical Function."

<sup>509</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 47-130. The persona of Jeremiah becomes increasingly significant in Lamentations 2.

<sup>510</sup>O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 17.

<sup>511</sup>Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice," 41-2.

<sup>512</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 33.

<sup>513</sup>O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 17.

impartial narrator and stands rather as a privileged, internal observer, who nonetheless is not actually involved in the action; he speaks from his own 'spatial level'.<sup>514</sup> Like the "internal observer," the observer in Lamentations 1 evokes compassion for the city. "Lamentations 1 facilitates a compassionate disposition in its readers most spectacularly through the figure of personified Jerusalem [...] the reader is unmistakably confronted by suffering in a most particular and personal form, which, as already suggested, is all important for the veracity and allure of the image."<sup>515</sup>

In Lam 1.1, the dirge, mourning rites, and antanaclasis all work to emphasise the debased situation and great reversal of the city. The verse opens with the hallmark of the dirge<sup>516</sup> (איכה) part of an institutional s-code for mourning, which conditions the reader to anticipate the context of bereavement and loss. The next words reinforce this notion, as a female city *ישבה בודד*, "sits alone." Sitting "alone" (*בודד*) in the encyclopaedic content of the OT is, ironically, a positive position as it indicates the notion of solitary security.<sup>517</sup> This former reality, however, is shattered as the reader encounters the second half of Lam 1.1a: the city once secure is now deserted ("the city once full of people," *העיר רבתי עם*).<sup>518</sup> Pham notes the act of sitting on the ground in isolation is common behaviour for a bereaved mourner<sup>519</sup>, and thus the poetry exploits the s-code "mourning" to develop for the reader the reality of loss and bereavement. Once full of people, or her "children," the fate of the mother is reversed as she now sits on the ground: "alone," *בודד*.<sup>520</sup> The motif of reversal is a common element found in the dirge and city-lament genres, which is further explicated in Lam 1.1b-c:

היתה כאלמנה רבתי בגוים  
שרתי במדינות היתה למס

"She has become a widow; great among the nations,  
princess among the provinces, she has become a slave labourer."

Once full of children and honoured greatly by the nations as a *שרתי*, "princess," the city-mother has fallen into servitude (*מס*). The term *רבתי* highlights the use of antanaclasis in

<sup>514</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 33.

<sup>515</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 57.

<sup>516</sup>Jahnow, *Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 136.

<sup>517</sup>Deut 33.28; Num 23.9; Jer 49.31; Mi 7.14. See Provan, *Lamentations*, 35.

<sup>518</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2)," 378.

<sup>519</sup>Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 13, 48.

<sup>520</sup>This description is similar to the description of the mourning scene for Jerusalem in Isa 3.26 and Dibon in Jer 48.18a. Both cities personified sit on the ground (*ישבי בצמא*, Isa 3.26; *לארץ תשב*, Jer 48.18a).



Lam 1.1: “full of people” (רבתי עם) is a nominal construct chain<sup>521</sup> while in the clause “great among the nations” (רבתי בגוים), רבתי serves as an adjective which modifies the phrase בגוים, “among the nations.”<sup>522</sup> Antanaclasis poetically blends the image of the bereaved mother into the simile of the forlorn and “widowed” city, both of which confront the reader with their debasement.<sup>523</sup>

Yet how does the personification of the city as widow function? By Lam 1.7a, the reader learns the city is Jerusalem, yet until that point, the reader has no explicit knowledge of the city’s identity. Once understood as Jerusalem, the city’s husband could be recognised as YHWH.<sup>524</sup> The LXX, Targum, and Vulgate all introduce Jerusalem as the city in focus in their prologues of Lamentations 1.<sup>525</sup> Unlike these texts and unlike Ezekiel 16 and 23—texts that identify Jerusalem as YHWH’s wife and indicate her whoredom—the MT of Lamentations 1 does not immediately give this information away. Through personification, the observer depicts the feminine city in her debasement and suffering without then explicitly linking her to apostasy or whoredom, enabling the reader to witness her suffering without recourse to explicit linkage of sin, at least until Lam 1.5b.

The observer continues his account of the personified city’s pain in Lam 1.2. Again, reversal is depicted, linking the verse to the dirge genre and possibly the city-lament genre as well. The pain of the reversal is in focus here rather than an explanation of what specifically caused the pain. The city is personified as an isolated and abandoned mourner and a betrayed woman. Lam 1.2 reads:

בכו תבכה בלילה ודמעתה על לחיה

<sup>521</sup>GKC §901; §128.

<sup>522</sup>JM §1291, m, n.

<sup>523</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 45, note b.; Pete Schramm, “Poetic Patterning in Biblical Hebrew,” In *Michigan Oriental Studies in Honor of G. G. Cameron* (ed., L. Orlin; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976), 167-91.

<sup>524</sup>As in Ezekiel 16 and 23; Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh’s Wife* (SBLDS 130; Atlanta: Scholars, 1991).

<sup>525</sup>The LXX reads: Και εγενετο μετα το αιχμαλωτισθηναι τον Ισραηλ και Ιερουσαλεμ ερωσθηται εκαθισεν Ιρεμιας κλαιων, “And it happened after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem was laid waste, Jeremiah sat weeping.” The Targum reads: “Jeremiah, the prophet and great high priest, said how it was decreed against Jerusalem and against her people,” אמר ירמיהו נביא וכהנא רבא איכדין אתגדר על ירושלם ועל עמהא. The Vulgate’s prologue reads: Et factum est, postquam in captivitatem redactus est Israël, et Jerusalem deserta est, sedit Jeremias propheta flens, et planxit lamentatione hac in Jerusalem, “And it happened, after Israel was carried into captivity and Jerusalem was deserted, that Jeremiah the prophet sat weeping, and mourned with this lamentation over Jerusalem.”

אִינִלָּה מִנְחָם מִכָּל־אֹהֲבֵיהָ  
כָּל־רֵעֵיהָ בַּגְּדוּ בָּהּ הִיוּ לָהּ לְאֵיבִים

“She weeps bitterly in the night, and tears (are) upon her cheeks  
There is no comforter for her from all those who love her  
All of her friends betrayed her; they became like enemies to her.”

The poetry actualises encyclopaedic content of mourning, as both weeping and the need for a comforter are common in mourning rites.<sup>526</sup> The repeated refrain “there is no comforter for her” (אִינִלָּה מִנְחָם)<sup>527</sup> heightens the importance of a comforter. Instead of finding comfort, the personified city is isolated from those who love her (מִכָּל־אֹהֲבֵיהָ).<sup>528</sup> This statement finds parallel in YHWH’s words over Judah in the Book of Consolation, in Jer 30.14: “All your lovers have forgotten you; they seek you no longer” (כָּל־מֵאֹהֲבֵיךָ (שִׁכְחוּךָ אֹתָךְ לֹא יִדְרְשׁוּ). Anderson argues that a loved one denying comfort to a mourning person in effect positions that person *against* the mourner, as an enemy.<sup>529</sup> By Lam 1.19a, the reader will discover that מִכָּל־אֹהֲבֵיהָ “all those who love her” may not be neutral terminology, but at this point, it merely points out that her loved ones do not offer the role of comfort that she desires: she is abandoned and betrayed. Those allies who once were friends have turned on her (כָּל־רֵעֵיהָ בַּגְּדוּ בָּהּ). The language of “friends” and “enemies” carries political overtones, as it is a city that is being described through personification.

It is appropriate to begin to ask questions about the developing “intention of the work.” The range of personifications (widow, a slave labourer, a wife, a slave labourer, a mourner, a princess, and a betrayed woman) highlights the paratactic nature of this poetry—feminine images abut one another without logical connection—and provide different ways for the reader to identify with the city, specifically her multiform

<sup>526</sup>Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 24-35; Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, 82-7.

<sup>527</sup>Lam 1.7c, 9b, 16b, 17a, 21a.

<sup>528</sup>מִכָּל־אֹהֲבֵיהָ, “from all those who love her.” Pham correctly notices the verbal nuance between אֹהֲבָה in the Piel and the Qal stems, especially in the participle (Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 47). אֹהֲבָה in the Qal stem connotes felicitous love and devotion, while אֹהֲבָה in the Piel stem connotes inconstant or infelicitous love (whoredom). The occurrence of אֹהֲבָה in Lam 1.2 anticipates its only recurrence in Lam 1:19, in the Piel stem, allowing them to be read against one another. The variance in meaning between stems is another example of antanaclasis and will be explored further in the exegesis of Lam 1.19, below; See Ceresko, “The Function of Antanaclasis,” 551-69.

<sup>529</sup>“To fail to show solidarity in such a situation—or even worse, to rejoice while a [neighbour] was mourning—was to declare oneself an enemy rather than a covenantal partner” (Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, 94).

experience of trauma and pain.<sup>530</sup> Theologically, in these first two verses no imagery explicitly links the city to sin<sup>531</sup>, enabling the reader to be drawn towards compassion for this disgraced woman.

Interwoven into this portrait of pain, however, is a theological thread exposing the city's sin in Lam 1.3-5. Lam 1.3a-b depicts Judah going into exile from affliction (מעני) and hard servitude (ומרב עבדה), sitting among the nations, and finding no rest. The referent of *ומרב עבדה* is vague, leaving the reader guessing. Berlin rightly recognises that this collocation occurs in Gen 15.13 and Deut 26.6: in both occasions depicting miserable slavery in Egypt and thereby highlighting for the reader this kind of slavery is intended here.<sup>532</sup> Though recognising these textual links, the clause remains difficult. One issue is the nature of the clauses מעני and ומרב. Dahood renders them "Judah went into exile for her iniquity and the diversity of her worship," taking מעני from עוין, "iniquity," rather than עני.<sup>533</sup> Deiana derives מעני from ענה, "to answer," and ומרב from ריב, "to strive": "Judah went into exile for her arrogance, and for her rebellion went into slavery."<sup>534</sup> While these are possible, it is just as plausible to derive the terms from עני and רבב, respectively.

The translation of the *mêm* prepositions prefixed to מעני and ומרב is the next difficulty. They may be either causal or conditional. Salters takes them causally: "Judah has gone into exile *because* of affliction and hard servitude," or that Judah has voluntarily gone into exile because of harsh conditions at home.<sup>535</sup> Thus exile is the result of "affliction and hard servitude" enacted in the region prior to exile. Gordis however argues the prefixed prepositions on both nouns are "conditional," so that a condition or state of

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<sup>530</sup>Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem," 169. It is conceivable that real readers may actualise different facets of the city's portrayal due to personification. And if the poem was read corporately the real readers of the poem may, through the image of personified Jerusalem, actualise different aspects of the city simultaneously. In this way, there may have been an interplay at work between communal and individual perspectives on Zion on the basis of the text, but both can be conceptualised under Eco's concept of the Model Reader.

<sup>531</sup>Explicit mention of sin arrives in Lam 1.3-5, 7-9, 14a, 18a, 19a, 20b, 22b.

<sup>532</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 51. She also cites Ex 1.11, where ענתו, "to oppress," conjoins בסבלתם, "with hard slavery," clearly depicting servitude, though not employing עבדה (Berlin, *Lamentations*, 51).

<sup>533</sup>Mitchell Dahood, "New Readings in Lamentations," *Bib* 59(1978): 175.

<sup>534</sup>G. Deiana, "Interpretazione die Lam. 1, 3a. 7a," *BeO* 23(1981): 101-3.

<sup>535</sup>Robert Salters, "Lamentations 1:3: Light from the History of Exegesis," in *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane* (eds., J.D. Martin and P.R. Davies; JSOTSup 42; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 73-89.

being is described: “Judah has gone into exile, in a state of affliction and hard servitude.”<sup>536</sup> Berlin, following Hillers, believes the prepositions to be temporal, so that the situation being described is the way of life in Judah prior to the exile. Thus the poetic line reads: “Judah has gone into exile after affliction and hard servitude.” That is, after a horrible period of trouble and turmoil in Judah, the nation was finally exiled by the Babylonians.<sup>537</sup> With this in view, Lam 1.3a hails back to the city as a “slave labourer,” (מס) in Lam 1.1c, and the plight of the Judeans has gone from bad to worse: slavery to exile.<sup>538</sup>

The remainder of Lam 1.3 alludes to Exodus and Deuteronomy 28, giving theological shape to the dire reversal.<sup>539</sup> Lam 1.3b, “She sits among the nations; she finds no resting place” (היא יושבת בגוים לא מצאה מנוח), recalls Deut 28:65: “And among those nations you will not find peace, and there will be no rest for the soles of your feet” (ובגוים (ההם לא תרגיע ולא ייהיה מנוח לכף-רגלך). Other than Deut 28.65, Lam 1.3b marks the only instance of בגוים and מנוח being used in such close connection. Both verses describe, in part, God’s curse against his people for disobedience, where they will be cast out of the land and exiled as a result of breaking the covenant.<sup>540</sup>

There is an inter-effectiveness between the language of “exile” (גלותה) and “affliction and hard servitude” (ומרב עבדה מעני) in Lam 1.3. Exile may be punishment of former sinfulness in Judah that resulted in “affliction and hard servitude” (taking the *mêm* causally). Thus exile fulfils the covenantal curse in Deut 28.65 and suggests a theological rationale (though somewhat oblique) as to why the disaster has occurred. Alternatively, exile and sitting among the nations can be seen as the benchmark of supreme suffering for Judah, where formerly “affliction and hard servitude” were bad, but at least the people

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<sup>536</sup>Robert Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations: A Study, Modern Translation and Commentary* (New York: KTAV, 1974), 153-4.

<sup>537</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 45; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 66-7. This interprets the poetic line in light of the serial trauma Judah experienced from 609 BCE to 587 BCE. After defeat by Egypt and Pharaoh Necho I in 609 BCE, Judah was caught in the middle of the struggle for Levantine supremacy between Egypt and Babylon; eventually Babylon won out after the battle of Carchemish in 605 BCE and subjugated Judah in 604 BCE as a vassal state. Judah experienced Babylonian deportations in 597 BCE and finally destruction in 587 BCE. See Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 36-133.

<sup>538</sup>House, “Judah has gone into exile under affliction, and under harsh servitude” (*Lamentations*, 332).

<sup>539</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 219-37.

<sup>540</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 52.

were in their own land (taking the *mêm* conditionally). In this way, syntax opens for the reader two possible theological worlds for the reader: one in which the disaster is explained as punishment for sin, the other culminates in a heightening of the present experience of pain and suffering, portraying an urgent need for divine deliverance.

This theological openness is exploited further through wordplay that recalls and inverts the Exodus experience. The term המצרים, “straits” (Lam 1.3c) puns the term מצרים, “Egypt.” The poet expresses the ironic difference between deliverance in Egypt and the present state of exile. The affliction and servitude Israel experienced in Egypt in former days (עני and עבד) is in effect what is happening now, again, to Judah.<sup>541</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp argues that עבדה ומרע מעני reminds the reader of the Exodus narrative and are part of about a dozen allusions to the Egyptian captivity.<sup>542</sup> In Lam 1.3c the term “straits” (המצרים) puns “Egypt” (מצרים) and alludes to the Exodus experience.<sup>543</sup> Instead of being delivered from a dire situation, they are overtaken (השיגה) and forced into straits (בין המצרים). Whether psychological distress or real physical entrapment,<sup>544</sup> the clause בין המצרים Judah is in a difficult and exhausting situation—she finds no rest from her pursuers.<sup>545</sup>

The combination of pun and allusion in Lam 1.3 creates a dark irony. Instead of being delivered from captivity—represented by the allusions to Exodus: עבדה ומרע מעני and בין המצרים—God’s people now go *into* captivity (גלתה יהודה). The references to exile and the return to slavery leave the personified city sitting not among friends but rather בגוים “among the nations” (Lam 1.3b), a reversal of רבתי בגוים in Lam 1.1b. Allusions to the exodus from Egypt bring to the reader an inverted “backstory” that may highlight the consequences of rebellion against YHWH and provides theological rationale for the city’s degraded state. Yet the allusion may simply be a way of emphasising the present debasement, isolation, reversal, and pain the city experiences.

<sup>541</sup>For מעני, see Ex 3.7, 17; 4.31. For עבדה, see Ex 1.14; 2.23; 5.11; 6.6.

<sup>542</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 16, 59.

<sup>543</sup>השיגה is a similar idiom used in Ex 14.9; 15.9 used to describe Pharaoh’s pursuit and capture of the Israelites [וירדף מצרים אחריהם וישיגו אותם, “and Egypt pursued after them and overtook them” (Ex 14.9); ארדף אשיג (Ex 15.9)].

<sup>544</sup>For psychological interpretations, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 16; Provan, *Lamentations*, 39; Nötscher, *Die Klagelieder*, 2; for physical entrapment, see Otto Thenius, *Die Klagelieder* (KHAT; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1855), 128; Albert Gelin, *Jérémie, Les Lamentations, Baruch* (2nd ed.; Paris: Cerf, 1959), 252.

<sup>545</sup>The term המצרים carries psychological tenor in Lam 1.20a: “Look, O YHWH, at my distress” (כִּי־צַר־לִי)! See discussion, below.

In Lam 1.4-7, a cumulative portrait of a suffering people is expressed, drawing once again from Deuteronomy 28. In the span of four verses, the reader encounters:

Lam 1.4a: absent festal pilgrims (מבלי באי מיעד)

Lam 1.4b: groaning priests (כהניה נאנהים)

Lam 1.4c: grieving maidens (בתולתיה נוגית)

Lam 1.5c: little children walking as captives (עולליה הלכו בשבי)

Lam 1.6b: princes not finding pasture (שריה...לא מצאו מרעה)

Lam 1.7b: her people who fall in the hand of an enemy (בנפל עמה ביד צר)

The experience of the maidens (Lam 1.4c) is too much for the personified city, as the observer describes her agony: והיא מרילה, "and it, it is bitter for her." LXX, Aquila, and Symmachus translate נוגית as ἀγομέμναι, "to thrust away," and it is proposed that נוגית should be emended to נהיגית, from נהגל, "to drive away," as in the concept of exile.<sup>546</sup> This emendation is possible, though the normal derivation of נוגית (Niphal participle from נגה) is equally possible.<sup>547</sup> Following Hillers and Berlin, the present study opts for נוגית from נגה, highlighting the grief of the maidens which leaves the city in bitter anguish.<sup>548</sup>

Though not mentioning "sons and daughters" (בנים ובנות) Lam 1.5c is an eerie reminder of Deut 28.41: "sons and daughters...walk as captives" (בנים ובנות...הלכו בשבי) and probably an allusion to it. The repetition of הלכו בשבי in both verses reveals the connection.<sup>549</sup> In these depictions the reader witnesses the most vulnerable (little children) as well as the best-off inhabitants (princes) in the city share the same fate: they are under the control and domination of others, specifically the צר and רודף. The parallel repetition of the verbal forms of הלך and לפני clauses in Lam 1.5c and 1.6c reinforce this connection. The use of ידף in Lam 1.6c recalls the description of the city's pursuers in Lam 1.3c while צר recalls the synonymous term איבים in Lam 1.2c; the repetition of terminology binds the poem together and gives the reader clues to make these connections in the poem.

Allusion to Deuteronomy 28 is exploited and carried further in Lam 1.5. The verse apparently alludes to Deut 28.44 and both affirm the Lord as the administrator of the city's fate. Moreover, it was punishment for sin. Lam 1.5 reads:

היי צרית לראש איבית שלי  
כי ידית הוגה על רב־פשיעה

<sup>546</sup>So Pham translates בתולתיה נוגית, "her virgins have been led away" (Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 40, 44, 65-6). נהיגית occurs in 4QLam<sup>a</sup>, as well.

<sup>547</sup>נגה is rare, and occurs most prevalently in Lamentations: Lam 1.4c, 1.5b, 12c; 3.32, 33. The Niphal participle from נגה does occur in one other instance: Zeph 3.18: נוגי.

<sup>548</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 67; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 45, note e. Provan, too opts for this reading tentatively (*Lamentations*, 40).

<sup>549</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 52-3. See also Lam 1.18c.

עולליה הלכו שבי לפני־צָר

“Her enemies have become her head; her enemies rest easy,  
For YHWH tormented her on account of the greatness of her offences.  
Her little children walk as captives before an enemy.”

The observer portrays the city’s reversal from a powerful entity to a vassal: “Her enemies have become her head [לראש].” This reversal recalls Deut 28.44: הוא יהיה לראש ואתה תהיה לזנב, “He will become the head and you will become the tail.” In Deuteronomy 28 “Israel is told that obedience to God will lead to dominance over others and disobedience to their dominance over her.”<sup>550</sup> But the curse is carried further: Jerusalem has in fact committed offences to the degree that YHWH has הִגָּה “tormented her” as a result of them (Lam 1.5b).

The repetition of גָּהַג, here in the Hiphil (הִגָּה) and in Lam 1.4c in the Niphal (נִגָּה), draws together the concepts of grief and the Lord’s torment. Rather than other language describing the act of punishment, such as פָּקַד עוֹן אִבְתָּ (Ex 20.5: פָּקַד עוֹן אִבְתָּ), פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם, the הִגָּה is language charged with emotion. God’s activity causes grief. The word פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם, “her offences,” derives from פָּשַׁע and denotes some sort of breach in the “rule of justice with regard to a person or community” and generally refers to the offence itself rather than its judgment.<sup>551</sup> The noun פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם is often used in parallel with חַטָּאת, “sin,”<sup>552</sup> yet פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם carries slightly different connotations and is often associated with breaches between individuals in domestic life and community, according to Knierim, and thereby connotes “criminal activity” rather than “sin.”<sup>553</sup> Both terms, however, indicate some form of deviation or rebellion from YHWH’s rule over the world.<sup>554</sup> Differently than the allusion to Exodus, the allusion to the curses of Deuteronomy raises significant theological questions about the cause of the disaster the city experiences.

What kind of theology does this verse, then, present? On the face of it, it would seem that the verse presents theodicy. As Hunter says, “[The] poets of Lamentations [...] seemed to have fully realised why the fall happened. Already in [Lam 1.5], when the fall

<sup>550</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 40.

<sup>551</sup>Horst Seebass and Helmer Ringgren, “פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם, *pāša*,” *TDOT* 12 (2003) 136.

<sup>552</sup>As in Gen 31.36, where Jacob asks Laban: מה־פִּשְׁעֵי מִה חַטָּאתִי, “what is my offence, what is my sin?” See also: Gen 50.17: שָׂא נֹא פִשְׁעֵי אַחִיךָ וְחַטָּאתֶם; Ex 34.7: עוֹן וּפִשְׁעֵי; Ps 32.1: וְחַטָּאתִי.

<sup>553</sup>Rolf Knierim, *Die Hauptbegriffe für Sünde im Alten Testament* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1965), 141.

<sup>554</sup>Štefan Porúbčan, *Sin in the Old Testament: A Soteriological Study* (Rome: Herder, 1963), 26.

is attributed to the planning of [YHWH] for the first time, it is immediately also linked to the sinning of the city and its people."<sup>555</sup> Yet Middlemas, Provan, Linafelt, and Dobbs-Allsopp argue that because the explicit description of offences is not given, Lamentations demurs the idea that Jerusalem's sins warranted such punishment, only offering a half-hearted attempt to "pin" the cause of the disaster on the sins of Jerusalem<sup>556</sup>: "The 'multitude' of Zion's 'transgressions' are acknowledged but never specified. We are never informed as to the precise nature of Zion's infractions. Moreover, their portrayal is flattened, spare, and does not readily seize the reader's imagination."<sup>557</sup> Instead of explaining why the disaster happened, the Lamentations theologically functions to present pain to the deity, to reach out for life, and persuade the deity to act on the peoples' behalf.<sup>558</sup> This view eventuates into the "anti-theodic" position.<sup>559</sup> The offences depicted in Lam 1.5b are only *rhetorical* a means of getting YHWH to notice the pain that the city experiences, but they do not actually justify the deity's actions; his divine punishment does not fit the crime.

However another explanation for imprecise description of offences is possible. It may be that depiction of offences is intentionally *underdetermined* at this point to provide interpretative opportunity for the reader. In this understanding, underdetermined offence opens space for the reader to examine one's own culpability within the context of suffering. That is, the text functions performatively rather than only descriptively; the reader is invited to be *involved* in making sense of the text, and its theology, rather than explaining precisely the nature of Jerusalem's offences.

Allowing the text *does* function descriptively, however, one is not compelled to conclude that the poetry underplays sin's significance. It may be that indistinct portrayal of sin provides a *comprehensive* means to depict the extent of the sin that warrants YHWH's stern punishment. Comprehensive language, rather than precise depiction, may be seen to offer the breadth of the offences of the people and city. Both the performative and the latter descriptive explanations are at least as plausible as arguing that the oblique

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<sup>555</sup>Jannie Hunter, *Faces of a Lamenting City: The Development and Coherence of the Book of Lamentations* (BEATAJ 39; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 144; 143-47.

<sup>556</sup>Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 210-16; Provan, *Lamentations*, 20-5; Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 43-61; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 60-2.

<sup>557</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 61.

<sup>558</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 43-61.

<sup>559</sup>Middlemas uses the inflammatory term *theo-diabole*, "god slander" to describe Lamentations' theology (*The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 212).



references to sin and sinfulness are a way of deconstructing their importance in the poetry of Lamentations.<sup>560</sup>

Yet even with sin in view, the variety of presentations of suffering among the people in Lam 1.4-7 counterbalances the emphasis upon sin and appropriates the reader's focus to the experience of Jerusalem's pain. The observer threads together an emotionally charged portrait of suffering, even by the most defenceless members of the city: "her little children" (עיללִיהָ). The observer depicts these little ones oppressed, in captivity, and this image, along with the plight of maidens, priests, and princes, is brought into full view of the reader.

Her sin as well as the city's suffering ambiguates distinct theology in the poem, leaving the reader to question its exact meaning. Does it primarily convey suffering of the city and her inhabitants (as Westermann believes) or depict the sin of the city (as Hunter maintains), or does it seek to protest against YHWH's activity (as Dobbs-Allsopp maintains)? Rather than opting for one theological position, it appears the poetry offers (at this point) the reader all possibilities.

Following the acrostic, the reader is forced forward in the poem, to the 1 strophe, where once again reversal that the city has experienced is described, introducing the reader for the first time to the city's personification as "Dear Zion" (בת־צִיּוֹן). The translation of this title is an interpretative crux that is bound up in the grammatical relationship between the two nouns. Berlin opts for an appositional relationship: "Daughter Zion," or "Dear Zion," meaning that X belongs to the class of בת.<sup>561</sup> Thus the

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<sup>560</sup>Moreover, imprecision in description of offence occurs in at least one other text involving the usage of פִּשַׁע in the OT, leaving the same two options for explanation. In Gen 50.17, Joseph's brothers inform him that their father Jacob wanted him to forgive פִּשַׁע אַחֵיךָ וְחַטָּאתָם, "the offence of your brothers and their sin." Whether or not Jacob actually spoke these words, it cannot be argued that the brothers do not specifically mention their offences because the narrator desires them to be downplayed. From the narrative account in Genesis, clearly they have committed the crime of kidnapping, but also they have broken kinship ties; they have perhaps even overstepped the authority of the patriarchal structure by selling someone into slavery without the father's knowledge (Knierim, *Hauptbegriffe*, 178). Indistinctness in reportage of crimes does not lead one to conclude that they are intended to be downplayed for the reader. Rather, the effect of this ambiguity in presentation is twofold: on the one hand, it calls the reader to consider the various ways the brothers have indeed offended and sinned against their brother; at the same time, it provides a comprehensive way to describe the various infractions of the brothers against Joseph. See Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16—50* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1994), 490. For an alternative view, see Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 379-80.

<sup>561</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 10.

place name is being metaphorically associated with the *nomen regens*, בת.<sup>562</sup> In contrast Dobbs-Allsopp thinks any construction of בת + geographical name (GN) as a locative genitive relationship. Thus, בת־צִיּוֹן, or בת + GN, should be translated “Daughter of Zion” or “Daughter of GN” meaning “daughter that is from GN.”<sup>563</sup> This construct chain mirrors the epithets for the goddess in the *Hymn of Nanâ* typified by the construct chain *mārat* + GN<sup>564</sup> and the epithet for the lamenting goddess in *Tammuz Lament*.<sup>565</sup> The grammatical similarities between these ANE forbears and בת־צִיּוֹן are obvious.

Dobbs-Allsopp goes further and connects this epithet usage to the weeping goddess motif prevalent in ANE city-laments as well as *balag* and *eršemma* compositions.<sup>566</sup> He says, “*bat* in the title *bat* GN, like the Akkadian *martu* in the title *mārat* GN, signifies a goddess as an inhabitant or citizen of a particular city or country.”<sup>567</sup> Thus Lamentations has adapted a city-lament convention, as well as conventional language, within its own context. The OT writers would not endorse the idea of a goddess in their literature; nevertheless, it represents an evocative way to describe the relationship of Jerusalem to her people.

The weaknesses of his argument lie in his linkage between the *mārat* + GN construction to the weeping goddess motif in city-laments and his reliance on geographical names. The *Hymn of Nanâ* is a hymn, not a city-lament, and other than the Tammuz Lament, the Mesopotamian city-laments do not use *mārat* + GN in their epithets for goddesses. Thus the linkage between the weeping goddess motif to the epithet is weak, and thereby it is likewise tenuous to make the same application to Lamentations. The weeping goddess motif, adapted in Lamentations, stands on its own without recourse to

<sup>562</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 11.

<sup>563</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Syntagma of *bat*,” 451-70.

<sup>564</sup>E. Reiner, “A Sumerian-Akkadian Hymn of Nanâ,” *JNES* 33(1974): 221-36.

<sup>565</sup>W. G. Lambert, “A Neo-Babylonian Tammuz Lament,” *Studies in Literature from the Ancient Near East Dedicated to Samuel Noah Kramer* (AOS; ed. Jack M. Sasson; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1984), 211-15. Written in Akkadian and in Sumerian, the epithets of the goddess are as follows: *mārat uri*, “daughter of Ur” (II. 6); [*mār*]at eridu, “daughter of Eridu” (III.10); *mārat kullaba*, “daughter of Kullab” (III.10), and [*mārat bāb*]ili, “daughter of Babylon” (IX.27). The Tammuz Lament, the goddess Istar laments her city and is identified by the titles *mārat uruk*<sup>ki</sup>, “daughter of Ur” (1.3) *mārat akkade*<sup>ki</sup>, “daughter of Akkad” (1.3), *mārat larak*<sup>ki</sup>, “daughter of Larak” (1.4), and *mārat nippur*<sup>ki</sup>, “daughter of Nippur” (1.12). See Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Syntagma of *bat*,” 455-63.

<sup>566</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Syntagma of *bat*,” 455-63.

<sup>567</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Syntagma of *bat*,” 469-70.

linking the epithet with this motif. Moreover, what of other epithets that do not use a geographical name but still employ בת in them, such as “daughter of my people” (בת־עמי)? This has precisely the same construction as בת + GN and occurs five times in Lamentations (Lam 2.11; 3.48; 4.3, 6, 10). It is unlikely this epithet denotes a goddess that dwells among the people of Jerusalem. At any rate, there is no ANE parallel for this construction.<sup>568</sup> The construction בת + noun is best rendered as an appositional genitive—a genitive of association—and translated with such relationship in mind. Yet then, what is the meaning of בת + noun?

Berlin’s argument is the most attractive. She understands that בת means “daughter” but also “female member of a group.” It also is a term of endearment, as the term that Boaz uses for Ruth in Ru 2.8: בתי. This construction could be rendered “my maiden,” drawing in with it contexts in which an epithet בת + noun should be translated “maiden” (sensible in the context of בת + the name of a foreign place—“Enthroned Maiden Dibon,” יִשְׁבֵת בַּת־דִּבּוֹן; Jer 48.18a). But in its context, it makes little sense for Boaz to call Ruth “my daughter”, or “my maiden”, but more plausibly “my dear.”<sup>569</sup> In this translation, “dear,” rightly associates the construction with connotations as a term of endearment.

This seems to be the force of the title בת־צִיּוֹן in Lamentations. Hillers, Berlin, Kartveit, and Stinespring render בת + noun in Lamentations as appositional genitives, “dear X,” and the present study follows this line as well.<sup>570</sup> Thus the city is personified as a maiden or a dear woman who has lost her honour (הדרה) and whose leaders are pursued without rest. Moreover, they walk before a pursuer (לפני רודף), repeating רדף from Lam 1.3c and emphasising the desperate and powerless state in which she finds herself.

All of this drives the city to mull over her fate, which the observer describes in Lam 1.7. The poetry exploits the dirge genre at this point, as Zion becomes the bereaved mother, who through her memory depicts the effect her people’s death has had on her.<sup>571</sup> The verse is longer than the other verses in the poem—four lines instead of three—but there is no need to omit the second half of the line from the verse as BHS suggests as it is sensible without emendation.

<sup>568</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 12.

<sup>569</sup>William R. Stinespring, “Zion, Daughter of,” *IDBSup*, 985.

<sup>570</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 30-1; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 12; Magnar Kartveit, “Sions dotter.” *Tidsskrift for Teologi of Kirke* 1-2(2001): 97-112; Stinespring, “Zion, Daughter of,” 985.

<sup>571</sup>See 3.2.1., motif 9.

Hendiadys in the phrase *ימי עניה ומרודיה* heightens the misery Jerusalem experiences, this time through memory. The text reads, “Jerusalem calls to mind the days of her miserable homelessness” (זכרה ירושלים ימי עניה ומרודיה). The *waw* conjunction and repetition of the feminine suffixes on each *nomen rectum* clearly mark the hendiadys *עניה ומרודיה*.<sup>572</sup> *מרודיה* derives from  $\sqrt{\text{רוד}}$ , “to wander freely.”<sup>573</sup> This root is repeated with similar nuance in Lam 3.19, and the entire hendiadys of Lam 1.7a finds parallel in Is 58.7, “miserable homeless ones” (ועניים ומרודים). The point of this, and the verse at large, is to depict yet again the intense suffering the personified Jerusalem experiences as she witnesses *מהמדיה*, “her precious things,” falling under the control of the enemy.

Though unspecified, *מהמדיה* could be taken to be the “children” of Jerusalem that have been taken by the enemies, which coheres with expressions of the city’s inhabitants under enemy domination in Lam 1.4-6. Moreover, Jerusalem’s grief comes from the fact that she has no helper (ואין עוזר לה, Lam 1.7b), perhaps another description of her isolation in accordance with the various repetitions of *אין־לה מנחם* or related language (Lam 1.2b, 1.7c, 1.9b, 1.16b, 1.17a, 1.21a), or in this verse a way of describing her inability to release her children from their captors. Either way, it depicts her powerlessness in the face of her present situation. In her plight, again the activity of the enemies (*צרים*) comes to the fore: “the foes look on mockingly upon her downfall” (ראוה צרים שחקו עלי־משבתה). The two verbs here can be considered another example of hendiadys, though lacking a formal *waw* conjunction, as a result of the common nominal antecedent, *צרים*, that conjoins the verbal concept.<sup>574</sup> The derision of her enemies is another source of pain and grief.

The observer then turns again to the relationship between sin and the fate of the city. Lam 1.8a reads, “Jerusalem has sinned greatly, accordingly, she has become a wanderer” (חטא חטאה ירושלם עלי־כן לנידה היתה). Jerusalem’s sin is unspecified, but the syntax indicates its seriousness by combining the noun with the verb, “she sinned a sin” or “she sinned greatly.”<sup>575</sup> This act of sinning is then directly linked to her plight as *לנידה* through the compound *עלי־כן*, linking the causal statement *חטא חטאה ירושלם* to the effect,

<sup>572</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 11.13(b).

<sup>573</sup>*HALOT*, s. v. “מרוד.” There is no need to emend the text to *מרוריה*, “her sorrows,” as BHS; nor is it necessary to derive the term from  $\sqrt{\text{רוד}}$ , “to beat down,” as Meek has done (Theophile J. Meek, “The Book of Lamentations,” *IB*, vol. 6, 9).

<sup>574</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 11.13(d).

<sup>575</sup>GKC §117p; Ps 14.5: *פחדו פחד*, “they feared a fear,” or “they feared greatly.”

לְנִידָה הִיָּתָה.<sup>576</sup> Yet what is it that Jerusalem has become, or put another way, what is the meaning of לְנִידָה?

Admittedly, this is an unclear term, though its ambiguity exploits its theological evocativeness rather than dearth of meaning. It is a homonym of the term נִדָּה, “menstruant,” that occurs in Lam 1.17c.<sup>577</sup> One should not avoid this association. However Qumran (4QLam<sup>d</sup>) and later Masoretes derived the term from נִדָּה to differentiate the term from the noun נִדָּה, “menstruant.” נִדָּה either means “to move or shake the head” in the sense of being an object of derision or mocking<sup>578</sup> or equally possible “to wander.”<sup>579</sup> Berlin looks to Gen 4.12, 14 (Cain’s banishment) and translates לְנִידָה “as a wanderer.” Cain “is the prototype of the exiled person, who was banished for defiling the land with spilled blood”<sup>580</sup>; it follows that Jerusalem becomes a banished person, a “wanderer” because she has “sinned greatly” (חַטָּא חַטָּאָה). LXX is middle ground with σάλον, “object of shaking” or “she became shaken.”<sup>581</sup> Targum, and Rashi prefer the sense of “wanderer” while Ibn Ezra favours “derision.” All, however, translate on the basis of נִדָּה.<sup>582</sup> Lamentations Rabbah connects the two understandings of לְנִידָה: “Therefore she became filthy [נִדָּה]: Condemned to wander [נִדָּה].”<sup>583</sup>

Previous references to exile (Lam 1.3) coupled with “her homelessness” (מְרוּדִיָּה) of Lam 1.7a, reveal that Jerusalem “as a wanderer” likely is the primary denotation of לְנִידָה. For translation purposes, I follow the LXX, Targum, Rashi, and Ibn Ezra, and Berlin to argue that לְנִידָה derives from נִדָּה, and then follow Targum, Rashi, and Berlin to translate the term “as a wanderer.” As the term is contextualised with Lam 1.8b, “all those

<sup>576</sup>JM §170h. BHS suggests omitting על-כן because it impedes meter, yet as the *qinah* meter has been shown to be questionable there is no need for its omission.

<sup>577</sup>Albrektson believes that לְנִידָה is a variant spelling, נִדָּה “menstruant,” from the root נִדָּה, though he understands the term to mean “filthy thing” or “deplorable thing” (*Studies in the Text and Theology of Lamentations*, 63-4). Syriac, Aquila, and Symmachus all translate לְנִידָה from נִדָּה.

<sup>578</sup>Jer 18.16: “And he will shake with his head” (וַיִּנְדֵּד בְּרֹאשׁוֹ); Ps 44.15: “A shaking of the head (object of scorn) among the peoples” (מִנְדֵּד־רֹאשׁ בְּלִאֲמִים).

<sup>579</sup>HALOT and Ibn Ezra understand נִדָּה in both senses.

<sup>580</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 54.

<sup>581</sup>See Peter J. Gentry, “Lamentations,” in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title* (eds., Albert Pietersma and Benjamin Wright; International Organisation for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc., 2004), 8.

<sup>582</sup>Targum Lamentations uses לְנִידָה, “as an exile” (Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations*, 29); For Rashi and Ibn Ezra, see Berlin, *Lamentations*, 54.

<sup>583</sup>Neusner, *Lamentations Rabbah*, 151.

who honoured her (now) despise her, for they saw her nakedness” (כל־מכבדיה הזילוה כִּירְאוּ עָרוּתָהּ), it is reasonable to conclude that overtones of derision from לְנִידָה are evident, as Ibn Ezra and possibly LXX imply. The polyvalency of the term then, combines the shame and disgrace of Jerusalem’s fall with the reality of the exile as a result of her sin.<sup>584</sup> Finally, because it is a homonym of נִדָּה, the concept of menstruant is raised implicitly for the reader by the usage of נִידָה; this will be exploited in Lam I.17c. With לְנִידָה, language is pushed to the limits to expose various interpretative possibilities for the reader: sin, pain, scorn, and reversal.

Her wandering and scorn over nakedness causes her pain. Different levels of meaning were associated with the exposure of nakedness (כל־מכבדיה הזילוה כִּירְאוּ עָרוּתָהּ) in the ancient world:

“Exposure of one’s body, especially of the genitals, was to the ancient Israelites an almost immeasurable disgrace [...] but in addition one may note that being stripped bare is also a curse connected with treaties and covenants [...] Finally, one may note that the expression ‘to see the nakedness’ of a country is used (Gen 42.9, 12) of spying out its weakness from a strategic point of view, and it is possible that a play on this sense of the term is also involved here.”<sup>585</sup>

Renkema adds that exposure of nakedness is a common theme in the OT particularly linked to YHWH’s judgment, as seen in Nah 3.5 and Jer 13.26.<sup>586</sup> Through divine judgment, the city experiences humiliation, which coupled with her status as a wanderer (see also Lam 1.3a), leaves Jerusalem groaning, turning away (Lam 1.8c). These actions indicate her distress stems from various sources: sin, disgrace, shame, and patent suffering at the hands of enemies. The variety of sources of pain open theological questions: is the deity to be conceived of as the one who has judged sin, the one who witnesses the city’s disgrace, or the one who *delivers* from oppression of enemies? Each of these theological horizons is opened in the poetry.

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<sup>584</sup>Robert Gordis argues that the employment of this polyvalent term is “an instance of *talhin*, a rhetorical figure where a word is consciously chosen because in addition to its dominant sense it carries another meaning on a secondary level” [*The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 155].

<sup>585</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 86.

<sup>586</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 134.

Lam 1.9 exploits this theological openness. The observer describes the sin of the city and her downfall, only to have the city break forth in speech for the first time. This is one of three instances of Zion's direct address to YHWH.<sup>587</sup> Lam 1.9 reads,

טמאתה בשוליה לא זכרה אחריתה  
ותרד פלאים אין מנחם לה  
ראה יהוה את־עניי כי הגדיל אויב

"Her uncleanness is in her skirts; she did not remember her end.  
She has descended appallingly; there is no comforter for her.  
Look, O YHWH (at) my affliction! For the enemy triumphs!"

Pham argues "her uncleanness," טמאתה, speaks of the lower part of personified Zion's garments (which are associated with modesty) that have become soiled—rendered unclean—by sitting upon the ground in a mourning ceremony.<sup>588</sup> By contrast, because Provan and Kaiser understand לנידה within a cognitive field of disgust and derive the term from נדה, "to drive out," they argue that the uncleanness represented in Lam 1.9a is menstrual blood and an object of revulsion.<sup>589</sup> The term נדה in its normal cultic usage designates a menstruant isolated from worship at the sanctuary; yet no moral onus is associated with the condition (Lev 12.2, 5; 15.19-27). Nor is menstruation disgusting or filthy except, as Berlin notes, "in the minds of modern scholars."<sup>590</sup> Nor is the נדה particularly isolated from social contact—even though her cultic impurity is contagious by contact, nonetheless she can associate with others.<sup>591</sup>

It is best to understand the first poetic line as metaphorically speaking of sexual impropriety. The clue to this understanding lies in the term בשוליה, "in her skirt." Pham rightly notes that the skirt is the lower part of a woman's garment and sometimes refers to modesty. Jer 13.22-26 depicts Jerusalem's rebellion against the Lord, in which the enemies expose her private parts (נגלו שוליה; Jer 13.22). Here, too "in her skirt" (בשוליה) is a euphemism for her private parts.<sup>592</sup> In my reading, בשוליה טמאתה connotes impurity neither from menstruation nor mourning. Rather, her impurity is a result of sexual

<sup>587</sup>Lam 1.9, 1.11, and 1.20 contain either a portion of or the entirety of the dual imperative "look and consider," ראה והביטה, and the vocative address to YHWH (only ראה in 1.9, 20) followed by a כי clause that describes the cause of the appeal.

<sup>588</sup>Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 75.

<sup>589</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 44-5; Kaiser, *Klagelieder*, 125-6.

<sup>590</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 58.

<sup>591</sup>Tikva Frymer-Kensky: "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honour of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (eds. Carol Meyers and M. O'Connor; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983): 399-414.

<sup>592</sup>*HALOT* 4: 1422 translates שוליה in Jer 13.22 as "your pubic area."

impropriety; in this way, the uncleanness in her “skirt” or private parts is the result of sexual dalliance with metaphorical lovers, or other nations. Using the same logic, Berlin states the city is “not a menstruant; she is a whore.”<sup>593</sup> The theological tone fits well with the notions for נִמְאָה in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, where moral impurity, notably whoredom, is cleansed through divine punishment.<sup>594</sup>

The notion of the city’s dalliance with lovers immediately draws the reader back in a reflexive arc to reconsider Lam 1.2b: “there is no comforter from all those who love her” (אִין לָהּ מִנְחָם מִכָּל־אֲהַבֶּיהָ). Read through Lam 1.8-9, the neutrality of the former reading is thrown in question and “all those who love her” (כָּל־אֲהַבֶּיהָ) of Lam 1.2b takes on a different connotation. The city may be isolated specifically because she has been a whore. The tension between the readings is not resolved and this is a prime instance where the text creates an “ideal insomnia” for the reader so that the one is necessarily involved in attributing the theological understanding of the text. In this case, the poem exhibits an “open” strategy for its model reader.

Association with sexual impropriety is further emphasised through the second half of the line, “she did not remember her end” (לֹא זָכְרָה אַחֲרִיתָהּ). The repetition of the זָכַר links back to Lam 1.8a (זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם) but here it refers to her failure to remember what would happen to her for wantonness with other lovers. Mintz argues, “Even in the anguish of her victimage Zion is not held to be entirely innocent of complicity in her fate [...] The text here implies that in her glory Fair Zion conducted herself with easy virtue and ‘gave no thought to her end’ (1.8), so that what began as unwitting, voluntary promiscuity, suddenly turned into unwished for, forcible defilement.”<sup>595</sup> Wanton sexuality culminates in sexual violation.

While her own whoredom is not denied, it is *their* actions, however, that she calls “my affliction” (אֶת־עֲנִי).<sup>596</sup> Though complicit in her disaster, personified Jerusalem

<sup>593</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 55.

<sup>594</sup>See Ezk 22-24; Jer 13.22-6. Because of the admission of sin in Lam 1.8 and the association of “skirts” in Lam 1.9, the text here specifically is reminiscent of Jer 13.22, 26, where Jerusalem’s enemies expose her privates (שׁוֹלֵיךְ, 13.22) and rape her, and YHWH pulls up her skirts (שׁוֹלֵיךְ, 13.26) and exposes her shame—apparently the evidence of sexual impropriety. Both are a result of, or at least connected to, her guilt (עֲוֹןךְ, 13.22) and her forgetfulness of the Lord (שָׁכַחְתְּ אֹתִי, 13.25).

<sup>595</sup>Mintz, *Hurban*, 25.

<sup>596</sup>In some instances in the OT, עֲנִי expressly depicts rape: Deut 22.25-7; Ju 19.24; 2 Sam 13.12, 14, 22, 32; Ezk 22.10-11. See also Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 99, n.79, 109-110.



desires YHWH to see her affliction from the enemy who has “raped her”: “Look, O YHWH, at my affliction—for an enemy triumphs” (רֵאֵה יְהוָה אֶת־עֲנִי כִי הִגְדִיל אוֹיֵב). The כִּי following רֵאֵה יְהוָה אֶת־עֲנִי links the clause directly as the motivation for her appeal to the deity indicates that Zion calls upon him to act as a deliverer or just judge, to “see” the violence she experiences and save her from it. The appeal is characteristic of the lament genre rather than the dirge as the plea of suffering directly goes heavenward.<sup>597</sup> This appeal can be seen as an aspect of the communal lament genre after the Feindklage, “the complaint against the enemy” has been offered.<sup>598</sup> Personified Jerusalem, however, has not offered a formal complaint against the enemy by listing his unjust activity; the reader must go back to the observer’s complaints against the enemies’ activity in Lam 1.2-6 to discover how he has triumphed.

Theologically, in her appeal, personified Zion depicts the deity as a just judge who will hear her complaint against the enemy and act on her behalf—despite her sinfulness and whoredom. Speech attributing the disaster to her wantonness does not characterise the final emphasis in the  $\text{v}$  strophe. Rather, Zion’s speech depicts a focus upon the pain that enemies are causing the city. This final poetic line in the verse provides a theological nuance, shifting the focus of the strophe away from *sin* to *suffering* at the hands of enemies. Moreover, the shift in focus rhetorically alters the city’s relationship to God. Instead of advancing theodicy, where YHWH is presented as the one who has enacted judgment against sinful *Jerusalem* so that her punishment is justified, the final line appeals to him as judge, who will act on her behalf and judge *her enemy*.

The observer teases out these theological threads further through depiction of rape in Lam 1.10. Here he addresses YHWH for the only time in the poem. Lam 1.10a reads: יָדוּ פָרַשׁ צָר עַל כָּל־מַחְמְדֵיהָ, “an enemy spread his hand over all her precious things”; personified Jerusalem watches as גּוֹיִם בָּאוּ מִקִּדְשָׁהּ, “the nations penetrated her sanctuary” (Lam 1:10b). The correspondence between body // temple is prominent, and personification particularly enables it.<sup>599</sup> In this correspondence, כָּל־מַחְמְדֵיהָ “all her precious things” likely denotes temple implements as well as either jewellery that adorns the female body or her body itself. The language of בּוֹא, “he entered into,” evokes sexual abuse especially coupled with the term מִקִּדְשָׁהּ<sup>600</sup>: the enemy has raped

<sup>597</sup>Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 176-81.

<sup>598</sup>Westermann, *Der Psalter*, 35.

<sup>599</sup>Mintz, *Hurban*, 25.

<sup>600</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 55.

Jerusalem. In light of this violation, the observer addresses YHWH directly. The final line reads: “whom you commanded, ‘they shall not enter into your assembly’” (אשר צויתתה (לא־יבאו בקהל לך). In concord with Jerusalem’s complaint in Lam 1.9c, the observer complains to YHWH about the activity of the enemies, typical of the *Feindklage* in the communal lament.

His complaint reminds God of his former command, which was contravened by the enemy. This command may reflect Deut 23.3-4, where Moabites and Ammonites are forbidden from entering the assembly of YHWH (לא־יבאו...בקהל יהוה). Clearly, the logic of the association works beyond Moabites and Ammonites; the observer uses his former command to remind YHWH of the impropriety of foreigners penetrating the assembly, not least because it violates his decree, but also because it has enabled the wanton rape of the city itself—a violation that cannot go unnoticed, as the observer vividly and horribly depicts it to the deity. The observer’s complaint rhetorically sets the city as a victim of enemy abuse, and figures the deity as a judge who will act on her behalf rather than in judgment against her.

In the observer’s concluding speech in Lam 1.11 (with the exception of Lam 1.17) repetition plays a key role that highlights the horror of the situation in Jerusalem. Lam 1.11 reads,

כל־עמה נאנחים מבקשים לחם  
נתנו מחמודיהם באכל להשיב נפש  
ראה יהוה והביטה כי הייתי זוללה

“All her people are groaning from seeking bread.  
They give their precious things as food to sustain life.  
Look, O YHWH, and consider! For I have become thoughtless!”

The repetition of the verb אנה presents a panorama of suffering, with each verse offering a different scene: priests groan from a lack of worshippers in Lam 1.4b; Jerusalem groans from personal anguish over her sin, reversal, and disgrace in Lam 1.8c; and in Lam 1.11a, all of her people now groan from scarcity of food and likely starvation. Groaning and starvation are common motifs in city-laments.<sup>601</sup> Yet the misery is shown to be horrific through the repetition of מחמד. Repeated from the previous verse “her precious things” (מחמודיהם) may refer to temple implements mentioned in 1.10a, but this is unlikely. The enemy has spread his hand over them and presumably carried them away. It is possible that מחמודיהם refers to the last available riches in the city, as Renkema believes, but the

<sup>601</sup>For groaning (LU 231-4); for starvation (LU 227; LSU 297-313, 392-4).

enemies likely carried these away as well.<sup>602</sup> “Precious things” in Lam 1.11a is better understood as the peoples’ children, whom they give up in exchange for food to sustain their lives (להשיב נפש).<sup>603</sup> Despite this, the syntax gives no clue *whose* life is sustained—the children, their parents, or both? The poetry leaves this question open. At any rate, the family unit, like the city itself remains fragmented.

This final image of misery is juxtaposed against the startling appeal of personified Zion in Lam 1.11c. Constructed like the appeal in Lam 1.9c,<sup>604</sup> the motivation for the appeal in verse 11 does not refer to enemies, but rather her own actions. To understand this, one must understand זוללה, translated variously: “like a beggar<sup>605</sup>,” “worthless<sup>606</sup>,” “despised,” or “thoughtless.” In the Hiphil, זלל means “despised,” as in Lam 1.8, “they despise her” (הזיליה). Yet זלל in the Qal means “thoughtless” or “rash,” especially in case of gluttony as in Prov 23.20: “Do not be among tipplers of wine (drunkards) or among thoughtless eaters of food (gluttons)” (אל־תהי בסבא־יין בזללי בשר למו).<sup>607</sup> Following the morphology of a geminate Qal feminine participle, I derive זוללה from זלל and translate it “thoughtless.” “Thoughtlessness” connects with 1.9a, where the city “did not remember her end.” Repetition of זלל again reveals antanaclasis but it also creates a reflexive movement for the reader, enabling the reader to revisit Lam 1.8 and *why* those who formerly honoured her now despise her: not only have they seen her nakedness, but she has forgotten YHWH and consequences of breaking faith with him (as in Lam 1.3b-c, 5).

Zion’s appeal in Lam 1.11c functions more as *confession* than an appeal. Seen from the co-texts of Lam 1.3, 5, 8, 9 and Deuteronomy 28, the tone of personified Jerusalem’s appeal to YHWH has to do with her own sin, and thereby, to her own failure to remember the Lord and his word. Theologically if the appeal focuses upon the recognition of sin in disaster, then it implicates the city in the destruction and the suffering experienced. Such a perspective differs significantly from the complaint of Lam

<sup>602</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 149.

<sup>603</sup>See also Hos 9.6, where a child (מחמד) is given for money.

<sup>604</sup>ראה יהוה והביטה כי הייתי זוללה // ראה יהוה את־עניי כי הגדיל אויב (Lam 1.9c) // ראה יהוה והביטה כי הייתי זוללה // ראה יהוה את־עניי כי הגדיל אויב (Lam 1.11c). Westermann calls this structural parallelism (*Die Klagelieder*, 114 = *Lamentations*, 130).

<sup>605</sup>Berlin and Hurowitz translate זוללה as “beggar,” from the Akkadian *zilulû*. See: Berlin, *Lamentations*, 46, note m; Avi Hurowitz, “זלל = Peddler/Tramp/Vagabond/Beggar: Lamentations 1:11 in Light of Akkadian *zilulû*,” *VT* 59(1999): 542-5.

<sup>606</sup>Bracke derives זוללה from זולל, “worthless” [Bracke, *Jeremiah 30-52 and Lamentations*, 192, 196-7].

<sup>607</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 56-7.

1.9c, whose focus remains on the enemies who are triumphing over shamed Jerusalem. Zion, in her own words, is not a victim at the hands of enemies but rather a cause in her own downfall (Lam 1.11c). Understood in this way, Zion's complaint does not function as a typical complaint but rather a confession for YHWH to witness—that the city is aware of her complicity in disaster by virtue of her sin. This fits in line with the genre of penitential prayer rather than a communal lament.<sup>608</sup>

Juxtaposed against one another, Lam 1.9c and 11c invite the reader to make sense of them theologically in light of the whole poem. The reader's interpretative decision is significant. On the one hand, one can interpret the poem as an appeal against violating enemies, fashioning Zion as a victim in need of YHWH as deliverer. On the other hand, the reader can read the poem as a confession to the deity, an acknowledgement of sin so that he will forgive her. Either choice has implications, though it is important to note that the logic of both Lam 1.9c and 11c works only if personified Zion envisages the deity as present to hear them and respond in justice. As Miller maintains, "[The] fundamental ground of prayer, that is, the responsiveness of God to the cry of human need, is lifted up. All the description of the plight of the afflicted, wherever it occurs in prayer, assumes God's care and compassion, especially for those in distress."<sup>609</sup> Thus whether complaining to YHWH or confessing to him, in the poem up to this point, there is a tacit belief that upon hearing the appeal/confession, the deity will act out of gracious care.

The confession of Lam 1.11c is not followed by further description of sin but rather more of Jerusalem's suffering. Lam 1.12 reads:

לוא אליכם כל־עברי דרך הביטו וראו  
 אם־יש מכאוב כמכאבי אשר עילל לי  
 אשר הוגה יהוה ביום חרון אפו

"Is it nothing to you, all those who pass by the road: Consider and look!  
 Is there any misery like my misery, that was inflicted on me,  
 that YHWH tormented me with on the day of his burning anger."

Repetition of *לוא הביטו וראו* ties Lam 1.9, 11 and 12 together (and, as shall be demonstrated, Lam 1.20). Yet Lam 1.12a is neither a complaint nor a confession, but an appeal by personified Jerusalem to passers-by (*כל־עברי דרך*), for them to see and consider the suffering she undergoes. As no-one else has comforted her anonymous passers-by may

<sup>608</sup>Morrow, *Protest Against God*, 161-8; Bautch, *Developments in Genre*, 1-6; Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, 202-3.

<sup>609</sup>Patrick D. Miller, "Prayer as Persuasion: The Rhetoric and Intention of Prayer," *Word and World* 13, 4(1993): 359.

serve as potential comforters to salve her pain. The source of it, however, is not enemies or sin, but the grief YHWH causes (הגנה) and the misery that he inflicts (עולל) upon her through his burning anger (ביום חרון אפי). Repetition of הגנה recalls Lam 1.5b (הגנה), but there the observer acknowledges the Lord's punitive action as just in light of the greatness of Jerusalem's offences; here no such explicit justification is offered. Instead, she needs *comfort* from God's activity.

As soon as the space is cleared for a focus upon the need for comfort, shifting the focus to pain, the third poetic line of the ל strophe introduces (or "blows up" in Eco's theory) encyclopaedic content having to do with "day of YHWH" language from the OT, effectively moving the reader towards further theological affirmation of the city's sin. The day of YHWH is the concept of a terrible day of judgment for sin, though with judgment also comes the hope for salvation. Zeph 3.8 typifies the judgment aspect of the day of YHWH which is particularly drawn upon in Lam 1.12c: YHWH's burning anger (חרון אפי) will consume with fire (באש) the land of Jerusalem, and indeed all the earth (Zeph 3.8). Yet in Lam 1.12c, his judgment is localised to Jerusalem and Judah, and this anticipates Lam 2.1-11, where the day of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem is explicitly described in language of divine war, where YHWH pronounces holy war against his own people.

Day of YHWH language sets the tone for Lam 1.13-15, where the deity is depicted as a warrior. YHWH sends fire from on high (שלח־אש ממרום, Lam 1.13a), he spreads a net of capture (פרש רשת לרגלי, Lam 1.13b)<sup>610</sup>, and he gives personified Jerusalem over to captors ("the Lord has given me into the hands of those against whom I am unable to stand," נתנני אדני בידי לא־אוכל קום; Lam 1.14c). God sending down fire is reminiscent of Canaanite and Babylonian iconography depicting the deity with lightning in his hand.<sup>611</sup> Yet different to these ANE depictions, which show the deity using the lightning (fire) in a "passive" sense<sup>612</sup>, YHWH has used the fire to destroy Jerusalem in judgment: the fire has descended into her bones (בעצמתי וירדנה).

<sup>610</sup>For a discussion of the net being an implement of divine war, see Henning Fredriksson, *Jahwe als Krieger* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1945), 94-101.

<sup>611</sup>Klingbiel, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 252-57.

<sup>612</sup>Klingbiel concludes: "the meteorological weapon is not used to attack an enemy, but rather held in an emblematic manner" (*Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 257).

With the repetition of פשע, Lam 1.14a-b creates for the reader a reflexive arc back to Lam 1.5b, tying the two verses theologically. This verse has long been an interpretative crux:

נשקד על פשעי בידו ישתרגו  
 עלו על־צוארי הכשיל כחי

“The yoke of my offences was bound;  
 In his hand it was fastened together.  
 They ascended upon my neck; he caused my strength to fail.”

נשקד is difficult because it is a *hapax legomenon*; BHS proposes emending נשקד to נשקד, from √שקד, “to be watchful.” This is how the LXX reads the verb, and also reads the noun על, “yoke,” as a preposition על, “over.” It retains פשעי, “my sins,” with τὰ ἀσεβήματα μου, “my impious deeds.” Wiesmann follows LXX while Hillers follows the LXX yet emends פשעי to פשעי, “my steps.”<sup>613</sup> While reasonable, these make a difficult reading all the more difficult.

Ewald’s solution is better. He looks to the parallel term ישתרגו, “they were fastened together,” to help determine the semantics of נשקד and argues that it is probably a technical term for harnessing a yoke onto an animal, hence his translation “O wie ist durch seine hand—meiner strafen joch geschirrt!”<sup>614</sup> Ewald’s explanation has been adopted by Albrektson, Renkema and House<sup>615</sup>, and is preferred here.

This reading is difficult syntactically, however because the verbal clauses בידו ישתרגו and עלו על־צוארי both demand a plural antecedent. על פשעי does not fit precisely as it is a singular yoke constituted of Jerusalem’s offences, though such disparity in agreement is not unheard of in poetic syntax. For clarity the verbs can be rendered “it was bound” and “it ascended,” referring to the yoke made up of Jerusalem’s sins. Dahood translates עלו as an infinitive absolute of the Phoenecian √‘ālō, “to mount,” and translates the clause, “The yoke mounted my neck.”<sup>616</sup> This derivation from Phoenecian however is unnecessary as עלו remains sensible as it stands. The offences that have been fastened together into a yoke and bound by YHWH’s hand have then ascended upon her neck, leaving her without strength. The yoke imagery refers to slavery, as is often the case in the OT: Gen 27.40; Deut 28.48; Jer 27.8, 11, 12.

<sup>613</sup>Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*, 115; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 73.

<sup>614</sup>Heinrich Ewald, *Die Dichter des Alten Bundes: Die Psalmen und Die Klagelieder* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1866), 329.

<sup>615</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of Lamentations*, 74; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 164; House, *Lamentations*, 335.

<sup>616</sup>Dahood, “New Readings in Lamentations,” 178.

Theologically in personified Jerusalem's speech, YHWH's actions as well as her offences are linked together to comprise the stuff of her suffering. The Lord's actions are clear: in his hand her yoke of slavery was fastened (בידו ישתרגו), he has caused her strength to fail (הכשיל כחי), and has given her over into the hands of those from whom she cannot stand (נתנני אדני בידי לא אוכל קום). Renkema argues that in general when אדני is employed in Lamentations, "we are left either with the context of his oppression in 1.5, 9 [...] or it is said in general terms that he executes judgment."<sup>617</sup> And, in light of the Lord's activity that personified Jerusalem describes in the following verses—piling up people like sheaves (Lam 1.15a) and treading people as in a wine press (Lam 1.15c)—Renkema's observation is cogent. Yet the judgment that YHWH enacts, it cannot be gainsaid, comes as a direct result of her offences. Her repetition of פשע draws the reader back to its only other occurrence to this point, in Lam 1.5b, where the observer has announced divine judgment as a direct result of Jerusalem's offences. Judgment and suffering go hand in hand in Lam 1.14: both the pain that is a result of God's action and the suffering that is a result of the acknowledgment of her offences (פשעי). This leads House to comment, "Under such judgment the people simply cannot bring themselves to a standing position (לא אוכל קום)."<sup>618</sup>

Divine judgment is described further by personified Jerusalem in Lam 1.15, where traditional harvest language is gruesomely transformed into descriptions of divine warfare against her. In the dirge genre, this would amount to a description of the manner of death that the deceased endured.<sup>619</sup> The text reads:

סלה כל־אבירי אדני בקרבי  
 קרא עלי מועד לשבר בחורי  
 גת דרך אדני לבתולת בתי־יהודה

"The Lord heaped up all of my young men in my midst;  
 He proclaimed over me a festal time to break my young men;  
 (Like) a winepress the Lord trod dear maiden Judah."

In her description, the Lord סלה, "heaped up" her young men in her midst (Lam 1.15a). The verb is difficult not least because it is only one of two occurrences of the verb in the OT, this instance in the Piel and the other (Ps 119.118) in the Qal stem. The versions are conjectural at this point and provide little more direction.<sup>620</sup> The root  $\sqrt{\text{סלה}}$  is close to the

<sup>617</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 167.

<sup>618</sup>House, *Lamentations*, 359.

<sup>619</sup>See 3.2.1., motif 10.

<sup>620</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of Lamentations*, 76.

geminat סלל, “to heap up” or “to pile up,” and Hillers believes that the MT may in fact reflect a scribal error so that סלל was the original root.<sup>621</sup> Both Hillers and Renkema translate סלה from this basis and argue that the Lord has heaped up, as wheat sheaves, Jerusalem’s young men in her midst (סלה כל־אבירי אדני בקרבי).<sup>622</sup> A similar image occurs in Jer 50.26, where divine judgment is declared against Babylon: “heap her up like heaps of grain, and devote her to destruction” (כמו־ערמים וההרימה סלוח). YHWH pronounces over her a “festal day” (מועד), yet instead of celebration of harvest or a worship service, normal connotations with מועד,<sup>623</sup> the celebration is the breaking of Jerusalem’s young men. Renkema argues that the infinitive connotes the act of threshing, as in crushing or threshing corn, and carries harvest imagery forward<sup>624</sup> though this understanding is not crucial to grasp that the Lord has pronounced judgment over Jerusalem’s people. Harvest imagery is taken over in the third line where instead of trampling grapes for their juice to make wine, the Lord “trod” dear maiden Judah like a winepress (גת). The grain harvest has been followed by the wine harvest; yet traditional harvest language has been transformed into gruesome war imagery: dead bodies are piled in the midst of Jerusalem, her young men are broken—perhaps threshed, and Judah is trampled in blood by the Lord. Clearly, YHWH’s severe judgment has come and personified Jerusalem’s speech depicts this in disturbing detail.

This suffering leaves Jerusalem weeping constantly. The text reads:

על־אלה אני בוכיה עיני ירדה מים  
 כִּי־רחק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי  
 היו בני שוממים כי גבר אויב

“On account of these I weep, my eye constantly descending with water.  
 For far from me is a comforter, the one who restores my life.  
 My children have become desolate, for the enemy is superior.”

Personified Jerusalem weeps over the suffering she endures and weeps “constantly.”<sup>625</sup> Albrektson follows much German scholarship as well as BHS in deleting the second עיני as dittography. While plausible, this is unnecessary. Dahood’s emendation to עני, “my sorrow,” is likewise gratuitous.<sup>626</sup> The duplication of עיני suggests poetic license that

<sup>621</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 74-5.

<sup>622</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 74-5; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 168.

<sup>623</sup>Klaus Koch, “מועד, *mô’ēd*,” *TDOT* 8 (1997) 169-71.

<sup>624</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 169-70.

<sup>625</sup>Thenius, *Die Klagelieder*, 136; Nötscher, *Die Klagelieder*, 5; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 23; Kaiser, *Klagelieder*, 116; Boecker, *Klagelieder*, 21; and Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 101-2 = *Lamentations*, 113.

<sup>626</sup>Dahood, “New Readings in Lamentations,” 178-9.



evokes “a certain pathos,”<sup>627</sup> reflects deep pain,<sup>628</sup> and implies a constancy to the weeping, as in Deut 2.27: בדרך בדרך אלך לא אסור ימין ושמאל: “I will constantly stay on the main road, and will not turn to the right or left.”<sup>629</sup> Her constant weeping profiles her suffering as persistent and unremitting. Yet the referent that causes her weeping is unclear. In her speech, Jerusalem says that it is על־אלה, “on account of these things.” Lee isolates the antecedent to על־אלה, “these things,” to YHWH’s activity in Lam 1.13-15, but there is no reason to limit the things of which Jerusalem weeps to YHWH’s activity, though certainly it is one of the causes for suffering. The repetition of בכה√ draws the reader back to the only other instance of this term (Lam 1.2), where the city weeps bitterly over her reversal from honour to degradation, betrayal, and isolation from רעיה, “all her friends.” In light of the repetition and in light of the variety of sufferings she mentions in her speech, it is more sensible to broaden the referent of על־אלה, “these things,” as broadly as possible, to the sufferings the observer mentions as well as the entire account she has given up to this point, in Lam 1.11c-15.

One must still deal with the כִּי that introduces Lam 1.16b, which could be understood in a causal or an evidential sense. If causal, then the reason for Jerusalem’s act of ceaseless weeping is demonstrated in Lam 1.16b; if evidential, then Lam 1.16b presents evidence or motivation that lies behind why she has said that she weeps constantly.<sup>630</sup> Either way, the second poetic line in the verse is logically connected to the first. In Lam 1.16b, personified Jerusalem mentions for the first time a theme that the observer introduced in Lam 1.2b, 7c, 9b: the lack of a מנחם, “comforter.” But differently than the lack of comforters described by the observer, whether friends or loved ones, the מנחם that Zion speaks of is YHWH himself. The apposition משיב נפשי, “the one who restores my life,” likely alludes to Ps 23:3, where the Psalmist says about the deity, “He restores my life” (נפשי ישובב).<sup>631</sup> If this is the case, then personified Jerusalem has connected her weeping to divine absence.

Moreover, the repetition of נפש + שוב moves the reader reflexively to Lam 1.11b. There the people give their “precious things” (children) as food “to restore life” (להשיב). The literary connection creates richness and multilayered levels of meaning.

<sup>627</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 52.

<sup>628</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 45.

<sup>629</sup>IBHS 7.2.3c, #13; 12.5a.

<sup>630</sup>GBHS § 4.3.4(a), (b).

<sup>631</sup>YHWH is also described as the one who restores life (למשיב נפש) in Ru 4.15.

YHWH's absence as a comforter, the life-restorer, creates a situation that causes the people to give up their "precious things" to "restore life." This, too, causes Jerusalem to weep. This connection between verses is fecund, especially considering the way Jerusalem links her weeping to the Lord's distance from her through the כִּי clause. Thus in 1.16b, personified Jerusalem attributes her suffering, her cause for weeping, to divine distance (רָחַק) and lack of comfort.

Yet immediately her attribution creates an interpretative challenge for the reader. What theology does she present? Reading the text linearly, the reader may interpret על־אלה from what has preceded in her speech, centring upon the Lord's violent judgment against her, which has been part and partial to her מַכְאוֹב, "misery" (Lam 1.12b), and at least part of the cause of her weeping (עַל־אלה עֲנִי בִוְכָה, Lam 1.16a). Yet when faced with Lam 1.16b, the cause of her weeping has shifted, to divine absence. The reader is left in an interpretative quandary: does Zion lament divine *absence* or his violent *presence*?

The poetry blurs the lines of theology and opens two interpretative horizons for the model reader. He or she may interpret the poem as theologically positive towards YHWH, that his role of comforter or absence thereof, is a source of pain for Jerusalem in light of Jerusalem's miserable state. Alternatively, the model reader may interpret the poem as theologically problematic; YHWH's role as divine warrior, meting out judgment for sin, creates the problem of suffering and pain, especially for the city's inhabitants, whom he heaps up, crushes, and treads. Neither theological nor interpretive horizon is foreclosed upon.

In light of this interpretative aporia, the issue of text pragmatics becomes important. For Eco, a text that leaves interpretative options available to the reader, justifiable on the basis of the "intention of the work," is to be identified as *open* rather than *closed*. In this case, the reader is left with (at least) two interpretative possibilities: the poetry laments divine presence—he has caused in her a bloody harvest in which Zion's people have been heaped up, crushed, and trampled, or the poetry laments divine absence—the fact that he has left and is in effect *deus absconditus*, leaves the city dead, without life, and open to violation from enemies (Lam 1.9c, 16c).<sup>632</sup>

<sup>632</sup>This openness remains valid whether one reads Lam 1.16 following the acrostic arrangement in the MT or 4QLam<sup>a</sup>. The MT of Lam 1.16 transposes the normal פ – ע order while 4QLam<sup>a</sup>, however, sets v. 17 before v. 16 so that פ precedes ע, following the normal alphabetic sequence. If in its sequence 4QLam<sup>a</sup> reads without the openness displayed in the MT, then one may prefer emendation of the MT on the basis of textual corruption. This, however, is not the case. Reading with 4QLam<sup>a</sup>, the cries of personified

In the פ strophe, the observer breaks in for an interlude. This interruption is evidenced by the shift in person. Namely, Zion is spoken of by the observer, who says:

פרשה ציון בידיה אין מנחם לה  
צוה יהוה ליעקב סביביו צריו  
היתה ירושלם לנדה ביניהם

“Zion spreads out her hands; there is no comforter for her  
YHWH commanded for Jacob, those surrounding him (become) his foes.  
Jerusalem has become as a *niddā* in their midst.”

Different to the enemy, who spread (פרש) his hand over Zion’s precious things (Lam 1.10a) or to YHWH, who spread (פרש) a net for her feet, Zion spreads out (פרשה) her hands in vain for a comforter. The motif of “no comfort” is reinforced with the repetition of לה אין מנחם, binding this verse to the previous verse (כִּי־רַחַק מִמֶּנִּי מִנְחָם), as well as Lam 1.2b, 7c, and 9b. God and surrounding nations have turned against her, his command (צוה) (יהוה ליעקב סביביו צריו), leaving her isolated. The betrayal of friends (כל־רעייה בגדו בה) from Lam 1.2c can be read as political betrayal at the hands of surrounding nations, who have now become foes.

The פ strophe reveals both artistry and theological density in the poem. The main difficulty with this verse is the term “as a *niddā*” (לנדה), which scholars translate variously as “unclean thing,” “filthy thing,” “chose impure<sup>633</sup>,” “Abscheu<sup>634</sup>,” “Ekel<sup>635</sup>,” “Greuel<sup>636</sup>,” “menstrual rag,” and “object of loathing.” It is not clear why scholars translate נדה as something filthy, disgusting, or abhorrent. The נדה was barred from worship at the sanctuary, but this was due to laws that dealt with things that prevent purity rather than notions of disgust.<sup>637</sup> Thus while “unclean thing” may fit the primary denotation נדה, the other translations remain questionable, especially “Greuel,” “Ekel,” or “Abscheu.” Yet in contrast to the regular denotation of נדה, Lam 1.17c uses the term

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Jerusalem (4QLam<sup>a</sup>, v. 17; MT, v. 16) are preceded by an affirmation of her suffering and isolation (4QLam<sup>a</sup>, v. 16a), YHWH’s command for punishment (4QLam<sup>a</sup>, v. 16b), and a description of Jerusalem as an impure woman (4QLam<sup>a</sup>, v. 16c). על־אלה, “these things,” in 4QLam<sup>a</sup>, v. 17a connotes a range of suffering, including YHWH’s punishment (as in the MT). Moreover, the phrase [אין] מנחם לה (4QLam<sup>a</sup>, v. 16a) is coupled with [ממני] מנחם] (4QLam<sup>a</sup>, v. 17b), affirming that the deity’s distance is a problem and that his presence is needed (as in the MT). For further analysis, see Cross, “Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Verse,” 134-35.

<sup>633</sup>Gelin, *Jérémie, Les Lamentations, Baruch*, 256.

<sup>634</sup>Wieser, *Klagelieder*, 307.

<sup>635</sup>Otto Plöger, *Die fünf Megilloth* (HZAT 18; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1969), 134.

<sup>636</sup>Thenius, *Die Klagelieder*, 136.

<sup>637</sup>Leviticus 11-15. See Freymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel,” 399-414.

differently so that the nations consider Jerusalem in a manner divergent than their former view of her.

The logic that lies behind לנדה in Lam 1.17c is understood when compared with Lev 18.19: “Do not approach a woman in her menstrual impurity; do not draw near to uncover her nakedness” (וּאל־אִשָּׁה בְנִדָּה טְמֵאתָ לֹא תִקְרַב לְגִלּוֹת עֲרוּתָהּ). As a cognitive filter for the verse, former allies—now enemies by YHWH’s decree (צוה יהוה, Lam 1.17b)—become like (perhaps unwitting) adherents of Torah (specifically the decree of Lev 18.19) so that they do not approach the נדה (Jerusalem) and stay away from her—though in their midst, Jerusalem is isolated from them. This reading is strengthened through the pun of לנדה (Lam 1.17c) on לנידה (Lam 1.8a).

לנדה, “as a *niddâ*,” puns לנידה, “as a wanderer” (Lam 1.8a). The pun recalls the state of wanderer or exile that is a result of sin demonstrated in the observer’s speech in Lam 1.8a. It is significant that 1.8b speaks of those who formerly honoured Jerusalem now despise her because they saw her nakedness (ערוותה), tying Lev 18.19 to both Lam 1.8 and 1.17. Jerusalem becomes as a wanderer (לנידה) as a result of her sinfulness (Lam 1.8a); in Lam 1.17 Jerusalem is equated to a woman (לנדה) who is isolated and rejected by the nations surrounding her ( צריו סביביו בנייהם/ היתה ירושלם לנדה ). Where normally associated with cultic impurity only, לנדה takes on a metaphorical connotation of moral impurity as a result of blatant sinfulness, making her, in effect לנידה “as a wanderer.” Moral impurity is reflected in a number of places in the Pentateuch, two of which are Lev 18.24-8 and Num 35.33-4, and elsewhere in Ps 106.34-41; Ezk 22.1-4; 36.18; Jer 2.23; 3.1. In the case of moral impurity, sin attaches to the individual and thus contaminates the land in which the individual lives. As a result, the land “vomits” (קיא) out its inhabitants (Lev 18.25, 28; 20.22); the act of vomiting is understood as exile. If this is the case, לנדה puns לנידה and ties the exile to Jerusalem’s sinfulness and transforms the normal denotation of the term נדה to a נידה, a morally impure wanderer or exile. Jerusalem has become cultically *and* morally impure. She has become unclean, morally culpable of her sins and so goes into exile, in the midst of the nations: “Jerusalem has become like a *niddâ* in their midst” ( היתה

ירושלם לנדה ביניהם).<sup>638</sup> Only through working through the pun can the notions of moral impurity and exile be attached to נדה.<sup>639</sup>

After the observer's brief interlude, personified Zion resumes her speech in Lam 1.18, which continues to the end of the chapter. She confirms "YHWH, he is right, for I have rebelled against his mouth" (צדיק הוא יהוה כי פיהו מריתי). Divine authority over her punishment cannot be discounted and thereby her statement should be understood as a confession and affirmation of her previous admissions of offence against God (Lam 1.11c, 14a) as well as the observer's statements of her sin (Lam 1.5b, 8a, 9a). This understanding contrasts against Lee, who reads it as protest speech. She translates מריתי in a stative or performative sense (it is unclear) and the כי as "an emphatic 'but!'"; Zion *ironically* declares YHWH as "innocent" though the כי signals her continued rebellion against him: "Innocent is YHWH, *but* I rebel against his speech!"<sup>640</sup> The existence of an "emphatic" כי is questionable at best. כי may function *asseveratively* ("indeed") but it is unlikely that personified Jerusalem would be seen confidently revelling in her own rebellion against God. The preposition can also be used *adversatively* and translated "but." In order for this to be the case, however, כי usually is coupled with אם or preceded by a negative clause (לא + verb), neither of which is the case here.<sup>641</sup> Thus the כי is best understood as either causal, providing the cause for the preceding statement, or evidential, providing evidence that justifies the former statement.<sup>642</sup> Moreover treating מריתי as stative or performative is doubtful. If stative, then Zion *continuously* rebels against God: "I am rebelling." If performative, then her speech is actually a speech-act of rebellion: "by speaking about YHWH's innocence, I am acting out in rebellion against him." Either way, nowhere in the OT is מרה/ used to describe positive activity of a human agent rebelling against the deity, whether his law or his judgment. Rather, מריתי is best understood as focusing upon completed activity of rebellion against the Lord—likely against his command, signified by פיהו, "his mouth"—which has come under the judgment of YHWH, which Zion now confesses.

<sup>638</sup>The present study does not emend with MT, where ביניהם, "in their midst" is emended to בעיניהם, "in their eyes"; the clause is sensible as it stands.

<sup>639</sup>This pun may be the origin of the moral impurity that is associated with נדה in exilic and post-exilic literature (Ezk 36.17 and Ez 9.11) but this ultimately moves beyond the discussion at hand.

<sup>640</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 123-4.

<sup>641</sup>GKC § 163a; GBHS § 4.3.4.

<sup>642</sup>GBHS § 4.3.4.(a), (b).

Immediately after this confession, Zion shifts the focus of her speech towards others as she did in Lam 1.12. The difference here is that she does not address כל־עברי דרך “all those who pass by the road” but rather כל־עמים, “all peoples,” emphasising the universal scope of her appeal. In Lam 1.18b, she makes an entreaty (נא) for the nations to hear (שמעו) and see (וראו) her misery (מכאוב). The reader makes a reflexive move to Lam 1.12 where identical language is used: מכאובי and וראו. Whereas in Lam 1.12 her misery that she wanted others to see was God’s activity, here it is the fate of her people: “my maidens and young men walk in captivity” (בתולתי ובחורי הלכו בשבי). The repetition of הלכו and שבי recalls Lam 1.5c, where Zion’s little children walk as captives (עולליה הלכו שבי) before a foe. The emphasis of her suffering here lies in the plight of her inhabitants, something that carries through in the ק strophe.

Lam 1.19 reveals that she has called to her “lovers” for help, who have deserted her. The text reads:

קראתי למאהבי המה רמוני  
כהני וזקני בעיר גועו  
כי־בקשו אכל למו וישיבו את־נפשם

“I called to my lovers; they deserted me.  
My priests and elders died in the city,  
As often as they sought food to restore their lives.”

The repetition of מכל־אהביה reminds the reader of Lam 1.2, where there was no comforter for the city from all those who love her (מכל־אהביה). Yet there, where אהביה reads innocuously, the reader has come to realise that the “lovers” are evidence of Jerusalem’s whoredom, clearly described in Lam 1.7-8. Jerusalem having “lovers” is well attested in terms of marriage imagery between YHWH and Jerusalem (Jer 3.7, 8, 11, 12). Thus מכל־אהביה “all those who love her” from Lam 1.2 are re-read in light of her lovers in Lam 1.19; while the original pathos for the city does not diminish, a crucial cause of her suffering becomes somewhat clearer. Jerusalem, in her own words, promotes a theology that recognises her own sinfulness (whoredom) as a contributing factor to her isolation and abandonment.

Yet as quickly as this theology is raised, the second and third lines highlight the burden Zion feels for her people. “As often as” (כי) the priests and elders went out for food to restore their lives (וישיבו את־נפשם), they died.<sup>643</sup> This links back to Lam 1.11,

<sup>643</sup>I render כי in the third line temporally (IBHS 38.7.a, #2; JM §166m). Kraus, however, abandons the MT as nonsensical and follows the LXX (καὶ οὐχ εὑρον, “and found nothing”) so that he translates, “Ja, sie suchten nach Speise und ‘fanden nichts’”

where the people of Jerusalem give their children up for food “to restore life” (להשיב נפש). The scarcity of food, death, and deprivation highlights the burden personified Jerusalem feels for her suffering people—despite the fact that the Lord was right in his punishment.

In light of her (and her people’s) suffering, Zion makes her final appeal and complaint to the deity. She says in Lam 1.20:

ראה יהוה כִּי־צָרָלִי מֵעֵי חֲמַרְמְרוֹ  
נִהְפַךְ לִבִּי בִקְרָבִי כִּי מָרוּ מְרִיתִי  
מִחוּץ שְׂכֵל־הַחֶרֶב בְּבַיִת כָּמוֹת

“Look, O YHWH, at my distress! My innards burn,  
my heart turns inside me, for I have rebelled exceedingly.  
Outside, the knife kills; in the house (inside) a place of death.”

This appeal is structurally similar to the other appeals in the poem. I take כִּי in Lam 1.20a to be perceptual,<sup>644</sup> attempting to garner God’s attention at her own inward anxiety, which is heightened through idiom (“my innards burn, my heart turns inside me,” מֵעֵי חֲמַרְמְרוֹ נִהְפַךְ בִּקְרָבִי) that highlights internal struggle. The second כִּי is causal, revealing what creates this anxiety: “for I have rebelled exceedingly” (כִּי מָרוּ מְרִיתִי).<sup>645</sup> The repetition of מְרִיתִי links back to Lam 1.18b, confirming her rebellion yet again. צָר draws the reader back to המצרים from of Lam 1.3c; there the external forces push her into “straits” while here it is internal distress that leaves her crying out to the deity. Her rebellion has created anxiety and pain that personified Jerusalem wants YHWH to notice. Different to Lam 1.9c, where her complaint centres upon enemies, and Lam 1.11c, where her complaint centres upon her

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(Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 22). Despite this, he fails to recognise the enjambment between the second and third lines. The poet abuts גָּעַז in the second line and כִּי־בִקְשׁוּ in the third to reveal the linkage between the two verbal ideas. The subordinating particle כִּי conjoins the two verbs poetically and thus the tendency of end-stopping between the second and third lines desists. In this way, the verbal concepts of “dying” and “seeking” conjoin temporally to entail the logic of the second and third lines: “The priests and elders died in the city as often as they sought food to restore life.” In this way, enjambment poetically links the logic of the verse. Without recognizing this poetic feature, Kraus must emend the text. The effect of this enjambment reflects on the endless cycle of death which personified Jerusalem experiences.

<sup>644</sup>GBHS § 4.3.4.(j).

<sup>645</sup>Scholars rendering כִּי asseveratively (Renkema, Seow, Berlin) suppose the phrase כִּי־צָרָלִי is formally parallel to כִּי־מָרוּ מְרִיתִי. This supposition is accurate but this parallelism does not require כִּי to be asseverative in order for the lines to cohere. The first poetic line employs a perceptual כִּי, with the poet pleading for God to perceive the city’s anxiety, while the כִּי in the second poetic line functions causally, explaining the source of the anxiety [GBHS § 4.3.4.(a)]. Seow argues that מָרוּ מְרִיתִי derives from מָרַר rather than מָרָה. Though possible, this emendation is not necessary. See C. L. Seow, “A Textual Note on Lamentations 1.20,” *CBQ* 47(1985): 416-19.

own thoughtless behaviour, *Lam 1.20a complains to YHWH about her anxiety that has come about as a result of her rebellion*. This, too, can be understood as a confession of sinfulness (like *Lam 1.18a*), garnering the deity's attention so that he might reverse the situation of death and killing inside and outside her walls.

Dobbs-Allsopp also notes the term *צַר*, "distress," repeats *הַמְצָרִים* (*Lam 1.3c*) and puns *צַר*, "enemy," used throughout the poem.<sup>646</sup> The pun enables the reader to recognise the enemy's (*צַר*) culpability for the distress (*צַר*) Jerusalem experiences.<sup>647</sup> In this understanding, even admission of offence against YHWH is tempered by a reference back to the wrongdoing of enemies, which creates distress for personified Jerusalem. Rather than foreclosing upon either interpretative horizon, the poetry opens both of the sources of distress for the model reader.

The verse concludes with the effects of rebellion, indicated by the merismus of "outside" and "inside." Merismus represents totality by dividing that totality into two halves<sup>648</sup>, and this is how the outside/inside relationship should be understood here, a motif that occurs also in the Lament over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur: "Ur—inside it is death, outside it is death; inside we die of famine, outside we are killed by the weapons of the Elamites" (LSU, 402-4).<sup>649</sup> Despite the similarities to the city-lament, the phrase "Outside the sword bereaves, inside: death" (*מַחוּץ שְׂכַלְה־חֶרֶב בְּבַיִת כְּמוֹת*) in *Lam 1.20c* is strikingly similar to *Deut 32.25*: "Outside the sword shall bereave, and in the chamber, terror" (*מַחוּץ תִּשְׂכַּלְה־חֶרֶב וּמַחְדָּרִים אִימָה*), which Albrektson marks as an allusion.<sup>650</sup> No safe place exists in Jerusalem—everywhere is death, and Zion pleads to YHWH for respite.

The final verses of the chapter reinforce the themes of suffering, sin, pain, and anguish, and personified Jerusalem directs her appeal heavenward. I take *Lam 1.21-22* as personified Jerusalem's prayer to God. In the verses, he is figured as a trustworthy deity, the divine judge, who will hear her plea and respond on her behalf. She focuses particularly upon the actions of enemies (rather than sin), who have heard her suffering and rejoiced over her misfortune, typical of a *Feindklage* in the communal lament.<sup>651</sup> As *Lam 1.21a* begins, it is unclear exactly to whom personified Jerusalem speaks. She says:

<sup>646</sup>Lam 1.5a, c, 7c-d, 10a, 17b.

<sup>647</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 72.

<sup>648</sup>Luis Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics (SubBi 11)*; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2000), 83-4.

<sup>649</sup>ANET, 618.

<sup>650</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 236.

<sup>651</sup>Westermann, *Der Psalter*, 36-7.



שמעו כי נאנחה אני אין מנחם לי  
 כל־איבי שמעו רעתי ששו כי אתה עשית  
 הבאת יום־קראת ויהיו כמוני

“They heard that I was groaning: ‘There is no comforter for me!’  
 All my enemies heard, rejoiced over my disaster. Indeed, you have done (it).  
 You brought on the day you had proclaimed; but may they be like me!”

Rather than reading שמעו as a plural imperative, with LXX or BHS, or following the Peshiṭta to read the verb as a singular imperative, I read this verb as it stands in the MT; personified Jerusalem is describing the activity of her enemies, whom she does not explicitly mention until the following line, after repeating the verb again.<sup>652</sup> What is it that the enemies hear? They hear that she is groaning (כי נאנחה אני). Moreover, she may, in the following half of Lam 1.21a, actually describe the words the enemies hear as she groans, namely אין מנחם לי, “There is no comforter for me!” especially if the כי in the preceding clause is to be understood as clarifying what the enemies hear.<sup>653</sup> Lam 1.21b expands knowledge of the activity of the enemies as personified Jerusalem makes them not merely passive agents who have heard of Jerusalem’s fate but active agents, who further rejoice (ששו) over her misfortune.

All of her description concerning the enemies, however, is directed towards a specific audience, when she indicates that כי אתה עשית, “indeed, you have done it.” This half of the poetic line can be distinguished from the preceding half; otherwise, ששו may be associated with כי אתה עשית, leading to the translation, “They rejoiced that you have done it.” This would imply that the enemies know and rejoice over YHWH’s punishing Jerusalem. The Masoretes were uncomfortable with this and inserted a *zaqef qaton* immediately above ששו, indicating its disjuncture from what follows.<sup>654</sup> This interpretative decision affects how the כי is understood, so that it is rendered asseveratively.<sup>655</sup> Thus, in light of what the enemies have heard and done, personified Zion then turns to the deity and confirms his activity in it all.

The third poetic line in the verse reinforces this as Zion confirms that he is the one who has brought on the day that he proclaimed. The referent of this former proclamation is unclear, and to make sense of it the reader goes back through the poem, searching for explanation. In Lam 1.12c, the reader was confronted with ביום חרון אפי

<sup>652</sup> Renkema emends שמעו to a Qal imperative, “Hear!” (*Lamentations*, 193).

<sup>653</sup> GBHS § 4.3.4.(c).

<sup>654</sup> JM §15g, k.

<sup>655</sup> GBHS § 4.3.4.(i).

“that YHWH tormented in the day of his fierce anger.” This is likely the day that Zion has in view, that is, the day of the Lord that was proclaimed over her in case of her rebellion. This becomes more apparent when considering the allusions to the curses of Deuteronomy 28 that Lam 1.3, 5 made use of to describe Jerusalem’s present state of degradation. In line with the covenant curses, Jerusalem confirms that the day of the Lord has come in judgment. This confirmation of divine judgment moves towards theodicy and her recognition of sinfulness in light of it.

Yet precisely as that moment is gained, the concluding half of the line shifts the focus once again to the enemies as she concludes a curse, typical of the communal lament genre. She curses the enemies through an imprecatory appeal<sup>656</sup>: וַיְהִי כַמּוֹנִי, “but may they be like me!” The use of the jussive is fairly common for the imprecatory appeal, and this is how the present study translates וַיְהִי, “but may they be.”<sup>657</sup> One must deal with the *waw* in some manner, though Renkema simply avoids it. But in light of the shift in focal point, from Jerusalem’s individual sin to her focus upon the enemies, I have rendered the *waw* disjunctively, “but.” This nuance keeps both her own sin and the activity of the enemies in tension, so that either cannot be removed from the reader’s attention.

The final strophe retains this tension as Zion pleads for divine justice: she wants him to deal with her enemies as he has punished her sin. The poem concludes as it began, with the city’s great anguish. The *n* strophe reads:

תבא כל־רעתם לפניך ועולל למו  
 כאשר עוללת לי על כל־פשעי  
 כי־רבות אנהתי ולבי דוי

“May all their wickedness come<sup>658</sup> before you, and deal with them  
 As you have dealt with me, on account of all my offenses.  
 For great are my groanings; indeed my heart is sick.”

Her imprecation against the enemies is driven by her desire for YHWH to judge them as he has judged her. Antanaclasis links the wickedness of the enemies (כל־רעתם) with the disaster (רעה) of personified Jerusalem in the previous verse. The terms, repeated with different shades of meaning, confirm her knowledge that the disaster is a result of her

<sup>656</sup>Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 124-8.

<sup>657</sup>Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 126.

<sup>658</sup>Renkema understands תבא as a Hiphil jussive, asking the Lord, “May you bring all their wickedness before you” (*Lamentations*, 198). The MT remains understandable as a Qal jussive, as I have translated it, but either option is plausible.

own wickedness (which YHWH has judged) and indicates her desire for the Lord to transform the wickedness of the enemies (כל־רעתם) into disaster as well! She prays that as she has been dealt with because of her offences (כאשר עוללת לי על כל־פשעי), so too would he deal with the wickedness of her enemies (תבא כל־רעתם לפניך ועולל למו). The interplay between the sinful activities of the enemies, which has included,

- Betrayal and desertion of Jerusalem (Lam 1.2c, 19a)
- Pursuit, capture and exile (Lam 1.3, 5c, 6b-c, 7c, 18c)
- Mocking or rejoicing in Jerusalem's destruction (Lam 1.7d, 21b)
- Despising Jerusalem (Lam 1.8b)
- Rape (Lam 1.10)

is set in relief against the extreme suffering of Jerusalem herself. Lam 1.22c hails back to Lam 1.1, with the repetition of רבות and behaviour once again associated with mourning. The city once described as a mourner now embodies it in her own speech. The phrase "my heart is sick" (לבי דוי) parallels Jeremiah's speech in his lament over his people in Jer 8.18: "Incurable sorrow overtakes me; my heart is sick (לבי דוי)." Like the prophet, external realities of the destruction of Jerusalem, the plight of her people, and the triumph of the enemies leaves Zion miserable and sick of heart<sup>659</sup>; she can only appeal to YHWH to hear her: "Lady Jerusalem is in an extreme state of physical and mental exhaustion. She is on the verge of death. She needs a comforter. She needs [YHWH's] deliverance."<sup>660</sup>

### 5.3. Conclusion

This chapter concludes with a brief summary of the ways that Lamentations I exploits genre, poetics, and the acrostic to build up a model reader whose construction directly impacts theological presentation in the poem. Through the alphabetic acrostic, the reader moves through the poem, past depictions of loss, sorrow and pain, to admissions of sin, depiction of suffering, to further presentation of guilt and back again to pain. The physicality of the acrostic precludes the reader from resting at one specific point in the poem, but rather (almost) forcibly advances one from strophe to strophe until arriving at n.

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<sup>659</sup>For a discussion of how distress, sickness of heart, weeping, and turmoil of the intestines, as is evidenced in Lam 1.20-22, see Terence Collins, "The Physiology of Tears in the Old Testament, Part 1," *CBQ* 33 (1971): 18-38; "The Physiology of Tears in the Old Testament, Part 2," *CBQ* 33 (1971): 185-97.

<sup>660</sup>Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 94.

Through the text, the model reader has been confronted with a range of interpretative horizons, which will be summarised and assessed as they bear upon the poem's theology.

### 5.3.1. Genre

Lamentations 1 deploys the dirge, lament, and city-lament genres to advance differing purposes in the poem. Through elements of the dirge—among them the use of אֵיכָה (Lam 1.1), reversal motif (Lam 1.1, 2, 8b), weeping (Lam 1.2), the impact of death on the bereaved (Lam 1.7), depiction of the manner of death (Lam 1.15)—the poetry presents pain and suffering, and commemorates it. However, the lament genre, too, is deployed in such a way as to complain to YHWH, and petition him for favour and release from oppression. This is most explicitly seen in Lam 1.9c, 11c, and 20a-22. In these appeals, however, it is apparent that the focus of the complaints vary—from misery over enemies (Lam 1.9c), to pain over the city's own thoughtlessness (Lam 1.11c), to anxiety over rebellion (Lam 1.20a), to finally an appeal for YHWH to heed the city's plight as a result of the enemies' mocking and for him to bring a day of judgment upon them (Lam 1.21-22). Finally, the city-lament genre has been exploited at the most basic level to personify Jerusalem in a variety of ways and to provide an "internal observer" to depict her suffering and enact dialogue with her. The poem also uses common themes of starvation and idiomatic language of outside/inside to depict the city's current misery.

### 5.3.2. Poetics

Speaking voices play a crucial role in understanding Lamentations. The observer establishes a portrait of pathos in his opening speech (Lam 1.1-9b, 10a-11b) that prepares the reader for Zion's speech in Lam 1.9c, 11c-16, and finally 18-22. The speaking voices enable a dialogic interchange where Zion's speech can be read in light of the observer's, and vice-versa. At some points, the speeches coincide while at other points, especially when the language of Zion's speech recalls the observer's, their speeches must be negotiated by the reader. At any rate, speaking voices project at the most fundamental level different testimony of suffering both endure. It is of note, as well, that embedded speech plays a significant role in opening windows of emotion for the reader: the observer's feelings (Lam 1.10c) and Zion's personal anguish (Lam 1.21bβ).

The language of Lamentations 1 has been shown to generate response from the reader through personification, enjambment, wordplay, repetition, and allusion. As Heim recognises, the various personifications of Jerusalem open a number of possibilities for

the reader to identify with her suffering.<sup>661</sup> That she can be personified as a victim (widow, oppressed woman, and abandoned woman) and a morally loose woman (whore) provides a range of interpretative possibilities for the reader. Yet in it all, personification enables the city to be seen as a mother pleading the cause of her inhabitants, particularly innocent children. Enjambment works to highlight reversal and present misery. In Lam 1.1a enjambment highlights the great reversal from the secure past to the debased present and in Lam 1.19b-c it reveals the present reality of starvation and scarcity of food.

Wordplay occurs throughout the poetry, demanding interpretative effort for the reader, especially with hendiadys, pun and repetition. Hendiadys occurs at Lam 1.7a (ימי עניה ומרודיה), and 1.7d (ראוה צרים שחקו), and heighten both the misery Jerusalem experiences (1.7a) and the mocking she receives (1.7d). Prominent puns occur at Lam 1.3c ("straights," המצרים, puns "Egypt," מצרים) and between Lam 1.17c (לנידה) and 1.8a (לנידה). The pun on Egypt draws the reader to encyclopaedic content from Exodus to depict a reversal of the exodus from Egypt; the pun on לנידה ties the exile to Jerusalem's sinfulness and transforms the normal denotation of the term נדה to a נידה, a morally impure wanderer or exile. Jerusalem has become cultically *and* morally impure. The reader is forced to re-read Lam 1.8 in light of the pun in Lam 1.17, enabling a reflexive movement for the reader, breaking the progression of the acrostic. Antanaclasis is an example of repetition, a trope that matches the forward movement of the acrostic and creates a reflexive arc for the reader, forcing one to re-read portions of the poem in light of new information garnered through repetition of language. Repeated elements occur throughout the poem, for various purposes. The prevalence of repetition in Lamentations I necessitates summation:

**Function: Intensification**

1. To emphasise suffering:
  - a. רבות / רבתי, Lam 1.1a-b, 21c: mourning of the city as a result of loss of people, honour (an example of antanaclasis).
  - b. הלכו + לפני, Lam 1.5c, 6c, 18c: suffering of inhabitants.
  - c. אין־מנחם לה (or related language), Lam 1.2b, 7c, 9b, 16b, 17a, 21a): isolation and persistence of mourning.
  - d. מחמד, Lam 1.7b, 10a, 11b: the loss of children, temple implements, and valuables of the city.
  - e. נפש + שוב, Lam 1.11b, 19c: emphasis on scarcity of food and deplorable situation.
2. To emphasise judgment:
  - a. הוגה, Lam 1.5b, 12c: focus upon divine punishment.

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<sup>661</sup>Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem," 169. Thus the model reader encompasses both communal and individual perspectives.

- b. יום, Lam 1.12c, 21c: focus upon the day of YHWH.
- c. שָׁמַם, Lam 1.13c, 12c: focus upon desolation experienced in divine judgment.
- d. פָּשַׁע, Lam 1.5b, 14a, 22b: focus on the suffering and judgment that comes from offence.
- e. מָרָה, Lam 1.18a, 20b: affirmation of judgment due to Zion's rebellion against YHWH.

### Function: Combination

1. To construct interpretive depth:
  - a. יָגַהַל, Lam 1.4c, 5b: combines YHWH's punishment (הַגָּהַל) as a source of grief (נוֹגַת). This is also an instance of antanaclasis.
  - b. זָלַל, Lam 1.8b, 11c: combines the scorn of the nations (הַזִּילָה) with the city's pain over thoughtlessness (זָלָה). This is another example of antanaclasis.
  - c. רָעַתָּה, Lam 1.21b, 22a: combines the misfortune of Jerusalem (רָעַתָּה) with an appeal that her enemies will receive the same fate (כְּלִי־רָעַתָּה).
  - d. פָּרַשׁ, Lam 1.10a, 13b, 17a: combines different agents actively spreading hands over precious things (enemies, v. 10a), a net for Jerusalem's "feet" (YHWH, v. 13b), and hands out to God (Zion, v.17a).
  - e. מִכְּאוֹב + רָאָה, Lam 1.12a-b, 18b: combines (and contrasts) the misery administered by YHWH (v. 12a-b) with the misery of her people (v. 18b).
2. To refocus previously held understandings:
  - a. אָהַבָּהּ, Lam 1.2b, 19a: revises previous understanding of the city (abandoned woman) to a new understanding (whore).
  - b. לְנִידָה / לְנִידָה (homonym and pun), Lam 1.8b, 17c: refocuses the primary denotation of נִידָה to incorporate into it a connotation of sinfulness and exile (נִידָה).
  - c. (וְהַבִּיטָה) + רָאָה + vocative of יְהוָה + כִּי clause, Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a: refocuses different sources of pain for Jerusalem.
  - d. צָר / הַמְצָרִים, Lam 1.3c, 20a: contrast the "straits" produced by the enemy (v. 3c) with the "anxiety" produced by Jerusalem's rebellion (v. 20a). This is an instance of antanaclasis.

Next to repetition, allusion plays an important role. Allusion can be understood as the poetry actively "blowing up" specific portions of the cultural encyclopaedia from which Lamentations drew to construct its argument. From the OT, Lamentations 1 alludes most prominently to Deuteronomy 28 (and Deut 23.3-4), Exodus, Ps 23.3, and Jer 8.18. Each of these allusions makes an important contribution to the poetry. Below is a summary list of them:

### Deuteronomy

1. Lam 1.3b = Deut 28.65: the theme of "no rest" in judgment.
2. Lam 1.5a = Deut 28.44: the theme of enemies becoming the "head."
3. Lam 1.5c = Deut 28.41: the theme of children's captivity.

4. Lam 1.10c = Deut 23.3-4: command about who may enter into the assembly, which Lam 1.10 cites for its rhetoric.

### Exodus

1. Lam 1.3c (המצרים, "straits") puns the term מצרים, "Egypt." Instead of deliverance (Exodus), God's people go into slavery (Lamentations).
2. Lam 1.3a (עני and עבד) draws from language of slavery in Exodus (מעני: Ex 3.7, 17; 4.31; עבדה: Ex 1.14; 2.23; 5.11; 6.6). The affliction and servitude Israel experienced in Egypt in former days is in effect what is happening now, again, to Judah.
3. Lam 1.3c (כל־רדפיה השיגוה) recalls the idiom of Ex 14.9; 15.9: וירדף מצרים אחריהם ושיגו אותם, "and Egypt pursued after them and overtook them" (Ex 14.9); ארדף אשיג (Ex 15.9).

### Ps 23.3

Lam 1.16b (משיב נפשי) alludes to Ps 23.3 (נפשי ישוב) and contrasts the psalmist's positive experience of YHWH to Zion's negative experience of him: there he is present; here he is distant.

### Jer 8.18

Lam 1.22c ("my heart is sick," לבי די) alludes to Jer 8.18 ("my heart is sick," לבי די). Zion employs the prophet's speech to depict her own misery over the destruction of the city.

#### 5.3.4. Theology

Poetics play a key role in developing the theology of Lamentations 1, and it is seen that different theological horizons are projected for the model reader. From intensification structures of repetition, there is a key emphasis upon YHWH's judgment and Jerusalem's sin. Matched with allusion to Deuteronomy 28 and the Exodus material, theodicy is a horizon that is explored in the poem. Similarly, both speaking voices confirm God's activity as a result of the offences of the city, further emphasising the rationale for the state of degradation in which Jerusalem finds herself. On the basis of personified Jerusalem's own views, this sinfulness leaves her in distress (ראה יהוה כמצרלי), Lam 1.20a). YHWH is figured as the just judge who has meted out judgment against a rebellious and sinful people—a people who deserved the punishment they received (Lam 1.18a). Thus the theology of Lamentations 1, does, in fact suggest rationale for the disaster, contra Westermann's view that explanation of disaster is not part of the original theology of the book.<sup>662</sup> To foreclose upon this theological horizon from the poem flattens its theological depth.

However, the model reader of Lamentations 1 is likewise confronted with the reality that theodicy is not all that is offered in this poem, opening another theological

<sup>662</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 77 = *Lamentations*, 81.

viewpoint. From combination structures of repetition, particularly repetition that constructs interpretative depth, the reader notices quite readily the activity of enemies: their rape, their scorn, their mocking, and their oppression. Moreover, repetition structures of intensification focus upon the suffering of the city and people, often at the hands of enemies. Both the actions of the enemies and the suffering of her people becomes the motivation for appeal in Lam 1.21-22. In this, YHWH is figured as the judge who, it is hoped through the rhetoric of the poem, will be moved to act *on behalf of* his people and city, to deliver them from both suffering and their enemies.

Finally, the reader must confront the reality that God's actions are questioned, opening a final horizon. This is seen immediately in the observer's aside to YHWH in Lam 1.10c and Zion's speech about "over *these things*" (על־אלה) in Lam 1.16a. The observer recognises that the violation of Jerusalem is, in some way, wrong, and YHWH has administered it, perhaps going against his own law. His statement is rhetorical, designed to get YHWH to act. Personified Jerusalem furthers this critique by portraying YHWH as a violent warrior deity, harvesting his own people (Lam 1.15). Rather than accepting this judgment, however, her speech in Lam 1.16 blurs the lines theologically between divine presence and absence as being a fundamental problem. The rhetoric of this, however, is designed to get YHWH to act in beneficence towards his people. Different theological horizons, then, are projected for the reader.

From Eco's theory, we may ask why Lamentations I presents its theology as it does. In terms of text pragmatics, this range of theological horizons projected for the model reader provides interpretative possibilities with which he or she must engage and actualise in the process of reading.<sup>663</sup> That is, when the empirical becomes the model reader for Lamentations, he or she is offered a number of interpretative possibilities with which to engage. Opposed to arriving at *one* conclusion for Lamentations I, as in closed texts, a model reader may tease out a number of theological horizons presented in the poem. These options afford the model reader an open strategy for interpreting the poem; whatever theological horizon the model reader actualises directly impinges on how one understands the theology of the poem. Thus the theology, like the text itself, is more open than closed. In terms of the real-life flesh and blood Judahite readers of the sixth-century BCE, through the poetry of Lamentations I these survivors would have a text that enabled

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<sup>663</sup>Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 276.



them to voice diverse experiences to their God, based upon their interpretations of the poetry and by means of the text's diversity in theological portrayal.

Yet these possible theological worlds have a governing logic in of all of them. Underlying each is the tacit belief that YHWH is present to hear the cries of his people—whether the cries centre upon sinfulness, enemies, or even the Lord's own activity—and is beneficent, so that he will be moved by the poetry to act on his people's behalf. This is a theology of hope that permeates Lamentations 1 itself: not that a specific theological tradition offers a way out of the crisis, as Zion theology often has been figured, but that the poetry itself, as it is uttered to YHWH, remains the source of hope—a deity who is present to look and consider (רָאָה וְהִבִּיטָה) the various sufferings of his people, sufferings identified and actualised by the model reader.

## CHAPTER 6: LAMENTATIONS 2

### 6.1. Introduction

Analysis now moves to Lamentations 2. As in the previous chapter, using Eco's aesthetic analysis, the blending of genres, the linear progression of the acrostic, and use of various poetics will be explored to understand how the model reader is constructed in the poem and how the "intention of the work" as a whole continues to develop. Interaction between Lamentations 1 and 2 will also be assessed to show how the poems respond to one another to produce interpretative opportunities for the reader. This chapter concludes with a catalogue of the ways genre and poetics are exploited in the poem, and then how these impact theological presentation in the poem, and by extension, the book up to this point.

Like Lamentations 1, two voices speak in Lamentations 2. The first speaker is unidentified, though his language is strikingly Jeremianic, leading Lee to identify him as Jeremiah the prophet.<sup>664</sup> The similarity of language is unique and the present study believes the observer takes on the persona of Jeremiah (Lam 2.11-17), but nonetheless identifies the speaker as an "observer" in concord with Lamentations 1.<sup>665</sup> The observer addresses the reader in Lam 2.1-12 and then personified Jerusalem from Lam 2.13-19. The second speaker is personified Jerusalem, who appeals to YHWH with prayer in Lam 2.20-22, as in the previous poem. An outline of their speeches is as follows:

Lam 2.1-9:	Observer describes divine wrath
Lam 2.10-12:	Observer depicts suffering inhabitants of the city and describes his own pain
Lam 2.13-19:	Observer addresses personified Jerusalem
Lam 2.20-22:	Personified Jerusalem appeals to the Lord

### 6.2. Exegesis of Lam 2.1-22

With אִיכָה, Lam 2.1a prepares one for the dirge only to subvert the reader's expectations as Lam 2.1b-9 portrays the wrath of YHWH against בְּתִצִּיּוֹן, "dear Zion,"

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<sup>664</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 131-62.

<sup>665</sup>As does House, *Lamentations*, 398. Specifically Lam 2.11-17.

with divine warrior imagery similar to Lam 1.12c-15. Rather than the communal lament genre, these verses are similar in tone to the oracles against the nations (OAN).<sup>666</sup> As Jeremiah proclaimed God's judgment against the nations—like the oracle against Egypt in Jer 46.10, "For this is the day for the Lord, YHWH of the Armies, a day of vengeance when he takes revenge on his foes," והיום ההוא לאדני יהוה צבאות יום נקמה להנקם מצרי"ו—the Lord has enacted a day of judgment against his own people and city. The major difference, however, is the cause of destruction. In the OAN, sin is generally the reason for YHWH's wrath. In Lamentations 2, sin is only explicitly mentioned in Lam 2.14. The model reader may draw from previous depictions of sin to attribute the cause of divine wrath<sup>667</sup> or may simply suspend the question of what caused destruction.<sup>668</sup>

The prominent depiction of YHWH's role as the agent of destruction links Lam 2.1-9 with the city-lament genre, though other motifs are present as well.<sup>669</sup> Blending generic elements highlights the various purposes at work in Lam 2.1-9 and creates a variety of ways for the reader to access the poem, among them mourning (dirge), depicting and commemorating disaster (city-lament), and recognising judgment of the deity for his people's sin (OAN). The blend of these genres effectively differentiates this poem from Lamentations 1, which blended the dirge, city-lament, and lament genres.

Lam 2.1-9 vividly displays divine judgment in a manner unparalleled in the OT. Thirty active verbs concentrate upon the day of wrath.<sup>670</sup> Through "object

<sup>666</sup>Jer 4-6; 8-10; 46.1-51.58; Isa 15.1-16.14; 23.1-14; 47.1-15; Mic 1.2-16; Zeph 2.13-15.

<sup>667</sup>Lam 1.5b, 8-9a, 14a, 18a, 20b, 22b

<sup>668</sup>Lam 2.14 depicts the sins of the prophets which cause divine wrath.

<sup>669</sup>Among them are: reversal, description of destruction, and assignment of responsibility. See 3.2.4., above. See also Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 100-21, 134-41.

<sup>670</sup>Lam 2.1a: He beclouded (יעיב); Lam 2.1b: He cast from heaven to earth the beauty of Israel (השליך משמים ארץ תפארת ישראל); Lam 2.1c: He forgot his footstool (ולא־זכר); Lam 2.2a: He swallowed (בלע); Lam 2.2a: He did not pity (לא חמל); Lam 2.2b: He tore down (הרס); Lam 2.2c: He hurled to earth her kingdom and officials (גע); Lam 2.2c: He profaned her kingdom and officials (חלל ממלכה ושריה); Lam 2.3a: He cut off every horn of Israel (גדע...כל קרן ישראל); Lam 2.3b: He withdrew his right hand (השיב אהור ימינו); Lam 2.3c: He burned in Jacob (ויבער ביעקב); Lam 2.3c: He consumed everything (אכלה סביב); Lam 2.4a: He strung his bow (דרך קשתו); Lam 2.4b: He slaughtered (ויהרג); Lam 2.4c: He poured out wrath like fire (שפך כאש); Lam 2.5a: He swallowed (בלע); Lam 2.5b: He swallowed (בלע); Lam 2.5b: He annihilated (שחת); Lam 2.5c: He increased mourning and lamentation (וירב...תאניה ואניה); Lam 2.6a: He treated violently (ויחמס); Lam 2.6a: He annihilated (שחת); Lam 2.6b: He abolished (שכח); Lam 2.6c: He spurned (ויואץ); Lam 2.7a: He spurned (זנח); Lam 2.7a: He repudiated (נאר); Lam 2.7b: He delivers the walls of Jerusalem's citadels into the hand of an enemy (הסגיר

enjambment<sup>671</sup> in Lam 2.1b, 2a-c, 3a, 4b, 5c, 6b-c, 7b, and 8a, Zion and her environs are clearly marked as the object of divine wrath for the reader; enjambment effectively depicts her passivity and helplessness before YHWH's active judgment.<sup>672</sup> The alphabetic acrostic draws the reader steadily through graphic depictions of judgment and reinforces its divine authority in which the deity is presented as a warrior through imagery of the cloud, fire, and the bow. Drawing from OT texts and Canaanite mythological tradition, YHWH is depicted as an adversarial warrior who pours out his anger (אף)—against his city, people, and temple.

Set within Eco's theory, cloud imagery in Lam 2.1 "blows up" a portion of the encyclopaedic content of Israel, specifically theological conceptions both from OT traditions and from Canaanite mythology. The only instance of "cloud" (ענן) as a verb in the OT occurs in Lam 2.1a: "he has beclouded," יעִיב. Re'em and Lee recognise cloud imagery is often associated with theophany and divine protection in the OT.<sup>673</sup> The cloud was usually a sign of God's favour on his people, as in the Sinai revelation of Ex 19.9, where after defeating Egypt and the miracle of the sea, YHWH says to Moses, "Behold! I am coming to you in a cloud," הִנֵּה אֲנִי בֹא אִלֶּיךָ בְּעָב, and Ex 34.5-6, where God descends in a cloud (וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעָנָן) and promises his presence: "YHWH, YHWH! A god compassionate and merciful; slow to anger, and full of lovingkindness and faithfulness" (Ex 34.6). Cross believes the Sinai theophany and divine battle theophany (as in Exodus 15) are variant aspects of similar conceptions of the divine warrior; he demonstrates that the OT draws from Canaanite imagery, usually ascribed to Ba'al, and transforms it polemically to refer to YHWH's power.<sup>674</sup> Contrasted against the imagery of divine war against a foreign people (like Egypt), YHWH is figured as a storm-god who has gone to war against Jerusalem and her people with his cloud of wrath in Lam 2.1a.<sup>675</sup> This

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חשב); Lam 2.8a: He planned to annihilate the walls of dear Zion (בִּיד־אֹיִב חוֹמַת אֶרְמוֹנֶיהָ (יהוה להשחית חומת בת־ציון מבלע); Lam 2.8b: He stretched out a line and did not turn back his hand from swallowing (נָטָה קוֹ לֹא־הָשִׁיב יָדוֹ מִבְּלֹעַ); Lam 2.8c: He put in mourning rampart and wall (אָבַד וְשָׁבַר בְּרִיחֶיהָ); Lam 2.9a: He destroyed and shattered her bars (וַיִּאֲבֵל־חַל וְחוֹמָה).

<sup>671</sup>Object enjambment occurs when the *rejet* of a line contains the object of action, pulling the reader to the *rejet* "as the syntax struggles to complete itself" (Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Enjambling Line in Lamentations: A Taxonomy (I)," 226-27).

<sup>672</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2)," 376.

<sup>673</sup>Re'em, *God's People in Crisis*, 92; Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 133.

<sup>674</sup>Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 156-77.

<sup>675</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 62.

theophanic “storm-god” language is applied to YHWH. He comes from the clouds and has arrows of lightning (Lam 2.4a) to ravage his own land in a storm.<sup>676</sup>

The specific objects of his wrath are the city, the people, and his temple. “Dear Zion,” בת־צִיּוֹן, is associated with “the beauty of Israel,” תפארת ישראל, and “his footstool,” הדם־רגליו, in the second and third poetic lines, respectively. But while “Dear Zion,” בת־צִיּוֹן, personifies Jerusalem, ambiguity persists as to the referents of תפארת ישראל and הדם־רגליו. תפארת ישראל may refer to Jerusalem, the temple, or the Ark of the Covenant. Faced with semantic ambiguity, Eco’s aesthetic analysis suggests that the reader makes “abductions” about the terminology on the basis of the coherence of the text, context, and encyclopaedic competence. In this way, the reader gropes one’s way to approximate the meaning of the terms. In this instance, based on coherence of the text, this is the first occurrence of תפארת ישראל and הדם־רגליו, so no help is gained there. Nor is going to context, for the semantic problem arises specifically from the triplet of terms used together.

Thereby, encyclopaedic content from the OT becomes helpful. תפארת ישראל is similar to Isa 13.19, where Babylon is identified as “the eminent beauty of the Chaldeans,” כשדים תפארת גאון. Thus the construct chain refers to Jerusalem. But Frevel thinks תפארת ישראל refers to the temple and reads it with “his footstool,” הדם־רגליו, in Lam 2.1c; precedent is found in Ps 132.7: “Let us go up to his sanctuary; let us worship at his footstool,” נבואה למשכנותיו נשתחוו להדם רגליו.<sup>677</sup> This is not conclusive though because YHWH’s footstool is the Ark of the Covenant in the later understanding of the Chronicler: “I had it in my heart of hearts to build a house as a place of rest for the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH, for the footstool of our god” אני עמ־לבבי לבנות בית מנוחה לארון ברית־יהוה ולהדם רגליו אלהינו. On the basis of encyclopaedic investigation, the association between תפארת ישראל and הדם־רגליו remains ambiguous as to its referents: this creates an openness rather than fixity of meaning. Whether the reader understands תפארת ישראל and הדם־רגליו as the city, the temple, or the Ark of the Covenant, ambiguity of reference enables a multilayered depiction as to how YHWH has “cast” them all “from heaven to earth.” Frevel believes that Lam 2.1 displays the utter collapse of Zion theology in the

<sup>676</sup>Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 161-63.

<sup>677</sup>Christian Frevel, “Zerbrochene Zier: Tempel und Tempelzerstörung in den Klageliedern (Threni),” in *Gottesstadt und Gottesgarten: zu Geschichte und Theologie des Jerusalemer Tempels* (eds. Othmar Keel and Erich Zenger; *Quaestiones Disputatae* 191; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 105-11.

mind of the poet; whether his view can be maintained or not, it is clear that God's activity demarcates a fundamental challenge to any continued relationship between the deity and his people.<sup>678</sup>

Fire and archer language builds upon divine warrior imagery already drawn from the encyclopaedic world of the ANE. Lam 2.2-4 read:

בלע אדני לא חמל את כל־נאות יעקב  
 הרס בעברתו מבצרי בת־יהודה  
 הגיע לארץ חלל ממלכה ושריה  
 גדע בחרי־אף כל קרן ישראל  
 השיב אחור ימינו מפני אויב  
 ויבער ביעקב כאש להבה אכלה סביב  
 דרך קשתו כאויב נצב ימינו  
 כצר יהרג כל מחמדי־עין  
 באהל בת־ציון שפך כאש חמתו

“The Lord swallowed, he did not pity<sup>679</sup>, all the pastureland of Jacob.  
 He tore down, in his rage, the fortified cities of dear Judah.  
 He hurled to earth, he profaned, kingdom and her officials.

He cut off, in the heat of rage, every horn of Israel.  
 He restrained his right hand from the face of an enemy.  
 He burned in Jacob like a flame of fire: it consumed everything.

He strung his bow as an enemy, strong (in) his right hand.  
 As a foe he slaughtered all the precious things of the eye.  
 In the tent of dear Zion he poured out his wrath like fire.”

Fire and wrath belong to divine warrior imagery<sup>680</sup>, prevalent in OT and Canaanite literature. Miller explains in the OT, “The image of the ‘devouring fire’ [אש להבה] seems to be predominantly expressive of the divine warrior’s wrath and destruction,” drawn from Canaanite theological traditions.<sup>681</sup> YHWH pours out wrath like fire against pastureland (כל־נאות יעקב)<sup>682</sup>, cities (מבצרי בת־יהודה), and temple (באהל בת־ציון); the observer can rightly say the fire of the Lord consumed everything (אכלה סביב).

<sup>678</sup>“Die Dimension des Verlustes, die darin zum Ausdruck kommt, ist kaum zu überschätzen: es ist der komplette Zusammenbruch der Ziontheologie” (Frevel, “Zerbrochene Zier,” 106). For my view on Zion theology, see 2.4., above.

<sup>679</sup>לא חמל (Kethib) is read as ולא חמל (Qere) following the Masoretic notation, but either way the sense of the line is clear.

<sup>680</sup>Antje Labahn, “Fire From Above: Metaphors and Images of God’s Actions in Lamentations 2.1-9,” *JSOT* 31 (2006): 239-56.

<sup>681</sup>Patrick D. Miller, “Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel,” *CBQ* 27 (1965): 256-261, especially 259.

<sup>682</sup>נאות means “grazing place” or “pastureland” as in Jer 9.9: “Over the mountains I raise weeping and lamentation; and over the pastureland of the wilderness, a dirge,” על־ההרים אשא בכי ונהי ועל־נאות מדבר קינה.

Along with the weapon of fire, YHWH is an enemy warrior with a bow. The divine warrior with a bow appears in iconography with the deity holding the bow from the heavens<sup>683</sup>; the OT often pictures YHWH as an archer with bow or arrows, possibly understood as thunderbolts and lightning.<sup>684</sup> In Lam 2.4a the deity has strung his bow (ךרך) and has it tensed ready to fire in his hand. The tensed bow seems to be the force of “strong (in) his right hand,” נצב ימינו.<sup>685</sup>

As in Lam 1.3b-c and 2.1, allusions to Exodus again reverse depictions of YHWH in the encyclopaedic world of the poetry to portray the deity as a warrior against his people. Boecker sees allusions to Exodus in the Song of the Sea in Lam 2.3b, 4a. In Ex 15.6, YHWH’s right hand (ימינך) wins glory for himself and his right hand (ימינך) shatters his enemy (תרעץ אויב). Where the Lord has formerly fought enemies with the strength of his right hand, Lam 2.3b, 4a reverses this tradition and presents YHWH as an enemy warrior (כאויב) fighting against his people with a bow in his right hand (ימינו); moreover, he withdraws his right hand from the face of the enemy (ימינו מפני אויב השיב אחר).<sup>686</sup> Reversal of Ex 15.6 in Lam 2.3b, 4a presents a dark divine victory song: YHWH remains victorious, but his enemy is his *own people* rather than *Egypt*.

The divine warrior literally slaughters (הרג) the precious things of Jerusalem’s eye (מחמדי־עין) in Lam 2.4b. Repetition of the term מחמד exploits its polyvalence and suggests another depiction of victims of destruction. מחמדי־עין refers to the city’s children when read with the information gained from Lam 1.7b, 11b. But מחמדי־עין takes on a different meaning in Lam 2.4b, namely, her leaders.<sup>687</sup> The similar syntactical constructions in 2.3a and 4b, כל + construct chain (כל קרן ישראל and כל מחמדי־עין), conjoins “leaders” with “precious things.” The syntactic repetition creates another meaning to מחמד, not only the city’s children but also her leaders are precious, but YHWH slaughtered them both like a foe.

From the observer’s description of divine wrath in Lam 2.1-4, the comparison between YHWH and enemy (כאויב) / foe (כצר) in Lam 2.4a-b, 5a is understandable but

<sup>683</sup>Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, fig. 88.

<sup>684</sup>Deut 32.23, 24; Job 6.4; 34.6; Pss 18.14; 21.12; 38.2; 64.7; 77.17; 120.4; 144.6; Is 41.2, Hab 3.9; Zech 9.13.

<sup>685</sup>BHS suggests emending נצב ימינו to “an arrow in his right hand” (חץ בימינו). Yet the Niphal participle from נצב suggests the bow is raised and tensed, ready to fire at its target. Thus Boecker translates נצב ימינו: “erhoben seine Rechte,” “raised in his right hand” (*Klagelieder*, 38).

<sup>686</sup>Boecker, *Klagelieder*, 38-9.

<sup>687</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 69.

still shocking. The reader has seen language about enemies in Lamentations 1, though the Lord is never named as such in it<sup>688</sup>; the deity remains the agent of change, the one who (it is hoped) can counteract the negative work of the foe. Even where implicated in destruction, the poetry never names YHWH as “enemy.”<sup>689</sup> Rather he is the divine judge, able to restore the city and people, if only he would ראה, “look,” upon the suffering described by the observer and personified Jerusalem.<sup>690</sup> In the previous poem, the enemies described are nameless and faceless.<sup>691</sup> By contrast, Lamentations 2 collapses the role of enemy onto YHWH. As in Jer. 30.14, he enacts the day of his wrath like an enemy (כאויב) or a foe (כצד).<sup>692</sup>

This metaphor has created difficulties in its history of interpretation, a point that highlights the ambiguity of the poetry. Central to the ambiguity is the understanding of the כ preposition in Lam 2.4a, 5a.<sup>693</sup> Gordis indicates the כ is asseverative, following Ugaritic and other OT precedents,<sup>694</sup> so the clause reads, “The Lord has *indeed* become the enemy.” In light of the vivid depictions of YHWH as an enemy warrior against his own people in Lam 1.13-15; 2.1-9, it is at the very least consistent to render an asseverative sense to the כ. Following Gordis, the poetry confirms the deity’s antagonism against his people and destruction of his city.

The Targum and later Lamentations Rabbah, however, are careful to depict YHWH as *compared* to an enemy but not *actually* so, likely treating the כ comparatively. In the commentary on Lam 2.4-5 the Targum writer employs a series of comparisons to show how the language is not making a final judgment on YHWH’s adversarial status against his people but merely compares his activity to an enemy: “He bent his bow and shot arrows at me, like a foe. He stood to the right of Nebuchadnezzar and aided him, as though he himself were an enemy of the House of Israel” (TgLam 2.4); “YHWH has

<sup>688</sup>Lam 1.2c, 5a, c, 7c, d, 9c, 10a, 16c, 17b, 21b.

<sup>689</sup>Lam 1.5b, 10c, 13-15, 17b.

<sup>690</sup>Lam 1.9c, 10c, 11c, 20a.

<sup>691</sup>The Babylonians or any other “foes” are not named (Joyce, “Sitting Loose to History,” 247-8).

<sup>692</sup>Jer 30.14: “For (as) the blow of an enemy I have struck you,” הכייתך כי מכת אויב.

<sup>693</sup>The Peshitta text does not translate the כ. Albrektson concludes the Peshitta translator did not follow the MT (*Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 93). Dobbs-Allsopp believes the כ was an editorial or theological addition though this cannot be known with certainty (*Lamentations*, 83).

<sup>694</sup>Robert Gordis, “Asseverative Kaph in Hebrew and Ugaritic,” *JAOS* 63(1943): 176-8. This function is called “correspondence” in GBHS § 4.1.9.(b); Gordis, *Lamentations*, 162.



become like an enemy” (TgLam 2.5)<sup>695</sup> Levine summarises, “The [Hebrew] ‘as an enemy’ is paraphrased ‘as though he were an enemy,’ to emphasize that the appearance belies the reality: God is certainly not the enemy of his people!”<sup>696</sup> In this understanding, divine antagonism is softened to a more palatable theological comparison. Brady agrees, “God’s behaviour is *like* that of an enemy, but he is not truly an enemy of Israel.”<sup>697</sup> Moreover, Lamentations Rabbah reveals anxiety concerning the proposition that God could be understood as an enemy: “What is written here is not ‘an enemy’ but ‘like an enemy’.”<sup>698</sup> As in the Targum, Lamentations Rabbah distances itself from reading the  $\text{כ}$  asseveratively. The attempts by the Targum and Lamentations Rabbah to distance the asseverative understanding from the  $\text{כ}$  demonstrate its inherent theological contentiousness.

The present study leaves the final interpretation of the  $\text{כ}$  unsettled as either an asseverative or comparative understanding is perfectly sensible. In light of the ambiguity, the reader is left to consider the theological positions that the poem provides here: YHWH may no longer side with the people with whom he has formerly established covenant—once a friend, he is now a foe; or it may be that his judgment only *appears* to be adversarial—punishment for sin has come, but restored relationship will appear in the future. Either way, “That a Judean poet could call God ‘enemy’ is a telling sign of the deep distress and unparalleled suffering brought on by the catastrophe [of the destruction of Jerusalem].”<sup>699</sup> The comparison reveals the fracture and tension in the relationship between YHWH, his people, and his city; the various readings of the  $\text{כ}$  in the versions highlight theological ambiguity and tension apparent in the verse as well as the book.

This tension becomes increasingly significant as Lam 2.4c-9 explicitly depicts God’s rejection of his temple, cult, and city as well as the leadership of Jerusalem, though this has already been intimated in Lam 2.1. In Lam 2.4c he pours out his wrath like fire into the tent of dear Zion (באהל בת־ציון שפך כאש חמתו). The “tent of dear Zion” likely indicates the temple itself, as it is drawn from the encyclopaedic content available to Lamentations’ poet, and recalls the description of the tabernacle or “Tent of Meeting”

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<sup>695</sup>Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations*, 66. This function is called “agreement” in GBHS § 4.1.9.(a).

<sup>696</sup>Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations*, 111.

<sup>697</sup>Brady, “Targum Lamentations’ Reading of the Book of Lamentations,” 95.

<sup>698</sup>Neusner, *Lamentations Rabbah*, 220.

<sup>699</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 83.

(אהל מועד) in Exodus 27-40.<sup>700</sup> Moses is unable to enter into the Tent of Meeting because YHWH settles upon it in a cloud (הענן) and fills it with his glory (Ex 40.35). As in Lam 2.1—where the Lord’s “beclouding” his people inverts the cloud imagery in Ex 19.9; 34.5-6—his pouring out fire on the tent of dear Zion in Lam 2.4c exposes a reversal: YHWH is no longer present in the Tent of Meeting (אהל מועד) through the cloud (הענן) and glorified (Ex 40.35); he now pours out his fire upon the Tent of dear Zion (באהל בת־ציון) in wrath (Lam 2.4c). This logic is advanced in in Lam 2.6-9. The verses read:

ויחמס כגן שכו שחת מועדו  
 שכח יהוה בציון מועד ושבת  
 וינאץ בזעם־אפו מלך וכהן  
 זנח אדני מזבחו נאר מקדשו  
 הסגיר ביד־אויב חומת ארמנותיה  
 קול נתנו בבית־יהוה כיום מועד  
 חשב יהוה להשחית חומת בת־ציון  
 נתה קו לא־השיב ידו מבלע  
 ויאב־לחל וחומה יחדו אמללו  
 טבעו בארץ שעריה אבד ושבר בריחיה  
 מלכה ושריה בגוים אין תורה  
 גמ־נביאיה לא־מצאו חזון מיהוה

“He treated his booth violently like a garden<sup>701</sup>;  
 he annihilated his meeting-place.

YHWH abolished in Zion festival and Sabbath,  
 And he spurned, in his indignant wrath, king and priest.

The Lord spurned his altar; he repudiated his sanctuary.  
 He delivered the walls of her citadels into the hand of the enemy.  
 They raised a sound in the house of YHWH as on a festal day.”

YHWH determined<sup>702</sup> to destroy the wall of dear Zion  
 He stretched out a line; he did not withdraw his hand from destruction.  
 And he consumed rampart and wall—together they dwindled.

Her gates sunk into the ground; he destroyed and shattered<sup>703</sup> her bars.

<sup>700</sup>Exodus 27.21; 28.43; 29.4, 10, 11, 30, 32, 42, 44; 30.16, 18, 20, 26, 36; 31.7; 35.21; 38.8, 30; 39.32, 40; 40.2, 6, 7, 12, 22, 24, 26, 29, 32, 34, 35. This language is carried through to Leviticus as well, in Lev 1.1.

<sup>701</sup>LXX reads כגן as כגפן and translates it ως αμπελον, “like a vine.” This translation provides no further clarity as to how YHWH’s booth is compared to a vine.

<sup>702</sup>LXX reads και επεστρεψεν, “and he (the Lord) returned.” See Gentry, “Lamentations,” 12. The LXX translator may have misread the ה for a ה, or he may have read וישב, which explains και, which has no other equivalent in the MT (Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 100). The MT remains sensible as a Qal perfect verb from חשב. The Hiphil infinitive construct from שחת links with חשב, indicating God’s purposeful act of destruction.

<sup>703</sup>אבד ושבר may represent an early form proto-masoretic activity, where each term represents two text traditions. One tradition read אבד; the other read שבר. Instead of

Her king and princes are among the nations—there is no Torah.  
Moreover, her prophets find no vision from YHWH.”

God has utterly rejected all prior systems in Jerusalem, creating a profound theological challenge. With the abolishment of festival and Sabbath (ושבת מועד), the spurning of king and priest (מלך וכהן), the rejection of altar and sanctuary (זנה אדני מזבחו נאר מקדשו), the exile of Jerusalem’s king and princes (מלכה ושריה בגוים), no Torah (אין תורה), and the failure of prophecy (מיהרה גמנביאיה לא־מצאו חזון), what could be said of any form of religious future for Jerusalem—how could worship continue?<sup>704</sup> The failure of the religious system here is presented as a result of divine wrath—the people are victims of judgment against them. This presents a fundamental theological problem. How can the people appeal to the deity for deliverance from the enemy when he *is* the enemy?

Ironically, when compared to divine presentation in Mesopotamian city-laments or related genres, divine potency described in Lam 2.1-9 may provide an avenue of theological hope and future. For Gottwald, the question of hope in Lamentations stems from prophetic tradition about the love, faithfulness, and justice of God, so that even if he has destroyed his people, city, and temple, he remains available to his people to deliver them—if they will but repent from sin.<sup>705</sup> The foregoing discussion will not necessarily contradict his assertion but rather look at the question of hope from a different set of encyclopaedic content, namely LU and LSU, while also bringing other related texts to bear as well. I do this for two reasons: Lam 2.1-9 fits quite well with the city-lament genre,<sup>706</sup> so comparative analysis is warranted; assessment of divine presentation from comparative analysis reveals a different focus of theological hope than has hitherto been maintained.

In LU and LSU, Enlil (the high-god and head of the pantheon) orders the destruction of the cities (LSU, 20-22; LU, 173, 180, 203), and the patron-deities of the cities are powerless to counteract Enlil’s decree.<sup>707</sup> Enlil decrees that the kingship of the

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neglecting a variant, the early scribes included traditions and set them side by side and connected them by *waw* (Gordis, *Lamentations*, 162-3).

<sup>704</sup>Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 44.

<sup>705</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 91-111.

<sup>706</sup>It is part of the “divine judgment” motif (Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 55-75).

<sup>707</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp rightly asserts that the concept of divine abandonment was a way for a defeated people to deal with their loss rather than to attribute their defeat to the impotence of their god in comparison to the deity of the victorious nation. From the victor’s perspective, however, their own god defeated the patron-god of the fallen city

city of Ur is handed over to another city (LSU, 366-72) and thereby Nanna, the patron deity for Ur, must abandon his sanctuary. Similarly, as a result of Enlil's decree of destruction, a series of patron deities of Mesopotamian cities are forced to abandon their sanctuaries, stripping them of their potency and worship (LU, 1-39). These deities are powerless to stop the destruction and are powerless to return to their shrines until Enlil changes his mind. Although they remain loyal both to their shrines and worshippers, they are still forced to abandon both, which leads to their inevitable destruction.<sup>708</sup>

In the *Curse of Agade*, a genre related to the city-lament,<sup>709</sup> the city goddess Inanna obeyed Enlil's decree to abandon her sanctuary (in line with LSU and LU) only to turn against her city (Agade) and shrine in battle, attacking it as a foe.<sup>710</sup> Although she attacks her city like a foe, Inanna, however, remains subject to Enlil's command. Lamentations, however, collapses both decree of destruction (Lam 1.15b, 17b) and the activity of the foe (Lam 2.1-9) onto YHWH rather than differentiating it to two deities, Enlil and Inanna respectively.

The complete authority of YHWH is more in line with the authority of Marduk, god of Babylon, in a text known as the "Marduk Prophecy."<sup>711</sup> In this text, Marduk describes how the enemies' sacking of his temple is actually associated with his volitional divine abandonment rather than his impotence. The fortunes of the city change when Marduk's disposition towards Babylon changes. Block summarises: "When Marduk had fulfilled *his* days in exile, he yearned for his city and recalled all the goddesses. The text does not speak specifically of the god's appointment of a new king (Nebuchadnezzar I), but this is implied in the 'prophetic' portion."<sup>712</sup> Like Marduk, YHWH's power is never in question in Lamentations. Unlike Marduk, however, he does not abandon his sanctuary but remains its enemy, so that Jerusalem's own patron-deity has turned against his city,

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(*Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 45-6). In the city-laments, however, all patron-deities are subject to Enlil's power and impotent next to his authority.

<sup>708</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 45.

<sup>709</sup>For comparison between the genres, see Cooper, *The Curse of Agade*, 7-36.

<sup>710</sup>Cooper, *The Curse of Agade*, 53, 240-42; Block, *The Gods of the Nations*, 115-16.

<sup>711</sup>R. Borger, "Gott Marduk und Gott-König Šulgi als Propheten: Zwei prophetische Texte," *BiOr* 28(1971): 3-24; Tremper Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1991), 132-42; 233-5.

<sup>712</sup>Block, *The Gods of the Nations*, 124.

shrine, and people by his own initiative. The fervent outpour of divine wrath in Lam 1.13-15; 2.1-9 confirms his adversarial status.

Yet because destruction is achieved by YHWH rather than an enemy or foreign god, there is a tacit belief in the deity's perseverance and potency, especially when compared to LSU and LU. YHWH's supreme authority in his decree for Jerusalem's destruction in Lam 1.17b (צוה יהוה ליעקב סביב צרייך) and his plan to destroy the wall of dear Zion in Lam 2.8a (חשב יהוה להשחית חומת בת-ציון) coheres with Enlil's authority in LSU and LU. As seen above, Enlil's authority in destruction was absolute. So too is YHWH's authority in Lamentations. Unlike the patron-deities in the Mesopotamian city-laments, in Lamentations YHWH has not been overpowered or coerced to abandon his sanctuary by another, more powerful deity like Enlil—he sits in the place of Enlil! Rather than differentiating the loss of Jerusalem and its decree for destruction to two deities—a high-god and a patron-deity—monotheistic orthodoxy present in Jerusalem by and during the exile enabled a presentation of YHWH as both the agent of destruction (in the place of Enlil) *as well as* the one who suffers the loss of his sanctuary (in the place of the patron deities).<sup>713</sup> In light of the devastation of the city and cult, YHWH worship was essentially threatened and could never continue as it had done prior to the destruction. Yet, there remains an implicit hope in the deity—because YHWH destroys his own city and cult, then he has not been overpowered by another deity or carried off into exile<sup>714</sup>; therefore, hope for some kind of future with the deity exists, though a fundamentally different religious picture than the previous one. Even in destruction, theological hope is warranted

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<sup>713</sup>Whether one accepts Edelman's position, that exclusive monotheism apparent by the second century BCE does not reflect the religious beliefs of the people of Jerusalem in the last years of the Judahite state, one can certainly argue that Yahwistic monotheistic tendencies pervaded Judahite culture (certainly in the upper classes) in the latter third of the seventh century BCE and into the sixth century BCE, reflected in Jeremicanic prophecy. Even by Edelman's reckoning for sixth century BCE Judah, that YHWH was the high-god of the pantheon, it is reasonable to construct a theology in which YHWH could destroy his own temple and still remain potent. See Diana V. Edelman, ed., *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (CBET; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 18-21. For a more positive assessment of exclusive monotheism in the Judahite state in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, see N. Avigad, "The Contribution of Hebrew Seals to an Understanding of Israelite Religion and Society," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (eds. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 195-208.

<sup>714</sup>As the Assyrian relief from the palace of Tiglath-pileser III at Nimrud reveals. The Assyrian warriors carry off the images of foreign gods away from a captured town, thereby exiling the deity [F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations: From the Exodus to the Fall of the Second Temple* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1969), plate 6].

when divine agency in Lam 2.1-9 is compared with LSU and LU. This hope is prescient of YHWH's continued presence and anticipates personified Jerusalem's fervent appeals in Lam 2.20-2.<sup>715</sup>

Where Lam 2.6, 9 introduced the plight of the king, priest, prophet, and leaders, Lam 2.10-12 further depicts the misery of the people as well as the emotions of the observer, all of which is set in mourning language. This marks a shift again in genre, from judgment speech to city-lament genre, though his language evinces characteristics of the lament genre as well, as the tone of his speech verges on complaint, namely over the present situation of his people.<sup>716</sup>

ישבו לארץ ידמו זקני בת־ציון  
העלו עפר על־ראשם חגרו שקים  
הורידו לארץ ראשן בתולת ירושלים

כלו בדמעות עיני חמרמרו מעי  
נשפך לארץ כבדי על־שבר בת־עמי  
בעטף עולל ויונק ברחבות קריה

לאמתם יאמרו איה דגן ויין  
בהתעטפם כחלל ברחבות עיר  
בהשתפך נפשם אל־חיק אמתם

“The elders of dear Zion sat on the ground—they were silent.  
They placed ashes upon their heads;  
they girded themselves with mourning cloths.  
They bow their heads to the earth—the maidens of Jerusalem.

My eyes fail with tears; my innards burn,  
My liver is poured out on the ground,  
on account of the breaking of my dear people;  
As little child and suckling languishes in the open plazas of the city.

To their mother they say, ‘Where is the grain and the wine?’  
As they faint like the wounded in the open plazas of the city,  
As their lives are poured out upon the lap of their mother.”

<sup>715</sup>Like Albrektson, Brueggemann argues, “The theological implication of the destruction of the city that produced such profound grief is that the liturgical tradition of the inviolability of the city—a notion fostered in temple-monarchy ideology—is shown to be false” (Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 334). The kind of hope intimated in Lam 2.1-9 runs counter to Albrektson and Brueggemann, who argue the destruction of the cult challenged Zion theology's views of Jerusalem's inviolability, election, and YHWH's presence there. If Zion theology is present here, it fits more with the version developed by Isaiah the prophet in the Assyrian crisis [See Roberts, “Yahweh's Foundation in Zion (Isa 28:6),” 39-40]. Backhandedly Lam 2.1-9 affirms YHWH's potency theologically despite the fact that he has decimated his own city and religious centre.

<sup>716</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 148.

Various behaviours associated with mourning appear in verse 10: sitting upon the ground in silence (ישבו לארץ ידמו), pouring ashes upon the head (העלו עפר על־ראשם), girding oneself with mourning cloth (הגרו שקים), and bowing the head to the ground (לארץ הורידו) (ראשן). Pham notes, “All these acts of self-abasement express grief and repentance in the face of sin and death, and serve as reminders of one’s own mortality. The elders or old men and the virgins or young women represent the two opposite poles of the population in terms of age, sex and experience. They form a merism to denote the whole surviving community: all survivors of the catastrophe are mourning.”<sup>717</sup> The observer, too, joins in the mourning as his eyes fail with tears and he attempts (vainly) to comfort personified Jerusalem in Lam 2.13: “What shall I say for you, how shall I wail for you, dear Jerusalem?”

The cause for mourning is explicitly stated—the breaking of the dear people of Jerusalem. Though YHWH has unequivocally been affirmed as potent in Lam 2.1-9, it is his vitality in judgment that produces pain in the observer, especially the effect it has had upon his people. The term “breaking” (שבר) in Lam 2.11b recalls divine activity in Lam 2.9a: “he shattered (ושבר) her bars.” Lee argues שבר is a Leitwort used to depict the suffering of Judah both in Lamentations and the book of Jeremiah.<sup>718</sup> “My dear people” is a generic term that encompasses everyone mentioned up to this point:

Lam 2.2c:	Princes (שריה)
Lam 2.3a:	Leaders of Israel (כל קרן ישראל)
Lam 2.4b:	Children (כל מחמדי־עין)
Lam 2.6c:	King and priest (מלך וכהן)
Lam 2.9b:	King and princes (מלכה ושריה)
Lam 2.9c:	Prophets (נביאה)
Lam 2.10a:	Elders (זקני בת־ציון)
Lam 2.10c:	Maidens (בתולת ירושלם)

בת־עמי is a common epithet used by Jeremiah for his people (Jer 4.11; 6.26; 8.11, 19, 21, 22, 23; 9.6; 14.17); the observer’s endearing description of Jerusalem here contrasts against the judgment she received from God. As with Jeremiah, the observer’s turmoil derives from the pain of his dear people (בת־עמי). This cites Jer 8.21a almost exactly, “Because of the breaking of my dear people I am broken,” על־שבר בת־עמי השברתי. The citation further identifies the observer with Jeremiah the prophet<sup>719</sup>; at the very least the

<sup>717</sup>Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 130.

<sup>718</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 148. For references, see note 62.

<sup>719</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 147-48.

citation enables the reader to recognise the observer takes on the persona of Jeremiah here, mourning the fate of his “dear people” as a result of divine wrath.

As Linafelt recognises, the observer almost quotes personified Jerusalem’s description of inner turmoil in Lam 1.20a.<sup>720</sup> The language of burning innards (מעֵי חמרמרר) in Lam 1.20a matches the language of the observer (עֵי חמרמררו) in Lam 2.11a. It is unlikely this repetition is accidental and it drives the reader to make the connection between the poems. Linafelt believes that the repetition reinforces the notion that the “scream of Zion has, almost literally, become the scream of the poet”<sup>721</sup> so that the observer’s pain mirrors the pain of personified Jerusalem.

Yet this view collapses a distinction between the parties. Repetition serves to contrast different sources of inner turmoil. In Lam 1.20 personified Jerusalem’s turmoil stems from the anxiety over her rebellion (כִּי מָרוּ מִרִּיחִי). In Lam 2.11, the observer’s turmoil stems from the breaking of his people (עַל־שֹׁבֵר בַּת־עַמִּי). The prepositions על and כִּי function similarly in both verses: they reveal the causes of turmoil.<sup>722</sup> Once revealed these diverging wellsprings of pain are juxtaposed against one another, keeping both in view for the model reader and suggesting interpretative options. One may follow the “rebellion” option and focus upon the reality of divine punishment as a response to Jerusalem’s sins (Lam 1.3, 5, 8-9, 11c, 18a, 20a-b, 22b), and read Lam 1.1-11 as enactment of the day of divine wrath. Alternatively, one may follow the “breaking of my dear people” option and draw from texts depicting victimisation and abuse—by enemies (Lam 1.2c, 3-4, 5c, 6b-c, 7, 8b, 9c, 12-16, 18b-c, 19a, 20c-22a; Lam 2.1-11)—but possibly YHWH (Lam 1.10). Neither option is foreclosed upon and reveals an interpretative fecundity.

Lam 2.11c-12 rhetorically shifts its focus to the most vulnerable and helpless in society. The Niphal infinitive that introduces Lam 2.11c (בַּעֲטֹף) is one in a series of three temporal infinitive constructs<sup>723</sup> (בַּהֲתַעֲטַפִּים, Lam 2.12b; בַּהֲשַׁתַּפֵּךְ, Lam 2.12c) that depict the plight of Jerusalem’s children in simultaneity with the observer’s act of weeping: his eyes fail with tears and his liver is poured out...*as* he witnesses the children—little child and suckling (עוֹלֵל וְיֹנֵק)—languishing in the open plazas of the city (Lam 2.11a, c).<sup>724</sup>

<sup>720</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 52.

<sup>721</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 52.

<sup>722</sup>GKC § 158b; GBHS § 4.1.16(d).

<sup>723</sup>GKC § 114e; WO § 36.2.2b; GBHS § 3.4(b).

<sup>724</sup>עוֹלֵל וְיֹנֵק occurs also in Jer 44.7 (עוֹלֵל וְיֹנֵק) and Ps 8.3 (עוֹלֵלִים וְיֹנֵקִים), likely idiomatic.



recalls עולליה in Lam 1.5 and inverts the association, though both picture the suffering of little children: formerly they went away into captivity (bound and oppressed), whereas in Lam 2.11c they remain in the city's "open plazas" (רחבות קריה), exposed and abandoned. Through the citation of children's speech in Lam 2.12aβ, the reader not only sees their suffering but hears it as well.<sup>725</sup> Instead of finding sustenance, they are emaciated, fainting, and return to their mothers' laps as their lives ebb away. The helplessness of the children is matched only by the helplessness of their mothers to prevent their deaths.

By following his admission of the source of his pain with a graphic and auditory depiction of the children's plight, the observer rhetorically shifts the focus from judgment (Lam 2.1-9) to the reality and immediacy of human suffering. For *this* reason, the breaking of his dear people—especially the children—the observer's eyes fail with tears and his innards burn. In central focus is the immediacy and horror of the suffering children and Linafelt believes this gruesome depiction is designed rhetorically to attract the deity's attention and persuade him to act on their behalf, the kind of rhetoric typical of the lament genre.<sup>726</sup>

The acrostic then moves the reader to the ל strophe, depicts behaviour characteristic of mourning rites, and evinces an element of the Mesopotamian city-lament genre. Lam 2.13 reads:

מה־אעידך מה אדמה־לך הבת ירושלם  
מה אשוה־לך ואנחמך בתולת בת־ציון  
כי־גדול כים שברך מי ירפא־לך

"How can I strengthen you<sup>727</sup>; what can I compare to you, dear Jerusalem?"

<sup>725</sup> יאמר introduces the children's speech (Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 337).

<sup>726</sup> Linafelt, *Lamentations*, 52-4.

<sup>727</sup> מה־אעידך is difficult. Following the Kethib, אעידך is a Hiphil imperfect verb from עוד; the verb in the Hiphil means "to testify" or "call as a witness." LXX follows the Kethib, "What witness shall I bear of you" (Τι μαρτυρησῶ σοι): See Gentry, "Lamentations," 13. The Peshitta also reads the Hebrew *Vorlage* this way (Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 108). Qere, אעודך, is a Qal imperfect verb from עוד, presumably derives from the adverb עוד, and according to Albrektson (following *BDB*), gains its primary meaning "to repeat." This would be the only instance of עוד in the Qal stem in the OT, but Albrektson and House nevertheless translate אעודך: "how can I repeat = produce yet another case of, name a parallel to you" (*BDB*, עוד, 728; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 108; House, *Lamentations*, 371). Meinhold emends אעידך to אערך, "to what can I liken you" [J. Meinhold, "Threni 2,13," *ZAW* 15(1895): 286]; Hillers follows Meinhold (Hillers, *Lamentations*, 100). Gordis disputes the emendation, as the orthography would have to be אערך for the emendation to stand (Gordis, *Lamentations*, 164). Rudolph preferred the Kethib and translated the verbal clause, "was soll ich dir als Zeugnis, d.h. als Beleg, als Beispiel anführen?" [Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder,"

What can I liken to you to comfort you, dear maiden Zion?<sup>728</sup>  
For your break is as vast as the sea—who can heal you?”

Offering words of comfort and encouragement is typical of the comforter in the mourning rite<sup>729</sup> while the dialogical style between the observer and personified Jerusalem is similar to the dialogue between the narrator and the patron city-goddess in Mesopotamian city-laments.<sup>730</sup> It is unclear which aspect of the encyclopaedia the poetry actualises at this point, but in either case it is clear that mourning and misery over devastation and loss remains central, specifically the loss of little children (Lam 2.11c-12).

Westermann believes this verse diverges from the lament genre and indicates a new theological awareness: that disobedience against the Lord leads to the suffering of the innocent.<sup>731</sup> The verse certainly diverges from the lament genre but slightly different to Westermann's theological assessment here, I argue that sin lies in the background, as it only appears explicitly in the next verse. Theologically, reading the poem with the acrostic, the verse and poem up to this point foregrounds the *enormity of suffering* as a profound problem, rather than sin. Linafelt avers, “The questions of verse 13 are rhetorical: only the inadequate can be said; only the inadequate comparison can be made; there is no healing for a breach as vast as the sea.”<sup>732</sup>

And suffering is compounded here because of utter failure of comfort. Though attempting to become the comforter that both he and personified Jerusalem declared absent in Lamentations 1,<sup>733</sup> even here his consolation is empty: the city's wound remains. The observer's words draw from YHWH's speech in Jer 30.12, 15: “your break

ZAW 56(1938): 107]. Gordis argues that the meaning of ער in the Hiphil is the same as the Polel and Hithpolel, thus translates אַעֲרֶיךָ, “how shall I fortify (strengthen) you” [*HALOT*, ער; Gordis, *Lamentations*, 164; “A Note on Lamentations II 13,” *JTS* 34(1933): 162-3]. Rudolph follows Gordis (*Klagelieder*, 220). “How shall I strengthen you” (מִהָאֲעִירֶיךָ) couples with “and how shall I comfort you” (וְאֵנְחֶיךָ), while “what can I compare to you” (מִמָּה אֲדַמְהֶיךָ) parallels “what can I liken to you” (מִמָּה אֲשׁוּהֶיךָ), forming a chiasm, noted by Gordis: מִמָּה אֲעִירֶיךָ // וְאֵנְחֶיךָ ; מִמָּה אֲדַמְהֶיךָ // מִמָּה אֲשׁוּהֶיךָ (*Lamentations*, 164). This is how the present study understands the first two poetic lines of Lam 2.13, though reading with the Qere is sensible (Albrektson and House) as is אַעֲרֶיךָ in its primary sense, “to bear witness” (LXX and Peshitta).

<sup>728</sup>LXX reads τις σωσει σε και παρακαλεσει, “who shall deliver you and comfort you?” However, “What can I liken to you” (מִהָאֲעִירֶיךָ), remains sensible (Provan, *Lamentations*, 73).

<sup>729</sup>Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, 133-4.

<sup>730</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 33.

<sup>731</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 132 = *Lamentations*, 154.

<sup>732</sup>Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 54.

<sup>733</sup>Lam 1.2b, 7b, 9b, 16b, 17a, 21a.

is incurable, your injury past healing” (אנוש לשברך נחלה מכתך), “why do you cry out over your break, your misery is incurable” (מה־תזעק על־שברך אנוש מכאבך). For the observer, taking on the persona of Jeremiah, the break of his people is too vast—he cannot help, heal, or comfort. The comparison between the “sea” and city’s destruction reinforces its magnitude; like the sea, it is “too vast.”<sup>734</sup> Yet at least the observer has attempted comfort, even with vain words. His actions rhetorically contrast with YHWH, who too is confirmed as an absent “comforter” in Lam 1.16.

A focus on suffering and divine negligence in comforting Zion may appear to connote a lack of faith in YHWH. However, the opposite is the case. The poetry backhandedly affirms YHWH as healer (ירפא־לך מי) with its lament in Lam 2.13c, further building upon allusions to Jeremiah 30. Jer 30.17 affirms YHWH as healer as he declares, “For I will bring health to you, and from your wounds I will heal you,” כי אעלה ארכה לך וממכותיך ארפאך. In Lam 2.13c, the observer (in the persona of Jeremiah) draws from the Lord’s own speech in Jeremiah, rhetorically designed for YHWH to overhear “Jeremiah’s” lament over Zion and respond to the lament *as healer*. As O’Connor notes, “Who can heal you (מי ירפא־לך)?” is a rhetorical question aimed directly at YHWH. “The only possible healer is God, but God is the very one who assaulted and smashed her in the first place.”<sup>735</sup> In this, the theology of judgment and wrath that was brought out in Lam 2.1-9 is questioned as the enormity of the people’s suffering, as well as the need for comfort and healing, is brought to light. This all is designed to be (over)heard by the divine judge, who is the *only* one who is able to comfort and heal the city’s wound.

The acrostic advances the reader past the focus upon suffering children and city to the observer’s depiction of the sin of her prophets in Lam 2.14. God’s wrath against the people, as well as their pain as his victims, has been in view until here, where iniquity is explicitly mentioned for the first time and blame is assigned to the prophets (נביאך), whose false visions have been followed by destruction. This confession complicates the previous depiction of the prophets in Lam 2.9c—they were victims of divine wrath. YHWH was the source of punishment up to this point, yet in Lam 2.14, false prophecy led to the disaster, thus in the verse the cause of the disaster (or blame for it) is uncertain, much like Lamentations 1 and the sources of pain: sin, enemies, and YHWH.

<sup>734</sup>Bergant, *Lamentations*, 73.

<sup>735</sup>O’Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 38.

The verse alludes to Jeremiah and recalls the various denunciations of false prophecy throughout his preaching.<sup>736</sup> Jer 5.31 warns, “The prophets prophesy with falsehood” (הנביאים נבאו־בשקר), and 6.13-14 states, “And from the prophet to the priest, everyone does falsehood. They have healed the breaking of my people as if it were insignificant; saying, ‘Peace, Peace!’ when there is no peace” (ומנביא ועד־כהן כלו אשה שקר) (וירפאו את־שבר עמי על־נקלה לאמר שלום שלום ואין שלום). Adopting this Jeremianic persona in Lam 2.14, the observer evocatively outlines the utter failure of prophecy as Zion’s prophets spoke false and deceptive words that led to punishment and exile:

נביאיך חזו לך שוא ותפל  
ולא־גלו על־עונך להשיב שביתך  
ויחזו לך משאות שוא ומדוחים

“Your prophets saw for you emptiness and whitewash.  
And they did not expose your iniquity to restore your captivity<sup>737</sup>,  
And they saw for you worthless and misleading pronouncements.”

Provan perceptively notes the use of ambiguity in this verse to emphasise the failure of the prophets (both at present and in the past) as well as the relationship between sin and punishment.<sup>738</sup> Ambiguity arises from the polyvalence of עון, להשיב שביתך, and ומדוחים. עון can either mean “iniquity” or “punishment,” and the polyvalence of the term highlights the failure of the prophets: they neglected to reveal Jerusalem’s sin and they failed to explain the consequences of sin—punishment.

The second half of Lam 2.14b is equally ambiguous and this has to do with the way that להשיב שביתך—which refers to the inability of the prophets to give good visions to lead the people out of present captivity—sits uneasily with the actions of the prophets, whose failure occurred *prior to* the exile and destruction, following the logic of the perfective verbs חזו and ולא־גלו. להשיב can mean “to return” or “to restore,” and the noun שביתך, likely derived from שבה, means “to take captive.”<sup>739</sup> Alternatively, it takes on the connotation of “fortunes.”<sup>740</sup> The clause then reads either “And they did not expose your iniquity (so as) to return your captivity” or “And they did not expose your iniquity to restore your fortunes.” Either interpretation exposes the utter failure of the prophets:

<sup>736</sup>Jer 2.8; 6.13-14; 8.10-11; 14.13-16; 23.9-40; 27.14-28.17.

<sup>737</sup>Read with Kethib שביתך rather than Qere שבותך.

<sup>738</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 73-4.

<sup>739</sup>Reminiscent of the children, maidens, and young men that walk as “captives” (שבי) in Lam 1.5c, 18c.

<sup>740</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 154; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 111.

formerly they did not expose iniquity, sin, and the punishment which would ensue, and this failure led them into captivity (שביתך); at present they are unable to return the people from captivity with sound prophecy so as to restore their fortunes. This is a complete condemnation of the prophets that refocuses the plight of suffering children raised in Lam 2.11-12 and sets blame squarely on the sin of prophets rather than upon YHWH, as in Lam 2.13.

Blaming the prophets, rather than YHWH, for the present state is advanced further through the semantic polyvalence of מדוחים. This is a *hapax logomenon*, likely from נדח, meaning “to seduce or mislead,” as in Deut 30.17, where the Lord describes the curse that comes if the hearts of the people are “seduced” or “mised” (ונדחה) by following other gods.<sup>741</sup> However, the term can connote “banishment” or “expulsion.” The LXX renders מדוחים as ἐξώσματα, “banishments.”<sup>742</sup> Lee recognises the affinities between Jeremiah’s use of נדח in his denouncement of false prophets and מדוחים in Lam 2.14c. She states, “In Jer 23.12, YHWH says the prophets will be ‘expelled.’ This imagery suggests punishment of the prophets congruent with the way in which the prophets’ oracles caused the ‘evicting’ of the people in Lam 2.14...In Jer 30.17, in the salvation oracle to [Daughter] Zion, YHWH will ‘restore her health’ and ‘heal’ her, because ‘they have called you an outcast (נדחה).’”<sup>743</sup> The seductive words of the prophets have led the people to banishment. Yet read with the intertext of Jer 30.17, healing from the sin of the prophets comes through YHWH, congruent with Lam 2.13; even while denouncing the prophets and affirming divine judgment, the poetry rhetorically looks to YHWH to heal the city.

The acrostic takes the reader past the sin of the prophets to Lam 2.15-17, where the focus shifts to further delineate Jerusalem’s ruin and mocking. Scornful words are placed in the mouths of “passers-by” (כלי־עבר דרך) in Lam 2.16. כלי־עבר דרך is identical to כלי־עבר דרך in Lam 1.12, where the “passers-by” appear as neutral parties or possibly even the reader to whom personified Jerusalem appeals. Yet here, they are sinister parties<sup>744</sup>; they scoff her downfall by clapping their hands (ספקו עליך כפים), hissing and shaking their heads (שרקו וינעו ראשם עליבת ירושלם), and verbally taunting her: “Is this the city that was called ‘perfection of beauty, joy of the whole earth’” (הזאת העיר שיאמרו כלילת יפי משרוש )

<sup>741</sup>See the discussion of McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 430.

<sup>742</sup>Gentry, “Lamentations,” 13.

<sup>743</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 152, note 84.

<sup>744</sup>The observer goes on to identify them in Lam 2.16 as “all your enemies” (כלי־אויבך).

פָּרָז (לכל־הארץ)?<sup>745</sup> Passers-by who personified Jerusalem formerly begged to witness her misery (Lam 1.12) now answer her pleas with taunting.

Repetition, too, plays a part in Lam 2.16, raising questions for the reader about the agent of the city's destruction? בלענו ("we have destroyed," בלענו) recalls Lam 2.2a, 5a-b, 8b, where the term is used to depict divine destruction in his day of wrath.<sup>746</sup> Yet in Lam 2.16, the enemies take credit for Jerusalem's destruction: *they* destroyed (בלענו) Jerusalem, in their own day of wrath (אך זה היום)—a day for which they hoped (שקוינו), obtained (מצאנו), and finally witnessed (ראינו). The enemies' perspective contrasts against the perspectives of both personified Jerusalem and the observer, who confirm divine agency in destruction. This contrast briefly ambiguates the cause of destruction, enabling interpretative space for the model reader to decide between them or, equally, leave the question of the agent of destruction open.

It may be that because the statement "we have destroyed" is inscribed in the enemies' speech (אמרנו בלענו), it is thereby unreliable testimony, and the former confession of Lam 1.17 sets the record straight—YHWH is in control of the disaster.<sup>747</sup> But this interpretation moves too quickly through the poetry and neglects the change in alphabetic acrostic in Lam 2.16. The introduction of the פ strophe here diverges from the normal פ-ע order of the alphabet as displayed in Lamentations 1. This divergence may only represent variation in the Hebrew alphabet; a number of texts and text traditions follow the פ-ע order.<sup>748</sup> But following the MT, the reader notes the divergence between the alphabetic

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<sup>745</sup>Re'emi mistakenly believes the passers-by "were moved" or empathise with Jerusalem's degradation (*God's People in Crisis*, 97); our analysis reveals otherwise as they taunt her demise. Westermann rightly argues the epithets "perfection of beauty" and "joy of the whole earth" were commonly heard titles for Jerusalem used by Jerusalemites in their temple songs (*Die Klagelieder*, 134 = *Lamentations*, 156).

<sup>746</sup>See exegesis above.

<sup>747</sup>Huey, *Lamentations*, 465.

<sup>748</sup>Prov 31.25-26, Lamentations 3 and 4, an inscription on a storage jar from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and an alphabet inscription at 'Izbet Şarṭah follow פ-ע sequence [Frank Moore Cross, "Newly found Inscriptions in Old Canaanite and Early Phoenician Scripts," *BASOR* 238(1980): 8-30; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 48; Z. Meshel, "Did Yahweh have a Consort? The New Religious Inscriptions from the Sinai," *BAR* 2(1979): 30-31; A. Demsky and M. Kockavi, "An Alphabet from the Days of the Judges," *BAR* (1978): 23]. The MT, LXX, and Targum follow the פ-ע order; 4QLam<sup>a</sup> follows the ט strophe with פ strophe, though this evidence is less conclusive as the ט strophe is lacking (Cross, "Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Verse," 134-35, 148). The Lucian Greek recension of Lamentations, the Peshiṭta, four of Kennicott's Hebrew manuscripts and one of de Rossi's follow the ע-פ order; the divergent text traditions may reflect two Hebrew Vorlagen (Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 114).

sequences between Lamentations 1 and 2, bringing attention to the strophe. Read in this manner, the change slows down the reading process and creates space for the reader to consider the meaning of the strophe, part of which is the question of divine agency of the city's destruction.

As soon as this interpretative space is gained, however, the acrostic moves the reader forward to the  $\epsilon$  strophe, which affirms divine agency for destruction though complicates the issue of divine justice. In Lam 2.17, the observer says, "YHWH has done what he had planned; he fulfilled his word (אמרתי), what he commanded (צוה) from days of old. He tore down and did not pity (הרס ולא חמל)." On a straightforward read, the verse clearly affirms God's role in destruction. Repetition of language and allusion to Jeremiah confirms this: צוה repeats צוה from Lam 1.17 where destruction is a result of YHWH's command; "He tore down and did not pity" (הרס ולא חמל) recalls Lam 2.2, where the Lord swallowed, did not pity (לא חמל), and tore down in his anger (הרס בעברתו) the fortified cities of dear Judah. Further, Lee recognises that the usage of זמם is peculiar only to Jeremiah, Zechariah, and in Lamentations, and in all cases where the term is associated with YHWH's activity in Jeremiah, it is used to depict his divine plan for destruction.<sup>749</sup> זמם is used in this way in Lam 2.17 and further reveals the persona of the prophet in the observer.

While confirming divine agency, through the Piel verb בצע, the poetry potentially complicates the notion of divine justice. בצע is a rare word in the OT and primarily describes actions associated with self-interest and violence, in both verbal and nominal forms.<sup>750</sup> The poetry could be drawing again from Jeremianic language, as in Jer 22.17, where the Lord condemns the King Jehoiakim for self-interest and gratuitous murder: "For your eyes and your heart (are set on nothing) except upon personal gain (כי־אם־על־בצעך) and upon shedding innocent blood (דם־הנקי לשפוך)." This is how the term is used, both in nominal and verbal forms, in 36 out of 39 usages in the OT. With the intertextual connection between בצע in Lam 2.17 and בצעך in Jer 22.17 in view, Lee believes the observer's affirmation of YHWH's agency complicates theodicy in Lamentations: the Lord's "word" (אמרתי) is unjust, accomplished by gratuitous violence or even self-interest.<sup>751</sup>

<sup>749</sup>Jer 4.28; 23.20; 30.24. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 153.

<sup>750</sup>Ex 18.21; 1 Sam 8.3; Ps 10.3; Prov 1.19; 15.27; 28.16; Jer 6.13; 8.10; 22.17; Ezk 22.12, 13, 27; 33.31; Mic 4.13; Hab 2.9.

<sup>751</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 153-54.

This possibility raises questions in the reader about the sufficiency of theodicy as the overriding theological position advanced in the poetry. On the information the reader has garnered up to this point, it cannot be gainsaid that Jerusalem—or some of her inhabitants—had sinned and committed offences (notably whoredom and false prophecy) that were destructive, leaving her anxious (Lam 1.5b, 9a, 11c, 14a, 18a, 20a; 2.14); moreover, it is clear that in his “day of YHWH,” the Lord enacted punishment against sin (Lam 2.14). Yet the suffering of exposed and dying little children (and infants) described in Lam 1.5c; 2.11c-12 as well as recurrent descriptions of the oppression and abuse by enemies in Lam 1.3, 5b, 6b-c, 7c-d, 8b, 9c, 10, 16c, 17c-d, 21; 2.15-16, and 17c raises questions about the justice of divine activity. As often as Lam 2.13-17 alludes to Jeremiah up to this point, it is plausible that the poetry could exploit this notion to challenge the reader to re-consider divine justice: like Jehoiakim’s activity (Jer 22.17), perhaps YHWH’s punishment has been done out of self-interest (בצע), constructing anti-theodicy using Dobbs-Allsopp’s language.<sup>752</sup>

Alternatively, the use of בצע is used three times in the OT to communicate the end or completion of divine punishment.<sup>753</sup> Isa 10.12 particularly conveys this idea and it reads, “And when the Lord has completed all his deeds (כִּי־בִצַע אֲדֹנָי) with Mount Zion and with Jerusalem, he will punish<sup>754</sup> the fruit of the boastful heart of the king of Assyria and the haughtiness of his eyes.” In this instance, יִבְצַע is in the Piel stem, as is בצע in Lam 2.17. Both texts, too, refer to the fulfilment of divine judgment: either his word (אָמַרְתִּי, Lam 2.17) or his deeds (מַעֲשָׂהוּ, Isa 10.12). Drawing from the semantics of בצע in Isaiah 10 rather than its predominant denotation of “self-interest,” the meaning of בצע in Lam 2.17 radically changes. In this reading, “[YHWH] fulfilled his word” (בִּצַע אָמַרְתִּי) affirms divine punishment while simultaneously anticipating its *completion*. Through this reading, Lam 2.17a also anticipates Lam 4.21-22, which states the cup of the Lord’s wrath will be poured out on Edom and he will punish their iniquity. In Lam 4.22, the poet then declares, “Your punishment is complete, dear Zion; he will not exile you any longer,” (תִּמְעֹנֵךְ בְּתִצִּיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתְךָ). If so, then Lam 2.17 subtly responds to Zion’s appeal in Lam 1.20-22 and advances a theodicy.

Rather than promoting one position over another, the poetry leaves the question open. This especially comes to light as Lam 2.17c concludes once again with a portrayal

<sup>752</sup>See 1.5., above; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 29.

<sup>753</sup>Isa 10.12; Lam 2.17; Zech 4.9.

<sup>754</sup>Following LXX “he will punish” (יִפְקֹד) rather than MT “I will punish” (אֶפְקֹד).



of Judah disgraced and destroyed and the enemy elevated above her as he rejoices ( וישמח ) (עליך אויב). Even if there is anticipation for the end of punishment, at present, enemies remain. Through the poetry's use of בצע, the reader is allowed to consider both theodic and anti-theodic proposals.

In Lam 2.18-19 a speaker pleads with personified Jerusalem to appeal to the Lord over the lives of her little children. The verses read:

צעק לבם אל־אדני חומת בת־ציון  
 הורידו כנחל דמעה יומם ולילה  
 אל־תתני פוגת לך אל־תדם בת־עינך  
 קומי רני בליל לראש אשמרות  
 שפכי כמימ לבך נכה פני אדני  
 שאי אליו כפיך על־נפש עוללך  
 העטופים ברעב בראש כל־הוצות

“Their heart cried out to the Lord, the wall of dear Zion.  
 Let tears stream down like a river day and night.  
 Do not give yourself rest; do not allow your eyes to be still/quiet<sup>755</sup>!

Rise up, cry out in the night at start of the night watches.  
 Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.  
 Raise your palms to him over the life of your little children,  
 Those languishing with hunger in every street corner’.”

The difficulties of syntax, nominal and verbal agreement, and obscure language in Lam 2.18 have proved to be contentious among scholars, leading many to argue for textual corruption and thereby emendation.<sup>756</sup> If the path of emendation is taken, Gordis provides the most plausible and elegant solution. Yet as Provan notes, the LXX and all other ancient versions support the MT.<sup>757</sup> Apparently the versions thought the text as it stands is

<sup>755</sup>Qal imperfect verb from  $\sqrt{\text{דמם}}$ . Unusual in the way it is related to the pupil of the eye (בת־עינך, see also Ps 17.8), the repetition of the root here contrasts against its previous usage in Lam 2.10a and the silence of the elders.

<sup>756</sup>Gordis emends to, “Pour out your heart” (צקי לבך), where צקי derives from  $\sqrt{\text{צק}}$  (*Lamentations*, 166-67); Hillers follows suit (*Lamentations*, 101). Westermann follows BHS and emends to, “Cry aloud to YHWH, lament, O maiden daughter Zion” ( צעקי לך ) (אל־יהוה המי בתולת בת־ציון): *Die Klagelieder* 124, 126 = *Lamentations*, 143, 146. McDaniel emends צעק to צעקי, and understands the *mem* on לבם as an enclitic *mem* rather than a 3 masc. pl. pronominal suffix, thus rendering the line “Cry out from the heart to the Lord” [Thomas F. McDaniel, “Philological Studies in Lamentations, II,” *Bib* 49(1968): 203-4]. Albrektson offers לבה, “revenge,” as an emendation of לבם, so that the clause reads, “Cry out of revenge to the Lord,” or if with a suffix (לבתם), “Cry out about their rage (the enemies’) to the Lord” (*Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 116-17).

<sup>757</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 75.

plausible. There is no Masoretic notation to point toward emendation, either. How, then, does the text read as it stands?

In the reading process, the semantic and syntactic difficulties in Lam 2.18 have the effect of slowing down the linear movement of the reader, forcing one to consider the meaning of the verses. Following the MT, the heart of an unidentified group of speakers cries out to the Lord (Lam 2.18a $\alpha$ )—that is, disparate entities have been subsumed into a collective (heart) to address the deity with an evocative appeal. This remains understandable, though syntactically awkward. The identity of the collective “heart” is unknown. It could represent any of the groups of people within Jerusalem who have been mentioned up to this point: princes (Lam 2.2c), leaders of Israel (Lam 2.3a), children (Lam 2.4b), king and priest (Lam 2.6c), king and princes (Lam 2.9b), prophets (Lam 2.9c), elders (Lam 2.10a), maidens (Lam 2.10c), little children and sucklings (Lam 2.11c), or even the collective “my dear people” (Lam 2.11b).<sup>758</sup> The vagueness lends itself to the reader “filling in” the antecedent. How one fills in the antecedent remains variable, depending upon how one reads the text.

The semantic difficulty of חומת בת־ציון in Lam 2.18a $\beta$  is also an interpretative challenge. Is this a vocative construct chain or an appositional genitive, describing אדני? If the former, then the poet “apostrophizes the walls, and personifies the city, so that the stich b is virtually an appositional genitive, ‘the wall, namely, Zion’.”<sup>759</sup> Yet in this reading, the collective appeals to God only then to address a different party, namely “the wall of dear Zion.” This is awkward, at best. The latter translation is preferred by Provan and Gottwald. They understand חומת בת־ציון as an appositional genitive, describing the protective power of the Lord; both cite Zech 2.9 as evidence: “And I, I will be for her—utterance of YHWH—a wall of fire surrounding (her) and the glory I will be in her midst,” אהיה בתוכה ואני אהיה־לה נאמ־יהוה חומת אש סביב ולכבוד.<sup>760</sup> What follows in Lam 2.18b-19 is the content of the collective cry to the Lord. This understanding remains difficult because it supposes the group directs their address towards the deity only to urge him to appeal to *himself* in Lam 2.19b (“Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord”)!

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<sup>758</sup>Renkema thinks “their heart” refers to the “little children” in Lam 2.19c (*Lamentations*, 308); this is possible, though could only be known to the reader after working through verse eighteen. I maintain the reader searches the repertoire of peoples mentioned already in the poem to discover the antecedent.

<sup>759</sup>Gordis, *Lamentations*, 167.

<sup>760</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 76; Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 12.

A way to circumvent this impasse is to see Lam 2.18a as the observer's explanatory aside to the reader, depicting the cry of the people to the Lord, after which he then resumes his appeal to personified Jerusalem (Lam 2.18b-19).<sup>761</sup> However, the resumption of speech equally could fit in the mouth of the unidentified collective voice that cried to the Lord in Lam 2.18a who then addresses personified Jerusalem, urging her to pray to the deity as they do! Ultimately, the speaker remains ambiguous in the verses, but for reading purposes, the aberration of the four lines in Lam 2.19 retards the regular rhythm of the acrostic. In Lam 1.7, the only other four-line strophe in Lamentations, the realities of no helper, the fall of her people to an enemy, and the enemies' mocking were ever present. In Lam 2.19, the realities remain, though personified Jerusalem is encouraged to vociferously complain to the deity about them.

The speaker calls upon personified Jerusalem to cry out, weep, stand up in the public square, and pour out her heart before the face of the Lord to address the issue of the lives of her little children who are languishing and exposed. עולליך, שפכי, and העטופים recall Lam 2.11-12 and the plight of the children, reinforcing the notion that their plight represents an injustice to which God must surely respond. Renkema summarises, "Given the fact that God let himself be compelled to assist his people in need, such cries of distress also applied to him... The person of faith directed his or her cry of distress to YHWH, knowing that he was attentive to the cries of those in need and was in a position to help."<sup>762</sup> As the lives of the children ebb away (בהשתפרך, Lam 2.12), Zion is to pour out her very heart (שפכי כמים לברך, Lam 2.18) to God in their defence, for their help. Unlike the elders of Lam 2.10, who are silent (ידמו), personified Jerusalem is admonished to *be active and vocal* (אל־תדם), as she has not spoken up to this point: "Jerusalem's prayer of tears must be oriented to him alone."<sup>763</sup>

And in Lam 2.20-22 Zion offers her response, through complaint. The imperatives to YHWH in Lam 2.20a are matched by second person verbs in Lam 2.21c, 22a so that these verses can be seen as the *Anklage des Gottes* in the lament genre: they directly address the deity over present distress.<sup>764</sup> Yet equally they resemble the "weeping goddess" motif in the city-lament genre, as personified Zion here perhaps most clearly

<sup>761</sup>The observer, then, re-addresses the reader from his initial speech in Lam 2.1-12. So Provan, *Lamentations*, 76-7.

<sup>762</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 309.

<sup>763</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 315.

<sup>764</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 135 = *Lamentations*, 158.

can be seen as the goddess-mother pleading the case of her children, the city's inhabitants.<sup>765</sup> As in Lam 1.20-22, the complaint concerns the present suffering of the people, especially the vulnerable:

ראה יהוה והביטה למי עוללת כה  
אמ־תאכלנה נשים פרים עללי טפחים  
אמ־יהרג במקדש אדני כהן ונביא

שכבו לארץ חוצות נער וזקן  
בתולתי ובהורי נפלו בחרב  
הרגת ביום אפך טבחת לא חמלת

תקרא כיום מועד מגורי מסביב  
ולא היה ביום אפ־יהוה פליט ושריד  
אשר־טפחתי ורביתי איבי כלם

“Look, O YHWH, and consider whom you have dealt with in this way!  
Should mothers eat their fruit, little children of health and beauty?<sup>766</sup>  
Should he be slaughtered in the sanctuary of the Lord, priest and prophet?

Young and old lay down on to the ground of the open places;  
Maidens and young men fell by the sword.  
You slaughtered in the day of your wrath, you butchered<sup>767</sup>, you did not pity.

You called as on a festal day, terrors from every side.  
There was not—in the day of the wrath of YHWH—fugitive or survivor.  
(Those) who I brought forth and reared, my enemy destroyed.”

Repetition of day of YHWH language affirms divine control over the events of judgment: אפ־ ביום אפ־ (Lam 2.1c) // ביום אפ־יהוה (Lam 2.20b); Lam 1.15, קרא עלי מועד; Lam 2.22a, תקרא מועד. Yet his active role has brought utter human catastrophe and loss of future, evidenced by the merism of the falling of young men and elders (נער וזקן), the death teenagers in the prime of life (בתולתי ובהורי), and the ascendancy of enemies (מגורי מסביב, Lam 2.22a; איבי כלם, Lam 2.22c).

Despite this confirmation of divine control, these verses have the effect of redressing the justice of his judgment, rhetorically drawing YHWH's attention (and the

<sup>765</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*, 80; Contra Jahnow, who argues these verses exemplify the communal dirge genre (*Das Hebräische Leichenlied*, 174-5). The present study doubts the existence of the communal dirge.

<sup>766</sup>אם functions interrogatively, in the fashion of a prayer or entreaty, in the second and third poetic lines of Lam 2.20. See GKC § 149c; §107n, p, r; §109b, k; §151e; JM §114g, h; §155l, m; GBHS § 4.3.2.(g).

<sup>767</sup>טבחת derives from טבח, which has connotations of in the OT of butchering an animal at a slaughterhouse for consumption, as in Isa 53.7; Prov 7.22. Here, as in Isa 34.2, 6; 65.12; Jer 48.15; 50.27; Ezk 21.15, the regular meaning of the term is transformed to depict the horrific killing of people and nations in prophecies of divine judgment.

reader's) to the plight of the people and their unthinkable situation. Personified Zion uses the particularly Jeremianic idiom מגורי מסביב, "terrors from every side" (Jer 6.25; 20.3, 10; 46.5; 49.29). In Jer 6.25; 20.3; 46.5, and 49.29, it depicts a situation of divine agency in the destruction. And yet, in the confession of Jeremiah (Jer 20.10) as well as Ps 31.13, the phrase מגורי מסביב depicts the slander and mocking of god's servant (Jeremiah or the psalmist, respectively). Zion's use of the Jeremianic idiom sees her taking on the prophetic persona, affirming divine judgement against her with "terrors from every side." Yet read with Jer 20.10 and Ps 31.13 as intertexts, Zion takes on the persona of one who is in need of divine deliverance from an oppressive situation. Both positions are viable for Lam 2.20-22.

Repetition of formulaic address links Lam 2.20 with Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a, and brings a different focus to the appeals already offered and also raises the question of divine justice.<sup>768</sup> The triumph of the enemies (Lam 1.9c), the city's own thoughtlessness (Lam 1.11c), and her anxiety over sin (Lam 1.20a) contrast against the appeal in Lam 2.20a, where *YHWH's* activity focuses the appeal: he must consider what *he* has done! The interrogatives that follow the dual imperative formula of Lam 2.20a rhetorically function to draw *YHWH's* attention to his actions that have led both to cannibalism and the slaughtering of his representatives on the earth (priest and prophet) in his own house, the sanctuary (מקדש). Even the prophets, who have been blamed for the destruction for seeing false and deceptive visions (Lam 2.14), are portrayed in Zion's complaint as victims of divine wrath; this shocking reversal complicates any flat notion a sin-punishment relationship. Truly the prophets *are guilty of sin*, both before God and their fellow Judahites for leading them astray, but in personified Jerusalem's complaint, the justice of the punishment of sinful prophets is questioned—should this happen?

In essence, *YHWH's* actions described in Lam 2.1-12 are redressed by personified Jerusalem. She brings her complaint to him through a "horrific pun"<sup>769</sup> that occurs between עוללת and עללי, juxtaposing once again the justice of *YHWH's* activity against the plight of the little children in Jerusalem, a connection already made in Lam 2.11. The wordplay drives the reader to consider the propriety of *YHWH's* dealings (עוללת) with her, in that it has led to a situation where the gruesome imagery of cannibalism is realised. Little children have already been depicted as suffering in Lam 1.5c (עולליה), and

<sup>768</sup>Thomas, "Aesthetic Theory of Umberto Eco"; "The Liturgical Function."

<sup>769</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 99.

languishing in Lam 2.11c (עלל), yet here their plight is worse: their own mothers consume them (עלל). The depiction of cannibalism as a result of warfare is common in OT literature, but nonetheless appalling.<sup>770</sup> Repetition of עלל also recalls divine activity in Lam 1.12, 22a-b, and leads Dobbs-Allsopp to recognise the correspondence between Lam 1.12b and 2.20a: “which you have done to me” (Lam 1.12b) // “to whom you have dealt with in this way” (Lam 2.20a).<sup>771</sup>

She uses previously spoken language about YHWH’s day of anger<sup>772</sup> and turns it on its head: though he enacted destruction, surely he will recognise the inequity and injustice of it! Hillers says, “Granted that Jerusalem had sinned, the actual conquest brought ghastly extremes of suffering, which seemed to those involved to be out of proportion to any guilt of the sufferers.”<sup>773</sup> Jerusalem’s questions function rhetorically to get the deity to “look and consider” the justice of his actions while simultaneously, through the language, to get the reader to consider the same: is his dealing (עללת) with her right, or is there something fundamentally wrong with his judgment?

Zion’s speech in Lam 2.20-22 remains theologically provocative; it is the presence of this type of speech that leads Brandscheidt to believe that a Deuteronomic redactor inserted the central core of Lamentations 3 in order to theologically ‘correct’ it.<sup>774</sup> In the history of interpretation, the Targum likely reads against its Vorlage, providing a theological corrective to Zion’s complaint. In Targum Lam 2.20c, the translator introduces a response to Zion’s speech by “the Attribute of Justice” (מדת דינא), God himself. The Attribute of Justice responds, “Is it right to kill priest and prophet in the temple of the Lord, as when you killed Zechariah son of Iddo, the High Priest and faithful prophet in the Temple of the Lord on the Day of Atonement because he told you not to do evil before the Lord?”<sup>775</sup> Of course the Targum has its own intentions when translating, not least to promote Torah adherence and to vindicate God’s justice<sup>776</sup>, but it is interesting

<sup>770</sup>2 Ki 26.29; Deut 28.52-7; Jer 19.1-9; Ezk 5.10.

<sup>771</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 99.

<sup>772</sup>עלל (Lam 2.4b) // יהרג (Lam 2.20c) // הרגת (Lam 2.21c); לא חמל (Lam 2.2a) // לא חמלת (Lam 2.21c).

<sup>773</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 108.

<sup>774</sup>Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenlied*, 344-52; *Das Buch der Klagelieder*, 154.

<sup>775</sup>Christian M. M. Brady, “Vindicating God: The Intent of the Targum Lamentations,” *JAB* 3(2001): 34-5.

<sup>776</sup>Brady, “Vindicating God,” 27-40.

that at this verse the translator is compelled to interpret in a way that deflects Zion's focused complaint about divine injustice.<sup>777</sup>

It says something about the controversial nature of this speech. The juxtaposition between divine wrath in Lam 2.1-12 and Zion's distinctive complaint against it (Lam 2.20-22) leads Westermann to state: "Das Zusammengehören vom beidem, die Polarität der Ersprechung des einen zum anderen macht Thr 2 zu einem einzigartigen Zeugnis des Redens zu Gott im Alten Testament."<sup>778</sup> Vociferous resistance against divine wrath is an appropriate way to talk to God in Lam 2.20-22. Yet what makes it appropriate is its rhetorical logic: the complaint can protest against divine injustice because it is rhetorically grounded in a tacit belief *in the overriding justice that permeates YHWH's character*. In this way, two theologies can be espoused simultaneously. Perceived injustice of divine wrath may be affirmed, described, yet resisted through complaint; this theology only becomes sensible if the poet believed that through the rhetoric of complaint, YHWH would be moved to act—even against his own actions.

The theological challenge of Zion's complaint cannot go unnoticed. From Lam 1.5, 9c, 10, 16c; 2.13, and 17, potential protest against (in)justice of God's activity has been raised for the reader; but in Lam 2.20-22, these threads of protestation are given a full attention. Interpretatively, the reader has the opportunity to read Lamentations through Zion's complaint in Lam 2.20-22, and the "intention of the work" culminates into resistance over divine injustice and suffering, especially the suffering of the city's little children.<sup>779</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp states that "It is in the likes of [Zion], hurt and hurting as she is but able to rise in the midst of her suffering to confront her God with the felt wrongness of that suffering, that the poem finally stakes its chance for survival and new life."<sup>780</sup>

And yet there is no attempt to assert independence from God, and this remains fundamental to the logic of the complaint. Dobbs-Allsopp thinks the shift away from direct address in Lam 2.22b-c portrays Zion as if she "begins to slowly turn and walk away, perhaps shaking her head in utter disgust. The effect is strengthened,

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<sup>777</sup> Alternatively, Linafelt thinks the Targum translator highlights the emptiness of divine speech. Because Zion responds to the Attribute of Justice with hope for a future in the messiah—yet unrealised—the Targum emphasises the persistence of YHWH's antagonism against his people (especially the little children) rather than his justice (Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 95-6).

<sup>778</sup> Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 136 = *Lamentations*, 159.

<sup>779</sup> Lee, Dobbs-Allsopp, Linafelt, O'Connor, Middlemas, Blumenthal, and Hillers interpret the book in this manner.

<sup>780</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 104.

contradictorily, by the subsidence of rage, the lack of the felt need to address God directly, face to face.”<sup>781</sup> Yet the tacit hope of Zion’s complaint is that God will be moved *by* the complaint to enact his justice. She does not “walk away” from the deity, but rather challenges him for justice with a hope in his deliverance. This appeal, in fact, depends upon the image of YHWH as a divine judge, who will hear the complaint and respond in justice to it. With this challenge, Lamentations 2 concludes.

### 6.3. Conclusion

This chapter concludes with a catalogue of the ways Lamentations 2 exploits genre, poetics, and the acrostic structure to open various interpretative vistas for the model reader. In Lamentations 2 the linear progression of the acrostic formally ties this poem together and associates it with the previous poem. Counterbalancing the forward movement of the acrostic, poetics tend to create a reflexive movement for the reader. Lamentations 2 differs slightly from Lamentations 1 in the choice and placement of encyclopaedic content that it “blows up.” Whereas the phenomenology of mourning was prominent in the opening lines of Lamentations 1 and referred to personified Jerusalem, such usage only occurs later in Lam 2.10-13, depicting the inhabitants of the city and the observer, taking on the persona of Jeremiah the prophet. The difference brings divine judgment into focus at the beginning of Lamentations 2 to rhetorically respond to it in the speeches of the observer and Zion.

#### 6.3.1. Genre

As in Lamentations 1, various genres are woven together in the poetic tapestry of Lamentations 2. The dirge introduces the poem, with its characteristic אִיכָה, only to subvert the reader’s expectations and move into language similar to OAN in Lam 2.1b-9. This change differentiates the genre usage from Lamentations 1 and emphasises the divine wrath and judgment. Moreover, in comparison with divine portrayal in the city-laments, divine portrayal in Lamentations 2 effectively collapses the roles of the high-god (Enlil) and patron-deity (Nanna) to YHWH; he is seen as the authoritative god who decrees Jerusalem’s destruction (in the place of Enlil) and the patron-deity who abandons their sanctuary (Nanna). This collapse effectively promulgates a hope for future worship— though fundamentally different to what it had been—as YHWH’s vitality and

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<sup>781</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 102.



authority is affirmed. Yet the lament genre blends into the poem as well, particularly highlighting *Anklage des Gottes* (Lam 2.10-12, 20-22).

### 6.3.2. Poetics

Repetition is stylistically prominent in Lamentations 2. The poem repeats elements throughout and it exploits and builds upon the poetry of Lamentations 1. As with Lamentations 1, repetition functions primarily in two ways: intensification and combination. Yet the combinatory-refocusing function figures prominently in this poem:

#### Function: Intensification

1. To emphasise suffering:
  - a. עולל, Lam 2.11c (Lam 1.5c): heightens focus on the persistence of toddler's suffering.
  - b. הלכו + לפני, Lam 1.5c, 6c, 18c: suffering of inhabitants.
  - c. נחם, Lam 2.13b (Lam 1.2b, 7c, 9b, 16b, 17a, 21a): failed comfort and persistence of mourning.
2. To emphasise judgment:
  - a. בלע, Lam 2.2a, 5a-b, 8b: focus upon YHWH's active role in punishment.
  - b. יום, Lam 2.1c, 16c (Lam 1.12c, 21c): focus upon the day of the Lord—its judgment and effects.
  - c. שבר, Lam 2.9a, 11b, 13c (Lam 1.15b): focus upon breaking experienced in God's judgment.
  - d. לא-חמל, Lam 2.2a, 17b: focus on divine judgment.

#### Function: Combination

1. To construct interpretive depth:
  - a. מחמד, Lam 2.4b (Lam 1.7b, 11b): provides another facet of human tragedy: the loss of the city's "precious" leaders.
  - b. צר / איב, Lam 2.4a-b, 5b (Lam 2.3b, 7b, 16a, 1.8b, 11c): reveals the enemy is both an unnamed foe (Lam 2.3b, 7b, 16a, 1.8b, 11c) *and* YHWH (Lam 2.4a-b, 5b).
  - c. בלע, Lam 2.16b (Lam 2.2a, 5a-b, 8b): this final repetition of the verb briefly provides the view that the *enemies* actually orchestrated the destruction rather than YHWH.
  - d. חמרמר מעי, Lam 2.11a (Lam 1.20a): differentiates sources of pain: from inner anxiety over sin (Lam 1.20a) to the breaking of the observer's people (Lam 2.11a).
2. To refocus previously held understandings:
  - a. לא-חמל, Lam 2.2a, 17b, 21c: the third repetition (v. 21c) challenges previous affirmations of divine judgment (vv. 2a, 17b).
  - b. עולל, Lam 19c, 21c (Lam 1.5c; 2.11c): Lam 2.19c, 21c, effectively challenge the justice of the suffering of the toddlers at the hands of the Lord.

- c. *יְהוָה* + *וּמִי יִשְׁמָע* (הַבְּיָטָה), Lam 2.20a (Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a): refocuses the motivation for appeal on the injustice of *YHWH*'s actions, rather than sin, anxiety, or enemies.
- d. *עָלֵינוּ*, Lam 2.18a, 20b: affirmation of, the questioning, the justice of divine judgment (what he has *done*).
- e. *יִשׁ*, Lam 2.22b (Lam 1.12c, 21c; 2.1c, 16c): refocuses the day of the Lord and questions its justice.
- f. *הִרְגָנוּ*, Lam 2.4b, 21c: the latter repetition questions *YHWH*'s act of slaughtering previously described.

Despite different functions, repetition of language effectively binds Lamentations 1 and 2 together stylistically, to the degree that Lee can say that the poems are of a piece and are to be read together.<sup>782</sup> In the combinatory examples cited above, repetition juxtaposes former understandings against present understandings, leading to different horizons of interpretation for the reader. This quality reveals the poem to be “open” rather than “closed” in Eco’s theory.

Other tropes are active as well. Enjambment works effectively in Lam 2.1-9 to emphasise the divine activity and the subjection and passivity of Zion to his wrath. Ambiguous language and grammar slows the reader to face the interpretative challenges created by them. This is seen in the terms *תַּפְרַאת יִשְׂרָאֵל* and *הַדָּם רָגְלָיו* in Lam 2.1, where the exact meaning of these terms remains unclear, though a range of semantic options is offered as the reader engages content activated from the OT. Ambiguous language also occurs in *לְהַשִּׁיב שִׁבְיָתָךְ* in Lam 2.14, where the double meaning of the language creates for the reader a picture of the total failure of the prophets. Moreover, the polyvalence of *מִדְּוָהִים* draws the reader to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah to garner its meaning, in comparison, its usage in Lam 2.14c affirms the seduction of the prophets while pointing towards a glimmer of hope through the possibility of divine healing. Difficulties of syntax, nominal and verbal agreement, and obscure language also appears in Lam 2.18-19, with retarding the reader’s forward movement, creating interpretative space for the reader to consider the appeal to personified Jerusalem evidenced in Lam 2.19, calling Zion to vocalise her complaint to the Lord over the lives of her children.

Compared to Lamentations 1, personification of Zion is used considerably less, but effectively in Lam 2.20-22, while divine imagery is exploited to a large degree. In contrast to the way that Lamentations exploits personification to provide the model reader a variety of ways to perceive Zion, in Lamentations 2, personification is employed to construct a model reader that may, with Zion, protest against God and an appeal to him,

<sup>782</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 162.

to counteract his activity. The most prevalent imagery in this poem is that of the divine warrior (Lam 2.1-9) and the metaphor of the Lord being like an enemy/foe (Lam 2.4a-b, 5b). Imagery of the divine warrior from both Canaanite myth and OT is exploited in Lamentations 2.1-9 to great effect, as well. In it, YHWH is depicted as a storm-god, an archer, and a consuming fire, all of which fit within the cultural encyclopaedia of the ANE. Lam 2.1a reverses beneficent imagery of God to reveal his present role: that of a storm-god against his people. This imagery extends divine warrior imagery from Lam 1.13-15. Moreover, through allusions to Exodus 15, 19, and 34, the image of YHWH as divine warrior set against his people is contrasted against former accounts of this role against foreign nations and his presence and beneficence to his people. Allusions to Exodus build on those already demonstrated in Lam 1.3. The poem concludes, however, as did Lamentations 1, with personified Zion appealing to YHWH. In these verses he is depicted as divine judge, the one who hears will hear the complaint of Zion and respond. This image is juxtaposed against the former image of divine warrior, for it is the activity of the divine warrior that is questioned and brought before the Lord as the divine judge. Through juxtaposition of images, divine imagery is complicated.

Speaking voices are employed rather sparingly compared to Lamentations 1, whose almost dialogic interaction between the observer and personified Zion was a hallmark of the poem. The observer takes on the persona of Jeremiah in Lam 2.11-19 and the poetry alludes to the book often using Jeremianic idiom (שָׁבֵר, בַּת־עַמִּי, עוֹלָל) (ויניק, זָמַם, מַגֵּר מִסְבִּיב). He confirms divine wrath (Lam 2.1-10) only to challenge its effects (Lam 2.11-19), using the persona of Jeremiah to help accomplish his task. In this way, the observer's voice is infused with the prophet in a manner unique from Lamentations 1. Also embedded in his monologue is the speech of children (Lam 2.12) and enemies (Lam 2.15, 16). As in Lamentations 1 (Lam 1.10c, 21bβ), embedded speech occurs in Lam 2.12aβ (the voice of children), 15c and 16b-c (speech of enemies). These speeches draw out two themes already presented in Lamentations 1, namely suffering children and mocking enemies, and give further "audible" testimony of the city's plight. Finally, the voice of personified Jerusalem also effectively is brought to bear to vociferously question the deity over his actions in Lam 2.20-22.

Finally, allusion is displayed with great effect in this poem. Lamentations 2 builds on allusions to Exodus in Lam 2.1, 3b, 4a, a tradition already exploited in Lam 1.3. Further, Lamentations 2 alludes prominently to the prophecies of Jeremiah through Jeremianic language in Lam 2.11-17 (שָׁבֵר, בַּת־עַמִּי, עוֹלָל ויניק, זָמַם, מַגֵּר מִסְבִּיב), day of

YHWH language and the OAN in his prophecy (Jeremiah 4-6; 8-10; 46-51), the presentation of Zion's incurable wound (Lam 2.11 // Jer 30.12, 15), the presentation of YHWH as healer (Lam 2.13c // Jer 17.14), and depiction of false prophecy (Lam 2.14 // Jer 5.31; 6.13-14). The effect of this allusion is two-fold. Firstly, it confirms divine destruction as a result of sin, even the sin of the prophets. Yet through allusion, this confirmation (or theodicy) begins to be questioned, as the persona of Jeremiah weeps over the break (שבר) of his city by focusing upon the plight of the children of the city (עללל יינק); this will become a rhetorical springboard by which he urges the city to cry out to YHWH on their behalf. Lam 2.17a alludes to Isa 10.12 through the term בצע; the regular connotation of the word is rhetorically shifted so that the reader might denote a future "fulfilment" of divine wrath against Jerusalem, briefly infusing a tone of hope in the poetry, though that hope is abandoned by Lam 2.17c. Different to Lamentations 1, this poem has no overt allusions to Deuteronomy; cannibalism mentioned in Lam 2.20b may refer to Deut 28.52-7 but this is not necessarily the case.<sup>783</sup>

### 6.3.3. Theology

The poetics of the poem impinge upon its theological presentation. In terms of the question of divine justice, the poetry opens possible interpretative worlds for the reader so that one is able to conjoin day of YHWH language and divine warrior imagery (Lam 1.13-15; 2.1-9) with confessions of the justice of the deity's actions (Lam 1.5b, 18a-b) and overt depiction of the people's sin (Lam 1.8-9b, 22b; 2.14) to construct a theodicy that (a) confirms divine judgment is a result of sin, and (b) divine judgment is just. However, the unparalleled depiction of YHWH's active role in destruction (thirty active verbs in Lam 2.1-9), the focus upon the suffering little children depicted up to Lamentations 2 (Lam 1.5c, 11b, 18c; 2.11-12, 19c, 20b-22c), the observer's appeal to Zion to pour out her heart to the Lord over her children (Lam 2.19b-c), and Zion's vociferous challenge to the deity in Lam 2.20-22 reveals to the reader a theology that is essentially anti-theodic in orientation, resisting divine activity that has caused great pain. Neither horizon is entirely foreclosed upon for the reader, especially when read with Lamentations 1.

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<sup>783</sup> Alternatively, Albrektson believes there is direct correspondence between the two (*Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 232-33).

In this vein, another theological point that has been raised in the poem is the source and nature of hope, both in the present and for the future. In comparison with the Mesopotamian city-laments and related genres, Lam 2.1-9 presents YHWH as authoritative in his decree over Jerusalem's destruction and potent despite the destruction of his own shrine. Because YHWH remains potent, even after the city and temple has been destroyed, Lamentations 2 intimates a glimmer of theological hope even amidst destruction: because the Lord is not exiled and powerless, he is able to hear the pleas of the people and rectify their situation. Moreover because the city's destruction was part of his divine decree, perhaps there is the possibility of a religious future with him, though admittedly a future fundamentally different than it had been. This contrasts to divine presentation in the Mesopotamian city-laments, whose patron-deities are impotent to prevent Enlil's decree for destruction of their cities and shrines.

Although divine sovereignty is affirmed by and large in the poem, at least in Lam 2.16, this theological portrait is briefly questioned, but not contravened. The repeated term בלע set in the mouth of the enemy raises for the reader an opportunity to question YHWH's control in destruction. Moreover the shift in the alphabetic sequence slows the reader's progress through the acrostic so that one can consider why it is the case. Such theological ambiguity over the cause of destruction was exploited to a larger degree in Lamentations 1, but nonetheless appears here as well.

Theological hope is perhaps most explicitly linked to the use of the rare word בצע in Lam 2.17a, an allusion to Isa 10.12. By reading the verse with this Isaianic allusion, the poetry shifts the normal denotation of the word (self-interest and violence) to present a hope for the end of divine punishment (the fulfilment of his word) against his people. But this theological hope is achieved by the reader only by working through the semantic range for the word בצע to gain this insight; in this way, the question of divine injustice is dealt with to break forth into a hope for an end to destruction and punishment.

Another facet of theological hope that has been raised as well is the image of YHWH as the divine judge. The hope that funds Lam 2.13 stems from a view that the deity will heal and comfort because this is his nature as divine judge; once he sees the enormity of suffering—especially of children—he will heal and comfort. This verse aims to move YHWH to neglect his role as the divine warrior (Lam 2.1-9) and respond to his people as the divine judge, and out of his justice to deliver the oppressed. The fact that he has not, in fact, been the comforter and healer that the persona believes him to be reveals Lam 2.13 as a piece of hopeful, theological rhetoric designed to gain God's attention and

move him to act. This rhetoric underlies Lam 2.20-22. Though his activity as the divine warrior is strongly questioned in these verses, they nonetheless depend upon a logic that confirms YHWH as the divine judge, who will hear Zion's complaint of Lam 2.20-22 and respond to her in a favourable manner. As Brueggemann rightly argues, the tacit belief in the justice of YHWH as the judge of the earth enables his people to challenge him on areas they perceive to be fundamentally unjust in life.<sup>784</sup>

In conclusion, it is evident that theological presentation in Lamentations vacillates, opening different theological horizons for the reader. From poetics, the reader constantly moves forward (through the acrostic), backward (through repetition), and outward into the encyclopaedia (through allusion and comparison with other ANE literary data) to make sense of the poem, especially of its theology. Once recognising this fact, the question of why comes to the fore. Understood from Eco's aesthetic theory, diversity in theological horizons can be explained through reference to Eco's distinction between "open" and "closed" texts. Diversity in theological presentation is evident in Lamentations 2, like Lamentations 1, so that the reader might activate any of them in the reading process. Each theological presentation is fully justifiable as the reader can read—working through the text—YHWH as just, unjust, a source of hope, or a source of despair. Thus the book develops an "open" strategy for its model reader, making Lamentations an "open text." And for the real flesh-and-blood readers of Lamentations 2 in sixth century BCE Judah, that this poem (as in Lamentations 1) constructs an "open" strategy for its model reader provides a means for these real readers (as they become the model reader) to engage YHWH and their situation in a variety of ways.

An important caveat must be made here, however. Theological openness works *rhetorically* only on the basis of a ground-belief that the deity: (a) remained a viable object of faith and potent to hear the appeals presented in the poem and (b) would respond out of his just and beneficent character to rectify potential injustice drawn out in the text, even if the theological portrait painted the profile of an unjust deity. Only this tacit belief in divine power and justice enables the range of theological presentations in the poem. If the poetry holds YHWH as *objectively* unjust, then the rhetoric of the poem, especially the strong rhetoric in the appeals of Lam 2.20-22, misfires.

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<sup>784</sup>Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 235-36.

## CHAPTER 7: LAMENTATIONS 3

### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter continues Eco's aesthetic analysis on Lamentations 3. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated that "the intention of the work" up to this point in Lamentations elicits interpretative choices from its model reader, both in regards to its theology and meaning. The reader may follow an interpretative horizon that strongly questions the deity through complaint, or affirms him by confirming sin and rebellion of the people. Alternatively, the reader can follow an interpretative horizon that opens up varying sources of hope, whether in YHWH's continued vitality despite the destruction of his cult, his role of beneficent divine judge that will hear the cries of his people, or in the (slim) view of hope that his word has been fulfilled and completed against Jerusalem, thereby suggesting an end of suffering (Lam 2.17). The notion of hope has been ever present, however, in the logic and rhetoric of the poems—God is potent and present to hear the cries and prayers of his people. Hope then derives from the continued presence of the Lord and the various expressions of its real readers in using this poetry. The blend of genres, different sources of pain (God, self, enemies), and actualised encyclopaedic content facilitate these interpretative possibilities. In terms of text pragmatics, the diversity of theological and semantic horizons projected before the model reader reveals Lamentations 1 and 2 as open texts in Eco's understanding.

Yet, it has been argued, all this changes when one arrives at Lamentations 3 because it represents the heart of the poem where the meaning of the book as a whole is found.<sup>785</sup> The poem draws attention to itself due to its structure and size. It has the most extensive acrostic in the book. As in Lamentations 1—2, each strophe is comprised of three poetic lines; but in contrast to the previous poems, in Lamentations 3, all poetic lines adhere to a letter of the alphabet, making twenty-two strophes in all. The boundaries of each strophe can be identified by the progression of the acrostic, which the Masoretes

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<sup>785</sup>See 1.1., above.

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marked with *sētûmôt*. Using the first strophe as an example, each subsequent strophe appears as follows:

\_\_\_\_\_ 8  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 8  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 8 (7 *sētûmâ*)

Verses 4-6 comprise the 2 strophe, 7-9 the 3 strophe, progressing until the 8 strophe is achieved in verses 64-66.

The size of the poem leads Mintz to conclude it is “three times the length of the chapters that flank it on either side.”<sup>786</sup> This point is slightly misleading. He is correct that as far as the number of *verses*, the poem is three times as long as the other poems in the book: it has sixty-six verses rather than twenty-two. But the number of *poetic lines* shows Lamentations 3 to be one line shorter than each of the preceding poems.<sup>787</sup> Nonetheless, its alphabetic acrostic pattern and length draw attention to the poem for the reader and so must be accounted for interpretatively. Moreover, Lamentations 3 is conspicuous due to its theological presentation. It is the only chapter in the book that draws upon wisdom material (Lam 3.25-39) that admonishes faith in YHWH.

As demonstrated below in the analyses of Middlemas, Berges, Brandscheidt, Labahn, Krašovec and Heim, these verses mark the theology of the book as a whole. For Mintz, the poem comprises the “theological nub” of the book where the worshipper can reconnect with God in faith.<sup>788</sup> Heater thinks Lam 3.34-6 comprises the “central argument” of the poem and book, that God is gracious.<sup>789</sup> Once again, for Kaiser, the chapter is the book’s theological crescendo, the “upward view” that teaches both theodicy and divine succor in time of suffering.<sup>790</sup> Set against Eco’s conception of open and closed texts, these scholarly treatments of Lamentations 3 provide varying degrees of theological closure to the book

The present chapter, however, challenges this view and highlights the “open” quality of the poem as it coheres with the developing “intention of the work” on display

<sup>786</sup>Mintz, *Hurban*, 33.

<sup>787</sup>Lamentations 3 has sixty-six lines as opposed to sixty-seven in both of the first two poems due to the four-line verses of Lam 1.7 and 2.19. Lamentations 4 and 5 cumulatively comprise sixty-six lines. Thus, the structural centre of the book, counting according to poetic lines rather than versification, lies in Lam 2.21 rather than Lam 3.33. Incidentally, this gives a rather different theological vision than Lam 3.33.

<sup>788</sup>Mintz, *Hurban*, 33-41.

<sup>789</sup>Heater, “Structure and Meaning in Lamentations,” 304-15, especially 308-9.

<sup>790</sup>Kaiser, *Grief and Pain in the Plan of God*, 20-21.

in Lamentations 1 and 2. Openness is achieved, among other means, through repetition of language (as in Lamentations 1 and 2), generic blending, and drawing in of encyclopaedic content, which will be demonstrated through exegesis of the poem.

Genre works somewhat differently than in the previous poems. Whereas Lamentations 1 and 2 interwove the dirge, lament, and city-lament genres to comprise their poetic tapestry,<sup>791</sup> Lamentations 3 evinces the lament genre predominantly, both individual (Lam 3.1-21, 23-24, 48-66) and communal (Lam 3.22, 40-47); wisdom material is then set in between these (Lam 3.25-39).<sup>792</sup> The wisdom section of the poem is uniquely juxtaposed against the lament sections that flank it, creating a hermeneutic richness for the model reader.

It is unclear the purpose of this central parenetic setting. It is conceivable to understand Lam 3.25-39 as a didactic text, designed to influence the reader to adopt its teaching as normative for the meaning and theology of the book. However, it is equally plausible to understand these verses as a kind of rhetorical stop-gap that heightens for the reader an emphasis upon lament and the present reality of pain when read in conjunction with Lam 3.40-66.<sup>793</sup> In fact, the text allows both understandings, so that the model reader is forced into, in Eco's terminology, an "ideal insomnia" to make a decision about its purpose—instruction on how to handle the crisis theologically or as a rhetorical tool to highlight the pain of the present moment.<sup>794</sup>

As in Lamentations 1 and 2, different genres are woven together, but here the generic mixture (especially between individual and communal laments) produces the effect of blending communal and individual perspectives, which in turn becomes productive for the reader—the individual voice is inherently inscribed in the voice of the communal "we" in the poem while the individual voice nonetheless is given its place as well. For Eco's theory, in this poem the real readers are constructed into the model reader by actualising both communal and individual identities in the poem. This view counters

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<sup>791</sup> Along with other textual influences from Jeremiah, Isaiah, Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Exodus, as seen above

<sup>792</sup> Moreover, prophetic material (specifically "day of YHWH" language and imagery) is incorporated within the larger generic blocks of Lamentations 3 as in the previous poems.

<sup>793</sup> Those adopting the former view are highlighted above (Mintz, Heater, Brandscheidt, Middlemas, Heim, Krašovec, W. Kaiser, Berges, Labahn) while Dobbs-Allsopp prominently accepts the latter view ("Tragedy, Tradition, and Theology in the Book of Lamentations," 48-9; *Lamentations*, 122-8).

<sup>794</sup> See 3.3.2., above.

previous scholarship that polarise the distinction between the individual/communal voices in the poem. Some believe the speaker should be identified as an (historical) individual or as a community:

1. Jeremiah, the prophet (Wiesmann)<sup>795</sup>
2. The persona of Jeremiah, taken up by his followers to model how to handle disaster (Rudolph, Löhr, Gottwald)<sup>796</sup>
3. A pious sufferer, paradigmatic for the people (Brandscheidt)<sup>797</sup>
4. A defeated soldier (Lanahan)<sup>798</sup>
5. A "strongman" (O'Connor)<sup>799</sup>
6. A literary "everyman" (Hillers, Renkema)<sup>800</sup>
7. Jehoiakin (Porteous)<sup>801</sup>
8. Zedekiah (Sæbo)<sup>802</sup>
9. Seriah the high priest! (Brunet)<sup>803</sup>
10. A General Davidic King (Gottlieb, Dobbs-Allsopp)<sup>804</sup>
11. The suffering community or Zion (Gerstenberger, Berges)<sup>805</sup>
12. Anonymous Sufferer (Weiser, Kraus)<sup>806</sup>
13. The same speaker (observer) as Lamentations 1 and 2 (Provan, House)<sup>807</sup>
14. The Job-like voice of the exiles (Berlin)<sup>808</sup>

The wide range of views displays the poetry's elusiveness regarding the specific identity of the speaker(s). Ultimately, he has affinities with a man, personified Zion, Jeremiah, a

<sup>795</sup>Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*, 44-84.

<sup>796</sup>Rudolph, *Klagelieder*, 196-99; Max Löhr, "Threni III und die jeremianische Autorschaft des Buches der Klagelieder," *ZAW* 24(1904): 1-16; Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 37-46.

<sup>797</sup>Brandscheidt, *Gotteszorn und Menschenlied*, 350.

<sup>798</sup>Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations," 45-7.

<sup>799</sup>O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 44-6.

<sup>800</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 122; Renkema, *Lamentations*, .

<sup>801</sup>Norman Porteous, "Jerusalem—Zion: The Growth of a Symbol," in *Verbannung und Heimkehr: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theologie Israels im 6. und 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Wilhelm Rudolph zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Arnulf Kuschke; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961), 235-52.

<sup>802</sup>Magne Sæbø, "Who is 'The Man' in Lamentations 3.1?" in *On the Way to Canon: Creative Tradition History in the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 131-42.

<sup>803</sup>Gilbert Brunet, *Les Lamentations contre Jérémie: Réinterprétation des quatre premières Lamentations* (Bibliothèque de L'École des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses, 75; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 114-87.

<sup>804</sup>Hans Gottlieb, "Das kultische Leiden des Königs: Zu den Klagegliedern 3, 1," *SJOT* 2(1987): 121-6; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 108-9. Dobbs-Allsopp, however, notes that Hillers' identification of the נָבִי as everyman is persuasive as well.

<sup>805</sup>Erhard Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2 and Lamentations* (FOTL; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 496-7; Berges, "'Ich bin der Mann, der Elend sah'," 10-20.

<sup>806</sup>Wieser, *Klagelieder*, 228-35; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 54-5.

<sup>807</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 80-1; House, *Lamentations*, 404-8.

<sup>808</sup>Berlin, *Lamentations*, 84-6.

royal figure, a pious sufferer, and the observer of the previous poems. This range provides the reader a number of ways to access and identify with the speaker in a way similar to the range of personifications of Jerusalem in Lamentations 1. Delimiting the identity of the voice(s) in the poem diminishes the way it functions poetically. The varied identities of, and relationships between, the speakers of Lamentations 3 promote an open strategy for the model reader.

The interchange of speeches of individual and communal speaking voices contributes to destabilising a “closed” notion for the poem. The borders of speech remain blurred and it is unclear whether speaking voices *respond* to one another<sup>809</sup> or they are the same speaker throughout, at times speaking on his own and at times speaking as part of a group.<sup>810</sup> A brief outline of the speeches (based upon shifts from first person singular to plural) highlights this point:

Lam 3.1-21:	Individual speech of the גבר, who recounts his misery.
Lam 3.22-23:	Speech of the גבר, speaking as part of a community.
Lam 3.24:	Speech of the גבר, explaining his reason for hope
Lam 3.25-39:	Speech of either an individual or communal voice (unclear) offering instruction.
Lam 3.40-47:	Speech of a communal voice, admonishing repentance and recounting YHWH’s and the enemy’s activities.
Lam 3.48-66:	Speech of an individual, speaking about distress, divine response, and praying against enemies.

## 7.2. Exegesis of Lam 3.1-66

The poem opens with the clause, “I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath” (אני הגבר ראה עני בשבט עברתי) rather than איכה as in Lamentations 1 or 2. This change immediately marks for the reader a different tone than the other poems. Though Lam 3.1-17 is quite similar to an individual lament evidenced in the Psalms, most of these begin with an invocation and address to YHWH, whereas Lam 3.1 does not, leading Dobbs-Allsopp to state, “For a poem that draws so self-consciously on the individual and communal lament genres from the Psalms, it is remarkable that no other psalm opens in a way analogous to Lamentations 3.”<sup>811</sup> This introduction to the poem focuses upon suffering, resultant of “his wrath” (עברתי), whose antecedent is YHWH

<sup>809</sup>Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 167-81.

<sup>810</sup>Gordis, *Lamentations*, 172-76.

<sup>811</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 108.

(בעברתי; Lam 2.2b). And God's wrath in the verse introduces in the poem a prominent theology of divine judgment.

"The man" (הגבר) speaks in the verse. גבר is a word used to connote physical, manly power, often in military prowess; Lanahan believes the man is a defeated soldier while O'Connor is content to identify him as a strongman. But Dobbs-Allsopp argues the closest parallel construction of an "I am X" clause in the ANE to Lam 3.1 comes from self-presentation formulae in royal inscriptions: "I am Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu'ath," for example.<sup>812</sup> Certainly some have understood the גבר as a royal figure, as indicated above.

While this notion cannot be foreclosed upon, Renkema helpfully notes the primary meaning for גבר can be seen from the Psalms, as an exemplary figure, a righteous follower of YHWH. "Taste and see that YHWH is good; blessed is the man (הגבר) who trusts in him" (Ps 34.9); "From YHWH the steps of a man (גבר) are prepared and he delights (in) his way" (Ps 37.23); "Blessed is the man (הגבר) who places<sup>813</sup> his trust (in) YHWH" (Ps 40.5).<sup>814</sup> In this light, the "man" of Lam 3.1 is a faithful follower, strong precisely because of his devotion, a theme which becomes prominent in Lam 3.17-39. The poetry exploits this portion of the encyclopaedia to enable the semantics of "faithful follower of YHWH-as-גבר" for the reader so that what follows will be an exposition from a Yahwistic devotee. Yet the anonymity of the devotee is, in fact, productive so that the reader might identify him as Zion, Jeremiah, a royal figure, or *even the reader himself*.

Despite his devotion, his present situation is miserable. Unlike Lamentations 1 and 2 that both admit sin, there is no such confession from the man. The language used in Lam 3.1, "affliction/misery" (עני), recalls personified Jerusalem's suffering in Lam 1.3a (מעני), 7b (עניה) and Lam 1.9a (עני). This point has often been missed, and immediately the relationship between the גבר and Jerusalem or Zion is raised for the reader based upon previous information garnered in the reading process. Poetically, the suffering of גבר *becomes* the suffering of Zion; though by only teasing the connection, the two parties are not collapsed onto one another.

But like Zion (Lam 1.13-15; 2.1-9), he experiences divine wrath (עברה). The text reads:

<sup>812</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 108.

<sup>813</sup>עני is a Qal perfect (עני) rather than "the name" (שם), as LXX reads.

<sup>814</sup>The usage of הגבר in Psalms 34 and 37 is interesting because these too are acrostic poems.

אני הגבר ראה עני כשבת עברתו  
 אותי נהג וילך חשך ולא־אור  
 אך בי יִשָּׁב יהפך ידו כל־היום

בלה בשרי ועורי שֶׁבַר עצמותי  
 בנה עלי ויקף ראש ותלאה  
 במחשכים הושיבני כמתי עולם

גדר בעדו ולא אצא הכביד נחשתי  
 גם כי אזעק ואֲשׁוּעַ שְׁתֵּם תפלתי  
 גדר דרכי בגזית נתיבתי עוה

דב ארב הוא לי אריה<sup>815</sup> במסתרים  
 דרכי סורר ויפשהני שִׁמְנֵי שָׁמַם  
 דרך קשתו ויצִיבֵנִי כמטרא להץ

הביא בכלייתי בני אֲשַׁפְתּוּ  
 הִייתִי שֶׁחַק לְכָל־עַמִּי נְגִינָתָם כְּלֵי־הַיּוֹם  
 הַשְׁבִּיעֵנִי בַמְרֹרִים הַרוּנִי לַעֲנָה

ויגרס בחצץ שְׁנֵי הַכְּפִי־שָׁנִי בַאֲפֶר  
 ותזנה משלום נִפְשִׁי נִשְׁתִּיתִי טוֹבָה  
 ואמר אבד נצחי ותוהלתי מיהוה

"I am the man who saw affliction under the rod of his wrath.  
 He drove and led me into darkness and not light.  
 Surely against me his hand demolished again and again<sup>816</sup>, all day long.

He consumes my flesh and skin; he breaks my bones.  
 He built over me and surrounded me (with) poison and hardship.  
 In dark places he caused me to dwell, like those long dead.

He built a wall around me, and I could not get out; he made my shackles  
 heavy.

Even though I cried out and called for help, he shut out<sup>817</sup> my prayer.  
 He built a wall (over) my way with hewn stone, he twisted my pathway.

<sup>815</sup>Read ארי (Qere) instead of אריה (Kethib). It may be re-pointed to read אַרְיָה.

<sup>816</sup>The combined verbs (especially with the use of שׁוּב) indicate a verbal hendiadys and שׁוּב should be translated adverbially, depicting the repeated activity of the second verb, יִהְפֵּךְ (Lambdin, §173). This is doubly reinforced by the predication "all day long" (כְּלֵי־הַיּוֹם).

<sup>817</sup>שְׁתֵּם is a *hapax legomenon* whose meaning uncertain. Some manuscripts read שְׁתֵּם, "he blocks my prayer." Renkema believes the idea of YHWH blocking the man's prayer is "far from evident" (*Lamentations*, 363). As it stands, it is a Qal perfect from שְׁתֵּם, "he shuts out my prayer" (see *HALOT*). But shutting out one's prayer does not mean that YHWH does not hear but rather rebuffs the prayer. Similarly, following Driver, Gottwald and Albrektson understand the term from the Arabic verb meaning "to reject" or "to frustrate" [G. R. Driver, "Hebrew Notes on the 'Song of Songs' and 'Lamentations'," in *Festschrift für Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet von Kollegen und Freunden* (eds. Walther Baumgartner, Otto Eißfeldt, Karl Elliger, and Leonhard Rost; Tübingen: Mohr, 1950), 134-46; 139].

A bear lying in ambush he is to me; a lion<sup>818</sup> in secret places.

He has turned my path and torn me to pieces; he made me desolate.

He strung his bow and placed me as a target for an arrow.

He brought into my inmost parts the arrows of his quiver.

I have become a laughingstock<sup>819</sup> to all my people<sup>820</sup>; their mocking-song all day long.

He satisfied me with bitter drinks; he sated me (with) wormwood.

He caused my teeth to grind as gravel; he made me cower in the dust.

And you rejected my soul from peace; I forgot goodness.

And I said, "My splendour and my hope have become lost from YHWH".

Lack of explicit "confession" notwithstanding, the various divine metaphors in this pericope suggest divine judgment against the גבר, and by extension, to Zion as well.

This is first evidenced in "under the rod of his wrath (בִּשְׁבֵט עֲבַרְתּוֹ)" in Lam 3.1. In the OT this collocation is rare and occurs in only one other text, Isa 10.5-6: "Behold Assyria, the rod (שֵׁבֶט) of my wrath (אֲפִי); and in whose hand my fury is a staff! Against an ungodly nation I will send him, and upon the people of my wrath (עֲבַרְתִּי) I will command him!" Similar usage in Lam 3.1 leads the model reader to its allusion in Isa 10.5-6; already the encyclopaedic content of Isa 10.12 was activated in Lam 2.17 to great effect. The difference between Lam 3.1 and Isa 10.5-6 is significant: a foreign nation is not given credit for the man's affliction but the wrath dispensed upon the גבר derives directly from the Lord, as in Lam 2.1-9. That the poet again "blows up" content from Isaiah 10 is telling. It is reasonable to surmise that the poet saw Isaiah 10 as a formative text for his work and used it as a clue for the reader to negotiate the poetry of Lamentations, noting the similarities and differences. For Lam 2.17, the text opens a number of possibilities for the reader to consider the end of punishment even in the midst of it. But Lam 3.1 emphasises the reality of divine punishment.

The reader moves through the divine judgment by negotiating language from the Exodus tradition (as in Lamentations 1) and Jeremiah (as in Lamentations 2) in Lam 3.5.

<sup>818</sup>Unusual orthography for ארִיָה, "lion." Though its proper pointing would be: אֲרִיָה, "lion," the meaning of the noun is clear. Some MSS read אָרִי, "lion" (Qere).

<sup>819</sup>Note the particularly Jeremicanic idiom for an object of loathing or mocking, שֵׁחֶק, "laughingstock" (Jer 20.7; 48.26, 27, 39; also Job 12.4).

<sup>820</sup>The Peshiṭta reads "the peoples/nations" (עַמִּים) for "my people" (עַמִּי). If one follows the Peshiṭta, then the man, like Zion, is jeered and mocked by the foreign nations (Lam 1.7d, 8b, 17c; 2.15-16). Yet following the MT and LXX, then his own people, presumably from Jerusalem, who taunt his suffering at God's hands. This offers a different theological perspective on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, marking them as

In the first place, Albrektson and Renkema argue “hardship” (תלאה) is “as a rule used of tribulations of Israel,” especially the Exodus experience and thereafter in the wilderness wanderings.<sup>821</sup> When Moses explains to Jethro Israel’s Egyptian experience and God’s salvation in Ex 18.1-12, Moses summarises Egyptian captivity as “hardship” (תלאה). This term is used again in Num 20.14-17 by Moses to describe to the nation of Edom the hardships the Israelites experienced in Egyptian bondage: “you know all the hardships (כל־התלאה) that have befallen us; that our forefathers went down to Egypt, we dwelled in Egypt for many days, and they dealt harshly with us and our forefathers” (Num 20.14b-15). If it is true that in Lam 3.5 “hardship” has the Egyptian experience as a referent, then the Egyptian deliverance is re-interpreted in Lam 3.5 as a return to Egyptian hardship (תלאה), but now at the hands of YHWH. This is similar to the way the poet employs the Egyptian experience in Lam 1.3. By exploiting and inverting this encyclopaedic content through allusion (תלאה), Lam 3.5 reverses the Exodus experience, reinforcing the notion of divine judgment.

Moreover, “poison” (ראש) is a noun that derives from II ראש, used especially in Jeremiah to describe divine judgment against his people for idolatry or false prophecy. “For YHWH has doomed us; he has mad us drink bitter waters (מִי־רֹאשׁ)” (Jer 8.14); “Thus says YHWH of the armies, God of Israel, ‘I am the one who feeds that people wormwood (לענה) and make them drink poison (מִי־רֹאשׁ)” (Jer 9.14). Jer 23.15 uses the same collocation (לענה and מִי־רֹאשׁ) as Jer 9.14 to depict YHWH’s judgment. Lam 3.5b, then, exploits these allusions to suggest divine punishment for the reader.<sup>822</sup> And yet, allusion serves only to reinforce the concept of judgment without specifics as to the reasons for it: the reality of suffering is emphasised instead of particular causes, except that YHWH has done it.

The shorter poetic lines in the poetry, coupled with the extensive acrostic, create a rhythmical movement, advancing the reader at a regular “pace,” though this is to be distinguished from meter, as this is a feature of the acrostic rather than internal workings of stressed syllables. Within this “pace,” the reader is confronted with a panorama of divine imagery that heightens his judgment and adversarial role. The metaphor of YHWH

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taunting the suffering of a righteous follower of YHWH. This inevitably leads the reader to question the ethics of the people.

<sup>821</sup> Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 130-31; see also Renkema, *Lamentations*, 357-58.

<sup>822</sup> Thus the LXX “my head and it grew weary” (κεφαλην μου και εμοχθησεν), is unnecessary.



as shepherd in Psalm 23 as a foil, the man's trouble as a result of God's judgment is foregrounded by the metaphor of God as *anti*-shepherd in Lam 3.1, 2, 6, 10. Hillers recognises the "rod" (שבט) as a common regulative symbol in the OT (2 Sam 7.14; Ps 23.4; 89.33; Job 9.34; 21.9).<sup>823</sup> Thus the "rod" belongs to divine shepherding imagery and depicts YHWH leading his people typically to salvation as in Ps 23.4: "Your rod (שבטך) and your staff (ומשענתך), they comfort me."<sup>824</sup> While it is not clear that Lam 3.1 is actualising this encyclopaedic content (the allusion is tenuous at best) it can be said that set in relief against Psalm 23, Lam 3.1-3 can be seen as a veritable *anti*-Psalm 23. The Lord does not lead the faithful follower to salvation, but rather afflicts with his rod of wrath (בשבט עברתו). He has not led the man to quiet waters (Ps 23.2) but rather led and drove him to "darkness and not light" (Lam 3.2). Instead of "dwelling" in the house of YHWH forever (ימים ושבתי בבית יהוה לארך; Ps 23.6) the Lord causes the man "to dwell" in dark places, like those long dead (במחשכים הושיבני כמתי עולם; Lam 3.6). While not necessarily alluding to Psalm 23, virtual quotation occurs in Lam 3.6, citing Ps 143.3: "For an enemy pursued my soul; he crushed my life to the ground. He caused me to dwell in dark places, like those long dead." Kraus believes the phrase כמתי עולם in Ps 143.3 to be an accretion, interpolated from Lam 3.6, but this assertion is difficult to demonstrate with certainty.<sup>825</sup> Whatever the direction of influence, it is clear that both texts reflect the speaker's sense of isolation. Eaton argues that "like those long dead" metaphorically depicts the furthest possible place from vitality, or "those most remote from life."<sup>826</sup>

Lam 3.2-16 combines other metaphors with this anti-shepherd metaphor, so that the deity is typified as a jailor, warrior, bear, lion, and grim party host. YHWH constructs over the גבר a wall to enclose and trap him in Lam 3.5, 7. Here the divine jailor places heavy shackles upon the man (הכביד נחשתי). And YHWH is a warrior who breaks the man's bones (שבר עצמותי) in Lam 3.4, recalling the divine "breaking" (שבר) in Lam 1.15; 2.9a, 11b, 13c. Again, through the repetition of language, Zion is associated with the man, both of whom receive divine wrath. Like Zion, the man experiences the Lord as a divine archer in Lam 3.10, recalling Lam 2.4: "he strung his bow like an enemy, standing strong in his right hand" (דרך קשתו כאויב נצב ימינו). But instead of just being tensed ready to fire

<sup>823</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 124.

<sup>824</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 125.

<sup>825</sup>Kraus, *Psalms 60—150*, 535, 537.

<sup>826</sup>John H. Eaton, *Psalms* (London: SCM, 1967), 307.

(Lam 2.4), YHWH has made the גבר his target, setting him up to receive arrows of wrath (Lam 3.12), which have penetrated the man's kidneys (בכליותי; Lam 3.11).

Divine metaphors compile one upon the other and culminate in animal imagery.<sup>827</sup> In Lam 3.10 the Lord becomes the animals that shepherds defended against in the ANE: he is both bear and lion.<sup>828</sup> The only other instance of the conjunction of אריה and דוב other than Lam 3.10 comes in the well-known passage in 1 Sam 17.34-6, where David defends his fighting prowess. His rationale derives from his skill in protecting his father's sheep against the lion and bear: וּבֹא אֲרִי וְאֶת־הַדּוֹב וְנִשָּׂא שֶׁה מִהַעֲדָר [...] וְהַמִּיתֵנִי גַם אֶת־הָאֲרִי [...] I killed it. Your servant has killed the lion and the bear." In both 1 Sam 17.34-6 and Lam 3.10, the lion and bear are marauders lying in wait for opportunistic hunting; in Lam 3.10 the גבר anticipates such attack from God and describes him with the same language (דוב and אריה).

These metaphors underline the man's sentiment towards his God: far from security and beneficence, he anticipates YHWH's unexpected attack. Moreover, he tears the man to pieces (ויפֿשחני) and makes him desolate (שמם). This word recalls Lam 1.4b, 13c, and further connects the man with the suffering of Zion. In this way, Lam 3.10-11 juxtaposes typical encyclopaedic information (a positive, protective, metaphor of YHWH as bear/lion) against the felt reality of the present, where he is typified as the very source of malevolence that shepherds in the biblical world would have combated to protect their sheep.

Finally, YHWH as "party host" concludes the divine metaphors that span from Lam 3.1-15. Rudolph perceptively notes YHWH is figured as a grim "host" (Gastgeber) in Lam 3.15. Instead of giving the man good food and drink, the deity gives him bitter drinks and wormwood.<sup>829</sup> The range of metaphorical depiction for the deity in Lam 3.1-

<sup>827</sup>For a helpful discussion of these, see Antje Labahn, "Wild Animals and Chasing Shadows: Animal Metaphors in Lamentations as Indicators of Individual Threat," in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. P. van Hecke; BETL 187; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 67-97.

<sup>828</sup>In Am 1.2 and 3.8, YHWH is a roaring lion announcing judgment (ישאג, Am 1.2; אריה שאג, Am 3.8). Yet in Hos 5.14; 11.10 depict the Lord as a protective lion guarding his people: אנכי כשהל לאפרים וככפיר לבית יהודה (Hos 5.14); ישאג כאריה (Hos 11.10). In these texts, the divine metaphors are positive. Hos 13.8, however, presents YHWH as as a mother bear (כדב) denied of her cubs that then attacks Israel and rips them open, a lion (כלביא) that devours Israel. Lam 3.10 uses different language, but is the only other text in the OT where YHWH is imaged as a malevolent bear or lion.

<sup>829</sup>Rudolph, *Die Klagelieder*, 239.

15, like the range of personifications for Zion in Lam 3.1-4, provide the reader a myriad of ways to identify with YHWH. At each turn in divine imagery, a new facet of YHWH's activity is revealed, enabling a multilayered depiction of the suffering of the גבר in YHWH's judgment.

The 3 strophe uses rare language to heighten description of the man's suffering.

The text reads:

ויגרס בהצין שני הכפישני באפר  
ותזנה משלום נפשי נשיתי טובה  
ואמר אבד נצחי ותחלתי מיהוה

"He caused my teeth to grind as gravel; he made me cower in the dust.  
And you rejected<sup>830</sup> my soul from peace; I forgot goodness.  
And I said, 'My lasting hope perished from YHWH'."

גרס is only used twice in the OT, here and Ps 119.20, הצין occurs only three times (Lam 3.16; Ps 77.18; Prov 20.17), הכפישני is a *hapax legomenon*, and נשיתי is the only instance of נשׂה in the Qal stem. The poetry may exploit unusual language to depict the unusual experience of the man. Yet from this dire experience the גבר addresses YHWH for the first time. He says what the deity surely knows, based upon divine actions described in Lam 3.1-15: God has rejected (ותזנה) the man's soul from peace, similarly to the fact that YHWH has rejected (זנה) Zion's altar in Lam 2.7a. Divine activity prevents his worshippers' communion with the deity, and thereby, there is no way to find peace (שלום) or goodness (טובה). In terms of formal analysis, this is the first Anklage des Gottes in the poem, which recurs in Lam 3.42b-45. And yet the logic of the complaint *about* God works on the basis of the justice of God, namely the metaphor of the divine judge, who will hear the complaint and respond in justice, even in regard to his own actions.<sup>831</sup> This represents a brief shift in metaphorical depiction of the deity, from antagonistic metaphors (Lam 3.1-16, 18) to a more positive metaphor.

And yet as quickly as the poetry evinces positive divine imagery, the acrostic moves the reader to Lam 3.18 shifts back to the reality, and results of, divine judgment. The variety of negative portraits of God against him (Lam 3.1-15) leads the man to internally reflect that his splendour and hope are lost from the Lord. Following Hillers, I understand נצחי ותחלתי as a hendiadys "lasting hope." In this translation, נצה may connote

<sup>830</sup>With Rudolph (*Klagelieder*, 231) I retain the MT (Qal 2 masculine singular) ותזנה rather than emending ["And he rejected," ויזנה, so the LXX (καὶ ἀποστατο)] or repointing [ותזנה] (Qal 3 feminine singular) so the subject is "my soul" (נפשי).

<sup>831</sup>Miller, "Prayer as Persuasion," 356-62.

either “glory” or the idea of “permanence” or as *HALOT* describes, “lastingness” in the nominative form.<sup>832</sup> Certainly “glory” is plausible, but glory is usually associated with YHWH (1 Sam 15.29; 1 Chron 29.11) rather than humans, and the association between תחלת and the גבר is unmistakable due to the 1 singular pronominal suffix. Likewise, תחלת may connote “hope” or “expectation.” The collocation of nouns marked with the conjunctive *waw* indicates hendiadys: “my lasting hope.” But what is the “hope” that has perished? Renkema rightly notes that it is “not the general sense of hope for the future but in the specific sense of the גבר’s expectations of YHWH” and his continued relationship to the man.<sup>833</sup> Contra Keil, who believes that the man has *himself* moved far from YHWH by complaining or lamenting, it is apparent from the logic of the verse that *YHWH* is removed from the *man*, specifically in terms of the expectation of YHWH’s continued relationship with the man, and this reality grounds his statement of loss: YHWH has perhaps ended his relationship with the man!<sup>834</sup> God’s adversarial status in Lam 1.12c-16aa has created a profound sense of uncertainty in terms of divine-human relationship.

But the “pace” of the acrostic advances the reader to a depiction of direct address once again to the deity, and the poetry exploits the observer’s language for Zion from Lam 1.7a. The † strophe is difficult but reads:

זכר עני ומרודי לענה וראש  
זכור תזכור ותשיה עלי נפשי  
זאת אשיב אל לבי עליכן אהיה

“Remember my miserable homelessness, wormwood, and poison.  
Surely my soul remembers, and cowers over me.<sup>835</sup>  
This I return to my heart; therefore, I will have hope.”

<sup>832</sup>*HALOT*, I נצה 716.: the man laments the loss of the Lord’s manifest presence and immanence (Renkema, *Lamentations*, 376-78).

<sup>833</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 378. He sees the grounds for divine fidelity in Zion theology, though this is far from clear. See 2.2.1., above.

<sup>834</sup>Keil, K&D, vol. 8, 513-14.

<sup>835</sup>Translating תזכור and ותשיה as Qal imperfect 3 feminine singular verbs from זכר, “to remember,” and שיה or שיה, “to be bent over/cower” (Kethib), respectively. Moreover, one must read with the supposed scribal change “my soul,” נפשי (*tiqqe sopherim*), over and above the supposed original “your soul,” נפשך, making נפשי the subject of the verbs rather than their object. For a similar construction, see Ps 42.6: עלי נפשי תשתחה עליכן אזכרך: “My soul bows down over me (my condition); accordingly, I remember you” (Keil, K&D, vol. 8, 515). Alternatively, ותשיה may derive from שיה, “to be concerned with something, considering or speaking” (Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 143), and so coincides with the LXX’s καταδολεσχεω, “to chatter (about).” Then the line could be translated: “Surely you remember and your soul will be concerned over me.” However, the line is sensible as it stands in the MT, and either the Kethib (ותשיה) or Qere (ותשיה) is understandable as well.

Despite his uncertainties, the man addresses YHWH directly. The imperative זכר, “remember,” presumably is directed towards the Lord, who was addressed in verse 17. If this is the case, then the גבר urges YHWH to remember the miserable homelessness that Jerusalem herself has remembered in Lam 1.7a: “Jerusalem remembers the days of her miserable homelessness” (זכרה ירושלים ימי עניה ומרודיה). This repetition rhetorically provides rationale for the deity to respond on behalf of the man, who once again is associated with Zion. Moreover, through the use of לענה וראש, the poetry points back to Lam 3.15 (לענה) and Lam 3.5 (ראש), specifically the oppression of the man (הגבר) at the hands of God.

In Lam 3.19, the fullness of Zion and the man’s experiences are distilled into a plea for YHWH to remember (זכר). This is different from the imperatives of Lamentations 1 and 2, for YHWH to “see” or “consider.” The man (and thereby, Zion) remembers miserable homelessness (Lam 3.19-20; Lam 1.7a) and is disturbed about it; by contrast, it is YHWH who has not remembered the state of both. This negligence is the motivation for appeal. The implicit intertwining between the voices of the man and Zion projects for the reader a portrait of solidarity in suffering; but that their association is not made *explicit* enables the reader to hear their various experiences of suffering on their own terms. And yet both voices at Lam 3.19-20 focus poignantly upon the reality of homelessness, wormwood, and poison and the need for its conclusion by divine aid.

The appeal is met with an abrupt change towards hope and confidence in verse 21. This is difficult interpretatively—what causes this change?—but syntactically as well. The syntax of על־כן is awkward as the particle normally links with *previous* argumentation that gives grounds for a present conclusion (“therefore”), as in Lam 1.8a.<sup>836</sup> But what is the argument that leads him to conclude that he has hope (אוֹחִיל)? The speaker’s present conclusion comes by returning an unidentified “this” (זאת) to his heart (אֶל־לִבִּי). The pronoun may refer to Lam 3.20, but makes little sense as that verse depicts internal strife. Most commentators posit that על־כן breaks syntactical convention and refers to what comes after it, namely Lam 3.22, where YHWH’s covenant love towards his people is confirmed.<sup>837</sup>

Yet it may be that Lam 3.20-21 shifts away from complaint to affirm the certainty of YHWH hearing the man’s prayer in Lam 3.19. One arrives here by translating תזכור

<sup>836</sup>GBHS § 4.1.6.(d).

<sup>837</sup>Albrektson provides a helpful summary and list of commentators adopting this view (*Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 143-5).

and וַתִּשָּׂה as Qal imperfect 2 masculine singular verbs from זָכַר, “to remember,” and שָׂה, “to melt away” (Qere), respectively, and supposing that “my soul” (נַפְשִׁי) is a scribal change (*tiqqune sopherim*) for “your soul” (נַפְשֶׁךָ): “Surely you remember and your soul will melt over me.” God, then, is the subject of the verbs; the text has been later altered by the scribes to avoid theological affront with the suggestion that god would condescend to humanity.<sup>838</sup> Divine memory of the גִּבּוֹר is the antecedent of זָאת in Lam 3.21 and would represent the most explicitly positive and hopeful statement in the book yet.<sup>839</sup> If correct, then this verse represents a Heilsorakel, “salvation oracle,” in the lament genre that prompts a shift in mood and grounds for hope in Lam 3.21<sup>840</sup>, which is how Westermann and House understand this verse.<sup>841</sup>

This interpretation, while attractive, is not without problems. McCarthy is tentative about the evidence of an earlier נַפְשֶׁךָ, as is Hillers.<sup>842</sup> The original text may have read נַפְשִׁי, as LXX apparently translated נַפְשִׁי as well (ψυχή μου), as does the later Targum. Apparently these versions have little difficulty with the verse as it stands in the MT and felt no need to theologically “correct” the text. Moreover, despite the somewhat awkward syntax of עַל־כֵּן and the ambiguous antecedent to זָאת, it is conceivable that both prepare the reader for the positive portrait of YHWH in Lam 3.22-4. In fact, the ambiguous referent to זָאת and the awkward syntax of עַל־כֵּן precisely creates a forward impulse for the reader to try and make sense of what could create hope in the man; nothing in the verses prior offer an answer. The reader is left wondering how the man changes his perception. Little prepares the reader for this unexpected shift to trust YHWH.

But the acrostic drives the reader forward to Lam 3.22-4, where hope is revealed: God’s faithful love and covenant loyalty. The text reads:

חסדי יהוה כי לא־תִמְנֹו כי לא־כִּלּוּ רַחֲמָיו  
 חֲדָשִׁים לְבַקְרִים רַבָּה אֲמוּנַתְךָ  
 חֲלָקֵי יְהוָה אִמְרָה נַפְשִׁי עַל־כֵּן אֶחֱוִיל לּוֹ

<sup>838</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 13.

<sup>839</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 13; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 142.

<sup>840</sup>Joachim Begrich, “Das presterliche Heilsorakel,” *ZAW* 52(1934): 81-92.

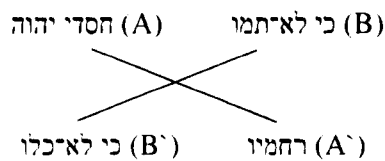
<sup>841</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 145 = *Lamentations*, 172-73; House, *Lamentations*, 413. So too Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 13; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 142.

<sup>842</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 114; Carmel McCarthy, *The Tiquune Sopherim and Other Theological Corrections in the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament* (OBO 36; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 120-23.

“[It is due to] YHWH’s acts of covenant mercy<sup>843</sup> that we are not consumed; indeed his mercies do not fail.  
[They are] new every morning—great [is] your faithfulness.

‘YHWH is my portion,’ my soul says; therefore I will hope in him.”

This strophe is fairly straightforward except for the first verse, which is difficult for a number of reasons. The first (and most obvious) is the problems associated with **כִּי לֹא־תִמְנוּ**, “that we are not consumed.” Some commentators emend the text to read **תָּמוּ**, “they have (not) ceased”—that is, “YHWH’s acts of covenant mercy.” Hillers understands both instances of **כִּי** asseveratively (following Gordis) and **חֲסֵדֵי יְהוָה** as the subject of the verb: “surely the lovingkindness of YHWH has not ceased, nor have his mercies ceased,” which reveals chiasm<sup>844</sup>:



The Targum and possibly the Peshittā read **תָּמוּ**. The impetus for emendation stems in part from a view that the clause is supposedly illegible without it.<sup>845</sup> Albrektson believes the emendation belies a prejudice against a corporate understanding of the speaker in Lamentations 3<sup>846</sup>, yet corporate connotations of the **גִּבּוֹר** already have been introduced effectively up to this point by associating him with Zion. Moreover several old translations follow **תָּמוּ** (Aquila, Symmachus, Old Latin, Vulgate). This shift from a first person singular to plural perspective further blends the perspective of the man to the community, yet here the man becomes a spokesman for the community. Thus the model reader here conceptualises both the individual *and* community and the model reader is directed towards hope in some way. In terms of syntax, Keil and Albrektson translate on the basis of **תָּמוּ** surmising the clause following **חֲסֵדֵי יְהוָה** introduces a subject clause: “that we are not consumed.”<sup>847</sup> This is how I understand the verse. The ground for hope

<sup>843</sup>YHWH’s day of judgment does not signal the end of his relationship with his people due to the **חֲסֵדֵי יְהוָה** (House, *Lamentations*, 414), in which **חֲסֵד** “describes the disposition of and beneficent actions of God toward the faithful, Israel his people, and humanity in general” (*NIDOTTE*, 2: 211).

<sup>844</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 115; Gordis, *Lamentations*, 179.

<sup>845</sup>For further rationale for **תָּמוּ**, see Hans Gottlieb, *A Study on the Text and Theology of Lamentations*, 45-6.

<sup>846</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of Lamentations*, 145.

<sup>847</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of Lamentations*, 145; Keil, *K&D*, vol. 8, 515. For subject clauses, see JM §157a.

introduced in verse 21 is tied to the covenant love of YHWH (חסדי יהוה), his mercy (רחמי), his faithfulness (אמינות), and that he is the man's "portion" (חלקי).<sup>848</sup>

His present conditions have not changed, but in these verses one discovers the most overt confession of hope that God's beneficence will be achieved. This is covenant language by all counts. In interpreting the  $\pi$  strophe, House rightly brings into view the covenant language displayed most clearly in Ex 34.6, "YHWH, YHWH, a god compassionate (רחום) and gracious; slow of anger but great in mercy and truth (ורב־חסד וראמת)," saying that for the  $\gamma$ , "Each new day dawns with the possibility of covenant renewal for a punished people. This opportunity lasts as long as God lasts since it is grounded in his personal character."<sup>849</sup> By returning these truths about YHWH and his covenant with his people to his heart (אשיב אל־לבי) the man has grounds for hope. The repetition of על־כן אוהיל in Lam 3.21b, 3.24b confirms this association, displaying a structural inclusio to Lam 3.21-24:

Lam 3.21	(על־כן אוהיל)	}
Lam 3.22		
Lam 3.23		
Lam 3.24	(על־כן אוהיל לו)	

The acrostic evinces a forward movement which then is met with a reflexive movement in the repetition of על־כן אוהיל, emphasising the entire  $\pi$  strophe through inclusio. The structural density here retards the progression of the acrostic so that the reader may reflect upon the reality that divine covenant acts of mercy, among other divine characteristics, bring the man—and Zion by extension—hope.

But what remains unstated is important for the construction of the model reader. How exactly does remembering covenant traits of God build hope within him (or the community, if observing the communal "we" of v. 22)? Is hope constructed from the idea that YHWH will counteract *his own* extensive punitive actions described in Lam 3.1-18 based upon his covenant characteristics?<sup>850</sup> Or is his hope grounded in YHWH's act of remembering the man's miserable homelessness (עניי ומרודי לענה וראש; Lam 3.19),

<sup>848</sup>YHWH as one's "portion" recalls Pss 16.5; 73.26; 142.6; and especially Ps 119.57, an almost exact parallel. The concept derives from Num 18.20, where YHWH is the "portion" of the Levites. Divine "portion" in Lam 3.24 provides the speaker with a hope that whatever ill he faces the deity will be his possession in the midst of it (Renkema, *Lamentations*, 391).

<sup>849</sup>House, *Lamentations*, 414-15.

<sup>850</sup>Building also off of previous depictions of excessive or theologically problematic punishment, especially in Lam 1.10, 13-15; 2.1-9, 20-22.



presumably exile? If so, then this may connote some notion of *return* from exile. Or is the man's hope in YHWH more theologically abstract, thinking that by adopting theological conviction about divine character expressed in Lam 3.22-4, the deity will relieve the man of his dire situation? Or, building from what the reader has experienced in the previous poems, does the hope stem from the notion that the Lord will forgive the sins of the people after they have confessed and repented (Lam 1.11c, 18a, 20a-b)? The question of *how* the mercies of YHWH actually build hope within the גבר remains unstated and this omission leads the reader to move to the previous portions of the poetry to negotiate it. Though drawing in covenantal language as a source of hope in verses 22-24, the precise *meaning* of the hope remains an open question, which the reader, enabled by the text, must respond to in some manner, though not *one* manner. In this way, there is multivalent potential in understanding the nature of hope for the model reader, so that individual real readers, identified within the community (the communal "we" of v. 22) are all directed towards hope, but the nature of that hope is precisely left somewhat ambiguous. In this way, the strategy for the model reader (at least up to this point) is more open rather than closed.

But then strophes ט – כ respond in part to the kinds of questions raised in verses 21-4, providing the rationale, means, and reasons for hoping in God. The גבר continues his speech on behalf of the community, admonishing his hearers (who are unknown but presumably inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah) in the appropriate way to live in the present experience of suffering. Apart from the other portions of Lamentations, which display a high degree of parataxis rather than logical connection, these strophes are linked not only by repetition of language, but also by a kind of argumentation, if somewhat loose. If Lam 3.24 depicts an expectant hope in YHWH, verses 25-30 reveal why it is "good" (טוב) to hope in him: "YHWH is good to the one who waits, to the soul who seeks him" (Lam 3.25). Moreover, the strophes reveal the manner to "wait" and "seek" God, through external actions of penitence that mirror mourning (Lam 3.26-30). The poetry further asserts that suffering through penitence is "good" (טוב), especially Lam 3.25, 27. In response, verses 31-33 test *why* suffering could be conceived of as "good" (טוב)—because YHWH is just and he is in control of the world, even when it seems topsy-turvy.

Consistent to the style of the chapter as well, these verses cite portions of Lamentations 1—2 as well as previous sections of Lamentations 3 and enable intertextual links as well as interpretative richness to the poetry. Lam 3.25 argues that YHWH is טוב to the one who waits upon and seeks him. The repetition of the divine name יהוה in verses

25, 26 links these verses structurally to verse 24 (יהוה חלקי) and bridges the ה and ט strophes; verses 25, 26 reaffirm the covenantal notion of the previous strophe and emphasise both the goodness and salvation of the Lord as well as the sufferer's trust, silence, and expectation of the Lord's deliverance. The teaching is directed to the גבר (Lam 3.27) who seeks to move beyond the present crisis. However one identifies the גבר, the speaker encourages himself and the community specifically by waiting on the Lord (לקוו), seeking him (לנפש תדרשנו)<sup>851</sup>, silent waiting and expectation for YHWH's salvation (טוב ויחיל ודומם לתשועת יהוה)<sup>852</sup>, and bearing a yoke in youth (טוב לגבר כיישא על בנעוריו).

The statement about bearing the "yoke" recalls for the reader Lam 1.14a, where Zion bears the "yoke" (על) of her offences. Zion's על then mirrors the man's על, both of whom suffer under divine judgment. Yet in Lam 1.14a, the על that was bound fast to Zion was inscribed in a portrait of suffering that led her to "weep" (Lam 1.16). Here, the על is productive, even "good" (טוב). This טוב teaching echoes the man's statement that his soul forgot טובה in Lam 3.17. The repetition of language here draws a logical connection that "goodness" (טובה) is derived from adhering to the טוב teaching outlined both in the ט strophe and the remainder of the parenthesis. The contrast between the former expression of pain through the language of yoke (על; Lam 1.14a; 3.27) and goodness (טוב/טובה; Lam 3.17, 27) and present confirmation of the pain being "good" is no doubt jarring for the reader, leading him to refocus former understanding of the pain of suffering to rather the "goodness" of suffering.

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<sup>851</sup> Masoretic notation implies לקוו (Kethib) be read לקוי (Qere) "to those who wait for him" (plural participle). The present work follows the Kethib with Hillers (*Lamentations*, 115). תדרשנו suggests the participle be understood as a singular, and ודומם implies singular reading as well, observing parallelism (but see LXX and Targum, who read plural).

<sup>852</sup> ויחיל, is difficult. The verb as pointed in the MT is unfamiliar; the LXX reads a Hiphil imperfect 3m.sg. (יחל), where the *qāmeṣ* under the ו is converted to a *hōlem*, making it fit the Hiphil paradigm: καὶ σπομεναι. This is how I understand it. The *wāw* conjunctive on ודומם is rare. Delitzsch emends the ו and י to ה, making the word החיל, a Hiphil infinitive construct. He emends ודומם to ודמום, a Qal infinitive construct from דמם, thus the translation: "It is good to wait and to be silent for the salvation of the Lord." Albrektson, too, favours this solution [Franz Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament nebst den dem Schrifttexte einverleibten Randnoten klassifiziert. Ein Hilfsbuch für Lexicon und Grammatik, Exegese und Lektüre* (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter, 1920), §132b; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 147]. The syntax, however rendered, does not necessarily muddy the sense of the line: it is good for a person to wait in silence for divine deliverance.

The 7-strophe advances this logic and suggests rationale for accepting suffering as good while transforming previous semantics of terms in Lamentations 1—2. The text reads:

נָטַל עָלָיו יָשֵׁב בְּדָד וַיִּדָּם כִּי  
 יִתֵּן בַּעֲפֹר פִּיהוּ אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ תְּקוּהָ  
 יִתֵּן לְמַכְהוּ לְחָי יִשְׁבַּע בַּחֲרָפָה

“Let him sit alone and be silent, for he has laid (it) upon him.  
 Let him lay his mouth in the dust; perhaps there is hope.  
 Let him surrender his cheek to the one who smites him; let him be satisfied with scorn.”

The acrostic brings the reader to understand the reason why judgment (על) is good is because it is done by God, the most likely antecedent of the masculine singular pronominal suffix (עליו) in verse 28. Moreover, laying one’s mouth in dust, giving the cheek over to the one who hits and being filled with shame can be understood as acts of both mourning *and* penitence. Anderson reveals mourning is a ritual process that enables a later movement towards joy—but this cannot be gained without going first through mourning. The same can be said of forgiveness and restoration in divine-human relations.<sup>853</sup> Penitence gives way to re-establishment of justice between two parties, especially in a covenantal relationship. Both mourning and penitence pave the way for restoration (from bereavement or judgment); without a process of penitence, restoration and healing in the divine-human sphere will not happen.<sup>854</sup>

Anderson further notes that “By publicly disfiguring himself, the lamenter invites those around him to react.”<sup>855</sup> This is crucial for understanding the verses here. The public disfigurements of the man through his acts of penitence are rhetorically aimed at both the reader *and* YHWH: for the former it is to instruct the reader (who may be a sufferer of distress like the man) the appropriate way to behave in suffering, while the penitent acts are aimed simultaneously at YHWH, designed to gain his attention. The expected “reaction” from YHWH is an unspecified restoration: forgiveness of sin and thereby respite from divine antagonism, relief from the current situation of suffering, or even (as verses 46-66 reveal) relief from the ascendancy of enemy power. Essentially, acts of penitence are good because they *may* usher in restoration. Restoration, however, in Lamentations 3 is liminal at best: “perhaps there is hope” (אולי יש תקוה).

<sup>853</sup> See especially Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice*, 135-6.

<sup>854</sup> Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance*, 82-101.

<sup>855</sup> Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance*, 96.

The poetry reinforces the notion of repentance by recalling, and apparently transforming, previous statements in Lamentations 1 and 2 to reflect the penitent stance. The people/man/Zion are to “sit alone” (יָשַׁב בְּדָד) and “be silent” (וַיִּדַם). The parenthesis here transforms Zion’s mourning activity in Lam 1.1 (“she sits alone,” יִשְׁבֶּה בְּדָד) to appropriate *penitence over judgment*. The same can be said of the act of silence: Lam 3.28 transforms the former depiction of the elders’ mourning (sitting on the ground in silence) in Lam 2.10a (יִשְׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ יִדְמִו), by shifting its focus from mourning to repentance. Silence and isolation is met, then, with an act of humble repentance. These phenomenal or external physical acts are designed to affirm judgment and announce penitence, and this brings the possibility of hope (תְּקוּהָה). Here, in contrast to the previous affirmation of YHWH being the source of hope in Lam 3.22-24, hope comes from penitence which *may* provide an end to judgment!

Set in Eco’s aesthetic theory it is evident the poetry exploits s-codes to teach this. Lam 3.25-30 exploits the s-code “mourning rite” within the cultural encyclopaedia (specifically institutional s-code) which then is utilised in Lamentations 1—2 through repetition of language. These verses then overlay the s-code “penitential rite” against the s-code of mourning, so that the reader is forced to refocus his previous understanding of mourning in Lamentations 1—2 as something “good” done through a penitential act. Through the poetic use of repetition, Lam 3.25-30 refocuses semantics of previous portions of the book, leading the reader to a theology of divine justice and human sinfulness, which demands penitence rather than mourning.

The rationale why both YHWH and suffering through judgment are “good” (טוֹב) is best understood in verses 31-33. Consistent with its style, the poetry employs previous language, drawing the reader back through Lamentations 1 and 2 to make sense of the poetry to this point. This will be discussed after dealing with syntactical irregularities in the strophes. The verses read:

כִּי לֹא יִזְנֶה לְעוֹלָם אֲדֹנָי  
 כִּי אִם־יִהְיֶה וְרַחֵם כְּרַב חַסְדּוֹ  
 כִּי לֹא עָנָה מִלְּבוֹ וַיִּגַּה בְּנִי־אִישׁ

“For he will not spurn forever.

For if he torments; even so, he comforts—for great is his mercy.

For he does not afflict from his heart<sup>856</sup>, nor grieve the children of man.”

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<sup>856</sup>The present study agrees with Lindström, who views “from his heart” (מִלְּבוֹ) as referring to an arbitrary punishment of God (see Num 16.28); thus the poet affirms God’s punishment as it is not an arbitrary decision [Fredrik Lindström, *God and the Origin of*

Both the כ and ל-strophes begin awkwardly, with כי clauses (כ-strophe) and infinitive clauses (ל-strophe). The כ-strophe by and large reinforces the notion of divine justice by recalling language from previous portions of the poetry. Lam 3.31, “For the Lord (אדני) does not spurn (זנה) forever,” recalls the only other instance of זנה in the poetry, Lam 2.7, “The Lord spurned (זנה אדני) his altar.” The almost terrifying finality of judgment on display in Lam 2.7 is transformed into a temporary reality in Lam 3.31. This logic is advanced in the repetition of the verb יגה as well. Whereas in Lam 1.5b, 12c YHWH “tormented” (היגה) Zion for her criminal acts, Lam 3.32 (היגה), 33 (ייגה) reveals that this divine “torment” (יגה) is met with divine “comfort” (נחם), which is a direct response to Lam 1.2b, 7c, 9b, 16b, 17a, 21a. The implication is, then, that the man’s day of judgment does not constitute a final word—comfort, removal of scorn, and restoration exists on the horizon. Moreover, YHWH is affirmed as just in his judgment. He does not afflict “from his heart” (מלבו) meaning perhaps that he is not capricious in his punishment.<sup>857</sup> Rather when he afflicts, he comforts, his mercies are great, and he does not exert judgment in a manner that is exploitative or unjustified. The כ-strophe transforms previous depictions of spurning, and tormenting to reveal YHWH as a comforter and just deity.

And though difficult, the ל-strophe confirms the relationship between YHWH and justice, especially to the man and Zion. The text reads:

לדכא תחת רגליו כל אסירי ארץ  
להטות משפט־גבר נגד פני עליון  
לעות אדם בריבו אדני לא ראה

“To crush under his feet, all the prisoners of the earth—  
To pervert<sup>858</sup> the justice of a man before the presence of Elyon—  
To suppress a person in his suit—does not the Lord see?”

The meaning of the ל-strophe, as well as the two that precede it, depends upon the interpretation of the series of infinitive constructs that open each poetic line as well as the

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*Evil: A Contextual Analysis of Alleged Monistic Evidence in the Old Testament* (CBOTS 21; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1983), 222].

<sup>857</sup>Westermann, *Die Klagelieder*, 148-9 = *Lamentations*, 177.

<sup>858</sup>The idea of “twisting/perverting” justice (Hiphil נטה + משפט) occurs here in Lam 3.35, but also occurs prominently in Ex 23.2, 6 and Deut 16.19; 24.17; 27.19. In these texts, the law forbids the twisting/denial of justice of people in their lawsuits (especially Ex 23.6: “Do not twist/deny justice of your poor in their lawsuits,” לא תטה; responsibilities of the judge in Deut 16.19: “do not pervert justice,” לא תטה משפט; the laws regarding the alien or orphan and justice in Deut 24.17: “do not deny the alien or orphan justice,” לא תטה משפט יתום; and a curse is pronounced over the person who denies or perverts justice (מטה משפט) for the alien, fatherless, or widow, from Mount Ebal by the priests and Moses.

interpretation of the last half of verse 36: אֲדַנִּי לֹא רָאָה. Hillers believes the infinitives should be understood temporally, for instance, “by crushing under his feet.”<sup>859</sup> His rationale is due to the fact that on their own, the infinitives make little sense and so are necessarily (syntactically) dependent on the verbal action of Lam 3.33: “He does not afflict from his heart...by crushing, by perverting, by suppressing.” On this view, אֲדַנִּי לֹא רָאָה is a circumstantial clause, “without the Lord seeing (it).”<sup>860</sup> And yet it is just as plausible that the infinitives are to be understood nominally (“to crush under his feet,” “to pervert the justice of a man,” “to suppress a person in his suit”).<sup>861</sup> In this rendering, אֲדַנִּי לֹא רָאָה cannot be understood as a circumstantial clause but rather either an interrogative<sup>862</sup> (“does not the Lord see?”) or indicative clause (“the Lord does not see”).<sup>863</sup> Kraus, Weiser, Albrektson, and Lindström understand the clause as a rhetorical question that expects a positive response, affirming divine justice for the reader—of course YHWH recognises or “sees” injustice and will not allow it to go on unchecked. Though rendering the syntax differently, Hillers agrees with these scholars that the verse promotes such a theology of divine justice. However, understanding the poetic line as a rhetorical question remains somewhat awkward because no syntactical marker suggests that it should be read in such a manner.

This leads Rudolph and Gottlieb to counter the former view and interpret the clause as an indicative statement of fact. This decision has subsequent theological ramifications: the speaker complains about the Lord’s capriciousness in deserting him.<sup>864</sup> Rudolph translates the verse, “daß man den Menschen drückt in seinem Rechtsstreit, das hat den Herrn nicht gekümmert!”<sup>865</sup> Gottlieb states unequivocally that the verse “should be read as a statement in the indicative, as an expression of the fact that the man praying is conscious of being deserted by God.”<sup>866</sup> With this understanding of verse 36 in view, O’Connor states that “the God of Lamentations is a blind God who, when asked to look,

<sup>859</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 116; see GBHS § 3.4.1(g).

<sup>860</sup>GKC §156d-g; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 111, 116.

<sup>861</sup>GBHS § 3.4.1(a).

<sup>862</sup>Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 51; Weiser, *Die Klagelieder*, 69; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 151; Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil*, 225-26.

<sup>863</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 97; Johnson, “Form and Message in Lamentations,” 66; “the Lord does not think proper,” Gordis, *Lamentations*, 181; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 121; O’Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 51-2.

<sup>864</sup>Rudolph, *Klagelieder*, 229.

<sup>865</sup>Rudolph, *Klagelieder*, 229.

<sup>866</sup>Gottlieb, *A Study on the Text of Lamentations*, 50.

see, or pay attention [...], does not respond.”<sup>867</sup> This understanding of the syntax of אדני לא ראה is both sensible and possible.

But what is lost to O’Conner, with the emphasis upon the “blindness” of God, and to Provan, who reads this text as a declaration about a lack of divine sovereignty<sup>868</sup>, is the way that verse 36 (אדני לא ראה) responds to other material in Lamentations 1 and 2, as seen in the style of Lam 3.27, 28, 31, 32, and 33. In the first place, contra O’Connor, scholars generally render the verb as “he does not approve” or the like, thus treating the meaning of the verb as having to do with the Lord’s leniency towards injustice.<sup>869</sup> This proposal is theologically attractive as it proposes to confirm the Lord’s beneficence towards his people and affirm divine justice in the כ and ל strophes. Yet nowhere else in the OT does the verb ראה connote this, leading Gottlieb to abandon this idea.<sup>870</sup> This judgement is adopted here. The regular semantics of ראה, “he sees,” is appropriate to its usage in verse 36. Further, the rather unusual instance of lack of divine sight (ראה) directly responds to the formulaic addresses of Zion in Lam 1.9c, 11c, 21c; 2.20a: YHWH *does* see (ראה) the sufferings both the man (Lam 3.1-36) and Zion (Lamentations 1 and 2) face.<sup>871</sup> It is interesting to note the differences between how the poetry employs previous language between the כ and ל-strophes. The כ-strophe exploits language from Lam 2.7 (זנה אדני), Lam 1.5b, 12c (יגהֵץ), and Lam 1.2b, 7c, 9b, 16b, 17a, 21a (נחם) while the ל-strophe prominently draws only on 1.9c, 11c, 21c; 2.20a (ראה), bringing attention to its usage and further reinforces its responson to the appeal of Zion in Lamentations 1 and 2. This is an extremely hopeful view of both God and reality in line with Lam 3.22-36.

The מ-strophe apparently confirms the positive view and promotes a theodicy.

The text reads:

מי זה אמר ותהי אדני לא צוה  
מפי עליון לא תצא הרעות והטוב  
מה־יתאוונן אדם חי גבר עלי־חטאו

“Who has said this and it come to pass except the Lord command it?  
Does not evil and good proceed from the mouth of the Most High?  
Why should a human complain, a man, over his sin?”

<sup>867</sup>O’Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 52.

<sup>868</sup>Provan, *Lamentations*, 97-8.

<sup>869</sup>Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 14; Gordis, *Lamentations*, 181-82.

<sup>870</sup>Hans Gottlieb, *A Study on the Text of Lamentations* (Acta Jutlandica 48; Theology Series 12; Århus: Århus Universitet, 1978), 49.

<sup>871</sup>Thomas, “The Aesthetic Theory of Umberto Eco”; “The Liturgical Function.”

The correspondence between אדני לא צוה (Lam 3.37b) and אדני לא ראה (Lam 3.36b) confirms the interrogative function of אדני לא ראה over and above the indicative notion of Gottwald and links the two strophes together structurally.<sup>872</sup> Together, both strophes reveal the reality that God is in control of the world—all that comes to pass is a result of his command (מי זה אמר ויהי אדני לא צוה). Renkema adroitly draws a parallel from Ps 33.9: “For he said it, and it came to pass; he commanded it, and it stood” (כי הוא אמר ויהי הוא־צוה) (ויצמד)<sup>873</sup>; this is the only other instance in the OT where the verbs היה, אמר, and צוה occur in such close proximity. In Ps 33.9, the poet speaks of the goodness of creation. Through the allusive linkage between Ps 33.9 and Lam 3.37, along with the instance of the name of God associated with creation in 3.38, עליון, the cosmic significance of YHWH’s creative power may be in view. At any rate, it is clear that he is just and aware of the events going on with the man and Zion.

Although perhaps drawing on creation language, the poet speaks of a rather specific instance of saying commanding here: the destruction that has come about in a particular “day of wrath” on which Zion’s enemies surrounded her and defeated her. This interpretation is strengthened through the repetition of צוה in Lam 3.37. The reader, recognising this language from Lam 1.10c, 17b and 2.17b connects the circumstance which the speaker describes to the day of YHWH enacted at divine command (צוה). Perhaps the command for destruction is the referent of זה. If this is the case, the poetry draws on creation language only to invert it: YHWH has not decreed creation but destruction. Yet in both, YHWH remains in total control: he has ordained the disaster so his continued vitality and potency are never in question; as discovered (ironically) in Lam 2.1-11, divine destruction ensures a future survival of faith, cult, people, and worship.

Moreover, הרעות והטוב, properly understood, refers to the day of YHWH (judgment and הרעות) as well as its counterpart, blessing (והטוב) in this particular instance rather than making a universal statement about theological monism—that good and bad (things) both have their direct source in YHWH. Hillers, for instance, takes Lam 3.38 to indicate a general view that both good and bad proceed from YHWH.<sup>874</sup> And Lindström cogently outlines the view of theological monism from this verse in the German tradition.<sup>875</sup> But the question here should be specified to whether the verse is admonishing

<sup>872</sup>Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil*, 223-4.

<sup>873</sup>Renkema, *Lamentations*, 418-9.

<sup>874</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 117.

<sup>875</sup>Lindström, *God and the Origin of Evil*, 214-7.



a view that all moral activity, both good and evil, stem from YHWH or whether “good and “evil” represents judgment (הרעות) and blessing (והטוב) in a more localised, specific sense, especially seen in covenantal relationship.

It seems to be that this verse is actually functioning on a more fundamental level in terms of the latter on the basis of the usage of רעה and טוב in the verse. There are only a few instances in the OT where these terms are collocated as predicates of divine activity. A number of texts, of course, associate moral “good” and “evil” with human activity (especially in wisdom material, prophetic warnings, and even in the creation account with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), but as predicates of YHWH, the collocation “good and evil” is relatively scarce. Among them are Amos 3.6, Isa 45.7, and possibly Deut 32.39. These texts depict YHWH “doing” evil (רעה) to a city in judgment (Am 3.6), both killing and healing, presumably in judgment and then forgiveness (Deut 32.39), and “making” peace (שלום) or good (טוב)<sup>876</sup> and “creating” evil (רע) (Isa 45.7). But with the strict collocation of “good” and “evil” the texts are: Deut 30.15; Josh 23.15; and Job 2.10b. Of these, only Deut 30.15 and Josh 23.15 have YHWH as the one who actively *dispenses* both טוב and רעה in a covenant relationship with his people. In fact, Joshua 23.15 recalls the covenant ceremony, blessings and curses, of Deuteronomy 28-30, so that the טוב and רעה should be understood in *that* light rather than a general statement about the morality of the deity. As to Job 2.10b, it is of a different ilk than what is apparent in Deut 30.15, Josh 23.15 and Lam 3.38. In Job 2.10b, the protagonist responds to his wife about the evils that have come upon him, especially the statement, “should we not accept evil (רעה) as well?” This statement is rhetorically designed to meet the test that he (unknowingly) confronts, of which the rest of the book plays out. In Deut 30.15, Josh 23.15, however, the emphasis particularly lies in the notion of divine judgment (רעה) and divine blessing (טוב), not just of an individual, but of a people in covenant with YHWH. Deut 30.15 reads, “See, I set before you today life and good (הטוב), and death and evil (הרע).” The focus of Lam 3.38 seems to reflect this reality especially with the repetition of צנה as indicated above. For this reason, the focus of the questions is not upon a general theological reality of “good” and “evil” but rather a specific reality: the judgment that both Zion and the man are experiencing. This, too, is a manifestation of divine sovereignty.

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<sup>876</sup>The Isaiah scroll at Qumran reads “doing good (טוב) and creating evil (רע), I am Yahweh, doing all of these.” The MT, however, reads “making peace (שלום) and creating evil (רע), I am Yahweh, doing all of these.”

The final verse in the  $\text{ז}$ -strophe heightens the emphasis on the justice of YHWH's judgment.  $\text{אָנָן}$  in the Hithpoel occurs only in Lam 3.39 (יתאונן) and in Num 11.1: "The people took to complaining (כמתאננים) bitterly before YHWH." It is interesting that, generally speaking, in the block of wilderness wandering material from Numbers 10-21, any mention of suffering is depicted as punishment for sin. Num 11.1 fits within this: "complaining" in the wilderness (Num 11.1) is apparently sinful and rouses divine anger, causing Moses to intercede for the people, ameliorating his wrath. By contrast, pre-Sinai wilderness wandering pericopes in Exodus 15-18 present suffering as an opportunity to reveal YHWH's deliverance rather than His anger.<sup>877</sup> That Lamentations here would exploit encyclopaedic content from the block of material in Numbers, particularly Num 11.1, reveals that the main concern here is to admonish the people to *avoid* complaining, as YHWH's punishment was *justified* and *predicted*, as on display in Deut 30.15: the good and evil, blessing and curse, that was set out before Israel, gave them the opportunity to rebel or obey, and they chose rebellion, justifying the divine punishment. This logic is confirmed through the repetition of the term  $\text{גָּבַר}$ , at use only here, Lam 3.1, and 3.27. The repetition of the term makes awkward the understanding that it is actually the  $\text{גָּבַר}$  speaking in Lam 3.1-38—is he reproaching himself? At some point the  $\text{גָּבַר}$  must have dropped his speech and another speaker entered, but exactly where this is could have taken place is unclear. Rather, it seems that the poetry uses the repetition of the term  $\text{גָּבַר}$  to refocus the complaint of Lam 3.1-18: the complaint (if it is such) is off-base, as the suffering is justified on account of the rebellion, namely "sin" (חטא). Like Jerusalem in Lam 1.8a (הטא הטאה), sin is admitted, incidentally further linking the man with Zion. In both cases, what is rather admonished is the bearing of the yoke in Lam 3.27 and the silent suffering of Lam 3.28.

Lam 3.25-36 employs the stylistic repetition of language within Lamentations 1 and 2 to dramatically transform their logic and advance a theodicy; this stylistic function is met in the  $\text{ז}$ -strophe with a stylistic repetition of language from Lam 1.8a, 10c, 17b to confirm theodicy in and through this repetition. The repetition of  $\text{צִיָּה}$  (Lam 1.10c, 17b; 2.17b) in Lam 3.37 confirms that judgment is a result of divine command and authority. Moreover  $\text{הִטָּא}$  in Lam 3.38 corresponds to Lam 1.8a (הטא הטאה), namely that YHWH's

<sup>877</sup>This is an insight brought forth by Brevard Childs [*Exodus* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 258-74], and exploited systematically into a larger understanding of lament traditions in the OT by Samuel Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Human-Divine Dialogue* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993, 189-98).

punishment is just because of sin, whether the man's or Zion's. Both of these examples cohere with the intensification function of repetition in Lamentations 1 and 2, with an emphasis upon the appropriateness of divine judgment (Lam 1.10c, 17c; 3.37) and the reality of the sin of the man, and by extension Zion as well (Lam 1.8a; 3.39).

Otherwise, verses 25-36 transform previous understandings. The yoke (על) of Lam 1.14a is transformed from an indicator of judgment and pain to an indicator of penitence in suffering (Lam 3.27). The statement of the Lord's spurning (Lam 2.7a; זנה אדני) is transformed in Lam 3.31 as a temporary reality. The statement of the Lord's grieving/tormenting (Lam 1.5b, 12c; יגה) is met and transformed in Lam 3.32, 33 with comfort (נחם), a direct response to the repeated refrain of "no comforter" (לא מנחם) in Lam 1.2b, 7c, 9b, 16b, 17a, 21a. The rhetorical question that expects positive response "does not the Lord see (ראה)" transforms the appeals of Zion for YHWH to "look" (ראה) in Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a, and 2.20a, arguing that God does recognise when there is unjust oppression, and apparently Zion's oppression is either *not* unjust or that he will see...to deliver her. These examples reveal that the poetic combinatory function in repetition, particularly with the aim of refocusing the reader's previously held understandings, is present in Lamentations 3 as it was in Lamentations 1 and 2.

The acrostic takes the reader from this affirmation of divine activity and human responsibility in this particular judgment (day of YHWH; Lam 3.1-3) to the appropriate response in verses 40-2: penitence and confession. For the reader, this move may be seen to be both logical and necessary, as it fits within what is present in the concept of the covenant in the OT material. When a covenant is breached, the one who has breached the covenant must take the necessary step of confession or admitting guilt to restore the relationship, or to re-establish justice between the parties in dispute.<sup>878</sup> This covenantal concept classifies as an institutional s-code in Eco's theory of codes.<sup>879</sup> As the speaker is a communal voice, the interweaving of the man/Zion throughout Lam 3.1-39 has reached a crescendo of communal confession. In the case of Lam 3.25-42, the accused (man/Zion), once cognisant of the breach in relations (Lam 3.25-39, especially verses 38-9), cognisant of the justice of the accuser (YHWH, Lam 3.31-39) and his accusation, is obligated to admit guilt and confess sin. The accuser (YHWH) then is obligated to respond with

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<sup>878</sup>Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice*, 31-5, 94-109. For an alternative view, see Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (SHI; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 143-68.

<sup>879</sup>3.2.2., above.

forgiveness and reconciliation—this is the structural nature of covenantal relationship.<sup>880</sup>

It is no surprise, then that the 3-strophe reads:

נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה ונשובה עדי־יהוה  
 נשא לבבנו אלי־כפים אלי־אל בשמים  
 נהנו פשענו ומרינו אתה לא סלחת

“Let us examine and explore our ways and let us return unto YHWH  
 Let us lift our heart over our<sup>881</sup> hands to God in the heavens:  
 We have transgressed and rebelled; you have not forgiven.”

The first two poetic lines of the strophe reinforce the need for confession through the three cohortative verbs “examine,” “explore,” and especially “return” (שוב). The verb has already appeared in the previous chapters<sup>882</sup> but here takes on a connotation that is associated with prophetic messages of return back to the Lord, specifically in repentance.<sup>883</sup> This brings it close to its usage in Lam 2.14b, where the prophets are denounced for not exposing the peoples’ iniquities so as to “restore” their fortunes. With this intertext, the “return” of Lam 3.40 has as its aim *confession* so as to receive a *restoration*. Similarly, “lifting” ones heart over ones hand to God represents an act of complete dedication to returning to God in repentance: “If love for God starts in the heart...so does repentance.”<sup>884</sup> Lam 3.42 enacts verbal confession with a corporate declaration: “we have transgressed and rebelled.” The repetition of פשע and מרה√ confirms similar statements about and by Zion in Lam 1.5b (פשעיה), 14a (פשעי), 22b (כל־פשעי) as well as Lam 1.18a (כי פיהו מריתי), 20b (כי מרו מריתי). Poetically, the repetition serves an intensification function: to confirm the transgression and rebellion of the people, the justice of YHWH’s activity, and the need for reconciliation, which the confession rhetorically works toward—for YHWH to hear and respond with restoration and forgiveness. And yet the last half of verse 42 explodes the reader’s expectation: instead of forgiven, YHWH has in fact “not forgiven” (לא סלחת). God is addressed once again as in Lam 3.19, but as Dobbs-Allsopp notes, the parallelism between, and juxtaposition against,

<sup>880</sup> Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice*, 31-5, 120-66.

<sup>881</sup> LXX reads a singular suffix (לבנו) rather than a plural suffix (לבבנו), but either way the sense of the line is retained. Regarding the preposition על the present study follows the LXX (επι), “over/upon our hands.”

<sup>882</sup> Lam 1.8c, “and she turns (ותשב) back,” Lam 1.11b, “to restore (להשיב),” Lam 1.16b, “one who restores (מישיב),” Lam 1.19c, “they restore (וישיבו),” Lam 2.3b, “he withdrew (השיב),” Lam 2.8b, “he did not withdraw (לא־השיב),” Lam 2.14b, “to restore (להשיב),” Lam 3.3, “it returned (ישב),” Lam 3.21, “I return (אשיב).”

<sup>883</sup> NIDOTTE, 4: 55-9, especially 57.

<sup>884</sup> House, *Lamentations*, 421.

the pronouns—“we” (נחנו) and “you” (אתה)—reveals precisely a fracture in the relationship that is the primary challenge of the remainder of the chapter.<sup>885</sup> As has so often occurred in the poetry up to this point, the readerly expectation is circumvented by the shifts and movements of the text. The proper view of YHWH, his justice, the rightness of his judgment, the proper role of penitence and confession has not produced any form of forgiveness. Rather “the man comes to the brink of being consoled by the sentiments of Lam 3.25-39 only to have them dashed by the continuing reality of God’s silence and absence and the awful persistence of suffering.”<sup>886</sup>

The suffering continues in terms of divine wrath and judgment that both recalls divine activity and Lamentations 2 and enemy activity in Lamentations 1. The depiction in the  $\sigma$ -strophe is that of divine war against the speaker, similarly to Lam 3.1-19. The concentration of divine activity against the speaker makes this clear as well as the similarity in the language about prayer being rebuffed. The communal voice, which began in verse 40, continues with its divine address begun in Lam 3.42b:

סכתה באף ותרדפנו הרגת לא המלת  
 סכותה בענן לך מעבור תפלה  
 סחי ומאוס תשימנו בקרב העמים

“You covered yourself in anger and pursued us. You slaughtered.

You have not forgiven.

You covered yourself in a cloud; prayer could not go through<sup>887</sup>.

[We are] offscouring and rubbish; you have placed us in the midst of the peoples.”

This verse builds upon previous language used to depict judgement against God’s people in Lamentations 2: סכך (Lam 2.1a), הרג (Lam 2.4b, 20c, 21c), and לא המל (Lam 2.2a, 17b, 21c). However, it also exploits language used for enemies who *pursued* Jerusalem’s inhabitants in Lam 1.3c (כל־רדפיה), 6c (לפני רודף). The connotations are relatively straightforward for the reader; the Lord has once again become an enemy pursuer by “covering himself” in a cloud, rebuffing prayers, slaughtering, and not pitying his people. This divine activity, employing day of YHWH language from Lam 2.1-9, leaves his people as “offscouring and rubbish,” once again “in the midst of the peoples ( בקרב )” or as Lam 1.3b states, “among the nations (בגוים).” Whereas in Lam 2.1-9 the narrator describes YHWH in third person speech, in Lam 3.43-5 addresses the deity

<sup>885</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 123.

<sup>886</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 123.

<sup>887</sup>LXX reads עביר as a Qal passive participle, though the sense of the line is retained.

directly, and this is typical of the *Anklage des Gottes* in the genre of the communal lament. The rhetorical function of the complaint is to present the current plight (namely YHWH's own activity) before the deity so that he might transform the negative situation (divine judgment) into a positive situation (divine mercy)—a most basic function of lament.<sup>888</sup> In this way, the metaphor for the divine enemy warrior (וּתְרַדְפֵנוּ) is juxtaposed against the metaphor of the divine saviour and just judge who will hear the complaint (about his own activity) and respond justly.

The interweaving of divine metaphors here paves the way for Lam 3.46-54, the next three strophes that present a description of distress. The communal voice that began prominently in verse 40 gives way to an individual voice in verse 48, which concludes the פ-strophe. Once again the mixture of communal/individual voices precludes firm distinction between them productively interweaving the concept of Zion with the individual speaker, or the גִּבּוֹר. The argument advanced here is that the corporate/individual relationship is productive for the model reader of the text because it enables both perspectives of suffering to intermingle, so that the real reader (likely a 6th century BCE Judahite) is given a voice in and through these personae while being subsumed into a larger corporate totality of suffering, providing a sense of solidarity and social cohesion in the midst of crisis.<sup>889</sup> The text reads:

פָּצוּ עֲלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם כְּלֵי־אִיבֵינוּ  
פָּחַד וּפְחַת הָיָה לָנוּ הַשָּׂאת וְהַשֹּׁבֵר  
פְּלִגְמִים תֵּרַד עֵינַי עַל־שֹׁבֵר בְּתַעֲמִי

עֵינִי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה מֵאֵין הַפְּגוֹת  
עַד־יִשְׁקֹף וַיִּרְא יְהוָה מִשָּׁמַיִם  
עֵינִי עוֹלֵלָה לְנַפְשִׁי מִכֹּל בְּנוֹת עִירִי

צוֹד צְדוֹנִי כַצְפוֹר אִיבֵי הַנֶּסֶם  
צַמְתוּ בַבּוֹר הָיִי וַיְדוּ־אֲבָן בִּי  
צְפוֹרִים עַל־רֹאשִׁי אִמְרַתִּי נִגְזַרְתִּי

"All our enemies open their mouths over us.

Trembling and ruin (the pit), came to us, devastation and breaking.

Streams of water descend (from) my eyes over the breaking of my dear people.

My eye flows and it is not still, there is no rest.

Until he looks down from above and sees: YHWH from the heavens.

My eye deals severely with my soul over all the daughters of my city.

Indeed they hunted me like a bird, my enemies, without cause.

<sup>888</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 54.

<sup>889</sup>See especially Berges, "'Ich bin der Mann, der Elend sah'," 1-20.

They silenced my life in the pit, and they cast<sup>890</sup> a stone against me.  
Waters flowed over my head: I said, ‘I am cut off!’

On the most basic level, these verses depict to the deity a situation of distress at the hands of enemies, or in form-critical parlance, a *Feindklage*. The “pit” (בֹּרַר) in verse 53 literally describes a “cistern” into which the enemies throw the speaker.<sup>891</sup> But metaphorically, בֹּרַר is used in the OT as an archetype for distress and oppressive situations, perhaps even the place of the dead, especially in the Psalter.<sup>892</sup> Drawing upon this encyclopaedic content, the poetry depicts for the model reader a situation that is threatening and dire, over which the speaker complains.

It is of note theologically that the *Feindklage* arises only after the metaphor of YHWH as divine judge has been invoked in the *Anklage des Gottes* (the  $\sigma$ -strophe). Thus the divine judge metaphor is carried forward while the divine (enemy) warrior metaphor fades away. It is unlikely that the relationship between the deity and the speaker(s) of Lam 3.1-19 is reconciled—the evidence leads to a negative conclusion—but what is clear is that the process of working through the reality of YHWH as divine warrior *to* the divine judge in complaint enables a shift to focus upon a different reality and felt pain, namely the activity of “enemies.”

Stylistically, these strophes once again employ repetition as a key poetic device as witnessed in previous portions of Lamentations 3. In the first place, Lam 3.46 (עלינו פצו) recalls Lam 2.16a (פצו עליך פיהם כל־אויבינו) prominently, and the repetition reinforces the reality of enemy derision. The difference, of course, is that in Lam 3.46 speaker is a part of the community, internally describing enemy activity, while in Lam 2.16a the speaker is an individual, describing (objectively) enemy activity against Jerusalem. Likewise, there is repetition of שָׁבַר (verse 47) as in Lam 1.15b; 2.9a, 11b, 13c. The repetition functions to reinforce the reality of suffering and “breaking” while drawing in the Jeremianic *Leitwort* that is exploited in the following verse. As the communal voice gives way to the individual voice in Lam 3.48, the reader has been prepared for the persona of Jeremiah through שָׁבַר and then confronts the Jeremianic clause, “over the breaking of my dear people” (עַל־שִׁבְרֵ בְתֵעִמִּי). Stylistically, the speaker blends the words of Zion (Lam 1.16b: מִיָּמֵי עֵינֵי יְרֵדָה)—something he has already done

<sup>890</sup>Piel imperfect plural verb from יָדָה, “they cast.” This is a rare word, only here, Zech 2.4, and Jer 50.14. For an explanation of the spelling, see GKC §69*u*.

<sup>891</sup>See Gen 37.24.

<sup>892</sup>*NIDOTTE*, 1: 620-1.

in Lam 3.19—with the words of the observer (taking on the persona of Jeremiah) in Lam 2.11bβ: על־שֹׁבֵר בְּתִיעֵצִי. Yet Lam 3.48 adds a nuance from the previous poems by inserting the noun פֶּלֶג. By blending the words of Zion and the persona of Jeremiah in Lam 3.48, the lines that mark communal or individual identity for the speaker become blurred. The man absorbs both communal and individual voices: he weeps over his people's destruction as an individual taking on the mantle of Jeremiah (using Jeremianic language), but as he weeps over what has happened to his people (using Zion's language), he manifests a distinctly communal perspective, like Zion—the model reader, then, encompasses both individual and communal facets. Similar integration is effected in the recollection of Lam 2.18c (עֵינַי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה מֵאֵין הַפְּגוּת) in Lam 3.49 (עֵינַי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה מֵאֵין הַפְּגוּת). In the former verse the persona of Jeremiah calls upon Zion to not allow her eye rest or stillness over the lives of her little ones. In the present verse, the persona of Jeremiah is, in a sense, the speaker, whose eye (עֵינַי) is not still (וְלֹא תִדְמָה) and there is no rest (מֵאֵין הַפְּגוּת). Finally, the repetition of רָאָה remains significant. This usage recalls its previous question in Lam 3.36, “does not the Lord see (לֹא רָאָה)?” and refocuses it to mirror the reality of its iteration in Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a; 2.20a: the deity has *not* seen (רָאָה) the distress in the sense that he has transformed the situation, so the complaint persists.

This repetition and poetic integration of these voices effectively binds Lamentations 3 to the other poems. The purpose here, however, is set within the context again of expressing pain over enemy activity, who have derided the people (verse 46), and who have presumably caused the breaking, destruction, ruin, and trembling (verse 47). This distinguishes the strophe from the ס-strophe, which emphasised YHWH's role in the city's rejection and pain. YHWH rather is depicted as the one to whom the Feindklage can go for appropriate just response.

The acrostic carries the reader past this depiction of distress to an extended direct address to YHWH in Lam 3.55-66. These verses, especially Lam 3.56-66, remain syntactically challenging, and the main interpretative question centres upon how to understand the series of perfective verbs extending from the ק-strophe to the ת-strophe. They may be understood as simple past perfectives, praising YHWH over his deliverance of the speaker from the pit (בִּיר), or alternatively they may be understood as precative



perfectives, the rare usage of the perfective which carries the force of a plea or wish.<sup>893</sup>

To understand the discussion, it is best to note the verses:

קראתי שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה מִבֵּיַר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת  
 קוֹלִי שָׁמַעַת אֱלֹהֵי־עֵלְמָם אֲזַנְךָ לְרוּחֹתַי לְשִׁיעֵרַי  
 קִרְבַּת בַּיּוֹם אֶקְרָאֲךָ אִמְרַת אֱלֹהֵי־רָא

רַבַּת אֲדַנִּי רִיבֵי נַפְשִׁי גְאַלְתָּ חַיִּי  
 רֵאִיתָה יְהוָה עֹתוֹתַי שִׁפְטָה מִשְׁפָּטַי  
 רֵאִיתָה כָּל־יַנְקָמָתָם כָּל־יַמְחָשְׁבָתָם לִי

שָׁמַעַת הִרְפַּתָּם יְהוָה כָּל־יַמְחָשְׁבָתָם עָלַי  
 שִׁפְטֵי קַמִּי וְהַגִּינָם עָלַי כָּל־הַיּוֹם  
 שָׁבַתָם וְקִיַּםתָּם הַבִּיטָה אֲנִי מִגְּנִינָתָם

תִּשְׁיֵב לָהֶם גְּמוּלָה יְהוָה כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם  
 תִּתֵּן לָהֶם מִגְּנַת־לֵב תֵּאלֶתְךָ לָהֶם  
 תִּרְדֹּף בְּאֵף וּתְשַׁמְדֵם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה

"I call your name, O YHWH, from the depths of the pit.

May you hear my cry; do not close your ear for my relief, to my call for help<sup>894</sup>!  
 May you draw near in the day that I call you; may you say, 'Do not fear'!

May you plead, O my Lord, the disputes of my life; may you redeem my life.  
 See<sup>895</sup>, O YHWH, my oppression<sup>896</sup>! Judge my suit!

<sup>893</sup>Iain Provan provides the best summary of the problems and possible solutions for the perfective verbs: "Past, Present and Future in Lamentations III 52-66: The Case for a Precative Perfect Re-examined," *VT* 41 (1991): 164-175.

<sup>894</sup>לְרוּחֹתַי is extremely rare, רוּחָה only occurring here and Ex 8.11. Normally, after "do not shut your ear" one would expect an object like "my cry" or "my voice" (Hillers, *Lamentations*, 118). Yet Hillers draws out similar appeal as is here from a Palmyrene Aramaic inscription: "they called on him in distress and he answered them with relief for them [לְרוּחָה לָן]" (Hillers, *Lamentations*, 118). On this view, the concept of "relief" (רוּחָה) as an aim for appeal to God is not necessarily a completely foreign concept, though in the biblical context it is a break from idiomatic convention. With this in mind scholars generally think that לְשִׁיעֵרַי is an editorial gloss, meant to clarify the meaning and intention of לְרוּחֹתַי. Rudolph nonetheless retains the primary meaning of לְרוּחֹתַי and translates the line as a former appeal of the speaker from the depths of the pit, saying "Verbig nicht dein Ohr, damit ich Luft bekomme!" (Rudolph, *Klagelieder*, 229). Thus the sense of "breath" from רוּחָה is retained: if Yahweh will open his ear (hear his cry), then the speaker will be able to breathe again (gain salvation and renewed vitality).

<sup>895</sup>Morphologically, רֵאִיתָה may be considered as a simple past perfective. However, the הָ ending on רֵאִיתָה in 3.59-60 must be taken into account as it is quite rare (occurring only 5 times, primarily in poetic texts), as the more regular form for Qal perfect 2m.sg., רָאָה, would be רֵאִיתָ (occurring 16 times). Though the imperative רָאָה has been seen in Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a, and 2.20a, רֵאִיתָה, too may be understood as an imperative form. The הָ ending often indicates a volitional mood, whether cohortative or imperative (GKC §48c, d, i).

<sup>896</sup>*hapax legomenon*, noun feminine singular, עֹתָה, with a first common singular suffix, "my oppression." The term derives from עָוַת, "to bend, falsify," and in context, it looks as though the meaning of the word means "how the law has been bent against me," or "my oppression."

See all of their vengefulness, all their plans for me.

May you hear of their taunts, O YHWH, all their intentions against me;  
The speech of those rising against me, and their taunting, (are) against me all day  
long.

In everything they do<sup>897</sup>, consider: I am their mocking-song!

May you return retribution to them, O YHWH, according to the work of their  
hands.

May you give to them hardness of heart; may your curse be on them.

May you pursue in anger, and may you exterminate them from under the heavens  
of YHWH.”

The very notion of a precative perfect, while attested in cognate languages<sup>898</sup>, has been received with little acceptance since Gesenius’ grammar and the scepticism carried through with Driver’s comments.<sup>899</sup> The reason for scepticism is due in part to the suggestion that the verbs in question can be understood as simple past perfectives and so thereby need not be explained as wishes or prayers. Underlying this view is the belief that there are two speakers in the poetry that depict two separate situations: one who describes present distress (Lam 3.46-54) and one who describes past distress out of which YHWH has delivered him (Lam 3.55-63).<sup>900</sup> In the former understanding, distress ensues from the description in Lam 3.46-54 while in the latter understanding there has been a deliverance, of which Lam 3.56-63 is considered a Danklied, at least until the *n*-strophe where the imperfective verbs mitigate against completed action and demand that the activity of enemies remains a pressing problem. The latter view infuses a good deal of hope in the poetry and responds to Lam 3.42b-55 with a positive response from YHWH. Yet this latter view is somewhat awkward in light of the imperatives *רִאִיתָה* and *שָׁפֹטָה* in Lam 3.59, *רִאִיתָה* in Lam 3.60 and *הִבִּיטָה* in Lam 3.63. If deliverance has been achieved, then why is there a need for YHWH to see or consider or judge the present situation? Wiesmann notices this and suggests that there is a past distress of which Jeremiah laments (Lam

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<sup>897</sup> *שבתם יקוּמם* is difficult. These do not follow the paradigms of hollow verb participles, but must be construed as some form of verbal nouns from *שׁוּב* and *קוּם*, respectively. If understood in this way, then their collocation indicates merism: in their resting and rising (all that they do / everything they do). Similar merism is found in Deut 6.7: “in their sitting and in their rising” (*וּבְשֹׁכְבָם וּבְקוּמָם*).

<sup>898</sup> For references noting attestation, see Provan, “Past, Present and Future,” 165-6, notes 5, 8, and 10.

<sup>899</sup> GKC §106*n*, note 2; S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of Tenses in Hebrew* (3rd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1874) §20.

<sup>900</sup> Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 53-9; Weiser, *Klagelieder*, 76-7, 87-91; Kaiser, *Klagelieder*, 349-51, 357-8. Huey, *Lamentations*, 477-8; Bracke translates on the basis of

3.52-8) to which Dear Zion responds in Lam 3.59, that God has seen (Lam 3.59-61) but not fully acted upon and thereby the distress persists (Lam 3.64-66).<sup>901</sup> There are two challenges to this view. In the first place, it is not a simple matter to unravel the interconnection between the speaking voices of Dear Zion and the second speaker, the persona of Jeremiah. The voices play into one another, overlap, and remain enmeshed. Attribution of one portion of the poetry to a particular speaker, whether Zion or Jeremiah, dissolves the poetic use of repetition at work in the poem. Moreover there is a close association between the present distress depicted throughout Lam 3.1-55 and the distress of Zion in Lamentations 1 and 2, also demonstrated through the use of repetition; the three poems cannot be divorced from one another stylistically, and thereby the distress exemplified in the course of Lam 3.52-66 cannot be easily bifurcated into a “past” and “present” situations easily. The final challenge to this view, as Provan rightly notes, is that this view neglects the imperative *הביטה* in verse 63, clearly appealing for YHWH to consider the situation.<sup>902</sup>

Besides this, Lam 3.56 militates against reading the verbs as simple past perfectives. This verse clearly has a perfective verb, “you heard (*שמעת*),” followed by an imperfective with negation, “do not close (*אל־תעלים*) your ear.” The typical response in favour of a simple past perfective for “you heard” is the clause which follows it represents embedded speech of the speaker to YHWH, which then the deity heard (*שמעת*). Embedded speech certainly is a poetic device employed to great effect in Lamentations, as the discussion above reveals. And it is used in Lam 3.18 and clearly occurs in Lam 3.57 (*אל־תירא*). While plausible, detrimental to this view is the reality that nowhere in the OT is there an occurrence where YHWH hears a petition that is followed by a quotation of that petition, making Lam 3.56 a unique case.<sup>903</sup>

Finally, rendering the span of verbs from Lam 3.55-63 as simple past perfectives does not solve the theological problem of the  $\pi$ -strophe. If God has delivered and the verses represent a Danklied, why then does Lam 3.64-66 return to a present description of enemy threat, which then the speaker appeals for YHWH to annihilate? Even if Lam 3.55-63 *is* a Danklied and represents past salvation, the final strophe in the poem raises

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past perfectives but notes the precative view is plausible (*Jeremiah 30 –52 and Lamentations 224-5*).

<sup>901</sup>Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*, 197-8.

<sup>902</sup>Provan, “Past, Present and Future,” 169.

<sup>903</sup>Provan, “Past, Present and Future,” 171.

the spectre of present distress and enemy activity once again, leaving the poem as a whole on a tense note.

The other solution to the problem, as translated here, is to treat the verbs as “precativ perfectives.” It is true that this span of perfective verbs would be the most concentrated in the OT, but the reasons offered above suggest at the very least a precativ notion is reasonable. There are obvious difficulties with this view as well, not least the perfective verb “I call” (קראתי) in verse 55, which I understand as a stative perfective that indicates ongoing action or continual “calling.”<sup>904</sup> the alternation of “may you hear” (שמעת) and “do not close” (אל־תעלם) in Lam 3.56, and verse 57, with its verb alternations between perfective (קרבת) + imperfective (אקראך) + perfective (אמרתי) + imperfective (אל־תירא). These issues deserve response. For Lam 3.55, I understand this verb to link structurally back to the ז-strophe with the repetition of the term “pit” (בור), the only other occurrence in the remainder of the poem. In this way the ק-strophe is structurally related to the ז-strophe and introduces the reality of present distress in the span of Lam 3.56-66. As to verses 55-6, Hillers and Provan rightly note the presence of similar structure in the Psalter, particularly in Ps 130.1-2:<sup>905</sup>

ממעמקים פראתיך יהוה  
אדני שמעה בקולי תהיינה אזניך קשבות לקול תחנוני

“Out of the depths I call you, O YHWH;  
O Lord, hear my voice; let your ears be attentive to the sound of my  
supplications.”

קראתיך may be understood as a perfective with a stative sense<sup>906</sup> while שמעה is clearly an imperative, and this parallels the general sense of Lam 3.56, “may you hear my voice (קולי שמעת).” Verse 56, however, remains difficult. Provan, however, finds at least vaguely similar construction in Ps 102.2-3:<sup>907</sup>

יהוה שמעה תפלתי ושוועתי אליך תבוא  
אל־תסתר פניך ממני ביום צר לי  
הטה־אלי אזנך ביום אקרא מהר ענני

“Hear my prayer, O YHWH; let my cry for help come to you;  
Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress;  
Incline to me your ear in the day I call—hasten, answer me!”

<sup>904</sup>GBHS §3.2.1.(b).

<sup>905</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 118.

<sup>906</sup>GBHS §3.2.1.(b).

<sup>907</sup>Provan, “Past, Present and Future,” 174.

In these verses there is a similar alternation of moods: volitional (שמעה) + imperfective (תבוא) + imperfective (אל־תסתַר) + volitional (הטה) + imperfective (אקרא) + volitional (מהר, ענני). These verbs are understandable corporately as a present plea that is ongoing before YHWH. The use of the imperfective אקרא + ביום in Ps 102.3 parallels אקראך + ביום in Lam 3.57, and both can be understood as “in the day I call.” These parallels from the Psalter at least suggest plausible evidence for seeing the verbs as precative perfectives that depict a persistent situation of distress that demands the present appeals to YHWH that extend from Lam 3.55-66.

But it seems likely that the verbal syntax of these verses stretch the limits of language to express the inherent tension and anticipation of divine deliverance and the relationship between the גבר and the deity. The alternation between imperative (Lam 3.59, 60, 63), perfective (Lam 3.55-8, 61-3), and imperfective (Lam 3.56-7, 64-6) forms reveal the uncertainty of the present situation: has YHWH delivered, is he going to, or must the appeal for deliverance still go forth? The present study adopts the precative perfective translation, but this in no way diminishes the way the poetry strains verbal aspect in this span of verses.

It is also of note that this span of verses also, once again, exploits repetition as a stylistic device. The most significant is the repetition of ראה√ and בטה√ in the imperatives of Lam 3.59, 60, 63. As has been demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, ראה√ and בטה√ are used in conjunction in the formulaic address seen in Lam 1.9c, 11c, 12a; 2.20a. That they occur once again in close proximity in Lamentations 3 is not accidental. The appeals of Zion in Lamentations 1 and 2 are taken up once again in the appeal of the speaker in Lam 3.59-63, indicating that repetition here functions poetically to intensify the focus upon present distress and the need for YHWH’s deliverance. Also in Lam 3.61 the term חרפה is used in association with the “taunts” or “scorn” of the enemies, that the speaker requests for YHWH to hear, and subsequently, to act. This term may subtly respond to Lam 3.30b, where the man is admonished to be “satisfied with scorn (בחרפה).” In this way, the repetition subtly refocuses this former instruction in light of the present appeal: the speaker will not necessarily be satisfied with scorn (בחרפה) but will appeal to YHWH to hear (שמעת) it, and subsequently act against it.

The poem concludes as Lamentations 1 concludes, with a focus upon the activity of enemies and an imprecation against their existence. Unlike Lam 1.22, which concluded in the third line with an emphasis upon Zion’s pain, Lam 3.64-6 focuses solely upon divine judgment and retribution against enemies. This is seen in the repetition of רדף√

between Lam 3.43, 66. In both instances, YHWH is figured as the divine warrior, in Lam 3.43 as the one who pursues the man/Zion but in verse 66 the one who will pursue the enemies. This is a transformation of the former usage of  $\sqrt{\text{רדף}}$ , where the “pursuer” (YHWH) *was* the enemy. Here, he is re-imagined by the coupling of divine metaphor: he is the divine judge who will hear the appeal of the speaker and the divine warrior who will pursue the enemy who has plotted against him. So the poem concludes as it opened with a lament that compiles divine metaphors to great effect; the differences are poignant, however: (a) Lam 1.1-16 was an *individual* lament while Lam 3.64-6 are part of a *communal* lament, and (b) Lam 1.1-16 displayed antagonistic divine metaphors while Lam 3.64-6 presents both positive metaphor (divine judge who will hear the appeal and act justly) and antagonistic metaphor (as a divine warrior acting against the enemy). By the time the poem concludes, though the relationship with the speaker(s) is not reconciled, at least it is at a place where the speaker(s) can refocus divine metaphors that figure YHWH on the side of the speaker rather than against him in judgment.

The ambivalence of divine imagery in the poem leads the reader to question how to understand the deity. Is YHWH depicted as beneficent, just (Lam 3.25-39), and able to hear his peoples’ complaint about his own activity (Lam 3.1-19, 42b-45) as well as enemy activity (Lam 3.46-54), or is he simply a deity who will not respond, who shuts out prayer (שתם תפלת; Lam 3.8b), who rejects his people (ותזנה משלום נפשי; Lam 3.17), and who hides himself so that prayer cannot pass to him (מעבור תפלה סכותה בענין לך; Lam 3.44)? The linear progression of the acrostic draws the reader through divine portraiture in the following manner: various antagonistic divine metaphors (Lam 3.1-16, 18, 42b-45) are matched by various beneficent divine metaphors (Lam 3.17, 19-41a, 46-66). The poetry simply does not provide determinate response as to which metaphor the reader is to adopt. Rather, the model reader is forced to decide between theological portraits, and there is good evidence to choose for a divine saviour, who is beneficent and to be trusted to deliver from his own activity, the activity of enemies, and ones own sin; likewise evidence exists to adopt the image of a divine warrior, whose activity presents a profound challenge that cannot be avoided because this activity prevents any reconciliation between God and his people (Lam 3.8, 42b-45).

### 7.3. Conclusion

Lamentations 3 is a complex poem poetically and theologically. As accomplished in the previous chapters, the present chapter concludes with a catalogue the use of

structure, genre and poetics and how they impact theological presentation in the poem. First a word should be said about structure. The acrostic in Lamentations 3 is much more extensive than the previous poems and the rapid progression from letter to letter in each strophe creates rather quick pace that keeps the reader moving through the poem. The extensiveness of the acrostic also offers an interpretative cue for the reader to pay close attention to the poem, enabling one to focus upon it in special relation to the previous poems, which is a helpful feature in light of the concentration of repetition of language drawn from Lamentations 1—2. As such, the acrostic, by nature of its physicality, is instrumental in framing the other poetic devices. The acrostic also formally ties disparate generic elements: individual lament (Lam 3.1-24), wisdom material (Lam 3.25-39), communal lament (Lam 3.40-7) and an individual lament (Lam 3.48-66).

Lamentations 3 “blows up” different encyclopaedic content from Lamentations 1 and 2 in that it draws from wisdom material; the other poems do not have this feature. Moreover, while the phenomenology of mourning was prominent in Lamentations 1 and 2, Lamentations 3 transforms the language associated with mourning into penitential language, particularly in Lam 3.28-30. Alongside this activation (then transformation) of mourning, Lamentations 3 employs a good deal of textual data from the OT to construct its model reader. This is seen in the term הגבר in Lam 3.1, which likely implies an exemplary figure, a righteous follower of YHWH on the basis of the same language in the Psalter: “Taste and see that YHWH is good; blessed is the man (הגבר) who trusts in him” (Ps 34.9); “From YHWH the steps of a man (גבר) are prepared and he delights (in) his way” (Ps 37.23); “Blessed is the man (הגבר) who places<sup>908</sup> his trust (in) YHWH” (Ps 40.5). The activation of this part of the cultural encyclopaedia reveals that הגבר represents a faithful follower, strong precisely from his devotion to YHWH.

### 7.3.1. Genre

The interaction between genres in Lamentations 3 creates interpretative fecundity for the model reader. Apart from Lamentations 1—2, the dirge and city-lament genres are not exploited; these pieces of cultural data are “narcotised” in Eco’s terminology. The individual lament in Lam 3.1-21 promotes a divine portrait that is problematic for the גבר as YHWH rebuffs prayer (Lam 3.8); the deity is portrayed through a range of antagonistic divine metaphors in the lament. This leaves the lamenter questioning God (Lam 3.17) and

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<sup>908</sup>שם is a Qal perfect (√שים) rather than “the name” (שם), as LXX reads.

appealing to the deity about his situation (Lam 3.19). The inclusio (Lam 3.21-4) jars against the preceding lament and transitions into the wisdom section (Lam 3.25-39). This parenetic section then effectively responds to both the preceding lament and Lamentations 1—2, effectively promoting a theodicy. A communal lament (Lam 3.40-47) follows, and is juxtaposed against, the parenetic section; the juxtaposition of the generic blocks raises questions for the reader about the plausibility of the wisdom teaching. Finally, an individual lament spans from Lam 3.48-66 in which an individual speaker laments both the fate of his people (Lam 3.48-51) and his own distress (Lam 3.49-54). The individual lament concludes with an extended address to YHWH (Lam 3.55-66) in which the lamenter prays to the deity about his own situation (verse 55-9) and the activity of the enemies against him (verses 60-6). The generic interplay in the poem creates a good deal of ambiguity for the reader in regard to the identity of the speaker as well as the *number* of speakers. Moreover, no singular perspective is adopted in the poem; the wisdom portion is counterbalanced by a focus upon enemies (Lam 3.46-7, 60-6) and the activities of God (Lam 3.1-19, 42b-45).

### 7.3.2. Poetics

Counterbalancing the forward movement of the acrostic, poetics tend to create a reflexive movement for the reader through repetition and an outward movement for the reader through allusion and drawing upon content from the cultural encyclopaedia. Repetition is stylistically concentrated in Lamentations 3 to a degree greater than the previous poems. And differently than the other poems, Lamentations 3 employs less internal repetition (that is repetition of language within Lamentations 3) in favour of a greater degree of external repetition (that is repetition of language from Lamentations 1—2). Nevertheless, as in the previous poems, repetition serves either an intensive or combinatory function. A catalogue of the use of repetition in this poem is as follows:

#### **Function: Intensification**

##### 1. To emphasise suffering:

- a. לענה וראש, (or related language), Lam 3.5, 15: heighten pain of the גבר.
- b. שבר, Lam 3.47, 48 (Lam 1.15b; 2.9a, 11b, 13c): reinforce the reality of pain in “breaking.”
- c. בטח / ראה, Lam 3.59, 36, 60, 63 (Lam 1.9c, 11c, 12a; 2.20a): heightens suffering of Zion and the גבר, and the need for divine response. Lam 3.59 recasts Lam 3.36, “does not the Lord see (לא ראה)?” and refocuses it to mirror the reality of its iteration in Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a; 2.20a: the deity has *not* seen (ראה) the



distress in the sense that he has transformed the situation, so the complaint persists.

2. To emphasise judgment:
  - a. עברה, Lam 3.1 (Lam 2.2b): divine wrath.
  - b. זנה, Lam 3.17 (Lam 2.7a): emphasise divine judgment—Zion's spurning becomes the man's spurning.
  - c. צוה, Lam 3.37 (Lam 1.10c, 17b; 2.17b): YHWH commands judgment.
  - d. חטא, Lam 3.39 (Lam 1.8a): reinforces the notion that judgment is justified and due to sin.
  - e. פשע, Lam 3.42 (Lam 1.5b, 14a, 22b): focus on the suffering and judgment that comes from offence.
  - f. מרה, Lam 3.42 (Lam 1.18a, 20b): affirmation of judgment due to Zion's rebellion against YHWH.
  - g. סכך, Lam 3.43 (Lam 2.1a): affirms divine judgment against both the גבר and Zion, strengthening their association.
  - h. הרגת לא חמלת, Lam 3.43 (Lam 2.2a, 4b, 17b, 20c, 21c): affirms divine judgment against both the גבר and Zion, strengthening their association.

### Function: Combination

1. To construct interpretive depth:
  - a. עני, Lam 3.1 (Lam 1.3a, 7b, 9a): enmesh pain of Zion and the גבר.
  - b. זכר-עני ומרודי, Lam 3.19 (Lam 1.7a; זכר-עני ימי עניה): enmesh pain of Zion and the גבר.
  - c. עני עיני, פלגים-מים חרד עיני על-שבר בת-עמי; ירדה מים; Lam 2.11bβ, על-שבר בת-עמי, Lam 3.48 (Lam 1.16b, עני עיני; Lam 2.11bβ): blends the speech of Zion (Lam 1.16b) and the personae of Jeremiah (Lam 2.11bβ) with the speech of the lamenter (Lam 3.48).
  - d. אל-חתני פוגת לך אל-התדם בת-עינך, Lam 3.49 (Lam 2.18, אל-חתני; Lam 2.18, פוגת לך אל-התדם בת-עינך): combines the speech of the persona of Jeremiah with the lamenter's description of distress.
  - e. פצו עליך פיהם, עלינו פיהם כל-איבינו פצו; Lam 3.46 (Lam 2.16a, פצו עליך פיהם; Lam 2.16a, עלינו פיהם כל-איבינו פצו): reinforces the reality of enemy derision.
  - f. ותרדפנו, Lam 3.43 (Lam 1.3c, 6c): transforms previous depictions of enemy "purusers" and equates these to YHWH, who has become an enemy "pursuer."
2. To refocus previously held understandings:
  - a. על, Lam 3.27 (Lam 1.14a): revises previous understanding of the yoke as a good form of discipline rather than pain.
  - b. ישב בוד, Lam 3.28 (Lam 1.1a; 2.10a): transforms acts of mourning into acts of penitence over judgment.
  - c. זנה + אדני, Lam 3.31 (Lam 2.7a): transforms former depiction of spurning Zion into a temporary reality.
  - d. יגה, Lam 3.32, 33 (Lam 1.5b, 12c): divine torment is not lasting, as it is met with divine comfort (נחם).
  - e. נחם, Lam 3.32 (1.2b, 9b, 16b, 17a, 21a): divine comfort which Zion longed for is introduced in Lam 3.32.

- f. ראה, Lam 3.36 (Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a; 2.20a): the appeals of Zion are met with a declaration that the Lord *does* “see” oppression and wrong.
- g. הרפה, Lam 3.61 (Lam 3.30b): refocuses former instruction (Lam 3.30b) in light of the present appeal (Lam 3.61)—the lamenter will not be satisfied with scorn.

One implication that arises from the use and density of the repetition throughout the course of the poem is that a focus upon the generic aspects of the poem to the neglect of the use of repetition remains methodologically flawed. Repetition is employed across the full span of the poem, across generic boundaries. Its poetic usage reveals both a complex and nuanced poem in its presentation and paratactic logic. Its “narrative” is precisely displayed in repetition of language, working alongside imagery, through the generic blocks. Thereby, focusing solely upon the parenetic section (Lam 3.25-39) to discover the “heart” of the poem is tenuous as it ignores the poem’s other stylistic features.

Next to repetition, “blowing up” of cultural data plays a significant role in Lamentations 3, which drives the reader *outward* into the encyclopaedia to build its model reader. This is first evidenced through allusion. The collocation of שבט and עברה in Lam 3.1 from Isa 10.5-6 reveals that Isaiah 10 likely played a role in the formation of Lamentations, especially chapters 2 and 3. The term “hardship” (תלאה) in Lam 3.5 should be seen as an allusion to, and inversion of, the Exodus experience. Instead of deliverance from bondage, the man experiences a re-entry into hardship (תלאה) as Moses describes in Ex 18.1-12 and Num 20.14-7. This allusion works in a similar manner as allusion to Exodus in Lam 1.3. Similarly, Lam 3.5 draws from Jeremianic language in the use of “wormwood” (ראש), as in Jer 8.14; 9.14; 23.15. This allusion depicts vividly the doom the גבר experiences in YHWH’s judgment. The covenant terminology in Lam 3.22-4 alludes prominently to stock language of YHWH’s gracious nature, spelled out most clearly in the first half of the credo of Ex 34.6, “YHWH, YHWH, a god compassionate (רחום) and gracious; slow of anger but great in mercy and truth (ורב־חסד ואמת),” linking the texts together as markers of YHWH’s beneficence and fidelity in covenant to the גבר. In Lam 3.24, the affirmation of YHWH as the “portion” of the גבר recalls texts from the Psalter (Pss 16.5; 73.26; 142.6) but especially Ps 119.57, which nearly forms a perfect parallel. Allusion to the “portion” concept from the Psalter reinforces for the reader that the גבר trusts in YHWH and that the deity will be with him. Continuing with allusion to the Psalter, Lam 3.37 alludes to Ps 33.9, reinforcing the notion that judgment is decreed by YHWH and he is aware of the distress the גבר faces. In Lam 3.38b, “evil and good”

(הרעות והטוב) was demonstrated to be referring to the “good” and “evil” presented before the Israelites in Deut 30.15 (הטוב and הרע). In this sense, Lam 3.38b does not present a general monistic theology as much as it connects the present situation of the man/Zion to covenant curses, emphasising the reality of divine judgment in a particular covenantal shape. Lam 3.39 (מהייתאונן) alludes to Num 11.1 (כמתאננים) to reinforce the notion that complaint is sinful and arouses divine judgment; the main aim through the allusion is to admonish the people to *avoid* complaining, as YHWH’s punishment was *justified* and *predicted*.

After allusion, exploitation of “s-codes” is evidenced in the poetry. Lam 3.25-30 exploits the institutional s-code “mourning rite,” which is used in Lamentations 1—2 through repetition of language. These verses then overlay an s-code “penitential rite” against the s-code of mourning, so that the reader is forced to refocus his previous understanding of mourning in Lamentations 1—2 as something “good” done through a penitential act. This refocuses semantics of previous portions of the book, leading the reader to a theology of divine justice and human sinfulness, which demands penitence rather than mourning. Finally, Lam 3.40-2 exploits the s-code of “covenant” to situate confession. For the reader, this move is both logical and necessary, as Lam 3.25-39 demonstrated the reality of covenant breach, and thereby the need for the offending party to confess so that there might be reconciliation (forgiveness).<sup>909</sup> And yet the reader is confronted with the acute reality through the progression from Lam 3.42a-b that forgiveness has *not* ensued and the dispute between parties (YHWH and the people) remains.

In conjunction with the poetics of repetition, allusion, and the use of s-codes, Lamentations 3 exploits metaphor and imagery in a manner unprecedented in the book. From Lam 3.1-19, YHWH is portrayed as:

- Anti-Shepherd (Lam 3.1)
- Divine Jailor (Lam 3.5)
- Divine Warrior (Lam 3.11-12)
- Wild Animals: bear/lion (Lam 3.10)
- Party Host (Lam 3.15-6)
- Divine Judge (Lam 3.17, 19)

The shifts from antagonistic to more positive divine metaphors occurs rapidly and without warning (Lam 3.18, 19-20, 21-4, 42-5, 45-66). For the model reader, this variety of divine portrayal opens interpretative horizons through which he or she might understand the

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<sup>909</sup>Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice*, 31-5, 94-109.

deity and the relationship between the speaker and God. And yet despite the variety of divine portrayal, the poetry remains focused upon maintaining address to the deity, appealing to him concerning his own actions (Lam 3.17a, 42b-5), the sin of the appellant (Lam 3.40-42a) or the activity of enemies (Lam 3.46-66). This coheres with the range of motivations for appeal in Lamentations 1—2.

### 7.3.3. Theology

The ambivalence present in divine imagery raises theological questions. What is the theology of this poem? How is the real reader to understand the גבר, Zion, and YHWH? Clearly YHWH is depicted as beneficent and just and the people as sinful, which promotes theodicy. The theodic presentation in Lam 3.25-39 and the creedal allusion to Ex 34.6-7 in Lam 3.21-4 is a crucial element that confirms this. Moreover, the fact that the poem concludes in a lament about present distress and enemy threat (Lam 3.6-66), presupposes a tacit logic concerning divine justice: YHWH is the divine judge, just and able to hear his peoples' complaint about enemy activity (Lam 3.46-54). This logic pervades even though there instances of complaint about YHWH's denial of attention (זכר, Lam 3.19) and lack of forgiveness (Lam 3.42b-5), as these complaints, too, go to the deity. Moreover, the interconnections between previous portions of the poetry, allusion to Deut 30.15, and the overt confession of sin in Lam 3.42a confirm that the גבר (and Zion) is sinful. There is no attempt to "downplay" the reality of sin, and this must be recognised. In this way, it is true that Lamentations 3 gives evidence to promote theodicy.

And yet, if Lam 3.21-4 does play a crucial element in the theodic presentation, then what is unstated in this theological affirmation remains vital for understanding the poem as well. What precisely about YHWH's covenant characteristics in fact give the גבר hope? Is hope constructed from the idea that YHWH will counteract *his own* extensive punitive actions described in Lam 3.1-18, or in YHWH's act of remembering the man's miserable homelessness (עניי ומרודי לענה וראש; Lam 3.19), presumably exile, or in thinking that a theological conviction will relieve the man of his dire situation, or in the notion that the Lord will forgive the sins of the people after they have confessed and repented? The precise *meaning* of the hope in Lam 3.21-4 remains an open question, which the reader, enabled by the text, may fill in the "gaps" and respond to in some manner, though not *one* manner. This fact projects an open strategy rather than a closed one for its model reader.

Building from this, there are indicators that theodicy does not paint the full theological picture. Stated another way, there is indeed an anti-theodic impulse present.

Divine response is not guaranteed, for he may shut out prayer (שתם תפלתי; Lam 3.8b), reject his people (ותזנה משלום נפשי; Lam 3.17), or hide himself so that prayer cannot pass to him (מעבור תפלה סכותה בענן לך; Lam 3.44). Also the linear progression of the acrostic draws the reader through divine portraiture in the following manner: various antagonistic divine metaphors (Lam 3.1-16, 18, 42b-45) are matched by various beneficent divine metaphors (Lam 3.17, 19-41a, 46-66). Even if the reader recognises that the poetry concludes on a tacit metaphor of divine judge, and thereby a rather positive view, the former depictions and questions raised by divine portrayal are not resolved, but passed over. YHWH as divine judge is *still* the malevolent bear and lion—an opportunistic hunter (Lam 3.10). The poetry does not give determinate response as to which divine metaphor the reader is to adopt. Rather, the model reader is forced into an “ideal insomnia” in terms of theological portrayal. As the empirical reader becomes the model reader, one may adopt the image of divine saviour, who is beneficent (Lam 3.25-39), or alternatively to recognise the reality of the divine warrior, whose activity presents a profound challenge that cannot be avoided because it prevents any reconciliation between God and his people (Lam 3.8, 42b-45). Equally, present pain *is* the problem for the גבר, if the conclusion of the poem is any indication: YHWH *has not* responded, leading the lamenter to cry out using the same language of Zion’s formulaic address (בטהל / ראהל); this poetically connects Zion with the lamenter and heightening the emphasis upon present pain and the lack of divine response.

A word, too, should be said about how the poetry stretches the limits of language to impact theological presentation beyond theodic/anti-theodic categories. This is seen first in Lam 3.21-4, where the ambiguous referent to זאת and the awkward syntax of על-יכן precisely creates a forward impulse for the reader to try and make sense of what could create hope in the man; nothing in the verses prior suggest an answer. The reader is left wondering how the man changes his perception. The acrostic, then, moves the reader forward through positive depictions of YHWH to the repetition of על-יכן אחיל, revealing an inclusio. Syntactically, the poetry stretches the reader to discover the theological truth of YHWH’s covenant traits. This is an entirely positive portrayal that only arrives by reading the text. Next, the rather strange syntax of the כ and מ-strophes, stretch the limits of language to show that YHWH is beneficent and “sees” the suffering of the גבר; this too promotes theodicy. Finally, while the present study has translated the perfective verbs in the span from 3.55-66 as “precativ perfectives” it cannot be denied that the poetry here stretches the limits of language as well, which has theological implications. If precatives,

the verbs in this span of verses imply ongoing distress from which there is no relief. If simple past perfectives, then there is a Danklied in which YHWH has *already* delivered, providing a positive theology of divine justice, care, and deliverance. This, however, is met by Lam 3.64-6, in which another distress appears, needing YHWH's deliverance once again. The past, present, and future in the theological relationship between God-people-enemies in the poem is strained and uncertain, which is then revealed in the syntax and semantics of Lam 3.55-66. The difficulties syntactically and semantically, I submit, give the reader different ways to construe the theological realities of the poem.

These factors present both a poem and a theology that is profoundly open in Eco's terminology. Thus it is clear that the relationship between God and the נָבִי may be read in by real readers in a multifaceted manner. The range of divine images suggests a number of ways for the model reader to access the deity. And the blurred relationship between communal and individual perspectives via communal and individual laments in the poem only heightens this point. The individual, real reader of Lamentations 3 may find himself or herself in agreement with the "man" of 3.1-17, understanding YHWH in a variety of negative images. However, as part of the community, the real reader may be drawn up into the communal voice of 3.22, who finds hope in YHWH, though even there the nature of that hope may be actualised in a number of ways. With this in mind, the poem operates on a more open strategy for its model reader than a closed one.

And yet as in the previous poems, a caveat must be made regarding the openness. Despite the varied ways the reader can approach the deity and the נָבִי and understand the relationship, as in Lamentations 1—2, the fact that all complaints—whether about sin, enemies, distress, or even YHWH's actions—go before the deity implies that the poetry tacitly affirms divine justice. That is, the openness of the poem works *rhetorically* on the basis that YHWH remains available and potent, able to respond out of that justice and beneficence to counteract distresses expressed in the text (even when the problem is his own divine activity). All the appeals and complaints rhetorically are designed to *persuade* YHWH to act on the lamenter's behalf. The content of the appeal and complaint, however, is something that must be actualised for the reader in the reading process. The poetry opens up interpretative horizons for the model reader to accomplish this. For the empirical readers living in sixth century BCE Judah, that this poem (as in Lamentations 1 and 2) constructs an "open" strategy for its model reader may give an indication as to its function: it provides a vehicle for these real readers (as they become the model reader) to engage YHWH and their situation in a variety of ways. However, the potential variety of

interpretative responses by the model reader is always met by a theology that affirms that YHWH is available to hear and respond to these responses.

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS**

### **8.1. Summary**

The present study has observed how Lamentations 1—3 synthetically presents its theology. It has accomplished this task by assessing the poetry to discover how, in terms of genre, structure, and poetics, theology is presented for the model reader of Lamentations 1—3. In Chapter 1, it was questioned whether or not selecting three chapters out of five is warranted as an object of study. In response, it was demonstrated that the majority of research on the theology of the book in the past has focussed primarily on Lamentations 3, and the figure of the גֹּבַר, until Westermann (1990), whose monograph shifted interest on Lamentations research to a greater interest in the figure of “Dear Zion” (בְּהִצְיֹן) in Lamentations 1—2 and a lesser interest in Lamentations 3. This culminated in the monograph of Linafelt, who focused upon Lamentations 1—2 solely and its theological portrait in light of the figure of personified Jerusalem. These approaches were seen to polarise the theological research into theodic and anti-theodic trajectories. Thus, as the majority of research focused upon these three poems separately (Lamentations 1—2 and Lamentations 3), the present study suggested approaching the theology of the book by observing how Lamentations 1—3 present theological issues synthetically.

But such an approach demands historical warrant, and a section in the first chapter was devoted to demonstrating the historical basis of assessing the poems together (1.2.). It was demonstrated that on the basis of correspondence between perceived proximity to Lamentations’ description of the disaster of Jerusalem, linguistic analysis, and textual interaction between Lamentations and Isaiah 40—55 and Zechariah 1—2, the book as a whole was completed between 587-520 BCE. Thus there is a historical warrant to assess the three poems together rather than separately.

With this in view, the chapter concluded by suggesting that interpretation of theology remains a complex task not least due to the hermeneutical presuppositions of the interpreter and how one frames the question to respond to the theological question for the book. The horizons “behind,” “within” and “in front of” the text were offered as useful



metaphors by which different approaches could be categorised. It was suggested that the present study would adopt an “integrated” approach in which all three horizons could be constructively recognised in interpreting the poetry and theology of Lamentations 1—3. And finally in the first chapter it was revealed that the methodology adopted for the task was the aesthetic theory of semiotician Umberto Eco.

Chapter 2 surveyed research into the theology of Lamentations using the metaphors of “behind,” “within,” and “in front of” the text as a guide. It was shown that the historical paradigm with its various emphases upon the world behind the text is helpful in that it highlights the essential historicity of Lamentations. And yet it was shown that neither Deuteronomic/istic nor Zion theologies can be argued to determine the theology of the book (Gottwald, Albrektson). Further, arguments that place Lamentations 3 later than the rest of the book were shown to be faulty (Westermann, Brandscheidt). Internal and external evidence points towards the book being composed as a unity. A focus on the world “within” the text was shown to be beneficial in observing the internal workings of the poetry, especially the presence of repetition. However, it was shown that this approach can be overdrawn to highlight structural issues rather than allowing the text to speak in its own right (Renkema). Finally, Chapter 2 touched upon the world “in front of” the text, particularly in modern feminist analysis of Lamentations (Guest, Seidman, O’Connor). These works rightly draw attention to the themes of abuse, degradation, and pain but their ideological commitments unhelpfully led to under-reading the theology of Lamentations. Finally, Chapter 2 adopted an “integrated” approach, typified by Dobbs-Allsopp, that takes seriously all three horizons in interpreting Lamentations 1—3.

Chapter 3 provided an entrée into the semiotics and aesthetic theory of Umberto Eco. His approach was adopted for a number of reasons. In the first place, his theory coheres with the integrated approach adopted in the study. Further, his theory provides a helpful means to assess aesthetic texts, such as Lamentations. Eco’s theory also enables distinctions between kinds of texts, namely how texts are designed differently to elicit different responses from model reader. Some texts are designed to arouse a single response from their model reader (closed) while others are designed to arouse multiple responses from their model reader (open). In light of the ambiguity in Lamentations, it was decided that this distinction may prove useful. Finally, Eco’s theory employed the concept of the cultural encyclopaedia, a useful device to describe the cumulative amount of cultural data available to the producer of a text at the time of its production. This concept was suggested to be useful in interpreting Lamentations’ theology.

Chapter 4 framed the borders of encyclopaedic content for research into Lamentations 1—3. As such, it assessed the possible genres, structures, and poetics that have been offered for Lamentations research in the past. It was suggested that Lamentations cannot be reduced to one genre but rather exploits different genres to advance its theology. The dirge, lament (communal and individual), city-lament, wisdom, and prophetic (OAN) genres were seen to be plausibly at work in the book. As to structure, analysis revealed that the acrostic was the most evident structuring device in the book. And finally, a number of poetic devices were explored that are activated in the encyclopaedic world of Lamentations 1—3, including repetition, wordplay and enjambment, imagery, speaking voices, and allusion. This discussion framed the exegesis of Lamentations 1—3, accomplished in Chapters 5-7.

The results from the exegesis performed in Chapters 5-7 revealed Lamentations 1—3 tend towards “open” rather than “closed” textual strategies for their model reader. This is significant in that Conrad claimed, as pointed out in 3.4., that the canon—and Lamentations by implication—was a closed text. Yet the conclusion drawn from exegesis of the poems confirms Heim’s assertion of Lamentations as an open text, while giving significantly more demonstrable proof. In terms of structure, the acrostic introduces the various poetics as well as the “blowing up” of encyclopaedic content for the reader. Thus the acrostic is an evident structuring device for Lamentations 1—3, and it also provides the reader a “forward” movement in the poetry, driving the reader progressively through the myriad of images, personifications, and metaphors both for God, the people, and Zion herself.

Moreover, the use of cultural data present to Lamentations has been revealed to be significant, and drives the reader “outward” into the encyclopaedia to construct the intention of the work. Lamentations draws on ANE material (Mesopotamian city-laments) to advance its theology, as witnessed in the divine depiction in Lam 2.1-9, where YHWH is affirmed as both high-god and patron deity in contradistinction to divine depiction in the Mesopotamian city-laments. The s-codes of mourning (Lamentations 1—2) and penitence (Lam 3.25-39) complicate a unified theology in the book.

This “outward” readerly movement is also felt in the use of allusion, which has been demonstrated to be a prevalent poetic technique. Explicit allusion to Isaiah 10 in Lam 2.17 and Lam 3.1 is something that has not been identified in any previous research to the present and represents a positive contribution of the present work. Moreover, allusion to portions of Deuteronomy 28 and 30 in Lamentations 1, 2, and especially 3.38

reveal the covenant curses to be formative for theology in these chapters. Finally, recurrent allusion to Jeremiah in Lamentations 2 and 3 reveal the pervasive influence of this prophetic corpus to these poems.

In conjunction with the “forward” and “outward” movements, the reader is faced with a “reflexive” movement, primarily through the poetic usage of repetition. While Renkema was correct to note the presence of repetition in the poetry, the present study revealed the pervasiveness of repetition as a poetic device. Rather than leading the reader to the central core of the poem as Renkema supposes, it creates theological complexity and depth in Lamentations 1—3 through two primary functions: intensification (upon suffering, sin, judgment) or combination (to recast previously held understandings or to provide interpretative depth). In each of the poems, these two primary functions were seen to be at work. The effect of this device is, as with allusion, to provide a variety of interpretative horizons for the model reader in regards to the book’s theology—sin, suffering at the hands of enemies, justice/injustice of God, an end to suffering, hope for a future in God’s power and continued authority, retribution for enemies—all these options were seen to be viable interpretative options for the real readers of sixth-century BCE Judah (as they become the model reader) to actualise, leading this study to recognise an open, rather than closed, pragmatic structure in the poems.

Finally, the use of metaphor, personae, and imagery was shown to be prominent in Lamentations. Divine metaphors (warrior, judge, animal, jailor, bear, Gastgeber) provide interpretative fecundity for the reader and a variety of ways to identify God. The personae of Jeremiah in Lamentations 2, a righteous follower of YHWH (הגבר) in Lamentations 3, and even the personae of an “internal observer” from the city-lament genre (particularly in Lamentations 1) were at work in the poetry of Lamentations 1—3. Moreover, Zion is presented in a myriad of personifications so that she might be presented as both victim and sinner simultaneously. If victim (Lam 1.1-2, 13-15, 2.13-22), the reader sympathises with her suffering and questions YHWH’s activity. If a sinner (Lam 1.5-8, 17, 20-22; Lam 2.1-10, 14), the reader interprets the disasters she faces as just judgment for sin.

What has been demonstrated from Lamantations 1—3, then, is that the theology varies, but this is part of the function of the poems. The poetry is not designed to teach a particular perspective as much as it is designed to bring the reader on an interpretative journey through its contents, and as he goes, to engage the relationships between sin, God, self, Zion, pain, enemies, suffering, redemption, and even an end of the punishment. While reading and interpreting, the reader faces an “ideal insomnia” in deciding how to

understand these relationships in the poems. Despite the various ways in which the relationships can be configured, that the poetry always has an impetus towards addressing YHWH. Each of the poems includes, and concludes with, prayer to the deity concerning various sources of pain. That the poetry highlights prayer to YHWH—even when he is the cause of pain—reveals this interpretative journey has a destination. The poetry of Lamentations 1—3 is designed to enable the reader to address God in light of the perspectives adopted and sufferings endured through the reading process.

In this, there is a positive theology at work in spite of the negative theological portraits displayed. Rhetorically, because all appeals go before YHWH, the deity is tacitly confirmed as both potent and able to save. His justice must be inherently affirmed by the poetry, even if this perspective is explicitly questioned (Lam 2.20-2). The poetry theologically confirms justice while questioning it simultaneously, and this tension is part and parcel of the urgency of the pain expressed in the poetry.

Thus Lamentations 1—3 provide a limit to both its theology and to theological interpretation. These chapters preclude the possibility of the model reader walking away from YHWH in light of the horrors faced in and through the poetry. In each of their prayers, the poems demand active interpretation from the reader as well as response from YHWH: concerning the activity of enemies and Zion's sin (Lam 1.20-2; 3.42-66) as well as the activity of YHWH himself (Lam 2.20-2; 3.42b-5). The precise sources of pain, the nature of sin, and the relationship of the sinner to YHWH are never fully defined but rather points to be negotiated in and through the poetry (in many ways, but not one) so that the model reader might be led to YHWH, who is portrayed as the final arbiter of the complaints and appeals. Thus Lamentations 1—3 can be said to affirm a strong theology of justice and sovereignty while simultaneously being open to theological refiguration.

## 8.2. Lamentations 4 and 5

While these insights are helpful in understanding the poetry and theology of Lamentations 1—3, it is necessary to briefly speak to Lamentations 4 and 5. Do these poems continue the “open” pragmatic strategy for the model reader of Lamentations, or do they work to close the book pragmatically? Further research must explore this question in full. However, some textual indicators point to tentative conclusions though only the opening and closing strophes of Lamentations 4 and 5 will be discussed here. Lamentations 4 displays a truncated strophic structure; instead of three poetic lines per strophe (as in Lamentations 1—3) the poem has two. Notice Lam 4.1 as an example:

\_\_\_\_\_ א (verse 1)  
 \_\_\_\_\_

But, as in Lamentations 1—2, the opening word of the strophe follows the alphabetic acrostic. Lamentations 5, however, only displays the vestiges of the acrostic (22 poetic lines), displays little strophic logic, and is generically similar to a communal lament.<sup>910</sup>

Lamentations 4 opens with אִיכָה, creating a reflexive movement for the reader, back to Lam 1.1 and 2.1. Lam 4.1 is most like Lam 1.1, and both depict a scene of reversal from former glory to present shame. The text reads:

אִיכָה יוּעַם זֶהָב יִשְׁנָא הַכֶּתֶם הַטּוֹב  
 תִּשְׁתַּפְּכֶנָּה אַבְנֵי־קֹדֶשׁ בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצוֹת

“How the gold has dimmed; the good gold changed.  
 The holy stones are poured out in every street corner.”

As in Lamentations 1—2, the poem begins by blending generic categories, specifically the dirge and city-lament genres. There is the use of אִיכָה and the motif of reversal, both of which seem to introduce a dirge.<sup>911</sup> And yet the city-lament too carries a reversal motif within it, and here there is a description of destruction from an internal observer, leading one to recognise the generic similarities between the city-lament and this poem.<sup>912</sup> The significance for the reader is the sense of personal loss coupled with the reality that the city itself is what has been bereaved, rather than a person. In this, the use of personification again becomes apparent: destroyed city // bereaved person.<sup>913</sup>

Beyond noting these similarities, what is of interest here is the way Lam 4.1 recalls the first two poems through the repetition of אִיכָה (Lam 1.1; 2.1), שִׁפְךָ (Lam 2.12c), and בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצוֹת (Lam 2.19d). While there is continuity in the depiction of reversal, destruction, and mourning between this verse and Lam 1.1, 2.1, there is discontinuity as well, as Lam 4.1 transforms previous speech from Lam 2.12c, 19d to emphasise the present reality of suffering, even after both personified Jerusalem and the man have uttered their complaints (Lam 2.20-2; 3.1-19, 42-66). שִׁפְךָ (Lam 2.12c) is recalled in “the holy stones are poured out (יִשְׁתַּפְּכֶנָּה).” As the lives of the children are “poured out” (בְּהִשְׁתַּפְּךָ) upon their mothers laps in Lam 2.12c, the holy stones are “poured out” at the head of every street. The repetition of שִׁפְךָ in the Hithpael draws the reader back to Lam 2.12c, making the connection between the children and “holy stones

<sup>910</sup>See 4.2.2., 4.3.4., and 4.3.5., above.

<sup>911</sup>See 4.2.1., especially motifs 1 and 12.

<sup>912</sup>See 4.2.3., features 2a-b and 6.

<sup>913</sup>Heim, “The Personification of Jerusalem.”

(אבני־קדש).” While it has been suggested that this construct chain refers to the jewels of the temple, it is much more attractive to note the connection between Lam 2.12c and recognise that it is precisely the city, temple, and *people* that is mourned—as the children are beautiful and lost, so too the city and temple are beautiful and lost in destruction. Through the repetition of  $\sqrt{\text{שפך}}$ , an intereffective play between the city, people, and temple are all brought together for the reader; the purpose of the suggestive play, however, is to heighten the loss and pain of present suffering.

The repetition of  $\text{בראש כל־חוצות}$  from Lam 2.19d subtly brings the theological complexity present in the poem to the surface. This is the only other use of  $\text{בראש כל־חוצות}$  in the book, and the repetition should not be seen as accidental. In Lam 2.19, the persona of Jeremiah urges personified Jerusalem to “rise up” and “cry out” to YHWH for little children “languishing with hunger in every street corner ( $\text{בראש כל־חוצות}$ )”; personified Jerusalem then responds with strong questions and complaint to YHWH precisely over this reality (Lam 2.20-22). By repeating the phrase in Lam 4.1b, the poetry informs the reader that the prayer of complaint, in fact, is unanswered: the children (Lam 2.19d) and city/temple/people (Lam 4.1b) are dying in agony. The lived reality that the internal observer depicts in Lam 4.1 brings the reader to realise that YHWH has *not* responded to prayer at this point, leading to further agony. Thus the reader may tease out the theological issues of divine justice and present suffering through the lens of Lam 4.1.

And yet, when one turns to the *n*-strophe, the situation is radically changed. Not only has YHWH *responded* to the complaint, the verse proclaims punishment upon enemies, specifically Edom. Lam 4.22 reads:

תִּמְעוֹנְךָ בְּתִצִּיּוֹן לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתְךָ  
פֶּקֶד עוֹנֶיךָ בְּתִאֲדוֹם גְּלָה עַל־חַטָּאתֶיךָ

“Your punishment is complete, Dear Zion; you shall no longer go into exile.  
(But) he punished your iniquity, Daughter Edom, he uncovered your sins.”

This verse immediately should be recognised as an enormous shift in tone from all that has preceded it, leading Hillers to rightly note that this is the most overtly positive statement in the entire book.<sup>914</sup> Even if one translates the three perfective verbs with Hillers as precative, rather than simple past verbs, one cannot escape the positive sense of finality to the “exile” (גלות) evidenced in the verse, especially in the opening verb from

<sup>914</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 152-3. I accept this view in contrast to Renkema, who believes  $\sqrt{\text{תמם}}$  should be understood as a complete affirmation of YHWH’s judgment: “Your iniquity has amplified itself, daughter Zion” (Renkema, *Lamentations*, 564-5).

תָּמַם.<sup>915</sup> The punishment (עוֹן) of Dear Zion (בְּתִצִּיּוֹן) is finished and the exile (גְּלוּת), drawing from גְּלוּת (Lam 1.3a), is carried over no longer. By contrast, the enemy, against whom both Zion and the גֹּבֵר prayed (Lam 1.20-2; 2.22; 3.46-66), is now receiving his just desserts—or rather, *have received* his just desserts. Antanaclasis functions in the repetition of עוֹן between the a-b lines, so that “iniquity” and “punishment” become interrelated for the reader (see also Lam 2.14).<sup>916</sup> In this verse, then, there is a strong theological response from the divine saviour, YHWH, who has heard the cry, recognised the reality of suffering, and has enacted justice against the enemy.

This positive view, the “end” and final word in Lamentations, if תָּמַם is any indication, is met with the stark reality of Lamentations 5, where present disgrace and the need for YHWH’s aid is foregrounded. The shift away from the acrostic structure marks for the reader the concluding poem of the book.<sup>917</sup> Lam 5.1 opens with formulaic address, binding this verse to Lam 1.9c, 11c, 20a; 2.20; 3.59. And yet it also differs from these by introducing, as in Lam 3.19, a more common lament prayer, “Remember!”<sup>918</sup>

“Remember (זָכַר), O YHWH (יְהוָה), what has happened to us;  
Consider and see (הִבִּיטָה וּרְאָה) our disgrace!”

This chapter as a whole depicts scenes of oppression and abuse including rape, starvation, fever, and disgrace.<sup>919</sup> The motivation for appeal here is חֲרַפְתָּנוּ, “our disgrace,” rather than enemies. The disgrace (חֲרַפָּה) that was encouraged in Lam 3.30 has been transformed into a complaint—it is the disgrace that is a problem, as in Lam 3.61 (חֲרַפְתָּם). Thus the motivation for the appeal lies in the present reality of suffering and disgrace. The poet pleads with God to see the situation and do something about it—to “Remember what has happened to us” (Lam 5.1a). This prayer, then, complains to Yahweh about present disgrace rather than anything else. The function of the prayer, then, is to enable the worshippers to address Yahweh about their shame and appeal for him to act on their behalf—to “remember” them.

<sup>915</sup>Hillers, *Lamentations*, 152-3.

<sup>916</sup>On the interrelationship between sin and punishment, see Joyce, “Sitting Loose to History,” 254-5.

<sup>917</sup>See 4.3.4. and 4.3.5.

<sup>918</sup>Isa 38.3; Jer 14.21; 18.20; Pss 25.6-7; 74.2, 18, 22; 89.48, 51; Job 7.7; 10.9.

<sup>919</sup>Perhaps there is admission of sin in Lam 5.6-7, in reference to alliances with Egypt and Assyria, as well as the sin of “our forefathers” (אֲבוֹתֵינוּ), but this is disputed.

Lam 5.21-2 reveals the ultimate desire for the book: that God would act to counteract the present situation of suffering. This desire, however, is matched with the understood reality of YHWH's anger and the uncertainty of his response. The verses read:

השיבנו יהוה אליך ונשוב חדש ימינו כקדם  
כי אם־מאס מאסתנו קצפת עלינו עד־מאד

“Return us to yourself, O YHWH, and we will be restored;  
renew our days as of old.

Unless you have utterly rejected us; you are angry over us forever.”

Lam 5.21 echos Jer 15.19 and 31.18: “If you return, I will restore you (אם־חשוב ואשיבך),” Jer 15.19; “Restore me that I may return (השיבני ואשובה), for you are YHWH, my God,” Jer 31.18. In these verses, the recognition of YHWH as divine saviour is tacitly recognised and juxtaposed against the present reality of suffering: YHWH has *not* restored/returned and thus the prayer works potently as rhetoric, forcing the deity to attend to the appeal.

And yet this rhetorical ploy is met with recognition of the sovereignty of YHWH: there is no sure way to tell if YHWH has heard, or will hear, or will respond to the prayers both in this poem and throughout the book—his anger may persist, or it may not. This is seen most clearly in the usage of אם כי in verse 22. The usage has been debated and Albrektson supposes that it should be translated “but, nevertheless.”<sup>920</sup> However, rather than offering an objective statement about the reality of the situation, the verse is logically connected to verse 21, highlighting the uncertainty of the speaker's knowledge; thus אם כי is best understood as an exceptative clause.<sup>921</sup> These final two verses reveal a deep theological tension: the desire for (and hope in) YHWH's saving power, a tacit recognition of both sin and divine punishment, and the problem of, as well as the uncertainty associated with, divine deliverance in light of present suffering.

Lamentations 4 and 5 raise similar questions using similar poetic techniques with similar language as Lamentations 1—3. In this, there is continuity between the poems. And openness, rather than closure, continues. Because Lam 5.22 ends ambiguously, the poetry calls upon the reader to continually rehearse the poetry, possibly activating different theological horizons along the way. Any interpretative activity, however, is chastened by the drive in the poetry toward prayer to YHWH. The intention of the work

<sup>920</sup>Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 205-6.

<sup>921</sup>GBHS § 4.3.4 (m).



guides its model reader, as in Lamentations 1—3, to address God in light of the perspectives adopted and sufferings endured through the reading process. In this, Lamentations 4 and 5 corporately fit more as open texts rather than closed texts.

### 8.3. The Purpose of Poetry and Theology in Lamentations 1—3

Lamentations 1—3 foregrounds both active readerly participation in interpreting poetry and theology and highlights the necessity of divine response in the poems; both of these realities provide clues as to the purpose of these poems. It has commonly been assumed that Lamentations provided the post-war Judahite community a way to deal with the crisis of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE in worship or a broader cultic setting. The particulars of this, to be sure, are debated.<sup>922</sup> But as Middlemas rightly affirms, Lamentations represents the most likely candidate of worship material for the Judahite community in sixth century BCE. Her exclusion of Lamentations 3 from consideration of this material, however, misses the crucial interaction between Lamentations 1—3 both poetically and theologically. It cannot be that the “third chapter with its odd admixture of forms and its central optimistic vision seems to be of a different thought milieu from the rest of the material”<sup>923</sup> because the present study has demonstrated that Lamentations 3 cannot be fully understood apart from the previous poems—it employs and builds upon language, imagery, and theology already expressed in the previous poems. If this is the case, then Lamentations 1—3 is likely designed to draw its real readers—as they become the model reader of the poems—to confront the various realities expressed in its poetry. Far from offering a univocal theological understanding, the journey through the poetry will take its model reader through different permutations of the relationships between sin, suffering, God, themselves, their relationship to the community, enemies, and justice. This impulse was intimated in Lamentations 4 and 5 as well.

Why could this be the case? Why could it be that Lamentations is an open text rather than a closed one? At the very least, the poetry may reflect the fragmentation and uncertainty present in the Judahite populace during the period of exile. As such, rather than providing a central theological teaching for the people to understand, the poetry constructs a model reader that would have a means to address YHWH in and through the poems in a variety of ways: to confess sin, question the deity, complain about enemies,

<sup>922</sup>See Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 1-23.

<sup>923</sup>Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah*, 184.

pray for deliverance, appeal for hope, or any of these permutations together. The world “in front of” the text, the lived reality of the real readers reading Lamentations 1—3, those who suffered through and were suffering through disaster, would help inform exactly which horizon the model reader would actualise from the text by situating his or her reading process in the lived reality of experience.<sup>924</sup> In terms of the theological positions of theodicy and anti-theodicy which Dobbs-Allsopp identifies, the Judahite who becomes Lamentations’ model reader may actualise an interpretative horizon that recognises the nation’s sin and one’s own complicity in sin may actualise the theodic interpretative horizon possible in the poetry. Alternatively, the Judahite who becomes Lamentations’ model reader may be experiencing the pain and disaster of death and suffering; he or she may come to Lamentations and actualise the anti-theodic horizon present in the poetry. At any rate, neither horizon in the poetry is foreclosed upon, but the particular one the model reader actualises is incumbent upon his or her situation in life. In this way, the model reader for Lamentations provides a means for the remaining Judahite community, and individuals within that community, to come to YHWH in a variety of different ways—each of which is enabled by actually reading the text.

And yet there is a theological reality that grounds both theological diversity and interpretative drives. In the poetry, there is a tacit understanding of YHWH as the divine judge to whom all prayer could go. This affirms, even necessitates, a theology of justice and power for YHWH. Far from “closing” the poetry, this theology enables openness; without this theology, the range of complaints present in the book of Lamentations—even complaints about YHWH’s activity or lack thereof—rhetorically missfire. YHWH ultimately is the one who can restore the people from whatever cause of pain. And it is to him that all poetry and prayer goes. Thus, if God speaks at all through Lamentations, it is in the form of an invitation: he invites his people to address him, which they do by participating in reading the poetry.

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<sup>924</sup>See 2.6. and 3.4., above. This carries implications for present-day readers who read Lamentations, as well. If real readers in the modern period wish to be the model reader of Lamentations, then such a similar exercise of “participating” in the poetry through its open strategy is demanded.

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