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The Power of Images: The Poetics of Violence in Lamentations 2 and Ancient Near Eastern Art

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The Power of Images: The Poetics of Violence in Lamentations 2 and Ancient Near Eastern Art

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Abstract

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By M. Justin Walker

The publication of Keel's *Symbolism of the Biblical World* (1972) introduced ancient Near Eastern iconography as an invaluable resource for the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. According to Keel, such images allowed the modern interpreter to "through the eyes of the ancient Near East" (8) and, when compared with the biblical literature, rendered accessible "identical, similar, or even diametrically opposed apprehensions of the same phenomenon" (12-13). In the intervening decades since (and of) Keel's work, iconographic exegesis of the Hebrew Bible has witnessed significant methodological and theoretical developments, many of which can be broadly characterized by an increasing concern with issues of histor(icit)y and contiguity in the image-text comparison.

The present work represents a (re)turn to a phenomenological approach to iconographic exegesis that is especially concerned with how images and texts might mutually inform one another at the level of their respective poetics. As a test case for such a comparison, the dissertation examines how the phenomenon of violence figures in Lamentations 2 and Ashurbanipal's palace reliefs—specifically, the Battle of Til-Tuba program (Southwest Palace, Room 33) and the lion hunt reliefs (North Palace, Room C). The project begins with a discussion of the neurological and cognitive relationship between seeing images with the eye and imagining them with the "mind's eye" as a means of justifying such a phenomenological approach that compares how ancient artists and the biblical author construct the violent images that are seen and imagined in their works, respectively (ch. 1). It then conducts detailed analyses of the poetics of violent imagery in Lamentations 2 (chs. 2-3), the Battle of Til-Tuba reliefs (ch. 4), and Ashurbanipal's lion hunt reliefs (ch. 5) before providing an extended comparison of the similar and divergent ways that violence figures in the literary and textual images of each piece (ch. 6). The dissertation's contributions are twofold. First, it proffers new interpretive insights concerning the phenomenon of violence in the ANE artwork and Lamentations 2 specifically—particularly as it pertains to the poem's construction of Yahweh's and Zion's bodies, its perspectival play, its manipulation of time, and the "power" of its imagery in eliciting the divine gaze. Second, the present work demonstrates the utility of ANE art for illuminating not only what but also how a given phenomenon figures in biblical poetry and vice versa.

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THE POWER OF IMAGES: THE POETICS OF VIOLENCE IN LAMENTATIONS 2 AND ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The iconographic approach to biblical studies has witnessed several new developments in recent decades. Since the publication of Keel's groundbreaking *Symbolism of the Biblical World,* practitioners have explored the relationship between biblical texts and ancient Near Eastern iconography in a number of sophisticated ways, three of which merit summary here.

First, many have introduced more refined methodological parameters for establishing what images and texts are relatable in the first place (image-text congruence).[1] In contrast to the literary and imagistic fragmentation that characterized Keel's early work, recent iconographic research has taken measures to reclaim the integrity of both the iconographic sources and the biblical texts in the image-text analysis. These refinements ensure a more nuanced comparison of their respective imagistic content. Second, the "Fribourg School" has sufficiently demonstrated the historical value of iconographic materials. As their interests have shifted their efforts toward publishing the archaeological record and using images to reconstruct Levantine (religious) history, biblical iconographers have emphasized the importance of establishing plausible lines of contact between the biblical text under scrutiny and the images employed in exegesis (see below). This concern with "image-text contiguity" has helped to establish a firmer historical foundation for the comparative analysis. Third and finally, researchers have conducted metaphorical analyses of images and texts as a means of introducing a more cognitive locus for the image-text relationship. These studies understand

[1] On image-text congruence, correlation, and contiguity, see Ryan P. Bonfiglio, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts: Towards a Visual Hermeneutics for Biblical Studies*, OBO 280 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 69-88 ; Izaak J. de Hulster, Brent A. Strawn, and Ryan P. Bonfiglio, "Iconographic Exegesis: Method and Practice," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: An Introduction to Its Method and Practice* (ed. Izaak J. de Hulster, Brent A. Strawn, and Ryan P. Bonfiglio; Göttingen: V & R Academic, 2015), 19-42.

textual and visual images as different artistic expressions of a pre-existing concept or comparative operation. The iconography thus "illuminates" (rather than "illustrates") the biblical text by offering a glimpse into its underlying ideas.

These three developments have contributed to the enduring viability of the iconographic approach and have helped to secure the credibility of its findings. At the same time, given the breadth of these contributions, one is left wondering what is next for iconographic research. As practitioners continue to publish the archaeological record and to refine comparative methodology and theory, are there any new ways of using visual materials to inform biblical exegesis beyond imagistic content and metaphor? Can ancient Near Eastern images do more than explain or illuminate what some ancient biblical texts (might have) meant or (might) mean?

In the present study, I will argue that images and texts can mutually inform one another at the level of their respective poetics. Rather than focusing the study solely on the subject matter of the images themselves, I will draw together the primary site of biblical imagery—namely, poetry—into conversation with the compositional features of ancient Near Eastern iconography as a means of exploring their unique and shared ways of making meaning. The iconography will therefore inform not only *what* the (images of the) biblical texts mean(t) but also *how* they mean(t)—what gives them their power, how they function within the literary work, how they convey concepts and experiences in a compelling manner and so forth. The focus of this study will be to compare how the phenomenon of violence figures in biblical and visual media in order to discern their shared and distinctive modes of expression. What is learned from this test case may apply to other studies of the comparative poetics of art and text—that is, of imagery in its primary media forms.

Before discussing the contributions of the project further, three key developments in the iconographic approach to biblical studies must be traced: (1) Keel's movement away from his more phenomenological interests presented in *Symbolism of the Biblical World* to his (almost exclusive) concern with Israelite (religious) history and the publication of artifacts, (2) the subsequent influence of these historical interests on biblical iconographic exegesis, and (3) the recent re-emergence of phenomenological approaches among various biblical iconographers, especially as it pertains to imagistic expression of (cognitive) metaphors. After summarizing these trends, I will then consider the grounds for a return to phenomenology within iconographic studies, with a special look at neuroscientific and cognitive research on the relationship between mental and visual images. I will conclude with a discussion of the texts and images suitable for such an approach.

1.1. THREE IMPORTANT MOVEMENTS IN BIBLICAL ICONOGRAPHY

1.1.1. The Movement from Phenomenology to Histor(icit)y in Keel's Work

In Othmar Keel's earliest iconographic work, he made a conscious step toward bringing ancient Near Eastern images to bear upon the meaning and particularly the "thought world" of biblical texts. Over against previous interpreters who mined ancient Near Eastern iconography for the historical information it might yield, Keel instead approached images as *Denkbilder* or "thought pictures" that gave expression to cultural concepts in visual ways.[2] For Keel, images provided the means by which

[2] Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; New York: Seabury, 1978; repr., Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 8; German orig: *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen* (5th ed.; Zürich/Benziger/Einsiedeln: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996). See further Izaak J. de Hulster, *Illuminating Images: An Iconographic Method of Old Testament Exegesis with Three Case Studies from Third Isaiah* (Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, 2007), 21-164; Brent A. Strawn,

the contemporary reader might see the biblical texts through ANE eyes.[3] He proceeded in an associative (or "thematic") rather than a verse-by-verse manner, as he drew together the unique conceptual imaginations of the Psalms and ANE iconography. The results of his project were thus more impressionistic or phenomenological as much as they were exegetical. While the iconography may have helped to adjudicate occasionally some textual cruxes or uncertain images in the biblical texts, his work ultimately enabled a more holistic experience of the Psalms writ large, while also facilitating interpretive clarity of specific Psalms.[4] Despite the (doubly) fragmentary nature of his methods (see below), Keel reclaimed ANE iconography as an invaluable window into the Psalter's conceptual world.

In order to facilitate Keel's comparative goals, Keel pulls from a range of images that conceptually intersected with the image repertoire found in particular psalms. He justifies his broad selection of artifacts in both historical and methodological terms. Historically speaking, Keel often presents the ancient Near East as a monolithic entity that, while composed of many different cultures, nevertheless exercised a kind of *en masse* general influence on biblical ideas. Keel of course acknowledges the temporal distance between many of the visual materials he discusses and the time of the Psalms' composition, going as far to say that the Psalter is "as far removed from the beginnings

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"Introduction: Othmar Keel, Iconography, and the Old Testament," in *Jerusalem and the One God: A Religious History*, by Othmar Keel, ed. Brent A. Strawn (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), xxiii–xl.

[3] Ibid., 8.

[4] Despite his original intention to compose a commentary on the Psalter with the aid of ANE visual materials, he soon recognized the benefit of a more thematic (rather than verse-by-verse) arrangement and acknowledged that exegesis would not be the primary aim of the volume: "A reading of [*SBW*] should make clear the sense of the juxtaposition of psalm texts with particular illustrations…It is not primarily concerned with the clarification of every detail. It assumes instead the task of making easily accessible, in a kind of survey, the broadest possible range of pictorial material, and of indicating, in the text, similarities between the problems and conceptions presented by the pictures and those presented by the psalms" (ibid., 12).

of the high cultures of the ancient Near East as it is from us (ca. 2,500 years)."[5] Rather than seeing the images he selects as visual "sources" of the Psalms, however, he nevertheless understands the ANE as a "current of traditions," from which Israel could inherit and innovate their own cultural identity.[6] Methodologically speaking, Keel accounts for the breadth of his comparative survey by appealing to his phenomenological interests. Because he was more concerned with comparing conceptual worlds than tracing genetic lines of influence between images and texts, he could employ visual materials from any number of locations and time periods across the ANE. In *Symbolism*, a second millennium tomb painting from Thebes provides an equally valid point of comparison into the thought-world of the Psalms as an Iron Age Syro-Palestinian stamp seal. When presented together, these images could illumine various aspects of psalmic theological discourse.

As the above summary suggests, *Symbolism* was not without its problems. Since its original publication, both Keel himself and his successors have especially critiqued the method featured throughout the work largely due to its piecemeal treatment of both the visual and literary materials. In *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden* (published twenty years after *Symbolism*), Keel offers his most specific methodological corrections to what he calls "artistic fragmentation," wherein one studies only one aspect or motif of a larger visual image.[7] Keel sought to rectify this tendency (featured throughout *Symbolism* and some of his subsequent exegetical work) by arguing now for the integrity

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[5] Keel, *Symbolism*, 7.

[6] Ibid., 7. It is important to note that Keel recognizes the cultural plurality within the ANE. Although his constant reference to the "ancient Near East" label implies a singular reality, he nevertheless grants that the designation is a scholarly construction indicating "a broad stream of traditions of the most diverse kind and provenance." This plurality is best witnessed, however, in the chapters themselves, wherein Keel juxtaposes multiple (even conflicting) image tradition from across this broad region.

[7] Othmar Keel, *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden: drei Fallstudien zur Methode der Interpretation altorientalischer Bilder* (OBO 122; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), esp. xi-xiv, 267-73. See also idem, "Iconography and the Bible," *ABD* 3:358-74.

of the visual image. He asserts that the interpretive task should take the entire visual tableau into account, using the history of image "constellations" as interpretive keys for understanding the meaning of specific motifs.[8] This methodological concern with the proper analysis of images—studying images diachronically and synchronically, without necessarily appealing to literary texts—helped to initiate a broad shift in Keel's subsequent research. No longer exploring the intersection between the conceptual worlds of biblical texts and the "ancient Near East" writ large, Keel instead oriented his efforts toward (1) interpreting ancient images on their own merits, (2) using specifically Syro-Palestinian materials to aid in the *Religionsgeschichte* project, and (3) publishing source data for the future practice of iconographic research.[9] The problem of "literary fragmentation" that characterized the iconographic approach initiated by Keel—namely, comparing only portions of biblical texts with visual materials—would not be addressed until Joel LeMon's work (discussed below).

[8] Keel borrows the notion of the image "constellation" from Jan Assmann, *Liturgische Lieder an den Sonnengott: Untersuchungen zur altgäyptischen Hymnik, I* (MÄSt 19; Berlin: Hessling, 1969), 339-52; idem, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism* (trans. Anthony Alcock; London: Kegan Paul International, 1995), 54-95; German orig.: *Re und Amun: die Krise des polytheistischen Weltbilds im Ägypten der 18.-20. Dynastie* (OBO 51; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1983). For Keel's use of the idea, see *Das Recht*, 1-44, esp. 21, 44; Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddessess, and Images of God in ancient Israel* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 12-13; German orig.: *Göttinen, Götter und Gottessymbole: neue Erkentnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (6th ed.; QD 134; Freiburg: Herder, 2010).

[9] See, e.g., Silvia Schroer and Othmar Keel, *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient. Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern. Band 1* (Fribourg: Academic, 2005); Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit: Katalog Bände* I-IV (Fribourg: Academic, 1997-2013); Jürg Eggler and Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Siegel-Amulette aus Jordanien: vom Neolithikum bis zur Perserzeit* (OBO.SA 25; Fribourg: Academic, 2006).

1.1.2. A Movement toward Exclusive Histor(icit)y in Biblical Iconography

Keel and many of his students have since become increasingly (perhaps exclusively) concerned with historically oriented iconographic work, and these interests have had particular influence on the evolution of biblical iconographic methods. In the previous three decades, many publications that employ visual materials to interpret biblical texts have made explicit efforts to establish plausible lines of influence or mechanisms of contact between biblical texts and images—that is, image-text contiguity (see above). Those that share these interests often restrict themselves to analyzing iconographic sources that share geographical proximity to and temporal propinquity with the text(s) at hand. In biblical studies, these limitations result in an extensive concern with the minor arts excavated in Syria-Palestine that date to the Iron Age II or III periods.[10] For practitioners, this methodological control serves to strengthen the underlying justification for relating texts and images

[10] The impulse toward privileging contiguous artistic materials in iconographic exegesis begins with Keel's Song of Songs commentary, in which he explains his "concentric circles" methodology. See idem, *The Song of Songs* (trans. Frederick J. Gaiser; CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 25-30; trans. of *Das Hohelied* (ZBK 18; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1986); idem, *Deine Blicke sind Tauben: zur Metaphorik des Hohen Liedes* (SBS 114/115; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984), esp. 26-25. Cf. Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative Method' in Biblical Interpretation – Principles and Problems," in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn; New York: New York University, 1991), 381-419, who argues for geographical proximity and historical propinquity in comparative methodology. Since Keel's original work on the Song in 1984, Keel's "concentric circles" has reverberated throughout the discipline's subsequent practice. An emphasis on contiguity in image-text comparison is especially evident in recent articulations of iconographic methodology. See, e.g., Izaak J. de Hulster, *Illuminating Images: An Iconographic Method of Old Testament Exegesis with Three Case Studies from Third Isaiah* (Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecth, 2008), esp. 195-213; idem, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah* (FAT 2/36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 23-104, esp. 63-67; idem, "Illuminating Images: A Historical Position and Method for Iconographic Exegesis," in *Iconography and Biblical Studies* (ed. Izaak J. de Hulster and R. Schmitt; AOAT 361; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009), 139-62, esp. 149-51; idem, "Practical Resources for Iconographic Exegesis," in *Image, Text, Exegesis: Iconographic Interpretation and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Izaak J. de Hulster and Joel M. LeMon; OTS 588; London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 285-95; cf. de Hulster, Strawn, and Bonfiglio, "Iconographic Exegesis," 20-26. For examples of iconographic studies expressly concerned with contiguity parameters, see Bonfiglio, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts*, 82-88. Cf. Brent A. Strawn, "'A World under Control': Isaiah 60 and the Apadana Reliefs from Persepolis," in *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period* (ed. Jon L. Berquist; SemeiaSt 50; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 85-116, esp. 111-15. In his analysis of Isaiah 60 in light of the Apadana Reliefs, Strawn introduces the idea of congruence and speaks not in terms of dependence between text and image but of "connection" or "relationship"—textual and artistic reflexes of an underlying Persian imperial propaganda. This piece, despite its focused comparison of a single text (Isa 60) and image, nevertheless evinces a concern with *why* these two artifacts are relatable (i.e., contiguity), even in the absence of genetic dependence.

in the first place by guaranteeing the presence of particular iconographic motifs (or the concepts they express) in ancient Israelite/Judahite/Yehudite culture. If one can demonstrate the possibility that a specific image constellation was available to the biblical author, one can offer a concrete basis for using these artistic sources for exegetical purposes. As Keel and his students continue to make primary source data available to researchers, image-text contiguity becomes an easier comparative locus to establish. Though, of course, given the data at hand, the evidence remains irreducibly interpretive. In any event, in light of the relative infancy of iconographic methods within biblical studies, these strictures on the method's practice indicate a growing self-consciousness in the discipline and help to protect the viability of its exegetical results. This historical sensitivity, coupled with other major strides in the method's development (especially as it pertains to the integrity of the text's "iconic structure"),[11] has no doubt transformed iconographic exegesis into a more sophisticated and disciplined exegetical approach.

1.1.3. A Movement (Back) toward Phenomenology in Biblical Iconography

At the same time, the phenomenological approach introduced in *Symbolism* has not been without its successors, albeit in more refined ways. By the term "phenomenological," I do not intend to subsume *Symbolism* (and similar iconographic works) under the philosophical subdiscipline concerned with

[11] For this language, see Joel M. LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts* (OBO 242; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2010), 1-25, esp. 16-17, 24; idem, "Iconographic Approaches: The Iconic Structure of Psalm 17," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation in Honor of David L. Peterson* (eds. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards; Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 143-68, esp. 152-54; idem, "On Wings in a Prayer: Multistable Images for God in Psalm 63," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 263-80, and further below.

the structures of experience or consciousness commonly designated by this title.[12] Rather, for our purposes, the term "phenomenological" denotes two fundamental features. First, this mode of iconography engages images as the artistic expression of a given thought world. It recognizes that the way in which particular experiences or phenomena figure in visual media yields insights into how its producers conceptualized their world. Images are analyzed as windows into the ancient mind that can also facilitate viewer participation in the phenomenon they capture. Second, as a result, such a "phenomenological" approach conducts the image-text comparison on the basis of their shared "phenomena," with secondary attention to issues of contiguity. Should the same phenomenon figure in the biblical and iconographic media (whether that be violence, worship, or sexuality), the artistic sources can inform the way we interpret the biblical thought-world. Such an iconographic approach is therefore concerned with the ways in which images express and influence human thinking—how certain experiences or phenomena figure in literary and visual media in comparable ways regardless of any extensive concern with genetic/historical relationships between a specific text and a particular artifact.[13]

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[12] David Woodruff Smith, "Phenomenology," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2013, online at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/.

[13] In *Symbolism*, Keel speaks of the relationship between images and concepts in several respects. He writes, "[ANE] compositions as a whole must be *read* as a thought-picture, not merely viewed." He even describes the project as an exploration of "fundamental orders and religious propositions" as perceived in artistic media, indicating "similarities between the problems and conceptions presented by the pictures and those presented by the psalms." See idem, *Symbolism*, 10, 12 respectively. This is related to Jan Assmann's concept of the "icon," which refers to an underlying idea that can be expressed in both language and image. See idem, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 38-66. Although Assmann presents the "icon" as a description of the text-image dynamic in Egyptian solar hymns, his idea has been particularly influential for biblical iconographers seeking a conceptual basis upon which to build the comparison of biblical texts and ANE sources. See, e.g., William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: WJK, 2002), 5, 8; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God,* 5, 8. Cf. LeMon's critique of Brown's use in LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 16-22, and Bonfiglio's critique of LeMon in Bonfiglio, "Reading Images, Seeing Texts," 5-7.

More recently, biblical-iconographic studies that share these interests have often drawn extensively upon metaphor theory to provide a more phenomenological locus for the text-image relationship.[14] Although emphasis on images as conveyers of complex thought operations and concerns with historical propinquity are in no way exclusive of one another,[15] scholars trafficking in the (more) phenomenological vein have often eschewed attention to contiguity in order to allow for more tantalizing comparative analysis. Rather than working solely with Syro-Palestinian and/or Iron Age sources, these scholars select from a variety of time periods and cultural centers as a means of gaining access into the imaginative universe of the ancient Near East. In their own ways, these studies explore how certain topoi (mostly the divine, but also death, power, conflict, etc.) are visualized in some of the seminal images of this ancient cultural expanse.

Studies that exemplify this approach have often proceeded in one of two ways, depending on which side of the metaphor they privilege. If a metaphor engenders new levels of understanding by speaking of one thing (a target domain) in terms of another (a source domain), recent analyses that have explored shared iconic metaphors between biblical texts and ANE iconography either privilege the image content (source domain) or phenomenon (target domain) in their methodology. In the

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[14] See, e.g., Brent A. Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion?: Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (OBO 212; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2005), 5-16; idem, "Lion Hunting in the Psalms: Iconography and Images for God, the Self, and the Enemy," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 245-62; 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; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999), 1-28; Martin Klingbeil, "'Children I Have Raised and Brought up' (Isaiah 1:2): Female Metaphors for God in Isaiah and the Iconography of the Palestinian Goddess Asherah," in *Image, Text, Exegesis*, 135-58. See also Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 3-14; de Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 259-70; idem, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*, 105-118; Izaak J. de Hulster and Brent A. Strawn, "Figuring YHWH in Unusual Ways: Deuteronomy 32 and Other Metaphors for God in the Old Testament," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 117-34.

[15] One could argue in fact that historical propinquity generates a more responsible metaphorical analysis by ensuring that the root metaphors expressed in text and image in fact are derived from the same cultural center. Cf. Strawn, *What is Stronger*, 25-228, who conducts an exhaustive analysis of extant Levantine leonine images prior to offering a broader survey of leonine imagery across the ancient Near East (in literature and icons).

former case, it is the image motif itself (e.g., tree, dove, deer, etc.) that drives the comparative enterprise and leads to a variety of metaphorical investigations. For example, Strawn's analysis of leonine imagery explores exactly that: all artifacts and biblical texts featuring lions. Though Strawn's comparative work begins with the biblical text, his analysis of the broader Near Eastern repertoire is organized in a more thematic way, according to how the lions variously figure: lion as enemy/threat, lion as monarchy/mighty one, lion and the gods, and lion as guardian of the gate/temple/palace.[16] Identification of the pertinent phenomena that are iconographically construed is anchored by the choice of a specific source domain—namely, the lion. Similarly, Klingbeil's investigation of God-metaphors in the Psalms focuses exclusively on two prominent image motifs in the ANE: warrior and heavenly deities. Like Strawn, he circumscribes his study by selecting only two divinity tropes, but he diverges from Strawn's method by restricting himself to a singular phenomenon or "target domain" (i.e., God).[17]

Some recent work, however, has "returned" to Keel's more initial probe: allowing the phenomena themselves to guide identification of pertinent metaphors or images. A mere glance at Keel's *Symbolism* discloses his privileging of the phenemona as an organizational principle. Rather than examining selected (literary) image tropes, he instead studies the numerous imagistic means by which the ANE explored particular concepts: God (in the temple, creation, and history), destructive

[16] Ibid., 131-228. Cf. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 135-66.

[17] In light of this methodological difference, perhaps it would be better to classify Klingbeil's work as a mediating position between those that privilege image content in metaphorical analysis and those that favor the phenomena themselves. On one hand, he implies that he prioritizes the "source domains" by restricting his study to two image motifs. On the other hand, he is concerned solely with how these images are applied to God and therefore does not give "free reign" to these tropes. That is, he doesn't trace *all* warrior metaphors in the Psalter (e.g., psalmist as warrior in Ps 18:34ff or the king as warrior in Ps 2:9) and ANE iconography but instead restrains the possible applications of an imagistic motif in his comparative methods.

forces (death and enemies), the temple, the king, worship, and so forth, and constantly relates them to texts from the Psalms. In *Symbolism*, the images of the Psalms and artifacts together wield a power both to present and to facilitate, to encapsulate and to engender specific human phenomena.[18]

William Brown's *Seeing the Psalms* is the clearest revivification of this approach in two senses. First, Brown wants to recapture "the imaginative and affective power of psalmic poetry,"[19] and, like *Symbolism*, he appeals to a variety of ANE images to shed light on the figurative imagination of the Psalter. The artifacts Brown features as points of comparison range from more contiguous items (e.g., the drawings on Pithos A from Kuntillet 'Ajrud or the *šbnym* seal from Palestine) to images that are far afield from the Iron Age Levant (e.g., the paintings from Zimri-Lim's palace in Mari or a relief of Akhenaten from Tell el-Amarna).[20] Although he differs from Keel in several ways—especially in his (contemporary) theological interests, his informed application of metaphor theory, and his more nuanced readings of texts—he mimics Keel's use of ANE imagery to facilitate a fresh experience of the biblical texts for the modern readier.

Second, like Keel, Brown often privileges human phenomena in his exploration of psalmic metaphors. While his initial two studies establish what he sees as the two "root metaphors" of the Psalter's "theo-poetic" world, many of the remaining chapters discuss how certain particular religious realities variously figure in these poems—especially chaos (and its resolution) and God or God's

[18] Keel articulates the phenomenological or conceptual dimensions of biblical and ANE images in various ways in the book's introduction. On images as events, he writes, "[ANE images] do not—at least not primarily—serve to explain what they portray, but to *re-present* it…In the ancient Near East, the usual purpose in literary or visual representation of an event or object is to secure the existence of that event or object and to permit him who represents it to participate in it" (*Symbolism*, 10).

[19] Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 2.

[20] Ibid., 61, 89, 66, 91 respectively.

interaction with humanity.[21] For both, Brown begins with the phenomena themselves prior to itemizing the different image motifs (or source domains) employed to express them. It is important to note, however, that Brown doesn't exclusively work in this manner. On two occasions, he chooses a single psalm and allows the particular motifs of the literary imagery (e.g., tree imagery in Psalm 1 or light imagery in Psalm 19) to guide the iconographic comparison. He also, like Strawn and Klingbeil above, devotes one chapter to a particular image category (animals) and examines the different entities in the Psalter that are described in creaturely ways (e.g. God, humans, or enemies).

Strawn's recent analysis of the "fear of the LORD" motif in the Hebrew Bible also explicitly builds upon Keel's *Symbolism* approach.[22] He examines an assortment of ANE images that present "fear-full" postures before deities and rulers as a means of clarifying how the Hebrew Bible thinks about the phenomenon of "fear" before God. Citing *Symbolism* as precedent, he argues that the artistic evidence helps to cast light not simply on visual aspects of culture but on what he calls "*visual thinking*." The images provide a window into "cognitive function and meaning-making in antiquity" and are available to be engaged as such within biblical iconographic practice.[23]

Many iconographic analyses since Brown have proceeded in a similar fashion, albeit with different goals. While these authors might not share Brown's explicit theological interests, they nevertheless have explored various "concepts" or "experiences" through non-contiguous iconographic analyses. In these studies, the images of the ANE are not necessarily the source of biblical images or even the primary tradition informing these texts. Rather, the "thoughts" conveyed by the iconography

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[21] Ibid., 105-34; 167-206.

[22] Brent A. Strawn, "The Iconography of Fear: *Yir'at YHWH* (יראת יהוה) in Artistic Perspective," in *Image, Text, Exegesis*, 91–134.

[23] Ibid., 127-28.

offer an insightful point of comparison with the conceptual world presented by biblical imagery that helps reveal the nuances of both pieces. The phenomena investigated in this manner include things like justification,[24] sacrifice/redemption,[25] cosmology,[26] God's image,[27] and violence.[28]

1.2. THE RETURN TO A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH IN BIBLICAL ICONOGRAPHY

Amidst these recent developments—the historical orientation of the Keel and the Fribourg School, the resulting concerns with propinquity in the text-image comparative work of biblical iconographers, and the parallel emergence of metaphorical analysis and/or resurgence of phenomenological approaches—the present project can be seen as an extension (mostly) of the latter trajectory: a "return" to the "power" of the image to capture and (re)create human experiences or thoughts. Rather than using ANE images only or even chiefly to clarify specific obscurities in particularly Hebrew Bible texts, I instead will explore the ways by which poetic and pictorial images present certain topics, of how their respective poetics serve to (re)present and (re)produce human and religious phenomena. If previous iconographic research has used images to investigate *what* biblical texts mean, the present study will explore Near Eastern images to yield insights into *how* biblical texts mean. Of course, the two are related, but the latter has gone underrepresented in previous work in the subfield of biblical iconography.

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[24] Thomas Staubli, "Images of Justification," in *Image, Text, Exegesis*, 159-77.

[25] Idem, "The 'Pagan' Prehistory of Genesis 22:1-14: The Iconographic Background of the Redemption of a Human Sacrifice," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 78-102.

[26] Izaak J. de Hulster, "Picturing Ancient Israel's Cosmic Geography: An Iconographic Perspective," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 45-62.

[27] Brent A. Strawn, "The Image of God: Comparing the Old Testament with Other Ancient Near Eastern Cultures," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 63-76.

[28] Joel M. LeMon, "YHWH's Hand and the Iconography of the Blow in Psalm 81:14-16," *JBL* 132 (2013): 865-82; idem, "Cutting the Enemy to Pieces: Ps 118:10-12 and the Iconography of Disarticulation," *ZAW* 126 (2014): 59-75; idem, "Masking the Blow: Psalm 81 and the Iconography of Divine Violence," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 281-94.

1.2.1. Why a Phenomenological Approach?

What then does a return to phenomenology in biblical iconography look like? Prior to addressing questions of method, it is helpful to establish the reasons for a phenomenological approach to the image-text relationship. This is to ask, on what basis may we conduct a comparison of visual and textual imagery at the level of their respective "power" or experience? What evidence concerning the relationship between the experience of these two media ensures a tractable comparison? I will briefly address two primary areas of research in neuroscience and cognitive research, both of which provide a window into the sibling relationship between the perception and imagination, and, and as a result, the visual and verbal arts.

First, I will begin with a discussion of the so-called "imagery" debate, which discusses the fundamental structures and processes that give rise to the phenomenon of mental images. Here, I will draw upon the research of the "pictorialists" especially, who have argued compellingly that seeing an image with the eye and imagining one within the mind's eye are not just phenomenologically analogous experiences but also neurologically overlapping processes. Second, I will consider the work of Gabrielle Starr in the field of "neuroaesthetics." Starr shows not only that the aesthetic experiences evoked by the visual and verbal arts engage a common neurological process but also argues that the neurological bridge between engaging a poem and painting lies in their shared use of imagery specifically. Third, I will appeal to Elaine Scarry's work on the relationship between *how* a verbal image is crafted and the kinds of mental images generated by the reader. I will conclude with

Marschark's psychological research concerning the impact "scrambled prose" (or poetry) can have in enhancing the vividness of the imagination.

1.2.1.1. The Relationship between Perceiving and Imag(in)ing Objects

First, for the past several decades, cognitive and neuroscientific researchers have undertaken to explore the phenomenon of mental imaging. The literature discussing the function, formation, and experience of these images is expansive and covers a range of academic disciplines (psychology, phenomenology, neuroscience, and literary studies to name a few).[29] Our present concern is necessarily limited to the relationship between perception and imag(in)ing—that is, seeing with the physical eye vis-à-vis seeing with the "mind's eye." If we can assume that reading the verbal arts can aid in the formation of mental images, how, if at all, does the perception of actual images relate to the "seeing" of imagined ones?

This and other related questions bear directly on the so-called "imagery debate" conducted within philosophical and psychological circles for four decades.[30] The conflict consists of two primary camps—the "pictorialists" and the "descriptionalists"—and centers on the *format* of internal representations. To be clear, both camps agree that human beings have image-like mental experiences. Neither would deny that one could, for example, visualize a lion in the mind as a

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[29] For a review of the literature and a helpful integration of these interdisciplinary findings as it pertains to the formation and effects of mental images in the act of reading, see Ellen J. Esrock, *The Reader's Eye: Visual Imaging as Reader Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1994). Cf. Paul B. Armstrong, *How Literature Plays with the Brain: The Neuroscience of Reading and Art* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2014), 1–25.

[30] For a helpful summary of the debate, see Grégoire Borst, "Neural Underpinning of Object Mental Imagery, Spatial Imagery, and Motor Imagery," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Neuroscience*, ed. Kevin N. Ochsner and Stephen Michael Kosslyn, vol. 1, *Oxford Library of Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 74–87; Zenon Pylyshyn, "Is the Imagery Debate Over? If so, What Was It About?" in *Language, Brain, and Cognitive Development: Essays in Honor of Jacques Mehler* (ed. Emmanuel Dupoux; Cambridge: MIT, 2001), 59-83; Stephen Michael Kosslyn, William L Thompson, and Giorgio Ganis, *The Case for Mental Imagery* (New York: Oxford University, 2006), 3–59.

phenomenological object. The debate instead pertains to whether the format or "coding" that gives rise to these imaging experiences is indeed "quasi-pictorial"—that is, fundamentally analogous to seeing objects in the real world—or is propositional—that is, based in (linguistic) concepts. Those who favor the propositional position (the "descriptionalists") argue that imagery phenomena are better explained using more general cognitive principles like language. According to the descriptionalists' reading of the behavioral and neurological data, the human brain relies not on a depictive format to store and manipulate visual information but rather on a more basic propositional format. "Mental imagery," however apt the label is to describe human imaging and imagination, is only epiphenomenal: it emerges not from collected mental pictures—a stored image of, say, lion seen in the real world—but from an abstract network of concepts—a collection of core ideas concerning the lion (lions have tails, mains, and four paws). Over against this position, the pictorialists argue that mental imaging is not the occasional result of stored propositional data but is, at its core, fundamentally pictorial and uses the *physical* space of the brain to simulate imagined visualization.

The "imagery debate" is deeply entrenched and incredibly complex, but the results of its countless behavioral and neurological experiments have fascinating import for the relationship between perception and imagination. Ultimately, the question of who's right need not concern us here. Whether pictorial representation is fundamental to the operation of the human mind or only the illusory result of propositionally encoded data is of no consequence for present purposes, since *both* camps acknowledge mental images as a phenomenological reality. At the same time, the pictorialists' interpretation of the brain scan data observes fascinating connections between human seeing in the world and "seeing" in the mind.

A variety of neurological experiments have suggested that in the act of seeing, the brain depicts (aspects of certain) representations of what is seen within the brain's physical structure. That is, there are areas of the brain that are topographically organized and use space on the cortex to represent space in the world. For example, an experiment conducted by Tootell, Silverman, Switkes, and De Valois in 1982 trained a monkey to stare at a certain geometrical pattern consisting of blinking lights.[31] They injected the animal with a radioactive sugar, which was absorbed by the brain cells according to their activity. The more active the brain cell, the more sugar used. After the monkey had stared at the pattern, the monkey was sacrificed, and its brain was removed for scanning. Upon looking at area V1—the first cortical area to receive visual input from the monkey's eyes (known also as area 17, area OC, or the primary visual cortex)—they noticed that the pattern among the cells that had absorbed the radioactively infused sugar looked almost identical to that seen by the monkey (fig. 1.1). Simply put, "The geometric structure of the stimulus [was] physically laid out on the cortex!"[32] Experiments like these and many others[33] have shown that in the lower-level areas responsible for the initial processing of visual information in human beings, the cortex is topographically organized and thus uses the available space in the cortex to render what is seen in a depictive manner.

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[31] R. B. H. Tootell et al., "Deoxyglucose Analysis of Retinotopic Organization in Primate Striate Cortext," *Science* 218 (1982): 902–4.

[32] Kosslyn, Thompson, and Ganis, *The Case for Mental Imagery*, 15–16, fig. 1.2.

[33] See the research cited in Borst, "Neural Underpinning." Specific examples include Bertrand Thirion et al., "Inverse Retinotopy: Inferring the Visual Content of Images from Brain Activation Patterns," *NeuroImage* 33 (2006): 1104–1116; S. D. Slotnick, W. L. Thompson, and S. M. Kosslyn, "Visual Mental Imagery Induces Retinotopically Organized Activation of Early Visual Areas," *Cerebral Cortex* 15 (2005): 1570–83; Isabelle Klein et al., "Retinotopic Organization of Visual Mental Images as Revealed by Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging," *Cognitive Brain Research* 22 (2004): 26–31; E. A. DeYoe et al., "Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (FMRI) of the Human Brain," *Journal of Neuroscience Methods* 54 (1994): 171–87; S. A. Engel et al., "fMRI of Human Visual Cortex," *Nature* 369 (1994): 525; M. I. Sereno et al., "Borders of Multiple Visual Areas in Humans Revealed by Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging," *Science* 268 (1995): 889–93; M. K. Hasnain, P. T. Fox, and M. G. Woldorff, "Intersubject Variability of Functional Areas in the Human Visual Cortex," *Human Brain Mapping* 6 (1998): 301–15; D. C. Van Essen et al., "Mapping Visual Cortex in Monkeys and Humans Using Surface-Based Atlases," *Vision Research* 41 (2001): 1359–78.

More importantly, for our purposes, subsequent research has also suggested that the same areas of the brain responsible for processing perceived images are also engaged in mental imagery. Put otherwise, the topographically organized areas used in sight are also functional during mental imagery or imagination. Various experiments have shown, for example, that the shape of an imaged object will change the pattern of activation in the brain: vertical shapes show vertical activation in area 17, while horizontal shapes yield horizontal patterns.[34] Conversely, when these topographically organized areas are temporarily impaired, subjects require more time to visualize mental images.[35] Though the phenomenology of imagery also demands the use of higher-level brain functioning, there is nevertheless a significant overlap between brain areas engaged during perception and those activated by imaging. For example, the fMRI scans conducted by Ganis, Kosslyn, and Thompson showed nearly 100% overlap between areas activated by perception and those activated by mental imagery in the frontal lobe (fig. 1.2).[36] Of course, it is important to note that not all experimental findings directly confirm these hypotheses, but the majority of them indicate a neurological relationship between sight and imagination.[37] The pictorialists even hypothesize that "the precise pattern of [brain cell] activation [during imagery] should reflect the shape of the object in the same way it does during perception."[38] Bottom line, seeing an image with the eye and imagining one within

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[34] S. D. Slotnick, W. L. Thompson, and S. M. Kosslyn, "Visual Mental Imagery Induces Retinotopically Organized Activation of Early Visual Areas," *Cerebral Cortex* 15 (2005): 1570–83.

[35] S. M. Kosslyn et al., "The Role of Area 17 in Visual Imagery: Convergent Evidence from PET and RTMS," *Science* 284 (1999): 167–70.

[36] G. Ganis, W. L. Thompson, and S. M. Kosslyn, "Brain Areas Underlying Visual Mental Imagery and Visual Perception: An FMRI Study," *Cogn. Brain Res.* 20 (2004): 226–41.

[37] The details of the data are far more complex than the above summaries indicate. An extremely detailed analysis of the different types of brain scans, a history of their findings (and respective merits), and fair assessment of their results for the mental imagery debate, see the appendix in Kosslyn, Thompson, and Ganis, *The Case for Mental Imagery*, 185–212.

[38] Ibid., 130.

the mind's eye are not just phenomenologically analogous experiences but also neurologically overlapping processes.

1.2.1.2. The Relationship between the Experience of the Visual and Verbal Arts

Second, as a correlate of the cognitive relationship between perception and imagination, there is also evidence of a connection between the *aesthetic experiences* facilitated by the visual and verbal arts. Imagery has long been identified as a primary bridge between artistic media like painting and poetry. Plato, for example, recognized verbal images as a primary function of literature and famously warned against poetic images as facsimiles of the true images seen in perception.[39] Millennia later, notions of forming images in the "mind's eye" would conversely influence the aesthetic assumptions and practices of Romantic poets.[40] More recently, neuroscientific research has helped to refine the phenomenological bridges built between different forms of aesthetic experience. Gabrielle Starr, for example, has argued for an integrated neural model of aesthetic experience among what are often called the Sister Arts (music, painting, and poetry).[41] She integrates the findings of cognitive science and neuro-imaging studies to account for aesthetic experience across human cultures. Rather than singling out what kinds of music or poetry induce aesthetic pleasure, she examines *why* the arts are related at a phenomenological level. Starr singles out "imagery" in general—broadly construed as the subjective experience of a sensation without a corresponding sensory input—and "motor imagery"

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[39] Plato, *Republic*, XIII.

[40] See Alan Richardson, *The Neural Sublime: Cognitive Theories and Romantic Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2010), 38–57. Richardson discusses the assumed antipictorialist tendencies of Romantic poets like Wordsworth, wherein the poet must eschew the images seen by despotic "eye" in favor of the "I" (the verbal associations and deeply laden symbolism of language that expresses consciousness).

[41] G. Gabrielle Starr, *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013).

(the mental simulation of physical actions) in particular as a key neural gateway into pleasurable aesthetic experiences.

For Starr, imagery is the primary bridge across the arts because of its epistemic value. Beyond imagery's ability to generate reality within the mind, imagination via the arts can also model the unknown, the non-intuitive, and the unpredictable. Many poems, for example, combine conflicting visual images interspersed with aural or olfactory images—all of which may be difficult to replicate simultaneously with the mind. Imagery is thus inherently multisensory, even at the most basic of levels. The simple image of "a barking dog" carries aural (the sound of barking), visual (the image of a dog), and semantic information available for integration by the hearer. The verbal arts compound this multisensory data in a highly stylized form, and the resulting connections between the available images make new epistemic connections possible.[42] Imagined motion especially lies "at the heart of the multisensory nature of imagery."[43] That same image of the barking dog, for example, can cause the imagining individual to simulate the gaze, even leading the areas of the brain responsible for sight to activate (as discussed above). What we visualize then affords the possibility for action in the real world: "Translated into aesthetic terms, objects of vision may draw us in to explore the world in reality and imagination, and to engage both inner and outer world as made to move us, to meet us as we grasp them."[44]

Motor imagery, for Starr, encompasses the Sister Arts and accounts for their shared aesthetic experience. Beyond the motion that one imagines when overtly prompted by the sculpted image of

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[42] On synesthesia in the brain, see V. S. Ramachandran, *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness: From Impostor Poodles to Purple Numbers* (New York: Pi Press, 2004), 60–82.

[43] Starr, *Feeling Beauty*, 80.

[44] Ibid., 80–81.

someone running or a poetic line detailing the same, motor imagery is also produced when physical action is *not* explicitly represented in the arts that elicit it. As a result, it can mediate between the actions of the artist who composes the work, the artwork itself, and the mind of the viewer, as we imagine the gestures that produce the composition. It is apparent in music, for example, when we hear the sounds and imagine the movements of the instrumentalists or the notes on the page. We might even be moved by the rhythm to tap our feet or hum along. Or when we view a painting, motor imagery is not only prompted by the bodies we might see but also by the brushstrokes we imagine when considering its design. In poetry, we imagine both the motion of the figures described in its lines as well as the movements of the speaker's lips, all while we feel the pervasive rhythm of its words.

In sum, it is imagery's multisensory character that accounts for its universal presence in the arts and for aesthetic experience as a whole. The network of neural areas implicated in the experience of motor imagery largely overlaps with those engaged in intense aesthetic experience (what is called the "default mode network"). In aesthetic encounter we are prompted to a variety of transformative activities, including the restructuring of our values and the reformation of our identities. Imagery demands the integration of internal and external worlds and thus serves as the gateway to these reflective activities. For the purposes of the present work, Starr calls into question any assumed division between the visual and verbal arts and establishes "imagery" as the necessary bridge between them. Our experience when, say, reading a poem and beholding a sculpture are comparable not only at an aesthetic level but at a neurological level as well.

1.2.1.3. The Relationship between the Verbal Arts and Imag(in)ing Objects

In addition to the neurological relationship between perception and imagery, other cognitive studies have explored how engaging *the verbal arts specifically* leads to certain kinds of mental images. I will consider briefly (1) the work of Elaine Scarry, who has discussed the ways that authors create and sustain visual images for the reader, and (2) further cognitive data concerning the power of poetry's paratactic form to encourage mental visualization.[45]

First, unlike the brain scanning data previously discussed, Elaine Scarry has taken a more intuitive approach to analyze the methods by which the written word effectively evokes and moves mental images.[46] In her own rather phenomenological account, she acknowledges the power of imagined objects in the brain to evoke perceived sensation.[47] Despite the frustration that often

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[45] Before summarizing some of the pertinent data, it is important to acknowledge that mental imaging (while reading) varies from person to person and changes depending upon context, text, and individual predispositions. See Esrock, *The Reader's Eye*, 178-87, who identifies these three features as determinative of how much visualization takes place during reading. First, where and how one reads can either enhance or disparage imagery attempts. While intentional reading conducted in a quiet, well-lit room might encourage visualization, speed-reading a textbook for a test the following morning does not. Second, the kind of texts one reads impacts the mental activities performed during comprehension. If a poem's orality or subject matter primarily engages the ear rather than the (mind's) eye, mental imaging may decrease, but a poem by William Carlos Williams, renowned for his ability to paint pictures with words, would likely enhance the imagination. Finally, the reader's ability also affects imagining. Quite simply, some readers are better visualizers than others, and as expected, identity markers like gender identity can influence this activity. See, e.g., Allan Paivio and James M. Clark, "Static Versus Dynamic Imagery," in *Imagery and Cognition*, ed. Cesare Cornoldi and Mark A. McDaniel (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1991), 221–45, whose research shows that women generate static images more quickly and efficiently than men, while men have an aptitude for moving imagery specifically. See further Norman N. Holland, *The Nature of Literary Response: Five Readers Reading.* (Somerset: Taylor and Francis, 2011).

[46] Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).

[47] Scarry distinguishes between three phenomena in perception. First, there is *immediate sensory content*, which refers to what we actually see, hear, touch, taste, etc. Second, there is *delayed sensory content* or "instructions for the production of actual sensory content." A musical score, for example, makes no sound on its own but instead provides the cues for the instrumentalists to transform the written notations into immediate sensory content. Finally, *mimetic content* refers to "imagery" proper—the absence of actual sensory content (whether immediate or delayed) and the "presence" of the figural rooms and faces that we mimetically see, touch, and hear, though in no case do we actually do so. Imagining is thus an act of perceptual mimeses, whether done in daydreaming or led by the instruction of great writers. According to Scarry, poetry (more than prose) makes use of all three phenomena: (1) the poem's linear arrangement and jagged margin provides immediate sensory content for the reader; (2) it's printed signs offer a set of instructions for its actual sounds and

accompanies our attempt to visualize certain objects or faces on our own, she notes that captivating prose or poetry often has the power to overcome this inability and to enhance our enfeebled imaginations. As we read, our imaginations "acquire the vivacity of perceptual objects" through the aid of verbal description.[48] Scarry thus sets out to account for the detailed ways by which writers construct and move mental images in the minds of their readers. If imagining is a mimesis of perception, then successful imagining will of course come about through the accuracy or acuity of the mimesis. Whatever perception is imitated in the mind is not only the sensory result (the way something looks, feels, etc.) but also "the actual structure of production that gave rise to the perception; that is, the material conditions that made it look, sound, or feel the way it did."[49]

For Scarry, part of the reason that the verbal arts are successful in evoking vivid images is their "givenness." By "givenness," she refers to the endurance, durability, stability of something perceived in the real world—the presentation of something there for the taking in sensory experience. We see the chair with our eyes because the chair stands (or is "given") before us. In the written poem or story, it is precisely this "prompting" led by the text that mimics the "givenness" of perception in the imagination. In the act of reading, the reader's volition is suspended. S/he does not have to work to sustain the imagined two-dimensional, fleeting image (like in daydreaming) but is instead surprised and instructed by the author on what's there. Just as perception entails involuntary encounter with what is perceived, so imagination, when prompted by the verbal arts, guides the reader through a "given" world. Suppression of the awareness of volition is the key to reproducing the "givenness" of

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therefore serve as delayed sensory content for the poem's aural/oral dynamics (rhythm, rhyme, etc.); and (3) its abundance of metaphors and images guide the reader in constructing mimetic perceptions. See ibid., 5-7.

[48] Ibid., 5.

[49] Ibid., 12.

what's imagined. Although one cannot manipulate imagined images well, verbal arts continually engage us in moving images about, rotating them, brushing them together, and so forth.

For Scarry, much of poetry's imaginative power resides in its counterfactual and counterfictional imagery. By "counterfactual," she refers to the poem's ability to bring into being things not previously existing the world. Through metaphor and descriptive language, poems combine features of various beings and objects not witnessed in perception. Poetry is also "counterfictional," a term that describes how poems replace the frustrating attributes of figured images—faint, fleeting, dependent on volitional labor to maintain their presence in the mind's eye—with the vivacity, solidity, persistence, and givenness of the perceptible world.[50] In poetry, the written imagery gives the reader prompting or "procedures" for reproducing the deep structure of perception and thereby replicates the "givenness" of perception itself. The mere fact that we are guided through an imagined world lends credence (or concreteness) to the "reality" of the floating images in the mind.

The remainder of her work identifies the subtle (almost unnoticeable) means by which authors like Proust, Eyre, even Homer manufacture and manipulate vivid mental images. Though these need not be itemized here,[51] it is important for what follows to note that Scarry consistently ties the construction of mental images to specific literary techniques. That is, she locates the "power" of the verbal image not in her personal response (or that of another) to the written imagery but rather in

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[50] Cf. Esrock, *The Reader's Eye*, 115–18, who discusses the complex relationship between bizarre imagery in literature and visualization effects.

[51] Among the literary techniques she identifies, she addresses the ways by which authors lend solidity to mental images through techniques like kinetic occlusion and shadows. She also discusses various means of moving images within the mind: "radiant ignition" (the reference to light to indicate movement), "rarity" (the moving of solid objects by pairing them with floating objects that are not solid), addition and subraction (asserting an image, withdrawing the image, and reasserting it), stretching images, folding them, tilting them, etc. For a helpful summary, see Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book*, 239-43.

the details of the texts themselves. In this way, she reveals the inherent connection between (1) the *way* an image is written, (2) the *kind* of image constructed by the reader, and (3) the experienced "power" of that image (vivid, vivacious, enduring, and so forth) within the readerly mind.

Second, aside from Scarry's more intuitive approach, other cognitive studies have confirmed that poetry in fact encourages more concrete mental imaging than prose, and for reasons one might not initially expect. While we might attribute poetry's vivacity to its descriptive tendencies, this factor alone does not necessarily lead readers to retain concrete images when reading. Visualization is also strongly linked to how the individual clauses of a given work together. Mark Marschark and Reed Hunt in particular have explored the relationship between imaging and comprehension and have argued that the imaged memory of concrete words is determined as much by the relationship between sentences in a given work as by the content of the sentences themselves. According to Marschark and Hunt, the concreteness of a sentence does not enhance memory when they are connected in prose. Rather, memory of sentences is a direct function of how concretely the verbal imagery is described only if the sentences are unrelated.[52] In prose paragraphs, the individual sentences are conceptually connected by the governing topic of the passage. The reader therefore gravitates toward this semantic unity rather than to the particular images found in the clauses that comprise the paragraph.[53] In these cases, the formation of more concrete images obtains at the level of the broader semantic unit (paragraphs, passages, and chapters) rather than the individual sentence.

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[52] See Marc Marschark and R. Reed Hunt, "A Reexamination of the Role of Imagery in Learning and Memory," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 15 (1989): 710–20.

[53] Marc Marschark et al., "The Role of Imagery in Memory: On Shared and Distinctive Information," *Psychological Bulletin.* 102 (1987): 35. They continue, "The structure of normal prose, thus, draws attention to the relationship among these higher order units, sometimes at the expense of attention to individual sentences. Because the concreteness manipulation is at the level of individual sentences, this potentially distinctive information is not as salient in normal prose as in scrambled prose."

Based on these findings, imagery effects are enhanced at lower levels of discourse (sentences and phrases) when the conceptual connections are not as apparent: "Where the context does not permit the units to be meaningfully integrated under some readily available upper-level proposition, as in *scrambled prose*, then visual imagery would serve as an effective organizing mnemonic."[54]

In light of this research, lyric poetry—"scrambled prose" *par excellence*—prompts concrete imaging not only through detailed description but also through its centrifugal forces. Lyric's non-narrativity, enjambment, parataxis, and other features encourage visualization at the level of phrases and words simply because these poetics tend to preclude a straightforward semantic unity.[55] Initial comprehension eludes the reader, and the slower pace that lyric poetry demands results in highly specific imaging at the level of the line.[56] If viewing images and visualizing them are cognitively connected, lyric poetry's capacity to evoke mental imaging in a variety of ways offers perhaps the shortest bridge from the verbal to the visual arts.

1.2.1.4. The Relationship between Visual and Verbal Images in Summary

In summary, the above foray into cognitive studies grounds and helps justify a phenomenological approach to biblical studies in two ways. First, cognitive research has demonstrated a fundamental connection between perceiving images in the real world and imagining them in the mind. As a result, the comparison of visual and verbal images in iconographic studies does not rest solely on the

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[54] Esrock, *The Reader's Eye*, 114.

[55] For a helpful discussion of these and other features of lyric poetry more generally and biblical poetry specifically, see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry* (New York: Oxford University, 2015), 178–214.

[56] Cf. Brian Boyd, *Why Lyrics Last: Evolution, Cognition, and Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 2012), 9–23., who discusses our attraction to lyric poetry because the individual line is ideally suited our attention capacities.

perceived merits of the constructed juxtaposition, although this alone may indeed suffice as a reason for its practice (see below). Instead, the connection is quite physical—even neurological. So it is that a phenomenological analysis of text and imagery is favorable not simply because it is interesting; rather, our comparison of the "power" of artistic and poetic images capitalizes on the shared cognitive structures that enable the perception of both media and the shared cognitive experience evoked by the visual and verbal sister arts. Given these (and other) cognitive findings, asking "how" and "why" written and artistic images make meaning in comparable ways is not a far-fetched aesthetic inquiry but rather a fundamental exploration of overlapping and mutually informing cognitive processes. Because reading and seeing (imagination and perception) are sibling exercises, an analysis of the techniques that give rise to the "power" of their respective images holds tremendous potential for understanding the imagistic workings of both fields. A discussion of their respective poetics is therefore not just intriguing but intuitive, not to mention highly informative.

Second, in light of the work of Scarry and others, a comparison of the "power" of images in biblical texts and ancient Near Eastern art is fundamentally a discussion of their respective poetics. If the *way* something is written or depicted directly informs the construction and experience of the phenomenon it describes, an approach that cares about such phenomena—a phenomenology—will necessarily take into account the literary and artistic techniques that give rise to the subject matter: how the literary features that construct *this* poetic image relate to the artistic features that construct *that* visual image, particularly when these images are congruent or contiguous. Thus, the analysis need not devolve into an account of reader/viewer responses to poetic and visual images devoid of any tractable reference to textual and iconographic details. We can instead "control" for certain

subjectivizing tendencies by addressing the imagistic features of the biblical and iconographic media—the techniques by which the artists and authors render the phenomenon in question, which in the case of the present study is violence.

1.2.2. What Does a Return to a Phenomenological Approach Look Like?

The above discussion of the "imagery debate" and other cognitive studies has helped to justify a return the phenomenological approach within biblical iconography. At the same time, this movement "backward" cannot naively repeat the methods conducted in the earliest iconographic work but must consider developments within the discipline since its inception. What then does an informed return to phenomenology within biblical iconography look like? I identify two features of the approach here: (1) an expanded comparative playing field and (2) a careful attention to literary and artistic integrity.

1.2.2.1. An Expanded Comparative Playing Field

First, a study of the poetics of violence in biblical and iconographic sources necessitates an expansion of the comparative enterprise beyond the limits of historical and geographical contiguity. As articulated above, biblical iconographers have rightfully called for practitioners to explain the relationship between biblical texts and iconographic motifs on contiguous grounds. In cases where the questions of "influence" and/or cultural particularity are primary, these methodological strictures are vital to the argument's tenability.

When the focus shifts, however, from what the biblical authors might have known about/of specific images to the imaginative worlds of the images themselves, the comparative playground may

profitably expand. It is no longer a concern whether or not the poet of Lamentations (see chapters 2-3), for example, had access to the wall reliefs standing in Ashurbanipal's North Palace (see chapter 5). If questions of genetic influence are not a primary issue, shared imagistic expressions of violence between the media need no genealogical explanation. The "payoff" of the comparison is found not in what it *explains*—what a textual image means in light of an iconographic motif—but in what it *reveals*—how the ways in which this image expresses a phenomenon throws the biblical expression of that same phenomenon into sharp relief. As Jonathan Z. Smith has noted, the comparative process is inherently a constructed task anyway—a task ultimately in service of *our* knowledge and theoretical problem— rather than an objective one. A comparison's intellectual energy and helpfulness resides in the practitioner's questions, and in many cases, the task is frankly more interesting when conducted across cultural and temporal divides—working with analogically similar rather than genetically identical materials.[57] Keel states something similar in the introduction to *Symbolism*. For him, the purpose of bringing the art of the Near East into conversation with the Psalms is not to indicate dependence but rather "to exhibit identical, similar, or even diametrically opposed apprehensions of the same phenomenon in ancient Israel and its environs."[58]

Put differently, the comparison itself is the "win" in that it helps to uncover *how* imagery makes meaning and captivates viewers in both biblical poetry and ancient Near Eastern art. In the

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[57] See Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), 36-53; idem, "The 'End' of Comparison: Redescription and Rectification," in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (ed. Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray; Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 237-41. Smith even argues that in religion, genetic comparisons are an *impossibility*. For a helpful summary of Smith's thoughts on comparison in religious studies and its import for biblical studies, see Brent A. Strawn, "Comparative Approaches: History, Theory, and the Image of God," in *Method Matters*, 117-42, esp. 124-27; idem, "The Image of God: Comparing the Old Testament with Other Ancient Near Eastern Cultures," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 66, 73; de Hulster, Strawn, and Bonfiglio, "Iconographic Exegesis," 26.

[58] Keel, *Symbolism*, 12-13.

case of biblical iconography, even if all questions of text-image influence are abandoned (and they need not be, though they often need to be chastened or constrained), one isn't limited to examining minor art alone but can also select from the most awe-inspiring pieces of the ANE monumental repertoire. These artifacts also offer fitting, if not the *most* fitting, conversation partners for the Bible's most exquisite literary contributions. The size and complexity of the monumental media provides a broader view of imagistic poetics that can in turn inform the poetics of the biblical text(s).

1.2.2.2. A Careful Attention to Literary and Artistic Integrity

Second, an informed phenomenological approach to iconographic comparison need not be construed as a "course correction" to the most recent iconographic contributions, but may instead be seen as building upon and working in parallel with its growing sophistication.[59] By "latest developments," I refer especially to LeMon's warning against literary fragmentation as well as Bonfiglio's introduction of visual semiotics into the discipline's field of vision.

First, I will be especially careful to avoid both literary and artistic fragmentation in light of LeMon's research in this regard. Although Keel and his students have addressed issues like image-text contiguity and artistic fragmentation, the discipline prior to LeMon largely lacked an explicit method for establishing what images and texts are comparable in the first place (what LeMon calls image-text congruence). As de Hulster has noted, Keel's exegetical work subsequent to *Symbolism* hardly

[59] For explicitly methodological expositions, see the references in n. 9 above. Note also the methodological refinements proposed for New Testament studies in Annette Weissenrieder and Friederike Wendt, "Images as Communication: The Methods of Iconography," in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images* (ed. Annette Weissenrieder, Friederike Went, and Petra von Gemünden; WUNT 193; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 1-59.

presented any methodological parameters for his approach.[60] With the exception of the "concentric circles" offered in his Song of Songs commentary and a brief methodological appendix in *Das Recht*,[61] Keel largely left his readers to infer his processes—an especially difficult problem given that his practice often changes depending on the biblical text that confronts him. As explained above, this interpretive analysis often severed textual and visual motifs from their contexts, resulting in fragmented comparisons that seized on similarities at a general level. Noting this problem, LeMon reclaimed the integrity of the biblical text in iconographic work. Over against the atomistic textual analyses that often characterized the discipline, he called for practitioners to map the "iconic structure" of the biblical text *prior* to searching for comparable images. This methodological addition not only ensured a richer exegesis but also established a more precise basis upon which to conduct a more careful and informed comparison.[62]

Second, I will also take into account Bonfiglio's application of visual theory to the discipline. In many ways, the present project is an application of some of the ideas Bonfiglio raises, especially those pertaining to the complexity of visual semiotics and the power of images. With respect to the former, Bonfiglio notes the ways in which biblical iconography has been inordinately concerned with "decoding" an image's subject matter based on its placement within the historical development of cultural motifs. Such artistic analyses generally treat image motifs as if they are linguistic signs that convey limited meanings regardless of how the motif appears. As long as one can recognize the constellation, form bears little to no impact on semantics. Bonfiglio critiques these assumptions by

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[60] De Hulster, *Illuminating Images*, 117-25.

[61] Keel, *Song of Songs*, 27-30; idem, *Das Recht*, 267-73.

[62] LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms*, 143-68, esp. 152-54; idem, "Iconographic Approaches," 1-25, esp. 16-17, 24. Cf. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 14.

appealing to the work of Nelson Goodman on visual semiotics. Unlike linguistic signs, "every difference in form can, at least potentially, make a difference in meaning."[63] Robust artistic analysis, therefore, demands more than "iconographic work" (as defined by Panofsky) and requires that the interpreter attend to formal qualities—what Bonfiglio calls the image's compositional design, rhetoric of display, and mode of signification (especially its ideological capacities). As already discussed, careful iconographic work thus attends not only to *what* is there but also *how* and *why* it is there. Any project attempting to understand the "power" of images must account for these formal aspects in its analyses.

With respect to the work at hand, these methodological refinements in issues of congruence and contiguity (discussed above) inform the comparative operations conducted here. As we expand the comparative playing field to allow for a more fruitful dialogue between the poetics of the selected text (Lamentations 2) and that of certain Neo-Assyrian monuments, the size and nuance of the biblical poems and Near Eastern artifacts also increase—and with them, the risk of literary and artistic fragmentation. The larger the visual tableau or the lengthier the poem, the greater temptation there is to atomize its images and or content as a means of rendering the component content more serviceable for comparison. In what follows, therefore, *prior* to conducting any comparison between the biblical text and ancient images, I provide extensive and detailed analyses of the imagery presented in the poetic and artistic compositions at hand. These analyses not only itemize *what* images figure in these pieces but also, in light of Bonfiglio's work, *how* and *why* these images appear within their respective works. If the present project is a "return" to the discipline's phenomenological

[63] Bonfiglio, "Reading Images, Seeing Texts," 186.

beginnings, it is not at the same time a retreat into its relative naivety about why and how ANE images and texts are relatable in the first place.[64] Perhaps one might call it, therefore, "the second (iconographical-phenomenological) naïveté."

1.2.2.3. The Comparison of Poetic and Imagistic "Functions"

Third, in addition to expanding the comparative scope of biblical iconography and working in conversation with recent methodological/theoretical developments, this project will take an extended look at the intersections of biblical poesy and ANE art. As discussed above, the "power" of the image in text or image resides as much in presentation as it does in content. While iconographers have often spent the majority of their analytical energy explaining the content of image constellations in a historically responsible way, I will consider how poems and texts intersect and diverge at the compositional level—what one could call the interplay of poetic and/vs. imagistic "functions," how poetry and visual art make meaning and draw attention to themselves in comparable and constructive ways.[65]

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[64] Perhaps issues of "image-text correlation" should be included here as well. "Correlation" refers to how or at what level images and texts are related, and in biblical iconographic work, such correlation has been conceived in various ways—images illustrating texts, images illuminating texts, images and texts independently expressing pre-existent concepts, etc. As discussed above, the latest developments in this regard have focused on the ways in which ANE iconography provides insight into the thinking of ANE cultures. The image thus "illuminates" texts by revealing its underlying (cognitive) concepts. The present study is essentially an extended exploration of image-text correlation at the phenomenological level and thus builds upon the multiple refinements in this regard (summarized above). On image-text correlation specifically, see de Hulster, Strawn, and Bonfiglio, "Iconographic Exegesis," 24-25; Bonfiglio, "Reading Images, Seeing Texts," 92-94, 101-9, 153-56.

[65] On poetic function, see Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language* (ed. Thomas A. Sebeok; Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1960), 350-77. For discussions of Jakobson on poetic function, see Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (2nd ed.; Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), 64-86; Eleanor Berry, "Poetic Function," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. Roland Greene; 4th ed.; Princeton: Princeton University, 2012), 1056-57; Linda R. Waugh, "The Poetic Function in the Theory of Roman Jakobson," *Poetics Today* 2 (1980): 57-82; Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985), 7, 9, 17, 140-41. For Jakobson, any act of communication involves six elements, each of which has a corresponding "function"

Pertinent questions for the following analysis include the following: how might lyric poetry's non-narrative quality relate to different forms of narrativity in ANE art?[66] If, in fact, lyric poetry is more interested in *becoming* an event for the reader than recounting them in narrative fashion, how might this "event-like" quality intersect with (historical) representations in ANE images?[67] How might the techniques used by ANE sculptors to unify the disparate scenes of their large-scale visual projects help us to see comparable centripetal and centrifugal forces in biblical poetic imagery (and vice versa)?[68] Beyond the fact that a text and image may express similar phenomenological content, how do the various motifs of the figured phenomenon hang together as a single piece? In what ways does its structure contribute to its effect? How might ANE beliefs concerning image agency and semiotics enlighten the performative dimensions of biblical poetry—its desire to impinge upon reality through devices like apostrophe? Can the play(fulness) of biblical lyrics converse with the suggestiveness of many ANE images? Taken together, these questions (and others) ultimately address the "whence" of imagery's power as it is found in (specific) biblical texts and iconographic sources.

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of language. The poetic function focuses on the message itself and refers to the way in which poetic language draws attention to itself as such—"the maximum foregrounding of the utterance" (J. Mukarovsky, "Standard Language and Poetic Language," in *A Prague School Reader* (ed. Paul L. Garvin; Washington: Georgetown University, 1964), 17-30)—as seen in features like unusual syntax and the sequencing of phonologically or grammatically (not just semantically) related words. In a similar vein, I speak of "imagistic function" not as a feature of linguistic discourse but of visual communication, the way in which images draw attention to themselves as images—their unique compositional arrangements, rhetoric of display, (non)narrativity, and so forth.

[66] On non-narrativity as a defining feature of the lyric and for a helpful summary of lyric's distinguishing characteristics, see Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry*, 178-214; "Poetry of the Psalms," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University, 2014), 79–98; "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," in *The Evolution of Rationality: Interdisciplinary Essays in Honor of J. Wentzel van Huyssteen*, ed. F. LeRon Shults (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 344–77.

[67] On lyric as an "event," see Jonathan D. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 186-243, 275-83.

[68] For a summary of centrifugal and centripetal features of lyric poetry and sequence, see Daniel Grossberg, *Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry*, SBLMS 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Edward Stankiewicz, "Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Poetry," *Semiotica* 38 (1982): 217–42.

1.2.3. What Phenomenon Will Be Considered?

A study of how a particular phenomenon figures in textual and artistic media requires a shared imagistic *topos*. The theme selected must be broad enough to allow for both image-text congruence—common visual/verbal content—and comparable image-text poetics or "functions." I turn now to discuss the merits of choosing "violence" as a constructive point of intersection between the Bible and ancient Near Eastern art before narrowing where this phenomenon appears in a specific poem (Lamentations 2) and visual repertoire (Ashurbanipal's palace reliefs). The selection of this biblical text and these images constitute a test case for exploring the potential utility of a phenomenological approach to ancient Near Eastern iconography that is especially concerned with the shared and divergent poetics between image and text.

1.2.3.1. Why Violence?

The rendering of violence in visual and verbal media presents an ideal option for a phenomenological approach to biblical iconography for two reasons. First, much like its prevalence in the modern arts, violence consistently figures in both the biblical corpus and ancient Near Eastern images. Its ubiquitous presence in these media presents a large of pool of texts and artifacts from which to choose and thus allows for a more complex image-text comparison. More importantly, as a common imagistic theme, violence is represented in a variety of ways, through multiple media, and for many different rhetorical purposes. That is, its consistency in use is matched by a variation in its poetics—whether literary or artistic. As we look to compare how violence is figured, the diversity of poetic and

visual techniques with which violence is rendered in the textual and iconographic repertoires presents many opportunities for finding comparable poetics in these images and texts.

Second, violence lends itself to vivid representation. In its most visceral form, violence is a corporal act committed between human bodies. Though difficult to define precisely, its presence is undeniable to the human eye, and the suffering it leaves in its wake both repels and attracts our attention.[69] When representing violence in either visual or verbal form, the ancient Near Eastern writers and authors often seize on its physical effects and render it graphically. Violence holds a power to compel attention, and the high degree of detail with which it appears in texts and images once again proffers the possibility of multiple points of connection between the verbal and visual arts. Violence has a troubling capacity to figure in the mind of the reader/viewer, sometimes even despite our desire that the images not linger *in our memory*.[70] As a result, it is an intriguing topos in the analysis of imagistic poetics in biblical and iconographic media.[71]

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[69] On the discrepancy between recognizing violence and defining it, see especially Patrick H. Tolan, "Understanding Violence," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*, ed. Daniel J. Flannery, Alexander T. Vazsonyi, and Irwin D. Waldman (New York: Cambridge University, 2007), 5–18.

[70] Cf. Wayne Booth's comments concerning figurative language: "Every art of the imagination, benign or vicious, profound or trivial, can colonize the mind…What is clear is that for all of us, the most powerful effects result when we have expended a great deal of mental imagery reconstructing an image from minimal clues…This effect of engaged energies means that figurative language will always figure the mind more incisively than plain language." See *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 298–99.

[71] Sontag speaks to the human attraction and repulsion to images of violence and suffering. She writes, "It seems that the appetite for pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show bodies naked…No moral charge attaches to the representation of these cruelties. Just the provocation: can you look at this? There is the satisfaction of being able to look at the image without flinching. There is[also] the pleasure of flinching… In each instance, the gruesome invites us to be either spectators or cowards, unable to look." See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 41–42.

1.2.3.2. Why Lamentations 2?

In the search for violence in the Hebrew Bible, few texts match the emotional depth and striking detail of Lamentations. Its lyric sequence features Hebrew poetry at its finest, and, as a result, it contains unforgettable images (visual, aural, and otherwise) reminiscent of Jerusalem's fall and its aftermath. Beyond its shock and poetic beauty, Lamentations as a whole and its second chapter in particular are enticing selections for the iconographic comparison that follows for many reasons, three of which merit specific mention here.

First, Lamentations contains several poetic features that encourage mental imaging for the reader. As already discussed above, cognitive research has shown that lyric poetry, as opposed to prose, is especially conducive for visual imagination at the level of the line because of its "scrambled" semantics. The paratactic character of lyric obfuscates comprehension for the reader because the poem and/or stanza lacks overt cohesion. As a result, the imagery of each line takes on greater significance and vivacity within the reader's mind. Given such findings, Lamentations offers a suitable comparand for violence in visual media not simply because it is poetry but also because of its especially "jagged" form. First, the Lamentations sequence rhythmically breaks up the syntax by using the limping *qinah* meter throughout.[72] The resulting "long-short" rhythm that alternates across the lines aurally atomizes the poem's imagery into distinctly perceivable parts. Second, as a part of this rhythmic tendency, Lamentations uses enjambment more frequently than any other poetic sequence. Enjambment occurs when the syntax or sense continues across a linebreak, as opposed to end-

[72] On the *qinah* meter specifically, see, e.g., C. Budde, "Das hebräische Klagelied," *ZAW* 2 (1882): 1–52; W. Randall Garr, "The Qinah: A Study of Poetic Meter, Syntax and Style," *ZAW* 95 (1983): 54–75. Cf. Raymond de Hoop, "Lamentations: The Qinah-Metre Questioned," in *Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch, Pericope 1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000), 80–104.

stopping, when the line ending coincides with a syntactical break. According to Dobbs-Allsopp's analysis, between 166 and 177 of the 244 couplets found in Lamentations 1-4 involve some form of enjambment,[73] and the majority of the enjambed lines are concentrated in the first two chapters: 78-81% of the lines in Lamentations 1 and 77% in Lamentations 2.[74]

Among the many effects that this dominant device has on the experience of the book, it also heightens the reader's focus. As Dobbs-Allsopp writes, "The density and complexity of this structure cannot help but to jump out at the reader and hearer, requiring their *closer attention*, if not for no other reason than to decipher the syntax."[75] Based on cognitive studies, the "closer attention" necessary for interpretation also encourages the mental imaging of its sensory content.[76] Thus, I've chosen Lamentations 2 not simply because it features descriptive violence. Many other poems also contain violent imagery. Rather, part of the poem's captivating power emerges from its limping meter and enjambed form—devices that both interrupt interpretation and encourage visualization. In the effort to compare the poetics of textual and visual violence, focusing on the biblical poem that makes its imagery most accessible to its reader seems to make earnest sense.

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[73] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2)," *ZAW* 113.3 (2001): 371. Dobbs-Allsopp also makes reference to similar findings from other interpreters. Cf. George Buchanan Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry: Considered with Special Reference to the Criticism and Interpretation of the Old Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 87–120, who estimates that there are 159-187 non-parallel couplets (out of 242) in Lamentations 1-4; Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed., AB 7A (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 20, who proposes that 101 of the 244 lines in the first four chapters are not parallel.

[74] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2)," 373. See also the comparable figures in n. 17. Enjambment decreases significantly as the sequence progresses: 56-68% in Lam 3, 59-61% in Lam 4, and only 14-24% in Lam 5.

[75] Ibid., 375.

[76] Cf. Greenstein's discussion of "hot" and "cool" media/parallelism. "Hot" media are those that present a complete form of stimuli, while "cool" refers to media that are somehow incomplete and only suggestive of a whole. He writes, "Parallelism, too, runs both 'hot' and 'cool.' Cool involves greater processing by the audience and is therefore engaging: hot presents a full stimulus and tends to disengage." See Edward L. Greenstein, "How Does Parallelism Mean?," in *A Sense of Text: The Art of Language in the Study of Biblical Literature. Papers from a Symposium at the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, May 11, 1982.*, JQRSup (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 54–55.

Second, Lamentations 2 also uses changes in voice to draw attention to its vivid portraits. As the following analysis will show, the book's second poem continues the two voices introduced in the first chapter but alters them in significant ways. In Lamentations 1, the poem alternates between third-person description of Zion's condition (1:1-9b, 10-11b, 17) and Daughter Zion's own lament (1:9c, 11c-16, 18-22). These shifting perspectives, coupled with Zion's own plea to God (1:9, 11, 20) or to bystanders (1:12) to "see" her affliction, captivate the reader and intensify the images of her suffering.[77] In chapter 2, the two preceding voices continue—the third-person description of Zion (2:1-10) and first-person voice of Daughter Zion (2:20-22)—but the poet develops the former perspective by providing a first-person account from the narrator (2:11-19). As Esrock discusses, imaging during reading is fostered by (and also helps to foster) empathy with certain characters.[78] We "see" in the mind's eye with the characters whose perspectives are privileged. In Lamentations 2, the poet enhances its litany of violent images by providing two complementary perspectives: Zion's first-person plea to "see" what she sees is retained (2:20), and the outsider's account introduced in chapter 1 takes on personality through the new first-person "witness" of the poet (2:11-19). In this way, the poem's images become more dramatic and graphic as the voices change and culminate in the book's most striking descriptions of Zion's loss. Once again, the book employs literary devices that encourage reader's imagination and thus allow for a more accessible comparison of violent imagery in biblical and iconographic sources.

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[77] The command to "see" in poetry can also encourage mental visualization for the reader. See Daniel W. Gleason, "Directed to See: Visual Prompting in Imagist Poems," *Style* 45 (2011): 489–509.

[78] On the relationship between imaging while reading and perspective/empathy, see Esrock, *The Reader's Eye*, 193–97.

Third, I have selected Lamentations 2 because the breadth of imaged violence and suffering offered by the poet opens the door for salient points of comparison with the iconographic data. Within its twenty-two stanzas, the poet describes the destruction of Zion's structures (whether her cities [v. 2], temple [vv. 6-7], walls [vv. 7-8, 18], or gates [v. 9]), the loss of her leaders (princes [v. 2], king [vv.6, 9], priests [v. 6, 20], and prophets [v. 9, 14, 20]), and the suffering of her population (e.g., old and young [vv. 10, 21], young men and young women [vv. 10, 21], and the people as a whole [v. 18]). We read of Jerusalem's enemies attacking the city (vv. 3, 7) and rejoicing over their victory (vv. 16-17), as Zion burns to the ground (vv. 3-4). The poet interweaves these (more or less) historical descriptions of brutality with figurative violence, especially of the theological variety. Beyond Jerusalem's human enemies, Yahweh himself becomes Zion's primary aggressor: cutting off Israel's horn (v. 3), preparing and firing his weapon against her (v. 4), killing those who dwell in Zion's home (v. 4), swallowing up her structures (v. 5), plotting the demolition of the city (v. 8, 17, 22), etc. The poem intensifies these accounts with first-person accounts of the resulting grief, whether from the witnesses (e.g., v. 13), Jerusalem's children (v. 12), or Zion herself (vv. 20-22). Most importantly, Lamentations 2 provides perhaps the most shocking image of suffering in the entire lyric sequence. On three separate occasions, we are told about the city's dying children (vv. 10-11, 19) and their mothers, who are forced by their own starvation to eat their infants (vv. 20, 22). With respect to what follows, the variety of violent content and the variations in its presentation afforded by the length of Lamentations 2 opens the door for more nuanced comparison with the Neo-Assyrian repertoire.

1.2.3.3. Why Ashurbanipal's Palace Reliefs?

The analysis that follows will provide several specific reasons for our interest in the Neo-Assyrian monumental reliefs for comparison with Lamentations. For now, it is important to note that these relief compositions represent the ideal intersection of variety, complexity, and temporal propinquity vis-à-vis the biblical material. First, as many have noted, the presentation of violence in the palace reliefs of the Neo-Assyrian kings is unprecedented in the Mesopotamian tradition. The sheer size of the relief program coupled with the royal exaltation of violence as an icon of the state resulted in the proliferation of wartime images across the spacious tableaus that decorated the many palaces constructed over a three-century period (9^{th}-7^{th} centuries B.C.E.). In this period, the royal artists used the reliefs to present complex portraits and narratives of "historical" war-campaigns and other feats of heroism—especially the royal hunt. The variety of the kinds of violence/suffering portrayed in this tradition is astounding, including images of bodily torture, besiegement, enslavement, weapon wounds, execution, decapitation, and so forth. The assortment of imagery, however gruesome, is conducive for finding points of comparison with the biblical poem.

Second, the Neo-Assyrian sculptors were not unreflective in their rendering of this violence but instead presented and arranged these scenes with a high degree of complexity. As the following analysis will show, it is the poetics of these compositions rather than the mere presence of detailed violence that captivates the viewers. By shifting perspectives, playing with narrative time, inserting captions, and incorporating the viewer into the rituals of the violence displayed, the artists craft images that exalt the imperial program with profound depth. Such features and others provide enticing comparands to the powerful presentation of violent imagery by the Lamentations poet.

Finally, the Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs—and those of Ashurbanipal in particular—represent Mesopotamian reflections upon violence at a time virtually contemporaneous with the writing of Lamentations. As discussed above, there is a rightful attention within biblical iconography to issues of temporal and geographic propinquity in the image-text relationship, and although Nineveh stands at quite a distance from Jerusalem, the selection of Ashurbanipal's reliefs (mid-7th century B.C.E.) places us within a century of the Lamentations poet (mid-6th century B.C.E.). The project may have no interest in arguing for any genetic relationship between two pieces, but the fact that the biblical poet and Neo-Assyrian artists are reflecting upon violence from opposing perspectives—victim and victor respectively—as near contemporaries enhances their juxtaposition. It transforms the comparison from something amusing into something more intuitive, and, as the following analysis will show, detailed observation of the poetics of violence in the ANE art reveals significant dimensions of the same in that of the biblical poetry.

CHAPTER 2

IMAGES OF VIOLENCE IN THIRD-PERSON PERSPECTIVE (LAMENTATIONS 2:1-10)

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter argued for the neurological and cognitive relationship between viewing visual images and imagining them in the mind as a means of grounding an extended comparison of the respective poetics of iconographic and textual imagery. As the cognitive data showed, the way an author may craft a given literary image has a tremendous influence on not only what the trope may mean for the broader work but also how the reader may (or may not) visualize or experience it. An analysis of the poetics of violence in Lamentations 2, therefore, must attend both to details of the component images themselves as well as their placement and interaction within the (poetics of) the entire poem. Consideration of how violence figures in the biblical poem will help to establish the primary points of comparison with Ashurbanipal's palace reliefs (to be discussed in chapters 4 and 5).

In what follows, I will exegete Lamentations 2 with specific attention to its violent imagery. Rather than cataloging various violent images or image types (demolished structures, mourning residents, warrior imagery, and so forth), I will analyze the poem in the order of its reading. While one might contend that this method lends itself to a gradual accumulation of (seemingly sporadic) insights, such "close reading" (as it were) is preferred to a more thematic approach, for if our primary interest is the "power" of the poem's image(ry)—rather than the mere identification of its tropes—much of discerning that effect resides not only in the noting the poem's image repertoire but also perceiving its arrangement both at the macro and micro level. Proper attention to such arrangement requires more than an analysis of a given motif's occurrences (e.g., the demolishing of Zion's

structures in vv. 2, 5-9, 18). One must also assess its variegations, its development, and, most importantly, its juxtaposition or blending with other images of the line, couplet, stanza, or total poem. Such image "combinations" are unique to each particular instance (even at the level of the line) and cannot be reduced to the sum of their individual pieces. Though a thematic approach can appropriate these concerns, following the contours of the poem's order privileges the *interaction* of the poetic phenomena—a key to discerning poetic function—over their *identification* without sacrificing the latter.

In order to assess the "power" of the poem's violence, the following discussion will examine four different aspects of its imagery. First, at a most basic level, any good exegesis must begin by identifying the meaning (or *selection*) of the images themselves (or "what" is there). As a result, where appropriate, much of the following analysis addresses the significance of certain motifs, metaphors, or phrases that remain obscure. These include *hapax legomena*, lineation discrepancies, corrupted readings, awkward phrases, and text critical adjudications. Second, in addition to addressing poetic content, the majority of the analysis will focus on the *presentation* of the images. This concern with "how" they are there will consider the effects of particular poetic devices, examining, for example, if the poet underscores the image through aural features, if the image invites multiple construals through its ambiguous placement, if it draws attention to itself through evocative word choice, if it invokes key traditions of the Hebrew Bible (whether for ironic, tragic, or terrifying effect), or if it appears through verbal or nominal means and to what end.

Third, as indicated above, what follows will also repeatedly point out the distinctive ways by which the violent images cohere with (and separate themselves from) one another throughout the

poem. Attention to such imagistic *combination* (a critical component of "how" violence figures) will consider a variety of features: (1) at the level of the line, we will consider how devices like alliteration, wordplay, parataxis, and enjambment connect otherwise disparate scenes; (2) at the level of the stanza, we will consider the arrangement of the (often contrasting) images across the stanza (both aurally and visually) and their evocation of one another through parallel syntax or repeated titles; and (3) at the level of the poem as a whole, we will consider the ways by which the poem constructs (and deconstructs) a larger tableau within which the variegated experiences of Zion's suffering appear together. This final aspect seeks to discern the thematic, semantic, lexical, and syntactical means by which the poem hangs together.

Finally, in rare cases, the analysis that follows considers particular instances in which the poem highlights its rhetorical purpose and provides the *justification* for its image repertoire. By "justification," I refer to more than the poem's broader attempts to evoke divine and human sympathy or provide articulation and form to Jerusalem's otherwise silent and formless grief. Many have noted these (and many other) insightful functions of the total Lamentations lyric sequence.[1] In many ways, the analysis below assumes these rhetorical purposes throughout, for these functions remain indispensable for the exploration of (and comparison with) the violent images of ANE art that follows. Concern with the poem's "justification" instead pinpoints implicit moments where the poem draws attention not to its imagistic content per se but to itself as truthful witness concerning what is seen or

[1] See, e.g., F. W Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations* (Louisville: WJK, 2002), 23–48; Iain W. Provan, *Lamentations*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 7–25; Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, SBT 14 (Chicago: A.R. Allenson, 1954); Adele Berlin, *Lamentations: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 17–36; Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation*, trans. Charles Muenchow (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 86–108; Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 3–16, 83–148.

to (the importance of) the faculty of seeing itself, especially the "seeing" of the poet's written world. Such self-justification enhances the truthfulness of the images written and thereby lends rhetorical power to their readerly reception. On the whole, the following analysis, where appropriate (depending upon the details of the given line, stanza, or section), will explore the power of the poem's violence through continual attention to the selection, presentation, combination, and justification for its images.

To facilitate the analysis, I have structured the analysis into two chapters, delimited according to the chapter's clear changes in poetic voice (vv. 1-10 and 11-22). The first section (vv. 1-10) features a third person account of Yahweh's destruction of Zion with special attention to the city's structural and cultic damages, in addition to the violence committed against her "precious ones" (v. 5). Midway through the poem, the poem shifts into first-person speech and an extended apostrophe to Zion (vv. 11-19), and with this change comes a dramatic change in imagistic content. Here, the poet fixates on the unconscionable loss of Zion's children (vv. 11-12, 18-19, 20, 22) and minimizes any prolonged attention to Jerusalem's structures and Yahweh's demolitionist activity that was predominant in vv. 1-10. Such a shift generates two complementary repertoires of figured violence useful for comparison with iconographic poetics.

2.2. TRANSLATION OF LAMENTATIONS 2:1-10[2]

(1) 1 How he has clouded in his anger,
2 the Lord to Daughter Zion.
3 He has cast from the heavens to earth

[2] The translation provided is my own. The verse numbers are indicated at the beginning of each stanza in parentheses, followed by the numbered lines. Pertinent text-critical and translational issues are addressed in the analysis below. The lineation follows that of *BHS*, unless otherwise noted.

4 the beauty of Israel.
5 And he did not remember the footstool of his feet,
6 on the day of his anger.

(2) 1 The Lord has devoured without mercy
2 all the settlements of Jacob.
3 He has torn down in his rage
4 the fortified cities of Daughter Judah.
5 He has cast to the earth—he has profaned—
6 the kingdom and her leaders.

(3) 1 He has cut off in the heat of his anger
2 every horn of Israel.
3 He has withdrawn his right hand
4 from before the enemy.
5 He has burned against Jacob like a flaming fire;
6 it consumes all around.

(4) 1 He has strung his bow like an enemy;
2 his right hand readied like a foe.
3 And he has killed all who delighted the eye.[3]
4 In the tent of Daughter Zion,
5 he has poured out like fire his wrath.

(5) 1 The Lord is like an enemy:
2 he has devoured Israel.
3 He has devoured all her palaces;
4 he has destroyed her strongholds.
5 He has multiplied in Daughter Judah
6 mourning and moaning.

(6) 1 He has torn down like a garden his booth;
2 he has destroyed his assembly place.
3 The LORD has caused to be forgotten in Zion

[3] The lineation of *BHS* proposes a six-line stanza here, like the majority of verses in the poem. Rather than concluding line 2 with "like a foe" (כצר), they introduce line 3 with this prepositional phrase. They arrange the first four lines as follows: דרך קשתו כאויב / נצב ימינו / כצר ויהרג / כל מחמדי עין ("He treads his bow like an enemy. / He readies his hand. / Like a foe (and) he killed / all those who delighted the eye."). We have opted for a five-line stanza because of several factors, including (1) the pointing of MT—the *zaqeph qaton*, placed over כצר indicates that the Masoretes understood the word to be the conclusion of the preceding clause—and (2) the *wayyiqṭōl* verb, which reads awkwardly after the prepositional phrase if the two words are understood to constitute a single line. See the discussion in the analysis below for further details.

4 assembly and Sabbath.
5 He has rejected in his cursed anger
6 king and priest.

(7) 1 The Lord has rejected his altar,
2 disowned his sanctuary.
3 He has delivered into the hand of the enemy
4 the walls of her palaces.
5 They made noise in the house of the LORD
6 as on the day of assembly.

(8) 1 The LORD had in mind to destroy
2 the walls of Daughter Zion.
3 He stretched out the measuring line, did not withdraw
4 his hand from devouring.
5 He has put rampart and wall in mourning;
6 together they languish.

(9) 1 In the earth her gates have sunk.
2 He destroyed, shattered her bars.
3 Her king and her princes are among the nations;
4 there is no law.
5 Even her prophets have not found
6 a vision from the LORD.

(10) 1 They sit on the earth; they are silent,
2 the elders of Daughter Zion.
3 They heap up dust upon their heads;
4 they wear sackcloth.
5 They bring their heads down to the ground,
6 the maidens of Jerusalem.

2.3. POETIC ANALYSIS OF LAMENTATIONS 2:1-10

In the poem's first extended section, the poet provides an extended account of Yahweh razing all aspects of Zion's life. The syntax is unmistakably marked by a paratactic sequence of 3ms verbs—a rapid succession of verbal images that work together to display the chaos inflicted by the Divine

Warrior against Zion's structures, institutions, and populace, even firing arrows into Zion's own home. According to Berlin, in this section, "We are, as it were, witnessing in slow motion the physical demolition of a city."[4] As we will see, these verses are marked by several distinctive motifs and means of presenting violence. These include the troping of violence as downward movement, the careful revelation of the divine body (part by part) across the stanzas, the complex characterization both of Zion (the victim) and divine wrath, the use of ambiguity to multiply violent imagery, the combination of violent moments through parallel syntax (thereby rendering them simultaneous), the selection of divine anger as the organizing trope upon which all disparate images hang, and the implicit identification between Daughter Zion and her people, institutions, and architecture. We will analyze the section in four distinct subsections, each of which emphasize four different attributes of God and their destructive consequences for Zion: Yahweh the enemy(-like) (vv. 1-5), the iconoclast (vv. 6-7), the demolitionist (vv. 8-9a), and the oppressor (vv. 9b-10).

2.3.1. Yahweh the Enemy(-like): Zion's Home Invaded (vv. 1-5)

The poem's first five verses open with a disturbing theological portrait that spotlight and explicitly liken Yahweh to a militaristic enemy. Like chapter 1, Lamentations 2 opens with a cry of disbelief, an almost formless shout that mimics pain's inarticulate experience. The screaming quality of the action is intensified by the poet's choice of the longer אֵיכָה over אֵיךְ—the second syllable of the former doubling the length of the word and prolonging the hearer's exposure to the screams. By beginning the poem in this way, the writer immediately immerses the reader not in a cognitive awareness of the

[4] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 67.

suffering's cause (Jerusalem's destruction) but rather in an auditory experience of the pain itself. The question introduced by the word ("how") then reveals how confounding the situation has become. The exclamation does not seek an answer as much as it names the experience of disbelief itself, for there are no rational means by which to make sense of its enormity.

The poetry augments the confusion of the pain in two primary ways. First, the first verbal image introduced by the poet complements the bafflement expressed by the opening cry. The first line reads, "How he has clouded in his anger." The verb יעיב, though a *hapax legomenon*, is likely a denominative from the more common עב ("cloud"), a noun that often appears in descriptions of Yahweh's terrifying theophanies throughout the Hebrew Bible (Exod 19:9; Judg 5:4; 2 Sam 22:12; Isa 19:1; Pss 18:12-13 [Eng 11-12]; 77:18 [17]; 104:3).[5] The poem has yet to identify the reason for the shriek that breaks the silence, but the choice to use יעיב subtly likens the experience to one of terror before the transcendent—the fear triggered by a sudden awareness of human powerlessness before Yahweh's authority.

Although the poem will later offer several specific descriptions of the violence that has provoked the initial interjection, it opens with a more ambiguous image that underscores suffering's obscurity. It isn't simply that the speaker finds himself in a darkening reality. Rather, the verbal form

[5] Reading יעיב as a denominative of עב not only agrees with the LXX ἐγνόφωσεν and Peshitta but also resonates with the larger poetic context and its use of ominous theophanic imagery. For proponents of this position, see, *inter alia*, NIV, NLT, ESV, KJV, NASB; HALOT 2:794; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 80; Ulrich Berges, *Klagelieder*, HTKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 124, 128, 134–35; Robert B. Salters, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Lamentations*, ICC (London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 109, 111–13; and Westermann, *Lamentations*, 141. Various other translations have been proposed. Some understand the word as related to the Arabic *ʿāba* ("to blame, revile") and translate the line, "How the Lord has disgraced Zion." See, e.g., NRSV and JPS. Others argue for a root **wʿb*, upon which *tōʿēḇā*(*h*), "abomination," is based. The *hiphil* verb would then be a denominative from *tōʿēḇā*(*h*) and carry a meaning of "to treat with contempt" or "to scorn." See Thomas F. McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations I," *Bib* 49 (1968): 34–35; Adele Berlin, *Lamentations,* 66–68; Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations*, AB 7b (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 35. For an more extensive list of supporters of all positions, see Salters, *Lamentations*, 112–13.

יעיב transforms the speaker's gloom from an unfortunate incident into an experience imposed from without. The confusion suffered by the poet, the shadowy world the poet's voice now inhabits, has a cause. By the second word of the poem, we understand the situation as one of perpetrator and victim. What's more, the first line draws out the mystery of the criminal's identity by revealing only one aspect of his character: his anger (or his nose). The first impression of the poem's major actor is a fragmentary one, as the reader is granted only a partial image of the offender's profile: before Yahweh is anything else, he is angry.

Second, the poem also underscores suffering's obscurity through enjambment across the first two lines.[6] As indicated above, the poem introduces action (darkening) prior to naming its subject and object such that the reader is thrown into disorienting movement before they are able to make out clearly the faces that surround them. We are left in the dark with the speaker, experiencing the disarray that evoked the איכה cry. Once the subject and object are revealed in the second line, the word order and selection work together to highlight the sufferer. The poet identifies the agent as "the Lord" (אדני), a title that, though clearly a designation of Israel's God, nevertheless accentuates the subject's political authority while keeping him nameless.

The victim, however, is explicitly disclosed to the reader with two titles. As "daughter," she is vulnerable, young, and helpless. As "Zion," she is identified as the place traditionally associated with Yahweh's dwelling and protection (e.g., Pss 2:6; 9:11; 14:7; 48; 50:2; 69:36 [35]; 74:2; 76:3 [2]; 78:68; 87:2, 5; 99:2; 102:17 [16]; 125:1; 128:5; 132:13; 135:21; 146:10). By naming the victim and concealing the subject, the poetry shines its light on the injured party, and the presence of the (redundant) *nota acccusativi*

[6] On enjambment in Lamentations more broadly, see Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Enjambing Line in Lamentations," 219–39; "The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations," 370–85.

את makes unmistakable the distinction between the offender and offended.[7] The poet isolates "the Lord" and "Daughter Zion" on a single line through enjambment and thus implies the close proximity of the injuring and injured parties, highlighting the intimacy of the violence. In this second line, the reader sees the basic grammar of the poem as a whole: "the Lord" (as subject) acts against "Daughter Zion" as stated object (identified by the את particle).

The third and fourth lines augment the description of the "the Lord's" actions in lines 1 and 2 by mirroring their structure. Just as line 1 features a *hiphil* verb followed by a prepositional phrase, line 3 opens with the *hiphil* perfect השליך —therefore omitting (but possibly assuming)[8] the opening exclamation איכה—and concludes with the phrase ארץ משמים. Line 4 both mimics line 2 by identifying the direct object with a two-word construct phrase (ישראל תפארת) but also diverges from the preceding line by leaving off the subject of the verb. These parallel, but slightly diverging structures, serve to overlay the distinct images upon one another in a manner that suggests not linear progression across the two lines (the Lord "clouds," then "casts") but rather simultaneous enactment (the Lord "clouds," that is, he "casts"). The "casting" image of lines 3 and 4 thus qualifies, complements, or even clarifies the "clouding" of lines 1 and 2.

Lines 3 and 4 enhance the opening two lines in two specific ways. First, the poem introduces a

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[7] The use of the particle את is especially striking here given its relative absence throughout the remainder of Lamentations—occurring only twice in Lamentations 2 (2:1-2) and five times in the book's other four chapters (1:9, 19; 3:2; 4:11; 5:1)—despite the frequent use of transitive verbs with definite direct objects throughout the book. On the general ellipsis of the marker of the definite direct object in biblical poetry more generally, see, *inter alia*, GKC §117a-b, who nevertheless note its more frequent appearance "in the late Psalms;" James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 89, n. 55; Ronald J. Williams and John C. Beckman, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 168. As a "weakened emphatic particle," its presence in Lamentations 2 serves to spotlight Daughter Zion as the object of the Lord's action. See Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 177–79.

[8] On the implied application of (initial) words/phrases across multiple lines, cf. Brent A. Strawn, "YHWH's Poesie: The *Gnadenformel* (Exodus 34:6b-7), the Book of Exodus, and Beyond," in *Biblical Poetry and the Art of Close Reading*, ed. J. Blake Couey and Elaine T. James (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2018), 237–56.

key movement repeated throughout the remainder of the poem: the descent from heights to depths or, as it is here, "from heaven to earth."[9] The forceful nature of the verb √שלך, often associated with ejection or throwing in order to harm/break (e.g., Gen 37:20, 22; Jer 38:6, 9; 2 Chr 25:12; Num 35:20, 22; Deut 9:17), adds an element of speed to the action, and the repeated "*š*" sound across line 3 aurally ties the verb and prepositional phrase into a singular image. The quick action implied by the verb, coupled with the use of enjambment (which delays the identification of the direct object until line 4), briefly confounds the reader, who must first hear the flinging action itself before being able to identify exactly what has been thrown. The "beauty of Israel" is set into blurring motion and cast down to the ground before it is named. Moreover, by exaggerating the spatial extent of Israel's downward movement ("from heaven to earth"), the poet casts Israel's suffering in cosmic terms, thereby indicating the cataclysmic nature of their experience. Finally, because Israel's "beauty" has been flung from the divine dwelling place itself, their suffering subsists not only in the length of the fall but also in their expulsion from God's presence.

Second, lines 3 and 4 supplement lines 1 and 2 by intensifying their clear focus on the victim. While line 2 contrasts the explicit naming of Zion with the nameless authority of "the Lord," the second bicola eliminates any mention of the divine actor whatsoever and characterizes him only by means of his violent actions. "Daughter Zion," however, receives an entirely new name ("Israel") and description ("beauty") that serves only to flesh out further the victim's broken identity, for in the same moment that the poet introduces תפארת ישראל, we witness its collision into the earth. The poetry reinforces Israel's broken state through the half rhyme of ארץ and תפארת across the lines. Their aural

[9] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 67.

and near visual identity inextricably tie the majesty of this once heaven-dwelling people to the very place of her ruin.[10]

Lines 5 and 6 of verse 1 signal the closing of the stanza in two ways: by breaking the syntactical pattern established in the first four lines and by focusing its descriptions on the divine actor. The line reads, "And he did not remember the footstool of his feet / on the day of his anger." Unlike the syntactic order of the preceding lines (verb + prepositional phrase + object), lines 5 and 6 begin with a *negated* verb and retain the direct object on the first line of the bicola. Although the lines are still enjambed, it is the prepositional phrase that is relegated to the second line rather than the object. This serves as a formal signal to the reader that the stanza is closing.

Also, although the lines focus their attention on the actor, they only refer to the divine person in indirect ways and therefore continue the stanza's trend of concealing its sole subject. Even "daughter Zion," who has received the most extensive attention in the first two bicola, is now defined not in terms of any new title or quality but in terms of her relationship to God as "the stool of his feet"—an image that epitomizes God's covenant presence in Jerusalem (1 Chr 28:2; Ps 99:5; 132:7) and thus indicts God for not remembering this obligation. By placing God's "feet" at the bottom of the stanza, the poem plays with the divine portrait on the page and mimics the content of which it speaks. Like the image of any human lord, God's אף (or "nose") in line 1 stands at the highest place on the page and his feet are relegated to the lowest space such that the divine body spans the entire stanza and even contains the "clouding" and "flinging" actions described therein. In verse 1, the writer

[10] On *melos* and *opsis* (or "babble and doodle")—sound patterning and visual patterning—as aspects of lyric poetry that help distinguish it as such (and their varying degrees of expression and complexity), see Northrop Frye, "'Theory of Genres' (1957)," in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 30–39; Jonathan D. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 244–58.

thus draws the reader's eyes down the page in a manner that surveys the divine body and mirrors Israel's tragic descent from heaven to earth.

The final line of verse 1 also continues the stanza's focus on the divine person(ality) and recalls the poem's first description of its actor in line 1: his anger. By bookending the verse in this way, the poet both reinforces "the Lord's" predominantly wrathful disposition and presents this anger as the summative emotion that permeates the entirety of not only this verse but also, given its placement in the first stanza, of the poem as a whole. In the eyes of the poet, it is rage that precedes all divine violence, guides its explosive execution, and lingers as the toxic atmosphere that daughter Zion now inhabits.

Verse 2 follows the tendencies of the previous verses—"the Lord" as the sole subject of violent action, contrast between the singular identity of the divine actor and multiple descriptors of the victim, and enjambment across all three bicola of the stanza—but escalates the violence by piling on 3ms perfect verbs (five total) and specifying the structural and political recipients of God's destruction. In lines 1 and 2, אדני is reintroduced as the subject, a title that both underscores authority without disclosing any name and contrasts the highly specified "Jacob"—yet another name for the sufferer—in line 2. In contrast to Yahweh, who remains hidden behind authoritarian titles, the reader is granted open access into the intimate (and vulnerable) identities of the victim. Here, the Lord has "devoured" or "swallowed" (בלע) Jacob's settlements—a verb that not only denotes complete annihilation (Isa 49:19; Hab 1:13; Ps 35:25; 2 Sam 20:19) but also highlights the destroyer's physicality (cf. the use of √בלע in the *Qal* stem to describe literal eating or swallowing: e.g., Isa 28:4; Hos 8:7; Jon 2:1; Job 7:19). The alliterated *l*-sounds across the line complement the "swallowing" reference by

drawing further attention to the tongue. In these ways, the poet directs us to the divine mouth, which consumes its prey as a vicious predator would: "without pity" or "mercilessly" (more woodenly, "he has not pitied").

The prey here are "all the settlements of Jacob (את כל נאות יעקב)." The poet again underscores the recipient of God's aggression by using the unnecessary direct object marker at the beginning of the line, and the reference to נאות יעקב broadens the portrait of Zion we have henceforth received. נוה often refers to the grazing places for livestock (e.g., 2 Sam 7:8; Isa 65:10) and serves as a common metaphor for human settlements characterized by peace and security (e.g., Isa 32:18; 33:20; 65:10), where Yahweh leads his people (Exod 15:13; Jer 33:12; 50:19; Ezek 25:5; 34:14). Rather than God providing and sustaining Jacob's secure dwellings, God acts as Israel's enemy (cf. Ps 79:7) and devastates "all" of their homes, thereby eliminating every safe place and leaving Jacob perpetually vulnerable to God's successive acts of violence.

The verbal onslaught continues in the final four lines of the stanza, as Yahweh tears down "in his anger the fortified cities of daughter Judah" and "casts to the earth" and "profanes the kingdom and her leaders." √הרס in line 3 often appears in contexts of judgment, where God "tears down" Israel's enemies (Exod 15:7), foreign nations (Ezek 26:4, 12; 30:4, Mal 1:4), the wicked (Ps 28:5; 58:7 [6]), and even Israel herself (Ezek 13:14; 16:39; Mic 5:11). Otherwise, the verb characterizes the destruction of invading armies against Israel (1 Kgs 18:30; 19:10, 14; Isa 14:17). Through this demolishing image, the poet implicitly continues the downward movement introduced in verse 1 and, given the energy required to bring down city walls, highlights the force exerted by Yahweh against Israel.

The line then draws out the verb's intensity with the addition of בעברתו ("in his rage"), another

word that elicits characteristic images of Yahweh's judgment in the prophets (e.g., Isa 13:9; 14:6; Hos 5:10; 13:11; Amos 1:11; Hab 3:8; Zeph 1:15). The mention of God's rage not only reaffirms the governing emotional tenor of the poem('s introduction) but also diversifies its portrait in a manner that almost hypostasizes the divine quality. Rather than presenting variegated identities for the divine person himself (much like the poet does for the victim), the poet instead expands our understanding of the Lord's anger specifically, such that for each new facet of Israel that suffers demolition (its beauty, settlements, or fortifications) there is a new description (or dimension) of Yahweh's rage that is revealed and poised to strike. Godly anger itself becomes a complex character that shifts and is evoked by Israel's own complexity in the poem. The poet subtly discloses this entangled connection between the specific qualities of Yahweh's anger and Israel alike through the near repetition of consonant sounds between *bĕʿeḇrāṯô* and *miḇṣĕrê ḇaṯ* across the lines.

The recipients of this anger are named in line 4: "the fortified cities of daughter Judah." With this multi-dimensional image (fortifications and settlements), the poet accomplishes a three things. First, the use of מבצרים—a reference specifically to walled towns or even fortresses that often serve as a refuge against besieging enemies (e.g., Num 32:17 Josh 10:20; Jer 4:5; Isa 25:12)—emphasizes Israel's structural and spatial dimension in a manner that complements the more metaphorical descriptions of the previous line (Israel's "beauty/majesty" or Israel as God's footstool). The poem zooms out from Jerusalem specifically to include the surrounding vassal villages within the reader's perspective. Verse 2 as a whole especially serves to construct Israel as a physical and inhabited settlement characterized

by "pastures" and "fortified towns" alike.[11] Second, the image simultaneously reuses and innovates upon a previous title. Just as "daughter Zion" served to humanize the Lord's victim, so "daughter Judah" reiterates this idea while also introducing a new name.[12] If "daughter Zion" is the target of God's anger (אף) in verse 1, Yahweh's rage (עברה) finds a new recipient in verse 2—namely, "daughter Judah." Finally, just as the מבצרים image highlights Judah's structural features, the complete designation "the fortified cities of daughter Judah" serves to draw together the personified city Judah with her fortified cities in a manner that enlivens the latter. As members of "daughter Judah," the fortresses themselves now take on her personality, and by expanding or specifying the daughter metaphor in this way, the poet prepares the reader for the full personification of the walls later in the chapter (v. 8).

In the final two lines of the stanza, God hurls the city's leadership "to the earth" in a manner reminiscent of lines 3 and 4 in verse 1. In line 5, √נגע in the *hiphil* has a literal meaning "to cause to touch" (e.g., Exod 4:25; 12:12; Isa 6:7 Jer 1:9) but can take on more forceful overtones, specifically when referring to tearing down city fortifications (e.g., Isa 25:12; 26:5; Ezek 13:14). The addition of לארץ again underscores Judah's downward movement and places the reader at ground level, leading her to see the city's walls and leaders touching the dirt. The paratactic חלל then reveals the meaning and result of God casting Zion to the turf—namely, their transference out of a holiness in which they once shared (Exod 19:6; 31:13; Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7-8, 26; 22:32; Deut 7:6 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9). Stripped of an

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[11] On the complementary nature of נאות and מבצרים as the rural and urban spaces of Jerusalem, see Berlin, *Lamentations*, 68.

[12] Cf. the Vulgate, which reads *virginis* (likely a translation of בתולת in place of בת) here. Both the Old Greek and Syriac, however, reflect "daughter" in MT, so there is no pressing need to emend. Also, by retaining MT, the initial reference to "Virgin" Zion is delayed to v. 13, where its introduction assists in heightening the speaker's exasperated address.

identity uniquely gifted to them by their Lord, Israel has plummeted from the heavens and now not only lies in the dust but also shares in its profane character. Shockingly, it is not Israel profaning themselves through their own disobedience but rather God, who assaults and diminishes God's own quality in Israel. What was first a violent attack is now understood to be a desecration. In the final line, where the target of God's defilement is identified, the poet litters the mind's eye with real human beings for the first time, for it is "the kingdom and its leaders" who suffer God's devastation and pollution.

Taken together, the verse as a whole offers the reader a series of verbal images and blends them together in striking ways. For example, the use of parallel syntax between the second and third bicola—3ms perfect verb + prepositional phrase + object—serves to connect the structural damage of lines 3 and 4 with the collapse of leadership in lines 4 and 5. As the walls implode upon one another, the city's princes simultaneously find themselves on the ground. Through this repeated syntax, the poet presents not a narrative progression of events (tearing down the fortified cities followed by casting down the kingdom and its leaders) but instead presents us with a rapid-fire slideshow of images that capture multiple vantage points of a singular devastation. The quick succession of 3ms verbs (in verse 2 especially)[13] bludgeons the reader with violent pictures that take shape in the mind's

[13] The poet's preference for 3ms verbs in verse 2 is evident in the lines 1 and 5 especially, where two 3ms verbs appear in succession and give the line an uneven feel. In these lines, the poet qualifies the governing verb of the bicola not with prepositional or construct phrases—two grammatical features otherwise regularly used throughout the poem's entirety—but with finite verbs (חמל לא and חלל in lines 1 and 5 respectively). The awkwardness of these lines has led to various emendations and re-interpretations. In line 1, for example, the *ketiv* of the Leningrad Codex and LXX lack any coordinating conjunction by which to connect בלע and חמל לא. The line thus reads: "The Lord consumed; he did not have compassion." Although not necessarily problematic, the *qere* of the Leningrad Codex in addition to other Masoretic manuscripts, the Syriac, Targumim, and Vulgate, all add the coordinating conjunction to smooth out the choppy syntax. As Schäfer notes (BHQ commentary), the asyndetic clause in MT is the *lectio difficilior* and is supported by the Old Greek.

In line 5, many argue for a different lineation to make sense of the verb's absolute occurrence. MT, for example, places the *athnach* under לארץ, which suggests that the Masoretes understood לארץ הגיע to be a continuation of יהודה בת

eye just as they are replaced by new snapshots. The images lack clarity and integrity, for the parataxis blurs them into and around one another. The poetry then transports the reader into the bewilderment of Jerusalem's besiegement and replicates the chaos of its collapse. The stanza's ambiguous lineation only exacerbates this confusion. Ought one interpret הגיע לארץ as a continuation of מבצרי בת יהודה or as the beginning of חלל ממלכה ושריה that follows? It becomes difficult to discern exactly what we see falling to the earth, whether cities, a kingdom, or the people, and the overlapping syntactical features facilitate the integration of the verbal images. What's more, the repetition of ארץ in line 5 connects back to verse 1 in a manner that brings the two stanzas together into a single chaotic moment.

Verse 3 introduces three new metaphors for God's destruction of Zion across the three respective bicola: cutting off Israel's horns, turning back his hand from before his enemies, and burning Israel like fire. The three successive verbal images unfold without reiterating their divine subject. First, the Lord "has cut off in the heat of his anger / every horn of Israel." The enjambed lines continue the pattern established in the first two stanzas, where the direct object is deferred until the second line of the couplet. Yet again, the poet draws attention to God's anger not only by stating its presence for a fourth time but also by using the redundant אף בחרי ("the burning of anger"). The use of חרי (√חרה, "to burn, be hot") further nuances the divine anger that drives the poem's opening verses

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מבצרי: "He has torn down in his anger. / The fortified cities of daughter Judah / he has thrown to the ground." In this reading, חלל would begin the final line of the stanza: "He profaned the kingdom and its princes." Much of the Versional evidence interprets the stichometry in this way, including Tg(s), Vulg., and LXX. For a defense of this position, see Salters, *Lamentations*, 109, 117–18. The vast majority of modern interpreters, however, understand הגיע to be the beginning of a new line and thus reckon with the interruptive חלל in one of three ways. (1) Some translate it adverbially (e.g., "in dishonor," as found in NRSV, NIV, and ESV). (2) Others retain the paratactic character of the line: "he brought down to the ground, profaned, / the kingdom and its rulers." See Berlin, *Lamentations*, 62; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 31. (3) Many, however, see חלל as the governing verb of line 6: e.g., "He thrust to the ground, he defiled the kingdom and its princes." see NASB, KJV, Westermann, *Lamentations*, 141, Berges, *Klagelieder*, 125. Given the paratactic quality of the total stanza and the poet's preference for stacking 3ms verbs upon one another in vv. 1-10 as a whole, I have opted for the second option, following the lineation of *BHS* and *BHQ*. The syntactical confusion, rather than reflecting a corrupted text, instead contributes to the chaos discussed in the stanza's content.

and prepares the reader for the conflagration that concludes the stanza. Rage alone brings God to hew down "every horn of Israel"—a common metaphor for sapping another's strength (cf. v. 17; Jer 48:25; Ps 75:11 [10]; Amos 3:14)—and Israel stands as God's helpless and hornless prey.

The third and fourth lines feature another unique image: God withdrawing God's hand from the enemy. The prepositional phrasing and verb is rather ambiguous. A more wooden translation might read as follows, "He has caused to turn back his right hand / from before an enemy." Among the four occasions where the verb שוב occurs in the *hiphil* stem together with אחור (Ps 44:11 [10]; Isa 44:25 Lam 1:13; 2:3), the phrase indicates a pushing backward or a forced reversal, with God as the only subject. God causes Israel to run from enemies in battle (Ps 44:11 [10]), turns Daughter Zion back by laying a snare for her feet (Lam 1:13), and reverses the status and knowledge of the wise (Isa 44:25). In our passage, the image is one of God "turning back" or "withdrawing" God's own right hand, assumingly from an extended position. Given that the "outstretched" arm or hand is traditionally associated with divine or military assault (e.g., Exod 15:12; Josh 8:26; Deut 4:34 et al; Jer 21:5),[14] the reversal of God's right hand before Israel's enemies indicates God's removal of military protection and lack of concern for Israel's enduring existence. The poetry even mimics this reality through

[14] On the violent meaning and tradition of the "outstretched arm" motif in the biblical materials with recourse to Egyptian and ANE iconography especially, see Brent A. Strawn, "'With a Strong Hand and an Outstretched Arms': On the Meaning(s) of the Exodus Tradition(s)," in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*, 103–16; idem, "Yahweh's Outstretched Arm Revisited Iconographically," in *Iconography and Biblical Studies: Proceedings of the Iconography Sessions at the Joint EABS/SBL Conference, 22-26 July 2007, Vienna, Austria*, ed. Izaak J. de Hulster and Rüdiger Schmitt, AOAT 361 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009), 163–211. Cf. Manfred Görg, "Der starke Arm Pharaos: Beobachtungen zum Belegspektrum einer Metapher in Palästina und Ägypten," in *Hommages à François Daumas*, ed. H. Altenmüller (Montpellier: Université de Montpellier, 1986), 1:323–30; J. J. M. Roberts, "The Hand of Yahweh," *VT* 21 (1971): 244–51; Karen Martens, "'With a Strong Hand and an Outstretched Arm': The Meaning of the Expression ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה," *SJOT* 15 (2001): 123–41. In light of Egyptian evidence from the New Kingdom period, Strawn draws attention to the life-giving dimensions of the "outstretched arm" motif (in addition to its themes of military power and violence). In this case, the withdrawing of Yahweh's "right hand" in Lamentations 2:3 not only leaves Israel vulnerable to military assault but also deprives Yahweh's people of their very life and sustenance.

enjambment, for the line break between ימינו and מפני "effectively mirrors what Yahweh's withdrawal of support brings about: the enemy are unencumbered and thus free to attack the city. Yahweh's hand is literally separated from the enemy by the pause at line-end."[15] Although, to this point, Israel has suffered solely because of the actions of their Lord, the poetry now indicates a working relationship between Israel's God and their military enemies, for it is God's destructive actions that authorize and animate Israel's invaders. Moreover, when taken together with the poem's previous references to Yahweh's face, feet, and mouth, the passage's focus on Yahweh's "right hand" here serves to flesh out the aggressor's portrait even more, as if the camera creeps across the divine body, revealing new physical features only as they are exercised against Israel.

The stanza's final lines make explicit the flames that were only implicit in God's "burning" anger in line 1. The couplet reads, "He has burned against Jacob like a flaming fire; / it consumes all around." While בער in the *Qal* stem commonly describes the kindling of divine fire or wrath against Israel (Num 11:1, 3; Ps 79:5; 89:47 [46]; Isa 42:25; Jer 4:4; 7:20; 21:12; 44:6), the wicked (Ps 106:18; Mal 4:1), or the nations (Isa 30:27; Ps 2:12), lines 5 and 6 of this stanza neglect to hypostasize God's anger as a distinctly burning feature of the divine personality. Instead, as indicated by third masculine singular ויבער and the clear divine subject of the poem's preceding masculine singular verbs, the *Lord himself* burns against Jacob such that there is now a complete identity between Yahweh's wrath and Yahweh's person. The burning of the former is not a distinguishable component of the divine personality but instead the sole and indivisible quality. The poetry then intensifies God's blazing actions through superfluous qualifying phrases: Yahweh burns like "flaming fire" (להבה אש), which consumes "all

[15] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Effects of Enjambment," 385.

around." The word positioning across the line even underscores the inescapable blaze, as the Jacob reference (ביעקב) sits hemmed in between God's burning action (ויבער) and the "flaming fire" (להבה אשׁ) it imitates. Thus, the stanza as a whole flashes three new metaphors for God's violence, each of them underscoring different dimensions of Israel's suffering: her loss of strength, her vulnerability to enemies, and her captivity to God's consuming wrath.

Having introduced Israel's adversaries in verse 3, verse 4 then expands upon this idea as a key metaphor for God's activity. As the third line of the stanza makes clear, God is "like an enemy." Despite the textual difficulties of the first two couplets,[16] the poem's focus on the divine body and

[16] The two primary problems of the text pertain to the subject of נצב in line 2 of the stanza and the awkward word order of line 3: כצר ויהרג. With respect to the former, one would assume that ימינו would serve as the subject of נצב, but ימין is grammatically feminine and נצב is a masculine *niphal* participle. Many of the versions resolve the issue by interpreting the verb transitively, thus making Yahweh its subject and ימינו its object: e.g., ἐστερέωσεν ("he strengthened") in LXX and *firmavit* ("he established") in Vulg. As it is pointed in MT, however, נצב remains intransitive, despite many who translate the verb transitively (see, e.g., JPS, NASB, and Berlin, *Lamentations*, 62).Cf. Lam 3:12, where √נצב appears (with √דרך) in the context of archery but appears in the *hiphil* stem and describes stationing the speaker as a target. Proposed emendations to the line are legion and need not be recited here. For a helpful summary, see Salters, *Lamentations*, 123–25. In an effort to retain the reading in MT, one can either interpret ימינו as an adverbial accusative, with God as the subject of the participle ("He stands ready with his right hand"), or one can assume that ימינו is understood to be a masculine noun here. Cf. Exod 15:6, where ימין appears to be the subject of both the masculine *niphal* participle נאדרי and the feminine, imperfect verb תרעץ in the two lines of the verse. For proponents of the adverbial accusative reading, see KJV and Bertil Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, Studia Theologica Lundensia 21 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963), 91; Johan Renkema, *Lamentations*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 230. For proponents of understanding ימין as a masculine noun, see NRSV, NIV, ESV, CEB; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Klagelieder* (*Threni*), 2nd ed., BKAT 20 (Neukirchen: Neukirchner Verlag, 1960), 37; Salters, *Lamentations*, 123. Cf. Berges, *Klagelieder*, 126, 139.

The other presenting problem of the passage pertains to the ambiguous lineation. Does כצר conclude the preceding clause (נצב ימינו) or does it begin a new line (cf. *BHS*, *BHQ*)? The former interpretation is appealing because it allows for a close parallel structure between lines 1 and 2: דרך קשתו כאויב / נצב ימינו כצר ("He bends his bow like an enemy. / His right hand stands ready like an adversary."). At the same time, this leaves line 3 of the stanza with only one remaining word (ויהרג), unless the word is combined with what follows (כל מחמדי עין) into a single line, thereby reducing the stanza to five lines only. For proponents of this interpretation, see, e.g., ESV, CEB, KJV, NASB; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 62. Cf. Berges, *Klagelieder*, 125. If one understands כצר as the beginning of a new line, however, one is left to make sense an awkward third line: כצר ויהרג ("like an adversary and he kills"). Many resolve this issue by transposing the words or eliminating the conjunction in the translation: NIV; *BHS*; *BHK*; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 37. It's likely that the Masoretes also recognized the interpretive difficulty here, as seen in double use of *zakeph qaton* over both כצר and ויהרג. Renkema interestingly understands line 3 as doubly enjambed, with the clause continuing from line 2 and then concluding in line 4 (*Lamentations*, 232). On the numerous emendations that have also been proposed, see Salters, *Lamentations*, 124–25; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 37; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 144. I am inclined to follow those who understand כצר as the

warfare is unmistakable. In addition to the sword that Yahweh presumably uses to hew down Israel's horn in v. 3, God brandishes a bow in verse 4 and wields it against Israel to kill. The images unfold in an almost narrative fashion. First, God "treads" (√דרך) his bow—a common idiom for stringing the bow prior to battle (Isa 5:28; 21:15; Jer 46:9; 50:14, 29; 51:3; Zech 9:13; Ps 7:13 [12]; 11:2; 37:14; Lam 3:12; 1 Chr 8:40; 2 Chr 14:7).[17] While many of the verbs in the previous verses focused on the divine hands, the use of דרך shifts the focus to God's lower body, as Yahweh bends the bow under his feet in order to fashion the string to it. Through this image, the reader catches a glimpse into Yahweh's preparation for battle, and like the violence Israel suffers from her enemies, Yahweh's killing is premeditated. Second, the poet highlights God's "right hand" upon the bow. The verb נצב in the *niphal* stem can frequently describe positioning oneself in preparation for action or standing at the ready (e.g., Num 22:23, 31; Judg 18:16ff; Prov 8:2; 1 Sam 22:6; Isa 3:13), and its use with reference to Yahweh's right hand is evocative of many possible images: pulling an arrow, placing it upon the string, drawing the bow, or firing the arrow. Rather than focusing the language on the specifics of weaponry mechanics, the poet instead draws attention to Yahweh's physical features and implies its immediacy through the participial verb form. The reader is left to fill out the details of the multiple actions God's right hand performs upon the bow solely on the basis of the repeated similes across the lines: God is "like an enemy" and "like a foe." The fragmented outline of God's body and God's archery is filled out with the

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conclusion to line 2 and subsequently combine lines 3 and 4 into a single line, although a doubly enjambed third line cannot be ruled out, given the prominence of enjambment throughout Lamentations.

[17] On the meaning of דרך קשת, see John A Emerton, "Treading the Bow," *VT* 53 (2003): 465–86. Emerton reviews modern translations, the history of modern scholarship, Versional evidence, Classical sources, Egyptian and ancient Near Eastern iconography, rabbinic texts, and medieval translations in order to demonstrate the various understandings of the idiom. He distills the debate into two major positions: those who understand דרך קשת as a reference to drawing the (long) bow (by placing one's foot at base of the weapon to steady it) and those who interpret the phrase as a reference to stringing the bow prior to battle (by using one's foot or knee to bend the wood piece into place). Despite the popularity of the former throughout ancient and modern translations, he convincingly argues for the latter interpretation based on the biblical evidence.

image of Israel's military oppressors, such that the actions of both are indistinguishable. The God who had previously removed the "right hand" of protection to allow enemy invasions now readies that same hand in hostility against Israel.

The miniature narrative that spans the first two images of the stanza—stringing the bow, readying the hand—is completed with a third image of Yahweh killing "all in whom we took pride" (NRSV). A more wooden translation of the phrase might read, "And he has killed all the desirable things of the eye (כל מחמדי עין)." Although מחמד most often refers to valuable items (Isa 64:10; Joel 3:5; 2 Chr 36:19; Hos 9:6) or places (Ezek 24:21, 25), its meaning can also by extension include precious or beloved human beings, like a spouse (Song 5:16; Ezek 24:16) or child (Hos 9:16). The poet seizes on the ambiguity of the word to suggest that God has collectively murdered everything that holds weight in Israel's world: temple, economic (and cultic) valuables, and the lives of women and children (cf. the typically human or animal objects of הרג in the Hebrew Bible). By presenting the human victims not in terms of their gender, age, or societal function but solely in terms of their beheld value ("precious ones of the eye"), the poet underscores the emotional severity of the loss and leads the reader to see through the "eyes" of the bereaved—those who stood watching as Yahweh gunned down their wives and children. "All" things held precious—everything destroyed thus far by Yahweh's rage (from Jerusalem's settlements to its leaders)—now lie pierced with heaven's arrows.

The fourth line of the verse then names the place where this violence takes place: "in the tent of Daughter Zion." While the repetition of Daughter Zion further nuances the human face of Yahweh's victims (implicit in מחמדי עין), the אהל reference recalls domestic, militaristic, and even cultic settings, given that the word commonly denotes human residences (Gen 18:1; 31:33; Judg 4:17; 6:5; 1 Sam 4:10;

13:2; 2 Sam 16:22; 18:17; 2 Kgs 14:12; Isa 54:2), military encampments (Jer 37:10; Zech 12:7), and Yahweh's dwelling (Exod 28:43; Num 9:15; 1 Kgs 1:39; 2:28; 1 Chr 15:1). In light of this setting, God's onslaught is not only a public phenomenon, battling Israel's fighters in formal warfare, but also "*within*" or *"against*" the tent of Daughter Zion. As a result, God enters into the most private places of Israelite life and commits domestic violence against the *daughter*(*s*) of Israelite homes, even when those dwellings belong to Yahweh himself.

The stanza then concludes with a return to the theme of God's fiery rage. The final line reads, "He has poured like fire his rage." Though "pouring out rage" (שפך חמה) is a common metaphor for God's wrathful punishment in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 42:25; Jer 6:11; 10:25; Ezek 7:8; 9:8; 14:19; 16:38; 20:8; 20:13ff; 22:22; 36:18; 79:6; cf. Zeph 3:8; Ps 69:25 [24]), Lamentations 2:4 and 4:11 are the only places where the expression occurs with "fire" (אש) as a descriptor. By likening God's anger to fire, the poet not only draws out the heat already implicit in God's "rage" (חמה) but also ties back to God's blazing destruction in verse 3. Moreover, the use of חמה provides yet another unique descriptor of divine anger, thereby increasing the complexity and multiplicity of this driving emotional tenor.

Beyond the meaning of these lines, however, it is important to note the way that באהל בת ציון serves as bridge between the stanza's two defining images (Yahweh's archery and Yahweh's rage). On the surface, it is difficult to discern if the prepositional phrase sets the background for Yahweh's killing (in the preceding line) or the pouring out of his wrath (in the line that follows). Despite the arguments for both interpretations,[18] one could understand the line as a case of *janus parallelism*,[19] wherein the

[18] For those who translate באהל בת ציון as the completion of the preceding clause, see, e.g., LXX, NRSV, ESV, KJV. For those who translate באהל בת ציון with what follows (with many transposing the two lines), see NIV, NASB, JPS, *BHS*, Berlin, *Lamentations*, 62; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 141; Hillers, *Lamentations,* 31; Salters, *Lamentations*, 125; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 125.

prepositional phrase introduces the setting for both Yahweh's military assault and Yahweh's burning anger. The stanza as whole could then be presented as follows:

> [4] He has strung his bow like an enemy;
> his right hand readied like a foe.
> And he has killed all who delighted the eye.
> In the tent of Daughter Zion,
> he has poured out like fire his wrath.

In this case, because Daughter Zion's tent serves as the tragic location both for Yahweh's bow attack and wrathful outpouring, the two actions are drawn together into a single experience, such that Yahweh's killing serves as the means of God's wrath and God's wrath is concretized in the divine warrior's activity. In this way, the two images are juxtaposed or superimposed upon one another and mutually inform their respective meanings. Within Daughter Zion's tent, Yahweh simultaneously fires arrows, killing what is precious, and pours forth fiery rage, and the distinct details of one image blur into the details of the other. Through Yahweh's anger, God's killing arrows become flaming darts that pour forth ceaselessly like flowing waters (cf. the ongoing action implied by the participial נצב), and Daughter Zion's home and her inhabitants burn to the ground.[20]

In many respects, verse 5 serves as a summary of verses 1-4 both by repeating key ideas from the preceding material and by stating in rather straightforward terms the effect of God's actions—namely, "moaning and mourning" (תאניה ואניה). Over against the prominent use of enjambment in the previous four verses, only lines 5 and 6 of verse 5 feature this device, and the resulting staccato effect

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[19] On janus parallelism, see C. H. Gordon, "New Directions," *BASP* 15 (1978): 59–66; Wilfred G. E Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOTSup 26 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 159; Scott B. Noegel, *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job*, JSOTSup 223 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 11–38.

[20] See also Renkema, *Lamentations*, 234–35, who notes the combination of these water and fire images in theophanic moments of the HB: "Within the genre of theophany, the combination of storm, light[n]ing, fire, rain etcetera. [sic] is not unusual." The Peshitta lacks the preposition altogether. See further Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 93.

generated by the quick succession of 3ms verbs (five total) is unmistakable.

The first two lines straightforwardly state the implication of the previous four verses "the Lord is like an enemy." The poet reintroduces אדני as the subject from vv. 1-2, as if the reader feels mistaken in attributing these actions to Israel's sovereign and now needs sober confirmation that the actor is indeed God. The clear articulation of the simile transforms Yahweh's historical actions into an identity, the implication being that Yahweh's destruction has no foreseeable end. Yahweh not only has acted (or "was") like an enemy but still "*is*" this way, and as such, he continually relates to Israel in this hostile manner. In the poet's estimation, Yahweh's violence is not an aberration but has a personal quality, and the only window of hope lies in the poet's choice of simile over metaphor. By adding a single prepositional prefix (כאויב), the poet distances Yahweh, however slightly, from the enemy designation. The comparison implies that, though Yahweh indeed "is like" Israel's adversaries, their Lord cannot be completely subsumed into this category. There is hope that other identities, other modes of behavior, other governing emotions might emerge in the tiny space between אדני and אויב, held apart by a singular letter.[21]

After establishing this adversarial identity, the stanza's remaining five lines demonstrate its reality through four successive actions of violence: the Lord has "swallowed up" (בלע) Israel, "swallowed up" (בלע) all her palaces, "destroyed" (שחת) her strongholds, and "multiplied" (וירב) mourning and moaning. The sweeping character of the first action in the stanza's second line—swallowing up "Israel" as a whole—prepares the reader for the more specific destruction that follows.

[21] Cf. Robert Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations* (New York: Ktav, 1974), 162, who argues that the *kaph*-preposition in v. 5 is asseverative rather than comparative and translates the line, "The Lord has indeed become the enemy." Though possible, this translation seems unlikely in light of the more common use of the preposition's comparative meaning in the Hebrew Bible and the assumed reluctance on the part of the poet to liken, much less emphasize, Yahweh's inimical behavior.

The use of בלע recalls the activity in v. 2, where Yahweh mercilessly consumes Jacob's dwellings. Here, there is nothing of Israel that the Lord does not devour. As a people engulfed by God, Israel is without escape from Yahweh's enemy-like presence.

The fifth stanza's remaining four lines then detail the physical structures God has destroyed. Line 3 repeats בלע from the preceding line but introduces a new subject: ארמנות, the fortified residences of the Israel's elite (cf. 1 Kgs 16:18; 2 Kgs 15:25). Through the repeated verb across lines 3 and 4, the poet ties Israel and her physical structures into a singular identity. Yahweh consuming Israel is coterminous with and ultimately witnessed in Yahweh consuming "all" her palaces. Line 4 expands this idea further, as Yahweh moves beyond royal residences to destroy (שחת) Israel's "fortified towns" (מבצריו)—an echo of v. 2. The parallel syntax and *piel* verbs across lines 3 and 4 again bring the two distinct actions into a singular demolition experience.

The final two lines dramatize the scene by introducing tragic theological irony. The couplet reads, "And he has multiplied in Daughter Judah mourning and moaning." The shift away from the 3ms perfect verbs used in the previous lines to the waw-consecutive imperfect וירב signals the stanza's end, and the specific use of √רבה in the *hiphil* stem concludes the stanza on an ironic note. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, √רבה (*hiphil*) figures prominently in God's promise to multiply human offspring, whether of Abraham (Gen 17:2; 22:17; Josh 24:3; Isa 51:2; cf. Exod 32:13), Hagar (Gen 16:10), Ishmael (Gen 17:20), Isaac (Gen 26:4, 24), or Jacob (Gen 28:3; 48:4). The verb even describes God's action in multiplying the nation of Israel as a whole (Deut 1:10; 7:13; 13:17; 28:63; 30:5; Isa 9:3; Neh 9:23). In Lam 2:5, however, Yahweh no longer makes Israel's offspring numerous—thereby, granting them a hopeful future—but rather massacres their children (2:11-12, 19-21), thus eliminating Israel's future and

multiplying their wordless groaning. The reference to "Daughter Judah" only intensifies this irony. The poet chooses to identify Israel not with the more frequently attested "Zion" (cf. 2:1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 18), a name that does not appear in the patriarchal narratives, but with Judah (cf. 2:2), a living fulfillment of God's promise to "multiply" Jacob (Gen 28:3; 48:4). Even if the poet lacks explicit knowledge of these narrative traditions, the reference to Judah, however fortuitous for the poem's eventual canonical context, recasts the divine character with grim irony. In a stunning reversal, Yahweh, rather than promising the birth of Judah's daughters, instead increases lamentation *within* or *against* Daughter Judah herself.

The final two lines also serves to immerse the reader in the auditory experience of Jerusalem's suffering. The play between *ta'ănîyyā*(*h*) and *wa'ănîyyā*(*h*) replicates the way in which the agony is compounded upon itself. The redundancy of the phrase—"mourning *and* moaning," even if hendiadic—reveals how excessive, how uncalled for, the pain has become,[22] and the near identity of the two words mimics suffering's ceaseless recurrence. With a one-letter difference between them, תאניה and אניה reflect the way in which Zion's pain simultaneously replicates and redefines itself from moment to moment—suffering's insipidity and its innovation, Yahweh's bludgeoning of old wounds and the opening of new ones.

What's more, the phrase's isolated appearance on the stanza's final line points not only to suffering's loneliness but its totality as well. Through the half-meaning of the line, groaning has become an experience unto itself, a reality removed from any meaningful action in the lines that

[22] As Gottwald notes with respect to chapters 3-5, there is a sense in Lamentations that "Judah has both sinned and been sinned against" ("Lamentations," in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed. James L. Mays [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988], 650). Though the former idea is altogether absent in the second chapter's opening stanzas (cf. the mention of prophetic responsibilities in v. 14), the poet highlights the latter through the repetition of divine violence.

precede or follow. Through the repeated *a*-class vowels across the phrase, the poet brings the reader into Israel's cries, the sounds reminding the ear of the victims' open-mouthed moans. By locating such mourning "within Daughter Judah" (line 5), the poet incorporates all aspects of her identity in this grieving display: in addition to the cries of the wails of the Daughter Zion (cf. v. 7), the reader hears the cries of the people she represents *and* the palaces and strongholds destroyed in the preceding lines. תאניה and אניה is the collective reality of the entire Judahite society.

2.3.2. Yahweh the Iconoclast: Zion's Temple Nullified (vv. 6-7)

After the tragic summary posed by v. 5, the poem shifts in vv. 6-10 to consider Yahweh's devastation of Israel's cultic and political life. The stanza opens with an enigmatic clause open to many different interpretations: ויחמס כגן שכו ("He has stripped like a garden his dwelling").[23] Working from the MT as it stands, there are three interrelated issues of the verse, each of which will be addressed in turn: (1) the meaning of √חמס, (2) the meaning of the *hapax* שך, and (3) the significance of the simile כגן. First, the poet continues to heap up the vocabulary of God's violence through the introduction of √חמס, a verb associated with sexual assault (Jer 13:22), oppressing the vulnerable (Jer 22:3), violating the law (Ezek 22:26; Zeph 3:4), and stripping a plant bear (Job 15:33). "Only here in the Old Testament is the verb predicated of God, underscoring the severity of the catastrophe."[24] Given the verb's rather broad semantic range, its nuanced meaning can only be discerned in light of its object שכו.

[23] As Westermann skeptically summarizes, "The initial words of the verse are not intelligible as they stand; the translation can be little more than a surmise" (*Lamentations*, 144).

[24] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 85.

Second, for those who accept MT's reading,[25] שך, a *hapax legomenon*, is understood either as a substantive from the root √שוך, a by-form of I √סכך/ √ שכך ("to hedge, fence about"), with a meaning of "enclosure" (cf. *משוכה and *מסוכה as "thorn-hedge" in Isa 5:5 and Mic 7:4, respectively) or from III √שכך / √סכך ("to cover") and thus a derivative spelling of the more common סך or סכה ("thicket, hut, refuge").[26] As Berlin has shown, the latter reading, which the majority of interpreters uphold,[27] plays upon multiple senses of the word. The related סך and סכה often denote temporary shelters in gardens or fields (Job 27:18; Isa 1:8; Lev 23:43; 1 Kgs 20:12, 16), which can provide a refuge from the elements (Isa 4:6; Jon 4:5). Due to their association with protection, סך and סכה also serve as metaphors for God's presence (Isa 4:6; Ps 31:21 [20]), especially the temple (Ps 27:5; 72:3 [2]; cf. 2 Sam 11:11).

In v. 6, the line plays with both the inherently fragile (and temporary) quality of these shelters, as well as their cultic and/or divine associations. As Berlin summarizes, "[T]he temple, the place of protection, is here demolished as easily as one could demolish a garden hut."[28] There are even resonances of Israel's cultic celebrations in the poet's choice of שך, given the frequent use of סכה to designate the "festival of booths" (Lev 23:33-36, 39-43; Deut 16:13, 16; 31:10; Zech 14:16-19; Ezra 3:4; 2 Chr 8:13; Neh 8:15-17) and the parallel appearance of מועד ("assembly") in the following line. As a result, the poet's choice of שך serves as a semantic bridge between the focus on Israel's sustained structural

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[25] A variety of emendations have been proposed for the line. See especially, McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations I," 36-38.

[26] *HALOT* 3:1326. Cf. BDB 697, 968, who offer the same meaning for שך/סך ("booth, pavilion") but offer II √שכך or √סכך ("to weave") as the root rather than III √סכך ("to cover"). Cf. McDaniel, who connects שך with שוך ("branch"), also found in Judg 9:49. See ibid., 36–38, as followed by Iain W. Provan, "Feasts, Booths and Gardens (Thr 2,6a)," *ZAW* 102 (1990): 255.

[27] See, e.g., NRSV, NIV, CEB, ESV, JPS, CEB, BDB, 968; *HALOT* 3:1326; Salters, *Lamentations*, 30–31; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 69–70; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 144; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 85; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 141. The Versional evidence also supports this reading: σκήνωμα (LXX); *tentorium* (Vulg.). Cf. טלל בית מקדשיה (Targum), which draws out the cultic implications of שך discussed above.

[28] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 69.

damage in the previous stanzas (שך as "dwelling") and the emphasis on Israel's cultic and political losses in the following stanzas (שך as "temple" or "festival"). God's unbridled rage is no longer directed solely at Israel but spills over to consume God's own dwelling. Divine violence takes on a self-destructive character.

Third, the poet supplements the image of the dismantled שך with the somewhat obscure simile כגן,[29] which has garnered a variety of interpretations. To what quality of a "garden," does the poet liken God's destruction of his shelter? Three nuances of the images are worth considering. First, according to many, the phrase serves a reference to the *location* of the shelter's destruction (e.g., "as *in* a garden").[30] This translation both fills out the line's image by naming the expected setting of these garden shelters and highlights the ease with which God dismantles God's own home. Second, the simile might also indicate the *result* of God's actions rather than the place of the action itself: "He has treated his dwelling so violently *that it has become a garden*,"[31] where "garden" represents a field without human habitation. Though גן is more commonly used as a metaphor of nourishment and life over against a desert or wasteland (e.g., Isa 51:3; Isa 58:11; Jer 31:12; Song 4:12, 15), Micah uses related vocabulary to speak of transforming Samaria into a place for planting a vineyard (כרם in 1:6) and

[29] Cf. LXX ὡς ἄμπελον ("as a vine"). This reading has led some to emend כגן in MT to כגפן. See, *inter alia*, the critical apparatus of *BHS*; *BHK*; McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations I," 37. The LXX reading as a whole, though itself obscure, seems to interpret God's action in terms of pruning away dead branches: Καὶ διεπέτασεν ὡς ἄμπελον τὸ σκήνωμα αὐτοῦ ("and he spread out as a vine his tabernacle"). For a defense of the LXX reading, see Provan, *Lamentations*, 64–65; idem, "Feasts, Booths and Gardens," 254–55. Provan points specifically to Job 15:33, the only other HB text that features √חמס and גפן together with an almost identical syntax to Lam 2:6: בסרו כגפן יחמס ("he will shake off like a vine his unripe grapes"). In the Job example, the vine takes violent action against itself by stripping off its own fruit prematurely, much like God damages God's own dwelling in Lam 2:6. Provan, following LXX, thus proposes the following translation: "He has cut off, like a vine, his branch." Schäfer (*BHQ*), however, accounts for the LXX reading not with an appeal to Job 15:33—a text, whose translation in LXX bears no similarity to that of Lam 2:6—but to Isa 1:8 and 5:5. The translation is therefore a loose rendering of MT as a means of evoking this prophetic tradition. Regardless, the simile in MT ("like a booth") works semantically well enough to avoid a need for emendation.

[30] See, e.g., Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 85; Salters, *Lamentations*, 110, 131; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 131; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 125.

[31] Provan, "Feasts, Booths and Gardens (Thr 2,6a)," 254 (emphasis mine).

plowing Zion like a field (שדה in 3:12). The "Song of the Vineyard" (Isa 5:1-7) also suggests that destructive activity is in fact a part of gardening. It's thus not entirely outside the realm of possibility for "garden" to connote the aftermath of divine judgment.

Third, as Berlin has noted, the simile may also take on a cosmic significance in light of the frequent use of גן to describe the divine garden (or Eden) throughout the Hebrew Bible (Gen 2:8-10 et al.; Gen 13:10; Ezek 28:13; 31:8-9; 36:35; Joel 2:3). She cites Gen 13:10 specifically, which makes mention of God "destroying" (√שחת) Sodom and Gomorrah, which were "like the garden of the LORD" (יהוה כגן). Conversely, Isa 51:3 discusses God transforming Israel's wilderness into Eden and Israel's deserts into "the garden of the LORD," a place characterized by "thanksgiving and the sound of music." In light of these texts, where "the garden of the LORD" has strong associations with the Israelite cult and God's punishment of Sodom, the "garden" simile in v. 6 takes on a near-mythic meaning: "The implication is that the destructive force used against the temple is like the force used against Sodom, and that the loss of the temple is the loss of the mythical center of the cosmos (Eden) that the temple represents."[32] In summary, the subtle reference to כגן coupled with שך simultaneously highlights the fragility (and temporality) of Yahweh's abode (now destroyed by God's own hand), its transformation into an uninhabited place, and the felt loss of God's refuge, a once Eden-like paradise revoked by divine violence.

The second line of the stanza then affirms Yahweh's destruction of his own cult site and festivals: מועדו שחת ("he has destroyed his meeting place"). Through repeated vocabulary and parallel structures, the meaning of מועד is refracted into multiple possible referents. Throughout the Hebrew

[32] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 70.

Bible, מועד commonly designates both an appointed place (e.g., Josh 8:14; Job 30:23), especially the "tent of meeting" that houses God's presence (e.g., Exod 27:21; Lev 1:1; Num 1:1; cf. Ps 74:8), or an appointed time (e.g., Gen 17:21; 18:14; 1 Sam 9:24; 13:8; 2 Sam 20:5), including Israel's sacred seasons and festivals (e.g., Exod 13:10; 23:15; Lev 23:2, 4; Isa 1:14; Ezek 36:38; Hos 2:13). Multiple poetic features elicit the locative sense of מועד here: the use of שך with a 3ms suffix (like מועדו) in the preceding line, the parallel syntax between the first two lines of v. 6 (likening God's "dwelling" to God's "appointed place"), the particular emphasis on Israel's infrastructure in the final two couplets of v. 5, and the repetition of שחת in the *piel* stem from v. 5, a verb first featured to describe the Lord's destruction of Israel's strongholds.

At the same time, much like the multiple sense of שך served as a bridge between the structural focus of v. 5 and the cultic themes in v. 6 (שך as both "dwelling" and evocative of the "festival of booths"), מועד also prepares the reader for the discussion of holy times and places in the following lines. In fact, line 4 of v. 6 and line 6 of v. 7 repeat מועד but highlight its temporal meaning by pairing the word with שבת ("Sabbath") and יום respectively. The מועדו reference thus functions as a hinge between two important dimensions of Zion's worship. Yahweh has destroyed Israel's appointed places *and* festivals, the perennial markers of space and time originally appointed by Yahweh himself.

In this light, the second line of v. 6 significantly intensifies the shock induced by God's destroyed dwelling place introduced in the stanza's first line. Over against the more generic מועד, שך has specific ties to the tabernacle traditions predominant throughout the Pentateuch, a period characterized by God's accessibility, mobile leadership, and intimacy with Israel. Just as v. 5 invoked (and in some sense, revoked) God's promise to the patriarchs through the use of √רבה, so v. 6

hearkens back to the beginning of Israel's (cultic) access to Yahweh and erases this historical memory. When God destroys his "meeting place/time(s)," God not only removes the intimacy of God's presence but also nullifies the original locus of the Yahweh-Israel event. Lying in ruins, the memory of the tabernacle can no longer serve as a historical anchor by which Israel can navigate their present and future relationship with God. With Yahweh's shared history with Israel blotted out and their annual appointments forgotten, Israel stands before their God anonymously with no cultic center, no ritual identity, no temporal map of appointed seasons by which to negotiate a Yahweh-governed space and time. As such, they have no means by which to understand the God who is "like an enemy" to them.

The third and fourth lines escalate Israel's loss by making the cultic amnesia explicit. The line reads, "Yahweh has caused to be forgotten in Zion / assembly and Sabbath." Two poetic features are significant here. First, after withholding the divine name for five verses, the poet introduces Israel's God by name for the first time in v. 6 with devastating effect.[33] Although Yahweh undoubtedly lies behind all references to אדני that precede, the full revelation of the perpetrator is disclosed precisely as all Israel's means of accessing Yahweh evaporate. At the same moment that the lines assert Yahweh's presence through the mention of the divine name, they also indicate Yahweh's absence by revoking the weekly and annual rituals designed to remember Yahweh and his deeds (e.g., Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15).

Second, the line also features the only use of √שכח in the *piel* stem in the Hebrew Bible, which

[33] I recognize that this observation concerning the delayed appearance of the divine name in Lamentations 2 is based upon the reading found in the Leningrad Codex, while other Hebrew manuscripts often present the divine name in place of אדני in previous stanzas. Note the critical apparatus of *BHS* concerning vv. 1, 2, 5, 7, 18, 19. The replacement of the DN with a translational equivalent of אדני in the Versional evidence renders it unusable in this regard. For the sake of consistency, I have opted for the reading in *BHQ*.

carries a causative sense here ("to cause to be forgotten").[34] The verb likely indicates the result of the temple's destruction: "God's demolishing of the temple causes the celebration of festivals and Sabbaths to lapse, since there is no locus for their celebration."[35] The choice of √שכח is especially striking, however, given Yahweh's consistent concern and precaution against Israel's forgetfulness throughout the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Deut 4:23; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 26:13; Judg 3:7; 1 Sam 12:9; Isa 51:13; Jer 3:21; Hos 8:14) and the specific connection between memory and the Sabbath established at Sinai (Exod 20:8; Deut 5:15). Given the importance of "remembrance" in the history of Yahweh with Israel, Yahweh causing assembly and Sabbath to be forgotten places Israel in violation of the divine command "to remember" them and thereby precludes the possibility of Israel's obedience. The poetry then heightens the tension between a Yahweh-commanded remembrance and a Yahweh-induced amnesia through the aural play between the line's first and last words: שכח and שבת (with resonances of שחת in line 2). The poet strips the Sabbath of its original purpose—namely, guarding Israel's memory of Yahweh's deliverance and ensuring Israel's rest—and fastens it to its own oblivion.

In the stanza's final couplet, Yahweh's wrath turns against religious and political leadership: "He has spurned in his cursed anger / king and priest." Having described Yahweh's action in terms of violence (√שחת, √חמס) and disremembrance (√שכח), the stanza concludes with a verb (√נאץ) that not only states Yahweh's volitional rejection of Israel's leadership but also connotes the contemptuous

[34] Despite the sole occurrence of √שכח in the *piel*, its meaning ("to cause to be forgotten") is widely attested by the Versional evidence (Vulg. *oblivioni tradidit Dominus*; Targum, נשי ייי בציון [pael of נשה]; Sym ἐπιλελῆσθαι) and virtually all modern translations. At the same time, one cannot exclude here the resonances of the verb's more common meaning (in the *qal* stem), as seen, e.g., in the LXX: ἐπελάσετο κύριος. That is, though the causative sense of the *piel* stem obviously remains prominent here, the word selection (especially in an originally unvocalized text) may invite an alternative reading that, though subtle, suggests that memory loss has afflicted (or been elected by) even the divine mind.

[35] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 66.

attitude that motivates the action.[36] The poet then intensifies the emotional tenor of the line by repeating the poem's governing affect ("anger"), albeit with yet another unique construction: בזעם אפו ("in the curse of his anger"). Though אף and זעם are commonly found in parallel with one another throughout the Hebrew Bible (Isa 10:5, 25; 30:27; Nah 1:6; Hab 3:12; Zeph 3:8; Pss 69:25 [24]; 78:49), v. 6 is the only place where the two words occur in construct with one another. In this unique phrase, various aspects of divine wrath (especially, the frequent association of √זעם with cursing, as seen, e.g., in Num 23:7-8) are compounded together, and the redundancy of the phrase underscores the superabundance of God's fury. The repeated refrain of Yahweh's anger here brings the loss of Israel's cultic life and leadership (described in v. 6) into continuity with the previous descriptions of divine violence found throughout the poem such that the disparate experiences of Israel's suffering find their cohesion solely in the Lord's rage. The poem hangs together on this singular affect, which, in v. 6, through the use of enjambed couplets, stands by itself for a brief moment before spurning the temple leadership, king and priest.[37]

The seventh stanza builds upon Israel's rejection in v. 6 by repeating a series of repudiating actions followed by specific images of Israel's destruction. The first couplet extends God's rejection of Israel's cultic leaders to include Yahweh's altar (מזבחו) and sanctuary (מקדשו). The parallel syntax between the two lines coupled with the near rhyme of *mizbĕḥô* and *miqdāšô* overlays the two distinct actions upon one another and inextricably connects the altar's demise to that of the temple. The intensification across the couplet is evident both in the selection of a more specialized verb in line 2

[36] The majority of translations highlight the contempt implied by *qal* √נאץ: "he scorned" (CEB); "has spurned" (NRSV, ESV, NIV, JPS, Berlin, 64; Salters, *Lamentations*, 110; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 141); "despised" (NASB, KJV); cf. Vulg. *tradidit…obprobrio*; Targum ושנא. The "reject" translation proffered Wildberger (*TLOT* 2:696) isn't preferable because it does not carry the disdainful attitude implied by the verb.

[37] On the royal responsibility within and over the temple, see Salters, *Lamentations*, 133.

(cf. the 19 occurrences of the verb √זנח in the Hebrew Bible over against the 2 occurrences of √נאר) and in the movement from the highly specific מזבחו in line 1 to the entire holy complex in line 2. What's more, despite the contested meaning of the *piel* √נאר,[38] the aural relationship between this verb and וינאץ in line 5 of verse 6 (and to a lesser degree, זנח in line 1, through the repeated "n" sound) transforms the three distinct actions into three facets of one divine decision. Through the shocking description of Yahweh rejecting his altar and dwelling place, the poet presents Yahweh in a "masochistic mood, removing the very means whereby he was worshipped in Zion."[39]

The third and fourth lines demonstrate how Israel's God spurned them: "he has delivered into the hand of the enemy / the walls of her palaces." Elsewhere, √סגר in the *hiphil* stem, especially when appearing with יד, frequently describes treacherous situations, wherein a people or person in the position to offer refuge to fleeing victims instead delivers the sufferers over to pursuing enemies (e.g., 1 Sam 23:11-12, 20; Amos 1:6, 9; Obad 14; cf. the forbidding of √סגר in Deut 23:16; Josh 20:5). Divine judgment is also described in similar terms, as God hands people over to hostile parties (Deut 32:30; Amos 6:8; Job 16:11; Ps 78:62; cf. Ps 31:9 [8]) or natural disasters and plagues (Ps 78:48, 50). Rather than casting the image straightforwardly (for example, Yahweh "hands over" Yahweh's people), however, the poet instead blends the metaphor with Zion's falling fortifications, as if the walls of "her palaces"

[38] The verb √נאר only occurs twice in the Hebrew Bible: Lam 2:7 and Ps 89:40 [39], where it occurs in parallel with *qal* √זנח ("to reject") and *piel* √חלל ("to profane") respectively, although the wider context of Ps 89:40 also features √זנח and √מאס ("to refuse, reject"). Despite the confusion attested in the Versional evidence (e.g., LXX ἀπετίναξεν ["he has shaken off"]; Vulg. *maledixit* ["he has cursed"]; Targum בעט ["to kick, stamp"]), the literary contexts alone carry enough evidence to support a meaning of "to repudiate" for the verb (so BDB, 611; HALOT 2:658). Modern translations generally reflect this sense, albeit with a variety of emphases: "disown" (NRSV, ESV, Salters, *Lamentations*, 110); "abandoned" (NIV, NASB, CEB); "disdained" (JPS, Westermann, *Lamentations*, 141); "abhorred" (KJV); cf. "verworfen" in Berges, *Klagelieder*, 125.

[39] Salters, *Lamentations*, 134.

(ארמנותה; cf. 2:5), had fled to Yahweh for safety and been sold out to the enemy.[40] In contrast to the 3ms pronominal suffixes found in v.6 and lines 1-2 of v. 7, line 4 subtly shifts to a 3fs suffix in ארמנותה, hearkening back to the Daughter of previous verses. Yahweh may destroy his own structures, but here, he informs on those of Zion. The reference to Zion's "palaces"—structures commonly associated with royalty and political aristocracy (see above)—complement the cultic structures identified in lines 1-2, and like v. 5, the poet continues to enliven Israel's structures, this time with the emotion of heartbreak. Yahweh's breach of faith is witnessed in Zion's breached walls. God's betrayal is felt as deep as Zion's brick and mortar.

The final two lines of vv. 5-6 sharpen the image of Israel's destroyed walls with tragic descriptions of the sounds heard on the day the temple was destroyed. A sound is raised in the "house of Yahweh" as on the day of a festival—a simile that re-introduces the theme of Israel's cultic memories to underscore the depth of loss. Much like the previous lines toyed with Israel's recollection, so the ironic comparison to the "day of a festival," prominently offset through enjambment, heightens the significance of the loss by relegating all pleasant interactions with Yahweh to an irretrievable past.

Furthermore, by leaving the subject of נתנו unnamed, the poet allows for several subjects to be operative simultaneously, thereby multiplying the decibel level of the moment. Four interpretive options merit further consideration. The first proposed subject is also the most obvious: it is the

[40] The repetition of ארמנות from v. 5—where said fortifications are destroyed—coupled with the sudden appearance of the 3fs pronominal suffix (ostensibly referring to Zion), without a clear antecedent in v. 7, have led some to emend the text to אצרותיה חמדת ("the precious things of her treasuries"). See Wilhelm Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder," *ZAW* 56 (1938): 107, followed by Kraus, *Klagelieder* (*Threni*), 38 and *BHS*. The MT remains intelligible, however, and the destruction of ארמנות in v. 5 presents no problem, given the "non-linear" character of lyric poetry. In fact, the repetition of ארמנות across vv. 5 and 7 and חומת across vv. 7-8 helps offer structural cohesion within the poem's disparate parts, which, without narrative's linearity, constantly threaten to break apart.

"enemy" (or "enemies," if understood as a collective singular) to whom Yahweh has delivered Israel's walls that now raise a victory cry in Yahweh's house (cf. קול נתן in Jer 4:16).[41] The joyous music and recitations of praise that once reverberated in God's holy place are now absent and "replaced by the noise of the enemy clamoring over the walls and into the temple."[42] Second, since חומת in line 4 serves as the nearest antecedent to the collective plural נתנו, some argue that Zion's walls themselves find a voice and compound the enemy's triumphant roar with their own traumatic moans. This reading resonates with and anticipates the following stanza, where Yahweh causes Jerusalem's fortifications to moan. Third, Dobbs-Allsopp identifies God as yet another source of the clamor. Not only does God serve as the grammatical subject for 23 out of the poem's first 24 couplets but also the expression נתן קול ("to raise a voice or noise") commonly refers to God's thunderous roar throughout the HB (2 Sam 22:14; Pss 68:34 [33]; 77:18-19 [17-18]; Amos 1:2). These factors strongly suggest that even God's terrifying thunder is active here, amplifying the raucous noise in God's own house.[43] Finally, one could even understand נתנו קול impersonally ("a sound is given")[44]—a reading, which, when supplemented by previous possible interpretations, supplies further unidentifiable background noise (perhaps human wailing; cf. Gen 45:2) to the image. If this isn't enough, the repeated "o" sounds across the couplet draw the reader into the experience by mimicking the open-mouthed cries of Zion's walls, Zion's enemies, and Zion's people. In this way, it becomes impossible for the reader to distinguish one voice

[41] Many interpreters understand the enemies to be the subject of the final couplet. See, e.g., Renkema, *Lamentations*, 249–59; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 141; Provan, *Lamentations*, 67; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 44; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 142–43; Robin A. Parry, *Lamentations*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 77; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 44; Salters, *Lamentations*, 135. Cf. JPS, CEB, NIV, and others, which, like the Versional evidence, translate the 3cp verb with only a pronominal subject.

[42] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 70–71.

[43] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 85–86.

[44] On impersonal constructions, see GKC §144g; Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 70–71. For those who favor this translation in Lam 2:7, see NRSV, Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 10. Cf. Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 36, who translates the couplet impersonally but interprets the clause as a reference to the enemies.

from another or to discern the emotional tenor of the deafening crowd noise. Tragedy and triumph, delight and distress, jubilation and judgment bleed into one another such that "the day of a festival" in Zion's memory and the day of Yahweh's wrath in Israel's present feature an identical soundtrack. The ambiguity therefore transforms Israel's joyous dreams of previous celebrations into a nightmare.

2.3.3. Yahweh the Demolitionist: Zion's Structures Felled (vv. 8-9a)

Verses 8-9 build upon two prominent themes of v. 7—the destruction of Zion's noisy walls and the intentionality of Yahweh's action—with detailed descriptions of Israel's structural damage. Much like God's preparation for battle in v. 4, the first two lines of verse 8 indicate that Yahweh's demolition of Israel's walls is premediated: "The LORD had in mind to destroy (חשב יהוה להשחית) / the wall(s) of Daughter Zion." As Salters points out, though the construction "infinitive + חשב" can designate a subject's intention to accomplish any type of action, the verb often appears in contexts where the subject plans to harm others (e.g., 1 Sam 18:25; Prov 24:8; Jer 23:27; 36:3).[45] The third and final use of √שחת here (a repetition from vv. 5-6) not only identifies the severe injury Yahweh intends but also, because of the near rhyme between להשחית and חשב, underscores the singular identity of divine thought and deed. Yahweh fulfills exactly what Yahweh formulates. The opening couplet thus puts to rest any suggestion that Jerusalem is the victim of an unmanaged divine rage, as if Yahweh's uncontrolled wrath exacerbated what was originally a justifiable punishment. Instead, the poet places Zion's total devastation in the divine mind prior to its execution. While Israel's walls stood impregnable and her people were celebrating their festivals unaware, Yahweh was drawing up

[45] Salters, *Lamentations*, 137.

murderous blueprints.

Here, the premeditated target is the "wall(s) of Daughter Zion"—a reference that retroactively clarifies the unidentified 3fs suffix in ארמנותיה in v. 7 and adds an emotional quality to the city's structural loss. Even razed walls share in Daughter Zion's suffering. In light of texts like Ps 48:11-13 [12-14], Renkema points out the theological significance of the walls' destruction: "The wall of Jerusalem…did not only possess a profane, strategic value, it was simultaneously the visible symbol of faith in Jerusalem. The protective power of Zion's fortifications was not guaranteed by the quality of its stones nor the height or thickness of its walls but by YHWH's presence alone."[46] The enjambed couplet intensifies the loss by separating Yahweh's target from Yahweh's ruinous plans: the aural pause between lines 1 and 2 lightly underscores the delay between Yahweh's thoughts and their concrete enactment, while the visual isolation of Zion's walls on the second line highlights their stately independence and integrity. They stand proudly but tragically ignorant of the divine schemes that impinge upon them. The poet then binds the walls to Yahweh's violence across the enjambed lines through the alliterative "ḥ" and "ṯ" sounds in *lĕhašḥîṯ* and *ḥômaṯ*.

After the first couplet highlights Yahweh's intentions to destroy, the second couplet provides a retrospective glimpse into Yahweh's study as he frames the plan. The couplet paints a portrait of the divine Architect—or "demolition expert"[47]—at work (cf. the use of קו + √נטה in Isa 44:13; Job 38:5), stretching out the measuring line over Zion's fortifications, mathematically calculating the amount of firepower necessary to "engulf" (מבלע) them. The measuring-line image is elsewhere used to describe intentional divine action, whether judgment (Isa 28:17; 34:11; 2 Kgs 21:13) or restoration (Zech 1:16). As

[46] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 252.
[47] Salters, *Lamentations*, 137.

Dobbs-Allsopp has indicated, however, the image may also allude to the sanctuary-razing ceremonies of the ANE, wherein old temples would be demolished by a master-builder so that a new sanctuary could be constructed in its place. As the crumbling walls fell, the worshipping community would bring offerings and sing lamentations in order to placate the now temple-less deity. Dobbs-Allsopp notes, "Here it is God, instead of the master builder, who does the necessary measuring in preparation for the demolition and, as noted, the first part of the poem is intent on showing that God's anger is anything but placated."[48]

As is typical of the poem's emphatic style, the couplet stresses the calculated quality of Yahweh's deeds through an enjambed description of Yahweh's determination: "He stretched out the measuring line. He did not withdraw/ his hand from devouring." The poet extends the craftsman image with a particular focus on the divine hand (the only use of יד Lamentations 2), which, through a subtle mixed metaphor of mouth and hand, is now adjoined to the body and thereby stands complicit in the "devouring" (√בלע) previously mentioned (2:2, 5). Once again, the enjambed lines intensify the loss by playing upon multiples senses of השיב. The full meaning of the couplet (drawing back one's hand) not only serves as a continuation of the measuring line image that precedes—Yahweh will not relent in meting out justice—but, given the militaristic connotations of the outstretched hand, also introduces the notion of martial dominance (e.g., Josh 8:26), thus bringing together Yahweh's plans for and means of destruction into a single image. At the same time, the half-meaning of the first line plays upon the absolute meaning of √שוב in the *hiphil* stem, which, among many other meanings, can often describe a restoring work (Ps 80:4 [3]; 8 [7]; 20 [19]), including the rebuilding of a city (Dan 9:25; cf. 2

[48] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 86.

Sam 8:3) or the re-establishment of political boundaries (2 Kgs 14:25) or offices (Isa 1:26). The line break thus generates a dual meaning that emphasizes Yahweh's determination to complete the destroying work while also revoking any hope of a life beyond Yahweh's devastation.

In the final couplet of verse 8, the poet brings the reader into the experience of Zion's fortifications themselves: "He has put rampart and wall in mourning / together they languish." The unique use of √אבל in the *hiphil* stem[49]—the ninth *hiphil* verb for which Yahweh is subject in the first eight verses—continues to represent Yahweh as the primary (if not solitary) cause of Israel's pain. Even in their lamentation, Zion's architecture is deprived of agency. Much like the final couplets of preceding stanzas (vv. 3, 5, 6), line 5 shifts from predominantly perfect verbs in lines 1-4 to the waw-consecutive imperfect ויאבל to indicate the stanza's conclusion. Here, the fully personified wall (חומה) along with the "rampart" (חל)—a relatively common hendiadys referencing the total wall by its inner and outer parts respectively (cf. 2 Sam 20:15; Isa 26:1; Nah 3:8)—become "mourners of their own destruction."[50] The alliterative חל וחומה bring both aspects of Zion's fortification together into a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Their combination indicates that no segment of these once-imposing structures stands above the ruin. The final line—"together they languish" (יחדו אמללו)—strengthens the alliterative connection across the couplet through the repeated "ḥ" and "l" sounds. The aurally similar *wayya'ăbel* and *'umlālû*, a relatively frequent verbal combination (Isa 19:8; 33:9; Jer 14:2; Hos 4:3; Joel 1:10), not only highlight the inextricable cause and effect relationship between Yahweh's inflicted mourning and the walls' deterioration but also suggest that the grieving itself contributes to

[49] In contrast to the *hiphil* vocalization of MT, the LXX and Vulg. appear to interpret ויאבל as *qal*: ἐπένθησεν (LXX), *luxit* (Vulg.). The Versional reading accords well with the frequent occurrences of √אבל in *qal* throughout the HB (18x), over against the rare appearance of the *hiphil* inflection: outside of Lam 2:8, √אבל (*hiphil*) appears only in Ezek 31:15, and many argue that an alternative homonymous root (III √אבל) is operative there. See the list of proponents in *HALOT* 1:7.

[50] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71.

their decomposition (cf. Ps 6:7 [6]; Jer 45:3). These features underscore the solitude and solidarity of the walls' suffering: under the weight of their remembered destruction and present lamentation, they languish "together and alone,"[51] having no community that participates in their particular suffering. Without and within (חל וחומה), Yahweh has transformed Israel's protective structures into grieving wreckage. Even if Daughter Zion's people are silenced in death, the rocks themselves cry out.

Verse 9 serves as bridge between the focus on Israel's structural trauma in vv. 5-8 and the descriptions of predominantly human suffering that follow (vv. 9-12). As Dobbs-Allsopp has noted, this transition begins in the final bicola of verse 8, where the use of √אבל (commonly predicated of living subjects) to describe Israel's walls brings together Zion's personal and physical identities, and "the whole nicely anticipates the reaction of the elders, young girls, and the poet-narrator to come (2:10-11)."[52] Even the particular reference to gates in the first line of v. 9, though obviously an extension of the structural themes that precede, also serve as a transition to the prioritization of human distress in what follows, for city "gates" were a locus of commercial, legal, and social activity. To destroy these structural aspects is "to destroy the life of the city in both a physical and social sense."[53]

The first two lines of verse 9 further particularize the architectural details from v. 8: "into the earth her gates have sunk. / He destroyed, shattered her bars." The image of sinking gates, found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, have evoked different understandings of the literary image: perhaps the gates have been broken by a battering ram,[54]or they appear to fall in light of the

[51] Ibid.

[52] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 92. Cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71, who critiques his overly literal reading of the mourning structures.

[53] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71.

[54] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 92.

crumbling walls that surround them.[55] To these interpretations, one could also add a more metaphorical reading that sees yet another example of structural personification. Berges, for example, understands the verbal image in light of other biblical sufferers who sink into the mud, whether figuratively (Ps 69:3 [2], 15 [14]) or not (Jer 38:6).[56] In all of these options, the passive presentation of Israel's architecture continues, for the intransitive verb simply indicates yet another result of Yahweh's agency. Also, the redundant reference to "the earth" (בארץ) not only subsumes Israel's structures into the downward movement prominently featured in vv. 1-3 but also intensifies this descent. While Yahweh might have brought "kingdom and her rulers" down "*toward* the earth" (לארץ) in v. 2, here Zion's gates sink "*into* the earth" (בארץ), beneath the clay surface, toward their own graves, and perhaps even into the underworld.[57]

In the second line, the simple syntax (characterized by a quick succession of 3ms verbs) prominent throughout vv. 1-8 returns, as the Unnamed Subject continues his divine rampage against Zion. The use of two *piel* verbs (אבד and שבר) again illustrates the superabundance of divine violence, and the near rhyme between the two words highlights this intensity.[58] Though the *piel* (or *hiphil*) stem

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[55] Salters, *Lamentations*, 140.

[56] Berges, *Klagelieder*, 144.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Although the Versional evidence attests two verbs in line 2 of v. 9, many find the two verbs to be awkward: the second colon, they argue, appears too long; the shift from a plural subject in line 1 to an unnamed singular subject in line 2 is unexpected; the two verbs are semantically redundant, etc. Some opt to delete a verb, assuming that the MT reflects an integration of variants. Robert Gordis, e.g., writes, "The two verbs are a conflate, representing variants of manuscripts which were both preserved in a very early stage of proto-Masoretic activity, evidence for which is to be found in the biblical text of Qumran. The early guardians of the text were unwilling to choose between variants, which they found in old, reliable manuscripts that they collated. They therefore preserved them both by incorporating them side by side into the accepted text" (*The Song of Songs and Lamentations* [New York: Ktav, 1974], 162, followed by Hillers, *Lamentations*, 38; the critical apparatus of *BHS*). Others emend the text altogether. See especially Robert B Salters, "The Text of Lam. II 9a," *VT* 54 (2004): 273–76; idem, *Lamentations*, 140–41, who provides an extensive history of modern research pertaining to proposed emendations.

In my view, no emendation is necessary. The change to an unnamed masculine singular subject simply reflects and assumes a similar syntactical structure from vv. 1-8, and at this point, Yahweh needs no introduction. In fact, as Dobbs-

is necessary for √אבד to become transitive, this is not the case for √שבר, which carries a perfectly suitable meaning for the line in *qal* ("to shatter, smash"), elsewhere used to describe breaking בריח (Amos 1:5). Instead, the poet opts for the aurally similar, intensive form of the verb to underscore the ferocity with which Yahweh assaults the gates' foundation.[59]

2.3.4. Yahweh the Oppressor: Zion's People Bereaved (vv. 9b-10)

The second couplet of v. 9 introduces a new focus on Israel's populace that will continue up through the end of the poem's first major section (vv. 1- 10). The descriptions of human suffering begin with political leadership: "Her king and her princes are among the nations / there is no law." In the first line, the poem subtly connects Zion's personal and architectural suffering through parallel prepositional phrases between the first and second couplets: her gates sink "into the earth" (בארץ) in line 1, while her king and priests are "among the nations" (בגוים) in line 3. The play with the -ב preposition draws Zion's rulers into the descending action of the gates in an understated way, and the visual arrangement of the sovereign beneath the gates suggests their own burial beneath the rubble. Having already discussed the demise of Zion's "princes" in v. 2 and the dismissal of "king and priest" in

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Allsopp has observed, the return to 3ms verbs completes a chiastic, four-line structure with the final couplet of v. 8, wherein the first and last lines detail Yahweh's actions, while the middle two lines (line 6 of v. 8 and line 1 of v. 9) describe the results (*Lamentations*, 91–92). Moreover, the verbal redundancy isn't awkward but significant (see above), especially considering that this clause is the final use of 3ms verbs (for which God is the intended subject) until their (final) re-appearance in v. 17. For Yahweh's (near-final) deed, he throws multiple blows against Israel, "destroying" and "shattering" Zion's bars. The resulting 3+3 meter, changing from the *qinah* meter (3+2) that is predominant, further indicates a conclusion to the string of 3ms verbs.

[59] Jenni differentiates between the *qal* and *piel* senses of √שבר based on the different direct objects they take: "[I]n the qal only items which can be actually broken, like wood, bones and pottery, are used as objects; but by contrast in the piel, objects made of stone and metal are used, which cannot actually be broken in one action but as a result of some other wasting process can be finally destroyed" (*Das hebräische Pi'el: Syntaktisch-semasiologische Untersuchung einer Verbalform im Alten Testament* [Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1968], 181, followed by *HALOT* 4:1402). While this differentiation may be operative at a general level, there is nevertheless some overlap between the *qal* and *piel* objects. Like *qal*, the *piel* of √שבר is also applied to bones (Isa 38:13; Lam 3:4; Job 29:17), trees (Exod 9:25; Ps 105:33; Ps 29:5), or bows (Ps 46:10 [9]).

v. 6, the poet here re-introduces these figures in a more personalized way (*"her* king and *her* princes") and emphasizes their current experience (exile) and its chaotic effects. These lines feature the first verbless clause of the poem, a syntactic shift that moves the reader out of the realm of remembered violence against Zion's king ("Yahweh *has rejected*…king and priest" in v. 6) into the interminable suffering of the present. As a result of the divine abuse recounted in vv. 1-8, Israel's royalty now remains (eternally) "among the nations," purposelessly serving peoples not their own.

The fourth line of the verse then details the lawlessness that has ensued in their absence. The simplicity of the clause ("[there is] no law") complements the verbless clause found in the first line of the couplet and, as a result, opens the phrase up to multiple senses. If one reads the statement in light of the discussion of prophetic leadership that follows (lines 5-6), the lack of תורה refers perhaps to the loss of a Mosaic law or the dearth of priestly leadership, who traditionally administered theological instruction to the people (Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26; Zeph 3:4; Mal 2:6-9), especially as it pertained to distinguishing between the holy and the profane (Ezek 22:26; Hag 2:10-13).[60] Although the priests are not explicitly identified, their implied invocation through the use of תורה fills out the stanza's discussion of political and prophetic leadership named in lines 3 and 5-6, respectively. Without instruction, the people have no authoritative means by which to discern how to propitiate the wrathful God intent on annihilating them. Yahweh's wrath is no longer a tantrum that must be withstood but an ever-present disposition that constitutes Israel's foreseeable reality.

Further nuances of the line emerge if one reads the statement in light of the kings and rulers

[60] Many modern interpreters prefer this interpretation. See, inter alia, Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh, Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Gunnar Östborn, *Tōrā in the Old Testament* (Lund: H. Ohlssons boktryck, 1945), 89; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 45; Salters, *Lamentations*, 142; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 145; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 103–4; Provan, *Lamentations*, 69; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 259–60.

featured in the preceding line. On one hand, the "no law" statement ostensibly describes the result of an exiled leadership, as the absence of political authorities has left Zion without anyone to administer wise rulings.[61] On the other hand, as the Masoretic punctuation indicates, the "no law" reality might not pertain primarily to Zion's populace but rather to the experience of "her kings and princes" themselves, who helplessly dwell "among nations without a law."

In all of these previous readings, lawlessness is construed as a cultic and socio-political problem experienced by Zion and/or her leadership, but one might also draw out latent overtones of immorality in the line. The Targum, for example, understands the line to be a description of royal disobedience. Lawlessness then becomes the *reason* for the expulsion of Israel's king and the failure of Israel's prophets: "her king and her nobles have gone into exile among the nations, *because* (על) they did not keep the words of the Torah*,* as if they had not received it on Mount Sinai."[62] At the same time, because the line lacks a finite verb, such lawlessness need not only precede the exile but might also describe the immorality engendered by—and even reflected in—Yahweh's violence. The absence of pious authorities may have exacerbated the anarchy in Israel, but this chaos is not limited to human perpetrators. The line as it stands might even read as a hidden indictment of the divine barbarity witnessed in vv. 1-8: there is no law, no moral boundary by which *Yahweh himself* might be reined in and no legal contract by which Yahweh might be prosecuted. The present suffering and disobedience bears witness to a mutual nullification of whatever covenant once was. Leadership deficiencies

[61] Otto Kaiser, *Der Königliche Knecht: eine traditionsgeschichtlich-exegetische Studie über die Ebed-Jahwe-Lieder bei Deuterojesaja*, FRLANT NF 75 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 31. Cf. the associations between תורה and wisdom in Prov 1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20, 23; 7:2; 13:14; 28:4, 7, 9; 29:18; 31:26; as well as the royal responsibility to study תורה in Deut 17:14-20

[62] English translation taken from Philip S. Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, The Aramaic Bible 17B (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 132–33, emphasis mine.

coupled with divine abuse have given rise to unrestrained ferocity among the Jerusalem populace, even to the point of cannibalism (vv. 20, 22). Kingless, priestless, and prophetless, Israel riots in the streets—looting, pillaging and assaulting—all in an effort to rail against their unjust yet unimpeachable God.

The final couplet of verse 9 completes the portrait of the collapse of Israel's leadership: "Even her prophets do not find / a vision from the LORD." The emphatic גם—its only appearance in the chapter—underscores the total decimation of Zion's cultic and political authorities, but here, the problem is not the disappearance of a particular office, as seen in the exiled king, but its futility. "The prophets alluded to here are genuinely trying to make contact with Yahweh, but to no avail."[63] Having already lost priestly instruction and, by consequence, all means of appeasing their God, Zion is now deprived of all direct communication with the divine. As v. 14 indicates, the prophets have not ceased their activity but have simply failed to mediate Yahweh's word specifically. Their words lack a divine fire, fury, and future. As a result, Israel roams the world terrorized by God in their present and bereft of God in their future. Their loss of meaningful space and structures, described in the opening couplet, is exacerbated by the loss of a divinely revealed word by which to render time meaningful.

The poetry plays with Yahweh's presence and absence in a number of ways here. First, through enjambment, the poet separates the prophets' frenetic and failed searching (implied by לא מצאו) from the revelation they desperately desire. Moreover, by placing נביאיה before the verb, the poet both highlights the prophets as the subject of the line and visually removes them as far as possible from their divine source (מיהוה concludes the couplet) in the following line. Even the poet's

[63] Salters, *Lamentations*, 142.

use of the divine name here is particularly tantalizing, given the way it simultaneously implies and revokes Yahweh's intimacy. This tension between divine presence and absence extends across the entire stanza as well, for while Yahweh, though unidentified in the opening couplet of v. 9, is unmistakably (and devastatingly) near in the shattering of Zion's gates and bars, Yahweh remains silent in the final couplet despite the explicit invocation of his name. Taken together, the stanza as a whole suggests that the presence of Israel's God no longer resides in anything previously revealed (names, laws, institutions, or rituals) but is disclosed solely in the suffering Yahweh has and is inflicting. Where pain and suffering are, YHWH is—not as savior or healer, but as dealer and designer.

Finally, it is important to note the stanza's consistent use of pronominal suffixes. Out of the eight total 3fs suffixes found in Lamentations 2 as a whole, five of them occur in v. 9. With the obvious repetition of 3fs suffixes across v. 9, the reader is constantly reminded that these structures and leaders aren't anonymous but belong to someone. Given the amount of unconscionable violence detailed in the preceding 48 lines, the poet resists any growing numbness in the reader through these personal markers: every demolished structure, every exiled leader has a Daughter to whom they belong, and each casualty multiplies her pain.

After v. 9 describes the effect of Jerusalem's destruction on its leadership, v. 10 focuses on the mourning ritual of Zion's people—specifically, her elders and her young women. Much like the king, priest, and prophet previously discussed, even the leaders of Israel's families sit silently: "They sit upon the earth; they are silent, / the elders of Daughter Zion." Despite the clear shift in focus from architecture to human beings, the poet continues to bring the two together into a single identity through subtle repetition. Just as Zion's gates have sunk "into the earth" (בארץ) in v. 9, so her elders

now sit "on the earth" (לארץ)—a prepositional phrase that looks both backward to the collision of "kingdom and princes" in v. 2 and forward to the mourning of Zion's young women and the speaker in vv. 10-11 respectively. Without walls, temple, and fortresses, the Jerusalem elders dwell homeless in the dust from which they came.

Unlike Yahweh, who moves freely and fiercely throughout the poem, Zion's people, even when they are the subjects of verbs, remain stationary and passive, consistently without transitivity and therefore unable to impinge (and thereby change) the world they inhabit. Here, they sit upon the earth and "remain silent" (I √דמם),[64] stupefied by what they have witnessed. In contrast to the staccato 3ms perfect verbs that characterize divine activity up to this point, the poet suddenly shifts to the imperfective aspect—which has occurred only once (v. 1)—to underscore the unfinished quality of the elders' immobility and silence, and the aural similarity between the two 3cp verbs helps intertwine these two traumatic responses (paralysis and dumbfoundedness) together.

In the second line of yet another enjambed couplet, the poet identifies the subject of these imperfect verbs in a particularly humanizing way. First, by delaying the subject's identification, the poem, if only for a brief moment, invites a host of possible groups lamenting in this way (prophets, political authorities, etc.) and, in some respect, invites the reader to fill in the verbal image with their

[64] Some have argued that ידמו is derived from II √דמם ("to wail, moan") rather than I √דמם ("to be silent") on the basis of Akkadian and Ugaritic cognates. See, e.g., George V. Schick, "The Stems *dûm* and *damám* in Hebrew," *JBL* 32 (1913): 420; Mitchell Dahood, "Textual Problems in Isaiah," *CBQ* 22 (1960): 400–402; McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations I," 38–40; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 63, 71–72; *HALOT* 1:226; cf. BDB 199, who suggest the possibility of II √דמם but only for Isa 23:2. Beyond arguing for the possibility of the existence of a homonymous root II √דמם based on Semitic cognates, Dahood explains why it is preferable to I √דמם in Lam 2:10: "Silence seems to have played very little part in mourning ceremonies, while weeping and screaming in excessive degree were a marked feature of Oriental [*sic*] rites of lamentation" ("Textual Problems in Isaiah," 402). However, as Lohfink has demonstrated with reference to texts like Job 2:11ff and Ezra 9:3ff, silence did indeed play a role in Israelite lamentation ("Enthielten die im Alten Testament bezeugten Klageriten eine Phase des Schweigens?," *VT* 12 [1962]: 276). The clear use of I √דמם in Lam 2:18 also works against the appearance of II √דמם in 2:10. Even the Versional evidence (LXX, Vulg., Targum) attests a meaning "to be silent" here. As a result, the majority of interpreters assume I √דמם to be the likely root in 2:10.

own impressions of the scene. The sitting and silent masses multiply in the mind's eye, until the second line specifies the surprising party lying in the dirt: "the elders of Daughter Zion." The choice of elders nicely transitions the stanza from Zion's formal leadership (discussed in v. 9) to the focus on the common inhabitants in v. 10ff. "Like those others who provided leadership and dispensed wisdom, they have nothing to say. They are fully occupied with their grieving."[65] Much like the 3fs suffixes that dotted the landscape of v. 9, the poet chooses to indicate Jerusalem's family leaders not in some generic fashion but through their intimate connection to Daughter Zion. The elders are doubly personalized in this way, and the portrait of suffering is compounded as a result: as the memory of Jerusalem's wailing (v. 7) lies fresh in their minds, the weeping Daughter, along with her elders, take up residence in the dust, and share in the silence of their devastated home.

The second couplet of v. 10 augments the portrait of the elders in mourning, while also preparing for the "young women" introduced in the final two lines of the stanza. The lines read, "They heap up dust upon their heads; / they wear sackcloth." An expression of grief, placing dust upon one's head (√עלה in the *hiphil* stem + עפר) elsewhere characterizes Israel's response to military defeat (Josh 7:6) and Tyre's response to judgment (Ezek 27:30)—both of which Jerusalem currently experiences. In the broader context of the poem, however, the image intensifies the downward progression initiated in the opening line. The earth upon which they once sat now covers them—not only in the verbal image but also through the vertical arrangement of the lines on the page—and they lie ritually buried beneath the dust. Through the use of √עלה might suggest their implicit (and hopeful) ascent vis-à-vis the prominent descending action in the poem, even this upward movement carries a tragic irony, for

[65] Provan, *Lamentations*, 70.

it only serves to drive them further into the grave. This irony is refracted in light of the frequent use of √עלה in the *hiphil* stem to describe the memory of Yahweh's delivering power and Israel's sacrificial activity. Where Yahweh once "brought up" Israel from Egypt (e.g., Exod 3:8, 17; Lev 11:45; Deut 20:1) and Israel once "brought up" gifts in response (e.g., Exod 24:5; Lev 14:20; Num 14:13; Deut 12:13-14; 27:6), Zion, now cut off and cut down by their God, only finds strength to "bring up" the dust over themselves in a symbolic death-wish. The second line then fills out the mourning image by indicating their sackcloth apparel—yet another common practice of ritual lamentation (e.g., 2 Sam 3:31; 1 Kgs 20:32; Isa 3:24; 15:3; 22:12; Jer 4:8; 6:26; 49:3; Ezek 7:18; 27:31; Joel 1:8, 13).[66]

In the final couplet of the tenth stanza, the poet subtly introduces a new subject, who shares in the elders' misery. The lines read, "They bring down to the ground their heads, / the maidens of Jerusalem." The construction √ירד (*hiphil*) + ראש is unique to Lam 2:10 and departs from the otherwise conventional depiction of ritualized mourning found in the preceding lines. Through the surprise of unexpected language, the poetry draws attention to itself and invites the reader to discern its connections to the broader stanza and poem. Three of these connections merit further consideration. First, the precise repetition of לארץ from the opening line both ties the stanza into an intelligible whole and draws together the elders (old men) and maidens (young girls)—a merism representing the entire Jerusalem population—into a single scene.[67] Furthermore, the lowering of the head "also makes the motion of the mourners mimic the downward motion of the walls and gates, which have

[66] The commentaries provide extensive details on the possible meaning of these (and other) Israelite and/or ancient Near Eastern mourning rituals, which need not be addressed extensively here. See, especially, Renkema, *Lamentations*, 264–65; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 146–49; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 69–70.

[67] Many draw attention to the merism here. See, inter alia, Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 92; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71; Salters, *Lamentations*, 145; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 147.

sunk into the ground."[68] The reference to בתולת in the final line similarly identifies the literal maidens of Jerusalem to the figurative בתולת בת ציון, whom the poet addresses in v. 13. "The poetry thus establishes a pattern of identification between the personified city and other figures in the poem which means to suggest the existence of a commonality of experience amidst diversity."[69] Young and old, the protectors and (once) protected dwell with Daughter Zion and her structures upon the soil in shared silence.

Second, the downward movement of the *hiphil* perfect הורידו complements the *hiphil* perfect העלו in line 3 above. Despite the opposing directions of the verbs, the images of the two lines have nearly identical implications: the collision and comingling of earth and sufferer. The "bringing up" and "bringing down" in many ways function as an accompanying (and intensifying) merism that implies the futility and mourning inherent in all of Israel's intended movements. Like those trying to shovel their way out of a divinely appointed grave, any attempt to alter their surroundings only immerses them further under the dirt. The totality of Zion's actions—her ascents, descents, and all movements contained therein—serve only to lament her affliction.

Finally, the use of the 3cp perfect הורידו enables a seamless (and surprising) transition from the elders to the maidens and, as a result, facilitates the blending of the two images together in the mind of the reader. Because the perfect conjugation lacks gender differentiation for third person plural subjects, the poem's use of 3cp perfect verbs in lines 3-5 ingeniously opens the stanza up to be read both forward and backward. Though the reader assumes that זקני בת ציון are the subject of the three perfect verbs in lines 3-5, the poem catches the reader off guard with the introduction of the 3fp

[68] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71.
[69] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 93.

suffix in ראשן at the end of line 5. Once line 6 supplies the feminine subject בתולת ירושלם, the reader must re-read the stanza and can in fact assume that the Jerusalem maidens might also lie behind the 3cp verbs in lines 3-4. With this subtle and inventive grammatical detail, the ritual mourning of the elders seamlessly bleeds into that of the young women with the result that the reader bears witness to a sea of men and women quietly sinking into the dust together.

Moreover, unlike the imperfect verbs found in the stanza's opening line, the repeated perfect verbs across lines 3-5 replicate the characteristic descriptions of Yahweh's destroying activity in vv. 1-9. This ostensible stylistic tribute, however, only underscores further the disparity between the kinds of agency exercised by Israel over against that of their Lord. Despite the grammatical transitivity of the *hiphil* העלו and הורידו in lines 3 and 5 respectively, the elders and maidens remain rooted to the earth and act only upon their own bodies, powerless to affect their environment and experience. Far more than simply conveying ritualistic mourning, the total stanza, through its unique construction, skillfully (and ironically) connects the populace to their falling structures (v. 9) and conveys their impotence.

2.4. SUMMARY

Among the many insights discussed in the preceding analysis, several general trends should be noted for the forthcoming comparison with ANE iconography. First, we highlighted the poet's attention to the divine body in particular, constructed both through explicit reference to physical features and through the repetition of 3ms verbs in vv. 1-5 especially. Second, we pointed out the way in which the poetry continually nuances the (metaphorical) victim of Daughter Zion through multiple variations

on her name (Daughter Judah, Daughter Jerusalem, and so forth), structures, and populace, while at the same time detailing the profile of Yahweh's anger with a varied vocabulary. Zion's robust characterization, when contrasted with relative anonymity of Yahweh, whose name is withheld until v. 6, reveals the poem's privileging of the victim's identity over that of her God. Third, we considered the poem's consistent use of enjambment to isolate key images of violence on a given line, as seen, for example, in the poem's opening couplet. There, the writer delays the mention of the subject (Yahweh) and object (Daughter Zion) until the second line, where the two are juxtaposed as dual parts of a single visual image. Fourth, we noted how the poem seizes on ambiguity as a means of integrating numerous literary images into a whole. In the fourth stanza, for example, the poet draws together Yahweh's murderous archery (lines 1-4) and Yahweh's fiery rage (lines 6) into a single image by locating the disparate images in the single setting of "the tent of Daughter Zion" in line 5. Similarly, the unnamed subject of נתנו in line 5 of v. 7 invites the reader to fill in the verb with multiple subjects, all of which contribute to the chaotic confusion heard in Yahweh's temple. Fifth, we pointed out the overall "downward" movement described at multiple levels throughout the poem—cosmic (v. 1), structural (v. 9), and even ritualistic (v. 10)—and this feature holds tremendous import for the poem's manipulation of perspective, discussed in chapter 6. With these features in mind, we will now consider how the content and poetics of the poem's figured violence shift to accommodate the poem's turn to direct address.

CHAPTER 3

IMAGES OF VIOLENCE IN SECOND-PERSON PERSPECTIVE (LAMENTATIONS 2:11-22)

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter analyzed the poetics of violence in the third-person discourse of Lamentations 2:1-10. I noted the poem's careful construction of the divine body, its attention to Zion's variegated identity, its use of enjambment to focus attention on particular persons and scenes, and its use of ambiguity to blend literary images together. The detailed analysis of these (and other) means by which the phenomenon of violence figures in Lamentations 2:1-10 helps to prepare for an informed comparison with the poetics of violence in ancient Near Eastern iconography, provided in chapters 4-6. As discussed in chapter 1, the project as a whole represents a test case for a (specific iteration of a) "phenomenological" approach to iconographic exegesis that is grounded in a meticulous attention to the shared and divergent techniques of literary and imagistic poetics.

The current chapter will complete the analysis of violence in Lamentations 2:11-22 and thereby provide further points of comparison with Ashurbanipal's palace reliefs (chapters 4-5). The poem's shift into first-person description and second-person address in vv. 11-22 introduces a change not only in the kinds of images that are features but also in the literary techniques by which they are presented. With respect to poetic content, vv. 11-22 contain multiple references to the poem's most disturbing image(s) of suffering—namely, Jerusalem's dying children. In these verses, the poet pays little attention to the divine body that characterized vv. 1-10 and instead focuses the reader on the suffering bodies of the speaker (v. 11), Zion (vv. 13, 18-19), and the children (vv. 12, 19, 20, 22). With respect to its figures of speech, though devices like ambiguity and enjambment will continue to

appear in vv. 11-22, the poem's second half, as I will show, seizes on the inherent empathy of the first-person voice to help *justify* the violent imagery of the poem as a faithful witness to Jerusalem's suffering. This concern with indexing the power of the poem's imagery will be especially important for later comparisons with the performative significance of Ashurbanipal's reliefs.

3.2. TRANSLATION OF LAMENTATIONS 2:11-22[1]

(11) 1 My eyes are spent with tears.
2 My stomach churns.
3 My liver is poured out on the ground
4 because of the breaking of the daughter of my people,
5 Because children and sucklings faint
6 in the streets of the city.

(12) 1 To their mothers they say,
2 "Where is the grain and wine?"
3 as they faint like the wounded
4 in the plazas of the city,
5 as their lives are poured out
6 at the breasts of their mothers.

(13) 1 What should I testify concerning you?
2 What could I compare to you,
3 Oh Daughter Jerusalem?
4 To what should I liken you that I might comfort you,
5 Oh Maiden Daughter Zion?
6 For your breaking is as great as the sea:
7 who will heal you?

(14) 1 Your prophets have seen for you
2 emptiness and treachery.
3 They have not revealed your iniquity
4 to restore your fortunes.
5 They have seen for you oracles

[1] As in chapter 2, the following translation is my own. All pertinent text-critical and translational issues will be discussed in the analysis below.

6 empty and seductive.

(15) 1 They clap their hands against you,
2 all who pass along the road.
3 They whistle and shake their heads
4 against Daughter Jerusalem:
5 "Is this not the city about which they say,
6 'The perfection of beauty,
7 the joy of all the earth.'"

(16) 1 They open their mouths against you,
2 all your enemies.
3 They whistle and gnash their teeth.
4 They say, "We have devoured!
5 Indeed, this is the day we've waited for!
6 We've reached it. We've seen it!"

(17) 1 The LORD has done what he planned.
2 He has executed his word,
3 which he decreed in ancient times.
4 He has torn down without mercy.
5 He has caused the enemy to rejoice over you.
6 He has lifted the horn of your adversaries.

(18) 1 Their heart cries out to the Lord.
2 O Wall of Daughter Zion,
3 Let tears stream down like a river
4 daily and nightly.
5 Do not grant yourself rest.
6 Let not the apple of your eye be silent.

(19) 1 Get up! Cry out in the night
2 at the beginning of every watch.
3 Pour our your heart like water
4 before the face of the Lord.
5 Lift up to him your hands
6 for the sake of the lives of your little ones,
7 those weakened by hunger
8 at the corner of every street.

(20) 1 "See, LORD, and notice
2 those whom you've treated this way.

Can it be that women are eating their fruit,
    their beautiful little ones?
Can it be that they are killed in the sanctuary of the Lord,
    priest and prophet?

They lie down on the ground in the streets,
    young and old.
My maidens and my young men
    have fallen by the sword.
You have killed on the day of your anger.
    You have slaughtered without sparing.

You summoned as on the day of an assembly
    my terrors all around.
And there were not on the day of the LORD's anger
    any who escaped or survived.
As for the ones I brought up and raised
    my enemy finished them."

3.3. POETIC ANALYSIS OF LAMENTATIONS 2:11-22

The following analysis will consist of two primary parts, delimited according to changes in speaking voice. The first section will discuss the speaker's address to Zion, in which he expresses concern with bearing adequate witness to Zion's suffering (v. 13) and itemizes a list of four failed "healers" for Zion's pain: the prophets (v. 14), passersby (v. 15), enemies (v. 16), and Yahweh (v. 17). The presentation of the passersby specifically helps to situate the reader among the crowds who observe and reflect upon Jerusalem's destruction. This first part concludes with an urgent address to Zion (vv. 18-19) that is characterized by an extended attention to her physical grief. The second major section of the analysis below will address Zion's own lament before God, especially her troubling description of Zion's mothers feeding on their children (v. 20). Ultimately, her discourse plays a culminating role in the poem as a whole, as she repeats, combines, and adjusts various images that have previously figured in

the work.

3.3.1. Zion Addressed by the Speaker: A Testimony of Divine Violence (vv. 11-19)

While the poet has assumed an exclusively descriptive posture to this point, v. 11 introduces a dramatic shift in tone and address at the poem's halfway mark. The images of the Jerusalem elders and maidens in mourning prepares the reader for the poet's own expression of grief, which s/he articulates with detailed descriptions of physiological affliction.[2] Although the following analysis of vv. 11-19 will discuss a variety of aspects concerning the *selection*, *presentation*, and *combination* of the poem's images, much of the poem's self-*justification* lies here as well, seen in both the rhetorical questions of v. 13 (discussed below) as well as in the poet's apostrophe to Zion, which requires further discussion prior to analyzing vv. 11-19 specifically.

As Dobbs-Allsopp and Linafelt have noted, the sudden movement into direct address carries rhetorical and performative significance that implicitly points to the *purpose* of the poetic composition. By devoting nearly half of the poem to the poet's reaction (vv. 11-19) and by crafting this self-expression in a manner that mimics Zion's own cries (cf. 1:20 and 2:11), the author both draws the reader into Zion's pain "through a strategy of identification" and explodes any sense of objectivity implied by the third-person voice thus far: the poet-narrator is aligned "solidly with Zion."[3] The speaker's expression of solidarity seeks an ally in the reader and validates the reader's own anger at

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[2] Cf. Renkema, *Lamentations*, 267–69, who argue that Zion herself speaks in vv. 11-12, 20-22 (with the poet speaking in vv. 13-17) on the basis of lexical correspondence between 2:11 and 1:20 and an inclusio structure, wherein Zion's voice (vv. 11-12, 20-22) brackets the direct discourse in vv. 11-22. However, as Berges rightly points out, if Zion utters vv. 11-12, phrases like "daughter of my people" (v. 11, line 4) seem out of place, and this in many ways ruins Zion's climactic discourse at the poem's conclusion (*Klagelieder*, 147–49).

[3] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 93.

the violence witnessed in the poem's opening descriptions. The reader no longer stands alone but has a fellow empathizer for Israel's cause and thus is affirmed in their emotional disposition. Ultimately, this empathetic posturing "functions not only to describe but to persuade; the literature moves from the basic need to give voice to pain to the project of giving testimony or bearing witness." In this way, the poem seeks "to make the concerns of the survivor the concerns of the reader as well."[4]

In addition to the persuasive capacities of the first-person voice, the use of apostrophe, as Culler has argued,[5] discloses the performative quality of the lyric poem and transforms the poetic description of events into the event of the lyric's utterance. Through the address, the suffering isn't simply summarized but also made present with each new reading. The listener overhears a performative word seeking to impinge upon Zion and elicit her response (vv. 18-19), while the one who reads aloud participates in the speaker's attempt to comfort Zion. As such, the poem evokes empathy by including the reader in the lyric "I" and by bringing Jerusalem's history into the readerly present through the performative speech.

3.3.1.1. A Painful Testimony (Zion's Contagious Grief) (v. 11)

V. 11 details the speaker's own physiological torment that is sympathetically evoked by Zion's suffering children. The poet begins, "My eyes are spent with tears; / my stomach churns." A common motif for suffering, eyes that "fail" or "cease" (I כלה) characterize starving animals (Jer 14:6), helpless widows (Job 31:16), and those desperately watching for (divine) rescue (Pss 69:4 [3]; 119:82, 123; Lam 4:17). The

[4] Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 49. For Linafelt, the shift to direct address in both Lamentations 1 and 2 is specifically triggered by the suffering of children (see below).

[5] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 186–243.

added reference to "tears"—a phrasing unique to Lam 2:11 in the Hebrew Bible—indicates that the grieving itself, in addition to the witnessed violence that gave rise to such empathy, contributes to the speaker's obscured vision (cf. Pss 6:7-8 [6-7]; 69:4 [3]). The use of √כלה is especially significant, given its reappearance in the final line of the poem: "Those whom I bore and raised / my enemy has destroyed (כלם)." The second half of the poem (vv. 11-22) is thus bookended (and therefore thematized) by the cessation of innocent life: "Her eyes have reached their 'end' because YHWH has made an 'end' of the life of her children."[6]

In a near verbatim repetition of Lam 1:20, the second line of the stanza intensifies the first image by describing the speaker's stirring stomach—a frequent physical metaphor (or manifestation) of profound affective experience, whether anguish (Jer 4:19; Ps 22:15 [14]; Job 30:27), compassion (Jer 31:20), or desire (Song 5:4). Although discerning the precise meaning of √חמר remains somewhat problematic,[7] the rare appearance of the *pealal* stem, whose repeated radicals indicate a series of "movements repeated in quick succession,"[8] aurally mimics the speaker's churning intestines (*ḥŏmarmĕrû*). Also, the occurrence of מעי at the couplet's conclusion brings coherence to both the second line specifically and to the total bicola: respectively, the initial "*m*" sound ties together the speaker's entrails to their agitation in line 2, while the 1cs suffix nicely creates a line-end rhyme with עיני in line 1—a feature that stacks the two independent images into a single portrait of total physical upheaval. The subtle merism between the eyes, an external (or visible) feature located toward the top

[6] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 269.

[7] While BDB identifies four possible חמר roots, *HALOT* attests to five. Two options are plausible for חמר in v. 11: II חמר ("to foam" in *qal*; "to ferment" in *poalal*), based upon the Arabic cognate *ḫamara* ("to leaven"), or III חמר ("to glow, burn" in *poalal*), based upon the Arabic II *ḥmr* ("to burn"). See *HALOT* 1:330. Cf. BDB, 330, who present I חמר ("to ferment, boil or foam up") as the operative root in Lam 2:11. Despite the possibility of III חמר ("to glow, burn"), the versions generally attest to an image of irritation rather than burning: e.g., ἐταράχθη (LXX), *conturbata* (Vulg.).

[8] See GKC §55e.

of the body, and the entrails, an internal feature located toward the bottom or middle of the body, also indicates a suffering that exceeds the bodily attributes identified and encompasses the entire self.

In the second couplet, the speaker begins by supplementing the portrait of his physical torment. He exclaims, "My liver is poured out on the ground."[9] An image unique to Lamentations 2, the spilling liver has elicited a number of interpretative translations: "My heart is poured out" (NIV; NASB);[10] "My being melts away" (JPS); "My spirit is torn asunder";[11] "My very grief is poured out."[12] Despite their differences, each interpretation understands the liver to be the seat of human emotions, an assumption confirmed by the surrounding context and the frequent use of √שפך to describe extreme sorrow (Pss 42:5 [4]; 62:9 [8]; Job 30:16; 1 Sam 1:15;).[13] At the same time, beyond the obvious emotional implications of the line, its visceral character underscores the violence of the speaker's experience. Rather than simply stating, "I am deeply grieved," the speaker paints a vivid portrait of spilled bile, indicative perhaps of the poet's convulsive vomiting or a piercing wound, which the speaker empathetically suffers alongside those whom Yahweh's bow has also impaled (v. 4). What's more, the careful repetition of לארץ brings the speaker's personal affliction into complete alignment with Zion's collapsing structures and populace (vv. 1-2, 9-10), and the occurrence of √שפך both recalls Yahweh's pouring fury in v. 4 and identifies the speaker with the draining life of Zion's infants (*hithpael* of √שפך in v. 12) and ultimately Zion herself (*qal* of √שפך in v. 19). The image thus functions

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[9] Cf. the LXX and Peshitta, which both attest to a reading of כבדי as כָּבֹדִי ("my glory") over against MT כְּבֵדִי ("my liver"). The bodily language used elsewhere in the stanza makes "my liver" preferable, although the subtle evocation of "glory" in the words' similarity helps to intensify the speaker's suffering. See also P. Stenmans, "כבד," *TDOT* 7:17-22, who argues that many occurrences of כָּבוֹד should be emended to כָּבֵד (e.g., Gen 49:6; Pss 7:6 [5]; 16:9; 30:13 [12]; 57:9 [8]; 108:2 [1]).

[10] Provan, *Lamentations*, 70–71.

[11] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 269.

[12] Salters, *Lamentations*, 110.

[13] Cf. Provan, *Lamentations*, 71, who, on the basis of Ps 62:9 [8] and 1 Sam 1:15, suggests that the poured out liver might convey the speaker's prayers on behalf of Zion.

centripetally, facilitating the convergence of (some of) the poem's variegated images.

After the gut-wrenching descriptions of the speaker's personal anguish in lines 1-3, the fourth line identifies the specific reason for his dramatic reaction: namely, the "breaking of the daughter of my people." As such, lines 3-4 facilitate the transition from the initial images of the speaker's physiological anguish into the horrific account of Zion's deteriorating children in the stanza's final couplet. The "breaking" (שבר) image frequently occurs in the context of divine judgment (Isa 51:19; Jer 4:6, 20; 6:1, 14; 8:11, 21; 14:17; 48:3, 5; Amos 6:6), and the בת עמי construction is specifically reminiscent of Jeremiah's descriptions of Jerusalem (see especially Jer 6:14; 8:11; also Jer 4:11; 6:26; 8:11, 19, 21-23; 9:6; cf. Lam 3:48; 4:3, 6, 10).

Though the "daughter" reference appears redundant, providing an unnecessary trope when "the breaking of my people" alone would suffice, the total phrase elicits a double meaning that delicately prepares the reader for the starving children that follow. As previously seen, the breaking "daughter" is clearly a reference to the personified Zion (vv. 1-2, 4, 8, 10), but its unnecessary inclusion in the protracted designation ("the breaking of the daughter of my people"), rather than being superfluous, serves to humanize the "breaking" image. Should the line simply read, "the breaking of my people," the image remains more abstract and functions as a higher-order metaphor, wherein a city's inhabitants are collectively likened to an unspecified shattered object. The insertion of בת into the construct phrase, however, facilitates a more vivid (and therefore, immediate) image of a shattered young woman's body, evoking situations of domestic violence, assault, or civilian casualties of war (cf. Dan 11:26; Lam 1:15; 3:48; 4:10). While the phrase overtly refers to the Jerusalem people as a whole, the extended designation of line 4 displays the horrifying image of a young girl's fractured body

just prior to an explicit discussion of the Jerusalem infants in the following couplet. Through enjambment, the poet isolates this striking photograph of a child (broken by God) that, coupled with the speaker's expressed grief, imposes its disturbing detail upon the reader.

3.3.1.2. A Devastating Testimony (*Zion's Dying Children*) (*vv. 11c-12*)

The final lines of the כ-stanza clarify what is implicit in line 4 and introduce the death of Zion's children as a new and tragic dimension to Jerusalem's suffering. We learn that the poet is speaking "as children and sucklings faint / in the streets of the city." We will discuss three primary aspects of the content, presentation, and construction of violence in these verses: (1) the use of infinitival verbs to enhance the immediacy of the suffering children, (2) the poetic devices that collectively intensify the portrait of the children's plight, and (3) the various means by which the poem fosters readerly empathy for Zion's mothers.

First, beginning with the final lines of v. 11, the writer shifts almost entirely away from the perfect verbs that predominantly govern the first ten and half verses. With the exception of ויאמרו in line 1 of v. 12, all verbal action predicated of Zion's children in vv. 11-12 is conveyed by means of the infinitive construct with a ב-prepositional prefix, a construction found nowhere else in the poem (cf. מבלע and להשחית in v. 8; להשיב in v. 14). The prominent figuring of the infinitive construct in vv. 11-12 serves both (1) to make the children's suffering present to the reader—an effect generated by a number of other features as well (discussed below)—and (2) to lengthen their agony indefinitely. The former is achieved through the juxtaposition of the poet's personal suffering in lines 1-4 with that of the children in line 5-6. As the shift into first-person voice (v. 11) transforms what could be an

ostensibly past-tense description (in vv. 1-10) into a present utterance, the use of the ב-preposition with the infinitive—a construction that frequently indicates the temporal proximity of the infinitival and finite verb[14]—brings the children's pain into simultaneity with the writer's own lament. This not only specifies the *reason* for the speaker's sudden articulation of personal anguish—another possible interpretation of the ב-preposition in בעטף—but also underscores the *urgency* of the infants' suffering.[15] In the same moment that the reader hears the poet's words, infants waste away in Zion's streets. The poem thus exerts a desperate ethical decision upon the listener, who is now acutely aware of the fact that Jerusalem's little ones could die at any minute without immediate assistance, whether human or divine.[16]

At the same time (regarding the latter), the repeated use of the infinitive construct with the ב-preposition in v. 12 in many ways prolongs the children's pain or at least precludes any attempt to relegate it to a bounded moment in time. Once the poem begins describing the children's deterioration, three of the four verbs in vv. 11-12 are infinitives, leaving only one finite verb to anchor their temporal significance: the imperfective יאמרו in line 1 of v. 12. The effect of these verbal selections is that the reader experiences the descriptions of the children as a series of simultaneous fragments—snapshots of painful realities without any clear timestamps to fasten them: "as infants and babes faint" (v. 11); "as they faint like the wounded" (v. 12); "as their life is poured out" (v. 12). Through these

[14] Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 604.

[15] Ibid. Many translations reflect the causal sense of בעטף here: e.g., "because infants and babes faint" (NRSV). Similarly, NIV, ESV, KJV, and CEB.

[16] Cf. Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 53, who argues that Lamentations as a whole not only serves to evoke human sympathy but also to catalyze divine action on Zion's behalf: "[A] causal chain exists in [v. 11]…in which the cause of the poet's distress is identified as the brokenness of Zion, and the cause of the brokenness of Zion is identified as the children collapsing like the wounded in the squares of the city. Thus it is Zion's presentation of the plight of her children that has recruited the poet so forcefully. Since the lament as a genre is concerned to get a response from God to the suffering it describes, the poet is modeling the response to Zion's lament that should come from God."

variegated repetitions of their weakening condition, the poet both *emphasizes* and *prolongs* their suffering, not only in the aural experience of the poem (as the reader hears successive articulations of their draining life) but also in the temporality of the poetic actions themselves. Without consistent finite verbs to secure their relative happening, the infinitival images of their diminishing vitality float in the poem's suspended present, as if they transpire concurrently with every new reading. Unlike vv. 1-10, where perfective and waw-consecutive-imperfective verbs largely place Yahweh's violence against Zion in her (recent) memory, vv. 11-12 utter their lingering effects and thereby affix them to the poem's performance, thereby precluding the possibility of their cessation and resolution. As long as the poem has a reader, Zion's newborns starve at their mothers' breasts.

Second, in addition to the poem's play with time, vv. 11-12 these verses use careful diction and aural features in order to paint a vivid portrait of the children's suffering. In the final couplet of v. 11, the line begins with the only occurrence of II √עטף in the *niphal* stem in the Hebrew Bible. Although the *niphal* meaning is virtually identical to that of the more commonly used *qal* stem (Isa 57:16; Pss 61:2 [3]; 102:1 [0]), the Masoretic preservation of the *niphal* reading might have been chosen to "convey the idea that the fainting/languishing was not of the infants' choosing."[17] The verb is typically associated with languishing conditions which are either caused by God (Isa 57:16) or from which only God can rescue (Jon 2:7; Pss 61:3 [2]; 77:4 [3]; 102:1 [0]; 107:5; 142:4 [3]), and both dynamics—divine negligence and the need for divine assistance—resound here. The two designations for those who suffer, the "child" (עלל) and "baby (or suckling)" (יונק), demonstrate the full range of childhood innocence from nursing newborns up through toddlerhood and early childhood (cf. their ability to ask

[17] Salters, *Lamentations*, 148.

their mother for grain and wine in v. 12). Commonly occurring together throughout the Hebrew Bible, the two often serve to differentiate "children and infants" from the adult population of "men and women" (1 Sam 15:3; 22:19; Jer 44:7), and their occurrence together here suggests that the speaker is referring to the most susceptible of Zion's population. Most importantly, the aural similarity of their participial forms draws the two designations together and further underscores the ongoing nature of their present suffering.

In the final line of v. 11, the camera lens zooms out to consider the setting of the children's suffering within "the plazas of the city." This decidedly public location (e.g., Deut 13:17 [16]; Judg 19:15; Prov 1:20) only enhances the shock of the situation, and its plural form reveals how endemic the loss of young life has become. In such a public setting at the "very heart of city life," we would expect to see children "running around and playing as their parents conduct business or catch up on the day's news,"[18] with "their mothers looking on protectively."[19] We would expect to witness the execution of justice (Zech 8:16; Job 31:21; Prov 22:22; Ruth 4:1-12; cf. Isa 29:21; Amos 5:10-15), but instead, there isn't a single street square within Jerusalem's gates that isn't filled with malnourished children. Moreover, given the frequent proximity (or even abuttal) of the רחבות to the city gates (Esth 4:6; Job 29:7), especially in Jerusalem (Neh 8:1, 3, 16; 2 Chr 29:4; 32:6; Jer 9:21), the chosen setting fills out the portrait of the sinking gates in v. 9 and the lamenting populace in v. 10, drawing these separate moments into a more unified portrait of public lamentation and destruction.

This detailed discussion continues in v. 12, where the second and third couplets provide two more striking images of the children's failing health. In lines three and four, the poet directly recalls

[18] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 95.
[19] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 72.

the concluding image of v. 11 through syntactical resemblance (as in v. 11, both lines begin with the ב-preposition and are governed by an infinitive construct) and the repetition of key words (e.g., רחבות and √עטף). At the same time, the disturbing scene is presented with enough innovation that it retains its shocking effect. First, the infinitive of √עטף appears in the *hithpael* stem rather than the *niphal* stem (v. 11)—a change that reflects the language of those who petition God for deliverance from their waning health (e.g., Jon 2:8; Pss 77:4 [3]; 142:4 [3]). Whereas the *niphal* stem perhaps called attention to the children's passivity, the *hithpael* stem, though closely related to the *niphal* meaning, may underscore the *felt* dimension of their diminishing vitality, as indicated by their inquiry in the preceding line.[20] Second, in place of the identified subjects in the final couplet of v. 11 (עלל and יונק), the poet assumes their presence in v. 12 (as seen in the 3mp pronominal suffix) and sharpens their suffering by likening their condition to "one slain" (כחלל)—a troubling image frequently found in contexts of divine judgment (Ps 69:27 [26]; Isa 22:2; Jer 14: 18; 51:52; Ezek 26:15; 30:24; 32:20-32; Zeph 2:12 Job 24:12).[21] By figuring the starving children in this way, the poet precludes the reader from assuming that their starvation is an unfortunate byproduct of military warfare or collateral damage from a violent conflict of political wills. On the contrary, like "one slain," their bodies, pierced and emaciated by hunger pangs, suffer wounds inflicted by the enemy (whether human or divine). In this image, the poem continues to emphasize the bodily suffering of Zion's populace (cf. the "broken Daughter" of v. 11) and portrays the visceral features of their pain. Finally, in an almost verbatim repetition from v. 11, the fourth line of v. 12 locates these wounded children "in the plazas of the city

[20] *HALOT* 2:815.

[21] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73 notes the subtle way that the poem implies "famine and sword"—a common word pair in contexts of divine judgment (e.g., Isa 51:9; Jer 5:12; 11:22; 14:12-18; 15:2; 16:4; Ezek 5:12; 7:15; 1 Chr 21:12;)—in the final two couplets of v. 12 through the children's question and כחלל, respectively.

(ברחבות עיר)" (cf. ברחבות קריה in v. 11e). By supplying a nearly identical setting here, the poet merges the images of vv. 11e and 12d such that the emaciated children that fill the streets appear (to the mind's eye) like those cut down in the aftermath of warfare.

In the third and final couplet of v. 12, the children's languishing condition reaches its tragic conclusion, as the lives of these "slain" infants are "poured out / at their mothers' breast." The expression "pouring out one's life" (√שפך +נפש) carries multiple senses. It sometimes serves as an image of extreme personal suffering (Job 30:16) or the vocal expression of grief before God (Ps 45:5 [4]; 1 Sam 1:15). In this light, its use in v. 12 complements the use of √עטף in vv. 11-12: the weakening children's strength now pours from their bodies like the blood of the slain. The poetry facilitates this combination of images through the similar appearance and sound of the two *hithpael* infinitives in v. 12c and 12e: בהתעטפם and בהשתפך respectively. Moreover, because the stanza has opened with the children questioning their mothers (discussed below), it is fitting that it concludes with them "pouring out" their souls to them. The lack of direct speech in the final couplet might even suggest that the little ones' words have regressed into mournful moans, as they starve in their mothers' arms.[22]

At the same time, others have noted the use of √שפך and נפש to denote the loss of life,[23] as seen specifically in legal texts that prohibit the consumption of an animal's blood, in which their "life" (נפש) consists, and instead require that their blood be "poured out" (√שפך) on the ground (Lev 17:10-14; Deut 12:23-25; cf. Gen 9:5-6). The stanza thus progresses from starvation (implied by the children's

[22] Provan, *Lamentations*, 72. Cf. Salters, *Lamentations*, 151, who proposes that the poet subtly differentiates between the older (עלל) and the younger children (יונק) in the second and third couplets of v. 12, respectively. The older children waste away in the streets, while the infants groan in hunger at their mothers' breasts.

[23] Cf. the interpretive translation of v. 12 in the Targum, which highlights their deathly condition: "To their mothers the young men of Israel say, "Where is the grain and wine?" when they were parched with thirst, like one slain by the sword, in the open spaces of the city, when their souls were poured out through hunger into their mothers' bosom." For the translation, see Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, 135.

question in v. 12b) to collapsing like the mortally wounded (cf. implied by כחלל in v. 12c) and ultimately to death.[24] The shock of dying children is only exacerbated by the broader poetic context, in which √שפך figures prominently, as Dobbs-Allsopp has noted: Yahweh has "poured out" his anger like fire (v. 4); the speaker's are "poured out" to the ground in response to Daughter Zion's broken bodies (v. 11); the infants lives are "poured out" at their mothers' breasts (v. 12); and the speaker exhorts Daughter Zion to "pour out" her heart like water before Yahweh (v. 19). "Here the action which caused the poet such distress is that that causes the babies to die."[25] Through this key lexical repetition, the poet not only identifies the poet's suffering with that of Zion and her infants but also presents their pain as the resulting outflow of Yahweh's streaming wrath.

Third, the ultimate purpose of (1) the temporal play in vv. 11-12 and (2) the verses' careful construction of the children's suffering is to identify the reader with Jerusalem's mothers and to overwhelm the reader with empathy for their loss. In the opening couplet of v. 12, for example, the poem immerses the reader in the mother's bereavement through direct discourse: "To their mothers they say, / 'Where are the grain and wine?'" The primary position of the children's mothers in the syntax of the opening line immediately indicates the familial focus of the stanza and makes primary the mothers' experience—a relational dynamic confirmed by the repetition of אמות as the stanza's last word. From beginning to end, the stanza seeks to convey the helplessness, hopelessness, and desperation of Zion's mothers, who lack any available means to keep their children alive, and the poet underscores the unity of their experience through devices like inclusio, euphony, and extended

[24] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73.
[25] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 95.

enjambment (the entire stanza being one extended sentence).[26] No less than four times, the stanza indicates the children with 3mp pronominal suffixes, a feature that again privileges the mothers' gaze upon "*them*" and mimics her obsessive parental concern with *their* suffering. Even the verb that follows (יאמרו) sounds and appears "motherly" through the repetition of א and מ from the preceding word. Instead of "asking" (√שאל) or "seeking" (√דרש) food from their mommies, they simply "speak" (אמר), and the "motherly" appearance of the verb indicates the trust inherent to parent-child love.

The speaker plays up this trust considerably by directly quoting the children in the second line of v. 12. This is the first moment of the poem where the reader hears the spoken word of the victims themselves, albeit within the speaker's own self-expression. In this line, the speaker provides a sound bite from Jerusalem's streets and thereby places the reader in the middle of Zion's destroyed plazas. By quoting the children directly (rather than alluding to their pleas), the poet identifies the reader with the mothers specifically. As the poem is read aloud, the reader hears the little ones' heart-wrenching request for food in a manner that mimics that of the mothers themselves. Other poetic features serve to immerse the reader in the moment of the question as well. For example, the a-class vowels across the second line mimic the children's open mouths,[27] longing for food provisions that are no longer available.[28] Also, the plural verb and subject increase the line's decibel level so to speak, as

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[26] Ibid., 94.

[27] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 273 likens their speech to that of infants: "Given the direct speech it seems more reasonable to imagine that the poets were in fact imitating child talk, the repeated a-sound being primary in infancy, no matter what the language." On the euphony of the line, see also Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 106.

[28] Cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, 72. She argues that the reference to "grain and wine," a word pair that is unique to Lam 2:12, represents more than a sign of divine blessing or prosperity that has now been revoked. She contends that they also served as Jerusalem's food supply in times of scarcity (e.g., 2 Sam 16:2), given that they can be stored for long periods of time without spoiling. The children's question thus "points to the fact that the city has no provisions left."

Many have found the mention of wine to be an awkward request from a child and have therefore suggested that יין be deleted from the line or be emended to ואין ("but there was none"). See, e.g., Kraus, *Klagelieder* (*Threni*), 36, 38;

the same children that fill Zion's "plazas" in v. 11f collectively and repeatedly[29] beg for food. In a tragic moment of dramatic irony, the children remain unable to see what the reader already knows: it's Yahweh's rampage (vv. 1-10) that has left them hungry.

Even the phrasing of the question itself reveals the strength of the mother-child bond. Rather than asking "why" there is no food or "what" they will eat—questions that convey accusation, panic, or, at the very least, an acknowledgement that nourishment can no longer be expected—the little ones simply ask "where" the grain and wine might be found, as if, in their naïveté, they cannot conceive of a world where food is interminably absent, but only misplaced. In many respects, the "where" question implies that their current experience is an anomaly in an otherwise loving history between mother and child, and yet, the speaker does not record the parental response. This one-sided conversation only heightens the reader's empathy for these mothers, who also search in vain for meaningful answers to such innocence. The reader sits beside them, unable to assure them or their children that food is coming.

Finally, v. 12 concludes by making it clear that infants' lives ebb away at their mothers' breasts, a place where infants should find comfort, strength, and sustenance (e.g., Num 11:12; Ruth 4:16; 1 Kgs 3:20). The lexical play between נפשם and אמתם at the end of each line highlights the indivisible bond between a mother and the lives of her children, and yet, as the line break indicates, even this relationship is now torn asunder: the wordplay (a cohering device) and lineation (a dividing device)

Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel. Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches*, vol. 7 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1908), 37; Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 11; Xuan Huong Thi Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 302 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 32; *BHK*. Cf. Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder," 107; Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*, 150.who argue that our concern with giving wine to children is an exclusively modern one and was not necessarily shared in ancient Israel. The Old Greek, Vulg., and Targum all attest the "wine" reading in MT.

[29] Westermann, *Lamentations*, 145: "The imperfect [in v. 12] is to be taken as a frequentative."

work against one another to intensify the tension between mother-child intimacy and separation, proximity and distance, life and death. In this way, the stanza concludes where it began, with "their mothers" (אמתם) who, along with their weakening children and dying infants, "embrace" the entire stanza.[30] But by the sixth line, everything has changed: while the mothers remain seated in the street plazas, the children's questions have faded into the silence of their death. "The horror of the imagery…is simply evoked and left to linger without comment."[31]

3.3.1.3. An Impossible Testimony (*Zion's Incomparable Pain*) (*v. 13*)

Overwhelmed by the horrific scene of v. 12, the speaker turns to address Zion specifically in v. 13 but cannot find words to comfort or even describe her suffering. The poetry of v. 13 demonstrates the speaker's obsession with Daughter Zion in a number of ways: primarily through the staccato stream of exclamatory questions but also through the repeated vocatives ("Daughter Jerusalem" and "Maiden Daughter Zion" in lines 2 and 4 respectively) and the twelve appearances of the 2fs pronominal suffix strewn across the linguistic texture of vv. 13-14. After articulating Jerusalem's destruction (vv. 1-10) and his own personal anguish caused by the city's dying children (vv. 11-12), the speaker *explodes* into direct address, and all further discussion of Zion's suffering will be spoken only to her (vv. 13-19), providing language for her experience until she finds strength (and words) enough to address her God (vv. 20-22). As we will see, besides simply indicating the speaker's sympathy for the fallen city, these questions serve both to *challenge* and to *justify* the poet's work. With careful rhetoric, the thirteenth stanza hints at the necessity of the poem itself and reveals that its literary images alone can bear

[30] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 273.
[31] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 95.

truthful witness to Jerusalem's destruction.

The opening couplet of v. 13 testifies to the immensity of Zion's pain precisely by indicating its unspeakable and incomparable nature: "What shall I testify concerning you? What shall I compare to you, / O Daughter Jerusalem?" Though the meaning of אעידך is disputed,[32] its concern with bearing

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[32] The verb as it stands in the Leningrad Codex is a *hiphil* inflection of II עוד (a denominative fromעד), meaning "to bear witness" (cf. other Mss that offer the otherwise unattested *qal* אעודך as the *ketiv* and the *hiphil* אעידך as the *qere*). Many find this sense of the verb to be awkward in v. 13: e.g., "What shall I testify for you?"; "How shall I testify concerning you?"; "What can I say for you?" (NRSV, NIV, ESV); "What can I take as a witness or liken to you?" (NJPS; similarly, KJV); "What can I testify about you?" (CEB). As Rudolph notes, one could also interpret the suffix as an indirect object. He reads, "was soll ich dir als Zeugnis, d. h. als Beleg, als Beispiel anführen?" ("Der Text der Klagelieder," 107–8). Whatever the case, the Versional evidence seems also to understand II עוד as operative here. Vulg. provides the most tantalizing translation: *cui conparabo te*. Cf. the Targum, which translates, "How shall I admonish you," on the basis of the BH and MH idiom ב- + II √עוד (*hiphil*) (e.g., Gen 43:3; Jer 11:7; Ps 50:7). See Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, 136.

On the basis of the Vulg. reading, some have proposed emendations to the verb. Johannes Meinhold, "Threni 2, 13," *ZAW* 15 (1895): 286–86, followed by *BHK*; *BHS*; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 39, proposed a reading מה אערוך on the basis of the similar appearance of ד and ר. He translates, "Was soll ich zur Vergleichung oder zum Trost dir vorlegen?" or "was soll ich dir vergleichen?" Meinhold also presents texts like Lam 2:13 that feature √ערך and √דמה in parallel with one another (Isa 40:18; Ps 89:7 [6]). However, as Salters notes, his reading cannot accommodate the 2fs suffix in the original reading (*Lamentations*, 152).

Some explain (and adopt) the Vg. translation (e.g., "to what shall I liken you?") without emendation. Ehrlich, for example, interprets the verb according to Jer 49:19, in which יעידני appears in parallel with מי כמוני and thus, according to him, might carry a comparative sense. Though MT points the verb as a *hiphil* inflection of √יעד ("to summon"), it's possible that the verb was originally intended to be from II √עוד, with a meaning "dem Objekt gleichkommen, eigentlich dessen Duplikat bilden." See Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel. Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1908), 367; also, Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, 7:37, as followed by Salters, *Lamentations*, 153; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 108.

Others, however, argue for a different root altogether. Samuel Daiches, "Lamentations ii. 13," *ExpTim* 28 (1917): 189 prefers the *qal* reading of the *ketiv* and argues for the root I √עוד, with a basic meaning of "to repeat, do again." See BDB 728; *HALOT* 2:795. Daiches argues that the *qal* inflection also has a sense of "to restore, relieve, give strength" based on *polel* and *hitpolel* occurrences of the same root with a similar meaning (see Pss 146:9; 147:6 and Ps 20:9 respectively). According to Daiches, this interpretation enables a nice parallel with ואנחמך in line 3 of the stanza. He translates, "How shall I relieve thee (by words of comfort, or give thee courage)?" Cf. Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 164; idem, "A Note on Lamentations ii 13," *JTS* 34 (1933): 162–63, who argues for the same root but retains the *hiphil* inflection (with a meaning, "to strengthen, fortify"). He bases this reading on the occurrence of √עוד in the *hiphil* in Sir 4:11 and the frequent equivalence of *hiphil* and *polel* meanings in the HB (e.g. Pss 19:8; 23:3). Like Daiches, Gordis also sees a chiastic structure in the four verbs of the verse, which, again, places אעידך in parallel with ואנחמך. Cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, 64: "How can I affirm you?" Similarly, Kraus, *Klagelieder* (*Threni*), 38, who understands the root to be I √עוד but interprets the *hiphil* on the basis of the verb's basic meaning "to repeat." For Kraus, the *hiphil* means " "immer wieder Worte brauchen,' um jmd. Zuzureden, aufzumuntern." He translates, "Wie soll ich dir zureden?"

As Schäfter writes, "[T]he case has to be judged not as a textual problem but as a question of interpretation" (*BHQ*). Because the Versional evidence collectively attests to a *hiphil* inflection of II √עוד, I am inclined to translate the verb in accordance with other (rare) occurrences of the verb, as it appears with accusative suffixes (without prepositions). In these cases, the *hiphil* stem simply means "to serve as a witness," whether for (Job 29:11; Mal 2:14) or against (1 Kgs 21:10, 13) (an) other(s). I translate the line as follows, "What shall I testify concerning you?"—a translation that again implies a

proper witness about Zion bespeaks the poet's simultaneous desire and frustration at discovering adequate language, much less adequate consolation, for the city('s bereaved mothers). The second question of v. 13 then (unsuccessfully) searches for a comparable example of Jerusalem's experience. If found, this example would not only provide one with whom Daughter Jerusalem might commiserate—an advocate that might speak with and for her, while walking her toward healing—but would also supply the speaker another source from which to attain the ideal (or most effective) language to capture and comfort Zion's misery. By phrasing this desire as a question rather than a statement (e.g., "no one compares to you"), the speaker avoids any presumptuous tone (as if the poem has considered all possible comparisons) and instead invites the reader to plumb the depths of human experience with him. Finally, the speaker directs these questions to "Daughter Jerusalem,"[33] a new title for Zion that connects the personified city to the "young maidens of Jerusalem," who bow their heads to the ground in mourning (v. 10) and anticipates the derision "Daughter Jerusalem" suffers from passersby (v. 15). Her isolation on the final line underscores her untouchable, "stand-alone" status among the world's sufferers.

These first two questions also reveal a dialectic in the poem between inadequate and adequate speech. The first question, "What shall I testify concerning you?" intimates that the descriptions in vv. 1-12 cannot suffice alone, that further discussion is needed to convey Zion's truth. With this search for the proper wording, the poem ironically subverts its own authority and *raison*

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desire to speak on behalf of Zion without the knowledge of what to say. Rudolph's interpretation of the 2fs suffix as an indirect object (discussed above) is also appealing: e.g., "What shall I give you as a testimony?"

[33] On the use of the definite article (with construct nouns already determined by a definite genitive) to denote the vocative, see GKC §127f.

d'être, for the eye-witness testimony recorded by the poet to this point is deficient in some way.[34] Surprisingly, the evidence of Jerusalem's assault presented thus far by the prosecution (vv. 1-12) is not quite enough to convince the readerly (or heavenly) judge to convict the (divine) defendant(s) or to grant justice to the oppressed. Despite the speaker's desire to speak effectively, the details of the sworn statement that will best serve Zion's case elude the poet, whose once vivid descriptions (vv. 1-12) are now reduced to desperate exclamations posed to the victim (v. 13).

Although the second question—"What shall I compare to you?"—seems to reinforce the impossibility of truthful speech by highlighting Zion's incomparable situation, it can also underscore the importance or adequacy of the poetry itself. The selection of √דמה is especially significant here, given its frequent use to express the incomparable power of God (Isa 40:18, 25; 46:5; cf. Ps 89:7 [6]). The unrivaled power of the divine is now refracted in the unprecedented affliction of God's people. It's this incomparable quality of Jerusalem's destruction that discloses the incomparable quality of the poet's work as well. If, in the eyes of the poet, the events of 586 constitute a horrific innovation within universal human experience, the poet himself also pioneers new territory in bearing artistic witness to the historicity and reality of these events. The poem's self-justification comes full circle in the stanza's final couplet, where the speaker communicates the immensity of Zion's brokenness through a figurative comparison: "For as great as the sea is your breaking; / who can heal you?" With this simile, the writer provides an explicit answer to the verse's second question ("what shall I compare to you?"), albeit in an unexpected way. Given the absence of human or societal equivalents by which to

[34] The idea of the poem's ironic contradiction of itself is, in some ways, *contra* to Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 96, who separates the speaker's expressed inability to find the appropriate testimony in v. 13 from the poem itself (as written testimony): "The poet-narrator is represented within Lamentations 2 as wondering how he can appropriately witness (memorialize) Zion's suffering, but it is in fact the poem itself—the literary artifact—that does the actual witnessing."

understand Jerusalem's trauma, the poet intimates here that *literary images alone* can provide a window into the truth of the city's experience. Only the artist, who looks beyond socio-political events into all aspects of the natural and heavenly orders, can paint the exact portrait necessary to translate Zion's pain to and beyond herself. The poem thus justifies itself as the only authentic medium for making Jerusalem's demise intelligible.

In sum, the two opening questions of v. 13 both relativize and exalt the poem's power. On one hand, the speaker's questions (and their implied negative answers) acknowledge the inadequacy (and unavailability) of *any* language to convey or resolve Jerusalem's upheaval, and this concession relativizes any capacity within poetic discourse for truthful—or at least *comprehensively* truthful—witness. On the other hand, by highlighting the incomparability of Jerusalem's fall, the poem also presents itself as an unprecedented linguistic event elicited by and accountable to atrocities heretofore unknown. The aural similarity of the two verbs in line one coupled with the near identical syntax of the two questions and the alliterative "m" sound across the line work together to intensify this dialectic between poetic power and powerlessness, authenticity and emptiness.

The second couplet is a near mirror image of the first, containing two first person imperfective verbs followed by the named addressee (here, "Maiden Daughter Zion"). This structural parallelism across the couplets is compounded by semantic parallelism as well, given the near synonymity between מה אדמה לך in line 1 and מה אשוה לך in line 3. In the final of the three questions, the poet's selection of √שוה in the *hiphil* stem once again draws upon the vocabulary of divine incomparability in an ironic fashion (note the only other occurrence of *hiphil* √שוה in Isa 46:5). Israel's unique place among the nations emerges not from the surpassing generosity of her God but from her experience of

his unparalleled anger. Combined with the first two verbs of the stanza, this final question concludes a rapid succession of succinct exclamations, whose similar sound contributes to the speaker's urgent and pleading tone.

The second verb of the stanza's third line signals the end of the interrogative list by leaving off the opening מה found prior to each of the three preceding verbs and instead reveals the guiding purpose of the poet's search: to comfort her. The implicit inability to find any comparable sufferer makes such comfort an impossible reality. In many ways, the poet expands the problem of the missing comforter(s) in Lamentations 1 (vv. 2, 9, 16, 17, 21) to include the writer and readers themselves. Even the well-intentioned few who desire to mollify Zion's experience yearn in vain, for her "breaking" exceeds the limits of language. The question concludes with an extended vocative ("Maiden Daughter Zion") that reminds the reader of her vulnerable members. The city's "maiden" identity associates her with her youngest mourners (v. 10), while the "daughter" identifier locates her face among Jerusalem's dying children (vv. 11-12).

In the final couplet of v. 13, the poet draws together the entire stanza by providing a figurative answer to the opening questions in line 5. While Jerusalem's "breaking" may have no historical comparison, it does have a metaphorical counterpart in the ocean waters that evokes the vastness and incomparability of Jerusalem's suffering. Like the sea, Zion's "breaking" stretches as far as the eye can see in all directions without any apparent boundary and reaches depths yet unperceived by human eyes. What's more, the literary image connotes the cosmic sea and its accompanying notions of chaos and destruction: "The destruction of Jerusalem is, in a metaphoric sense, like the flood that returned

the world to its primordial chaos (cf. Isa 54:9)."[35] The poet's careful selection of שבר is suggestive of משבר ("wave, breaker"), which commonly occurs with ים (Jon 2:3; Ps 93:4). The aural similarity between the two words concretizes the ocean image by evoking both the wavy detail of the water's surface and the sound of its crashing, mimicked by the sibilant in שבר. At the same time, by referencing Zion's suffering this way ("your *breaking*"), the writer ties the addressee back to the "breaking of the daughter of my people" in v. 10. The blending of these two images together—Zion's battered body and the "great sea"—has two effects: (1) the generic (perhaps even placid) sea now becomes choppy and chaotic, which in turn introduces an ominous undertone to Zion's condition; and (2) Zion's broken body (once bounded) now expands without limit, her bruises multiplying across her body like the "breakers" that cut up the ocean's surface.

Standing in the middle of Jerusalem, the reader sees brokenness in all directions and capacities—walls, structures, systems, families, children, authorities. It's this unfathomable experience that gives rise to the stanza's final question, "Who will heal you?" The change from asking "what" in the opening four lines into asking "who" in the final line transitions the matter from one of comprehension (making sense of Jerusalem's destruction by means of comparable examples) into one of responsibility. The speaker moves from first-person reflection into third (or second) person action. Bookended by questions, the stanza concludes with a plea for someone to intervene and prepares the reader for the "quick succession of potential 'healers'" that follow (vv. 14-18)."[36]

[35] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73.
[36] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 96.

3.3.1.4. A Collective Testimony (*Zion's Failed Healers*) (*vv. 14-17*)

3.3.1.4.1. The First Failed Healer: The Prophets (v. 14)

The first of the four (failed) "healers" discussed by the speaker are the prophets. Mentioned initially as "her prophets" in v. 9, they now become the subject of an extended critique by the speaker in his continued address to Zion. The critique begins by discussing the empty and false content of their prophecies. First, as those who see שוא, they prophesy visions that have no regard for justice or truth, whether construed as intentionally deceitful (e.g., Exod 23:1; Isa 59:4; Ezek 13:6; Hos 10:4; Ps 144:8; Prov 30:8; Zech 10:2) or simply frivolous, flattering speech (e.g., Pss 12:2; 41:7 [6]). The equivalent to modern "bullshit," שוא, when applied to human speech, suggests more than mere lies but rather an undisciplined discourse that benefits the plans or image of the speaker, regardless of its oppressive, destructive, or even idolatrous (cf. Jon 2:9 [8]; Ps 31:7 [6]) consequences.[37] Second, the poet pairs this word with תפל and plays upon its two possible senses. If derived from I √תפל, the word indicates tastelessness or insipidity (Job 6:6) and, when used figuratively, can connote moral unseemliness or offensiveness (cf. תפלה in Jer 23:13; Job 1:22).[38] If derived from II √תפל, however, the word refers to "whitewash"—a popular metaphor in Ezekiel for the deceiving appeal of false prophecies (13:10-15; 22:28; cf. √טפל in Ps 119:69; Job 13:4).[39] Both senses of תפל respectively draw out the "vanity" (akin to the worthlessness of tasteless food) and/or "falsehood" (akin to whitewash over a crumbling wall)

[37] The translations reflect this more complicated meaning, for though many opt for a reading that highlights שוא as deceit (e.g., NIV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, NJPS), others highlight the term's associations with vanity or emptiness (e.g., CEB, KJV). Cf. Harry G Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2010).

[38] Proponents of this reading often highlight the emptiness/worthlessness of the prophets' words. See, e.g., NIV, CEB, Renkema, *Lamentations*, 282; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 110; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 64.

[39] For those who reference "whitewash" explicitly or imply it through mention of deception, see, e.g., NRSV; ESV; Salters, *Lamentations*, 111; Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 136; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 33; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 142; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 36; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 127.

suggested by the preceding שוא. In this way, the speaker indicts the prophets for the ignorance[40] and treachery of their words.

What's more, because the poetry makes it impossible to determine the timeframe of the prophets' activity, the poet extends these "empty and false" visions across a range of scenarios leading up to and following from Jerusalem's fall. On one hand, their deceptive prophecies might have contributed to the downfall of Jerusalem prior to the poem's composition, as they failed to call Judah to account for their disobedience. On the other hand, it is just as possible that the prophets continue to proclaim vain words in the aftermath of 587—words devoid either of honest speech concerning Israel's faults (see lines 3-4) or, in light of the gruesome images that precede, devoid of meaningful hope that soberly recognizes the severity of her suffering. As v. 13 suggests, their visions may lack substance simply because, as human discourse, they fall short of addressing the city's incomparable condition. Whatever the case, the broad meaning of the two labels provided in the stanza's second line invite the reader to look both backward and forward in order to fill in the content of these worthless delusions in light of many different historical moments.

The details and arrangement of the first couplet also disclose the theological implications of a corrupted prophetic office. Above all, prophetic dysfunction, like the destruction of the cult in vv. 6-7, strips Israel of any communication with their God. Without the prophets, they have no mediating voice to discern the divine meaning of their past, present, and future. Zion again stands in the eternal present of her suffering without the possibility of significant action. The enjambment across the couplet, however, intensifies this loss by separating the fact of prophetic activity (line 1) from its false

[40] Cf. LXX ἀφροσύνην ("foolishness"); NASB and KJV ("foolish"); JPS and Parry, *Lamentations*, 69 ("folly").

content (line 2). As soon as the poem presents the possibility of a restored future through the mention of these seers ("Your prophets see for you"), it dashes any possible hope in these potential comforters by naming its subject matter ("emptiness and deception"). The isolation of שוא and תפל on the second line then underscores the comprehensive meaninglessness of their words, and their near rhyme (*šāw*[*ʾ*] *wĕṯāpēl*) speaks to their interwoven unity: "false emptiness" and "empty falsehood." Rather than offering "false and empty visions" (שוא and תפל as attributive adjectives), the seers prophesy the cancerous mass of "falsehood and emptiness" itself (שוא and תפל as substantive adjectives). Their words are not *characterized* by deception but *subsist* in deceit, thereby precluding any latent benefit they may otherwise have. Their redemption lies only in their cessation.

The second couplet specifies the prophets' ineptitude by naming their failure to "uncover" (√גלה) Zion's iniquity. In the majority of cases, √גלה in the *piel* stem appears with a direct object, but our writer indicates the object of the verb with the preposition על—a construction found only in Lamentations (2:14; 4:22). Regardless of the dialectical or grammatical reason for this idiosyncratic formulation, the seemingly superfluous preposition contributes to the line's aural (and visual) cohesion. The additional "l" sound ties the preposition to the preceding words and highlights the tongue's movement, indicating the contrast between the prophets' verbal activity and its futility. At the same time, the use of על visually stitches the verb גלו to its object עונך. As they stand, these two words share only one corresponding character (ו). The preposition, however, combines the final character of the verb (ל) with the first character of the object (ע) and, as a result, underscores the inherent unity of the prophet's expected task: to uncover Zion's hidden faults.

The theological implications of the line's governing verb are striking. Consistently associated

with uncovering what is hidden (e.g., Job 12:22; 20:27), √גלה in the *piel* stem figures prominently in the prophets as a sexual metaphor for public shaming (Isa 22:8; 47:2; 57:8; Hos 2:10; Nah 3:5; cf. Ezek 22:10; 23:10; 23:18). The poet fills out the "empty" visions of the previous line by naming their lack. Unwilling to expose or unwilling to discern Jerusalem's shame, the seers leave Zion oblivious to the meaning of her faults and unwittingly transform Jerusalem's suffering from an avoidable punishment into an inevitable catastrophe. When read in light of v. 9, however, we see that their ineptitude lies not in their corrupted intentions but in their silent God. Unable to find a vision from Yahweh, the prophets helplessly speak vain pronouncements devoid of divine insight. Yahweh has rigged the system: revoking all redemptive outcomes, pinning Israel's ignorance of their iniquity on their incompetent prophets, and steering Jerusalem toward its demise. The dual mention of the prophets in vv. 9 and 14 thus work together to present Yahweh as the sinister mastermind of the chaos.

Line 4 completes the clause by identifying the result of the "uncovering" Jerusalem was and is denied. The difficult phrasing suggests multiple possible outcomes. The idiom "√שוב (*hiphil*) + שבות/שבית" is a wordplay upon √שוב ("to turn, return") and can be translated, quite woodenly, "to turn a turning."[41] The ambiguity of the phrase has understandably generated multiple interpretations of its meaning. Those who favor the *qĕrê* (שבות) interpret the phrase in one of two ways. First, some understand the "turning" as a reference to repentance: the prophets neglected to expose Zion's sin

[41] The phrase "שוב (*qal*/*hiphil*) + שבות/שבית" appears throughout the Hebrew Bible (over 27 times) and has engendered much debate not only because of its idiomatic quality but also because of the difficulty of discerning the root of שבית/שבות, as evidenced by the *kĕṯîḇ*/*qĕrê* respectively of our verse. Of its multiple occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, the reading שבות appears eighteen times without a *qĕrê* and three times with the *qĕrê* שבית. Comparatively, שבית appears only twice without a *qĕrê* and eight times with the *qĕrê* שבות. Their consistent intersection reveals an already scribal ambivalence concerning whether שבית/שבות is derived from √שבה ("to take captive") or √שוב ("to turn") respectively. If the former, the phrase has a basic meaning of "to restore (one's) captivity." If the latter, as already indicated above, the wordplay upon √שוב could be translated (quite woodenly) "to turn a turning." On the Versional evidence and the exegetical significance of this difference, see below. For extensive bibliography and discussion of the idiom's etymology and meaning, see *HALOT,* 4:1385-7; *TLOT,* 3:1314-15; *ThWAT*, 7:958-65; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 111.

that they might "turn you (back) toward repentance."[42] This reading allows for both a past and present application, as the prophets have failed and continue to fail in addressing Judah's wrongdoing. The second interpretation, which is held by the majority of modern readers, reads the phrase as a description of restoration. For these interpreters, the idiom has a basic meaning of "returning to the status quo ante"[43] or "restoring the situation which prevailed earlier" (cf. Ezek 16:53).[44] In this reading, the prophets' continual incompetence in the present tense precludes Zion's reconstruction and repopulation after Yahweh's destructive judgment. Among those who retain the *kĕtîḇ* שבית ("captivity"), some similarly favor a restorative meaning (e.g., "to restore you from captivity" in NASB; "to turn away thy captivity" in KJV),[45] while others translate the idiom as a reference to Zion's past: "They didn't reveal your sin so as to prevent your captivity" (CEB). The ambiguity of the idiom (coupled with its alliterative play), therefore, intensifies the prophets' deficiency and the tragedy of their activity by noting their inability/refusal to lead Zion to repentance and thereby avoid (or restore Zion from) her unconscionable disaster. In some sense, as an answer to the final question of v. 13, the poet presents "returning" (or repentance) as a way out of Jerusalem's suffering and yet simultaneously revokes this possibility through the corruption of the prophetic office.

In a near repetition of the stanza's opening couplet, the final couplet of v. 14 returns to the deceptive character of the prophets' words and, with evocative diction, reveals the prophet's

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[42] This reading is primarily attested by the Versional evidence: *ut te ad paenitentiam provocarent* (Vulg.) and לאהדרותיך בתיאבתא (Targum): "to turn you to repentance."

[43] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 64.

[44] *HALOT* 4:1387. Interpreters render the restorative meaning of the idiom in various ways: "to restore your fortunes" (NRSV; JPS; ESV; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 284; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 64); "to make things better again" (Hillers, *Lamentations*, 33); "to avert your fate" (Westermann, *Lamentations*, 142; cf. Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 36; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 127); "to restore your former state" (Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 136). Cf. the Peshitta, which appears to combine both readings (restoration and repentance) together: "that you will repent and I will turn back your captivity."

[45] Cf. LXX: τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι αἰχμαλωσίαν σου; Parry, *Lamentations*, 69: "to reverse your captivity."

idolatrous inclinations. While לך, √חזה, and שוא are all repeated from lines 1-2, the poet introduces two lexical additions in these final lines that evoke a fresh insight from an already-stated idea. First, despite the debates surrounding its vocalization,[46] the mention of "oracles" (משאות) is suggestive of the homonymous II משא ("load, burden")[47]—a dual meaning played upon elsewhere in the prophets (Jer 23:33-38). Such wordplay implies that in the rare moments when Zion's prophets receive supernatural pronouncements, they only encumber her movement out of suffering. Second, the concluding line introduces an idolatrous element to their "empty and seductive" practices. Though the first descriptor in line 6 is a repetition from line 2, the second word is changed from תפל to מדוחים, a *hapax* from √נדח that has been translated in one of two ways: (1) "expelling, banishment" (cf. LXX ἐξώσματα; Vulg. *eiectiones*) and (2) "erring, misleading, enticing" (cf. Tg. וטעותא; Pesh. *mṭʿynyt'*).[48] The latter seizes upon a nuanced meaning of the verb in the *hiphil* stem ("to entice, seduce"), which primarily occurs in contexts of idolatry (Deut 13:6, 11, 14; 2 Kgs 17:21; cf. Prov 7:21; Ps 62:5 [4]).

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[46] The form *maś'ôṯ* is unique to Lamentations. Although most understand the noun as a derivative of "נשא קול" ("to raise a voice, make a statement") and thus interpret the word as a reference to an uttered pronouncement, many take issue with its construct state in MT due to its perceived interruption of a 3:2 metrical sequence, which has been predominant to this point. The caesura of the verse in MT resides after the second word (לך), and this results in an awkwardly extended final line: משאות שוא ומדוחים. For this reason, some argue that the word should be pointed as an absolute noun (*maśśā'ôṯ*), with שוא and מדוחים isolated on the final line and functioning appositionally. See, e.g., Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 38; Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*, 153; G. Bickell, "Kritische Bearbeitung der Klagelieder," *WZKM* 8 (1894): 110; Karl Budde, "Die Klagelieder," in *Die fünf Megillot: das Hohelied, das Buch Ruth, die Klagelieder, der Prediger, das Buch Esther: Erklärt*, KHC 17 (Freiburg: Mohr, 1898), 89. Cf. Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder," 220., who retains the absolute state of the noun but re-points *maśśā'ôṯ* to *maššā'ôṯ* ("Täuschungen" or "deceptions"), an invented *hapax* based on √נשׁא (*hiphil* "to deceive;" cf. משואות in Pss 73:18; 74:3). Albrektson (*Lamentations*, 112) notes, however: "Considering our very slight knowledge of the rules of Hebrew metrics it seems rather dubious to suggest any emendations on this ground." See also Hillers, *Lamentations*, 39; Salters, *Lamentations*, 157. The construct form of the noun does not necessitate a 2:3 meter (cf. *BHS*, *BHK*, *BHQ*).

[47] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 288–89.

[48] The majority of interpreters favor the latter meaning ("enticement, seduction"): Salters, *Lamentations*, 110; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 288; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 127; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 33; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 112; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 37; Parry, *Lamentations*, 69; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 142. For proponents of the former interpretation ("banishment"), see Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder," 108; Budde, "Die Klagelieder," 89; C. F. Keil, *Biblischer Commentar über den propheten Jeremia und die Klagelieder*, BCAT 3 (Leipzig: Dörffling und Franke, 1872), 584; Artur Weiser, "Klagelieder: Übersetzt und erklärt," in *Das hohe Lied, Klagelieder, Das Buch Esther*, ed. R. H. Ringgren and Artur Weiser, ATD 16:2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 59.

In a sense, due to the parallel structure and repetition of שוא across lines 2 and 6, מדוחים clarifies the kind of "whitewash" (תפל) Israel's seers proclaim and identifies it as apostasy. The prophets who have traditionally pled for fidelity to Yahweh now entice Israel to other gods and thereby exacerbate the divine jealousy that has already consumed them. The stanza therefore concludes with the most devastating effect of the prophets' false and empty speeches. Despite Zion's attempts to journey forward beyond her devastation, those responsible for charting her divinely prescribed path instead hamper her mobility with their burdensome words (משאות), rendering onerous any step toward healing, and (mis)guide her down treacherous paths, presenting her with only the illusion of progress. Without a foreseeable destination, the sufferings Zion now endures in her travels have no ultimate redemption.

3.3.1.4.2. The Second Failed Healer: The Passersby (v. 15)

Verse 15 introduces a second potential healer: the passersby. As we will see, the "power" of this image resides not in its gruesome detail but in the emotional implications of the passersby themselves, seen especially in (1) their perspective, (2) the ambiguity of their non-verbal gestures, and (3) their broken conversation.

First, much of the stanza's "power" resides simply in the introduction of the passersby as a distinctive perspective. Identified as כל עברי דרך ("all who pass along the road"), these individuals represent more than the actual travelers who happen to pass through Jerusalem. As Albrektson points out, the idiom carries a generic quality, as witnessed in its other biblical occurrences.[49] Appearing only

[49] Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 68–69.

six times in the Hebrew Bible, these "street-walkers" are found in contexts of destruction and represent the ordinary bystander who easily plunders the once-powerful fallen (Pss 80:13 [12]; 89:42 [41]; cf. Lam 1:12). They are the generic faces to whom Dame Folly calls (Prov 9:15) or to whose collective experience (or "common sense") Job can appeal in a dispute (21:29). As such, they are comparable to the contemporary "person on the street." Their faceless appearance and morally neutral character have tremendous import for the function of the fifteenth stanza as whole.

The writer's inclusion of the bystanders has a significant effect upon the reader's experience in three primary ways. First, as Berlin notes, the reaction of the passersby "provides an external observer, another perspective, that confirms the poet's perspective."[50] This perspective places the poet among the crowd and reframes the entire composition as one attempt (among masses of others) to render these horrific scenes in language. Second, the description of the passersby reveals the public dimension of Judah's suffering, "thereby underlining the theme of shame that accompanies destruction."[51] The poet thus discloses the hidden gaze of the crowds, among whom the poet and reader find themselves. As such, it unearths a moral complexity that inheres in the tension of the poem's presentation—a tension between the poem's use of language both to evoke sympathetic action from God and reader and to exploit Zion's pain for artistic delight. While the poet's gaze may enable truthful witness, it also feeds the inherent human amusement gleaned from violence.

Third, just as the passersby introduce an external perspective and highlight Zion's shame, one could argue as well that their reaction simultaneously objectifies the *reader's* position as witnesses of Zion's destruction (along with the poet). In this sense, the passersby present a morally neutral party in

[50] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73.
[51] Ibid. Cf. Westermann, *Lamentations*, 156.

whom the reader witnesses themselves—as the poet has already taken them into Jerusalem's plaza streets (vv. 11-12)—and upon whom the reader can transfer their complex reaction to the poet's testimony. The poem's genius is reflected in the stanza's focus on (somewhat) ambiguous gestures (see below) that leave the reader the task of discerning the underlying emotional experience of "all those who pass along the road." What's more, by framing this discussion in direct address, the poetic voice separates itself as an observer of observers and, in this way, distances itself from complicity in the bystanders' gestures: "*Those* bystanders clap their hands at *you*, Zion." By subtly identifying the reader/poet with the passersby, however, the poem turns any readerly disapproval of the crowd's inaction back upon the readers themselves, who, as a result of the poet's exhaustive report, also stand immobile with the multitude, complicit in the crowd's reactions. In summary, the inclusion of the bystanders' response does more than simply fill out the portrait of Zion's condition with additional characters, but it also verifies the poetic voice and raises a range of moral questions through the collision of observational perspectives (namely, the passersby, the speaker, and the reader).

Second, in addition to playing with multiple points of view, the stanza also paints the portrait of bystanders in nonverbal gestures only, and their collective ambiguity heightens their emotional import. The speaker mentions three different gestures of the onlookers: clapping hands, hissing/whistling, and shaking the head. The first appears immediately in the opening couplet, but the meaning of this response is unclear. Clapping one's hands (ספק + כפים) only appears in two other places in the Hebrew Bible, either as an expression of exasperation and anger (Num 24:10) or

(perhaps) mockery (Job 27:23), though the latter is uncertain. As a result, the majority of interpreters[52] see it as a sign of derision,[53] astonishment (cf. Ezek 21:12),[54] or both.[55] While its combination with "whistling" and "head shaking" in this stanza leave open the possibility that the onlookers have mocking intentions, the introduction of hostile or scornful motives is not necessitated by other appearances of the gesture in the biblical corpus. As a result, "hand clapping" serves as a partially completed canvas of intense emotional experience upon which the reader may paint the details (whether shock or derision).

Beyond the gesture's meaning, however, the poem draws the reader into the scene of the bystanders' reaction through the alliterative plosives in the first line (*sāpĕqû ʿāláyiḵ kappáyim*), which mimic the sharp, percussive sound of hands slapping together. The enjambed lines contribute to this immediacy by immersing the hearer into the action as a self-standing reality in the first line prior to identifying the subject in the second. The near rhyme of עלֵיך and כפים then strengthens the connection between their clapping and its intended recipient, whom the poem highlights by privileging the addressee in the line's word order.

The second and third gestures, "whistling" (√שרק) and "shaking the head" (√נוע+ √ ראש *hiphil*), carry similarly ambiguous meanings. The former frequently appears among passersby in the aftermath of divine judgment and destruction and can convey terror or astonishment, as seen

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[52] Hedwig Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung*, BZAW 36 (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1923), 187; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Des Buch Ruth, das Hohe Lied, die Klagelieder*, KAT 17:3 (Gütersloh: GMohn, 1962), 225; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 155. Cf. *HALOT* 2:765.

[53] Provan, *Lamentations*, 74; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 46; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 47; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 97; Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 137.

[54] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 290.

[55] See the extended study of hand-clapping in the ANE by Nili S. Fox, "Clapping Hands as a Gesture of Anguish and Anger in Mesopotamia and Israel," *JANES* 23 (1995): 49–60 , esp. 54. For others who present both meanings for the gesture (derision and astonishment), see Westermann, *Lamentations*, 156; Parry, *Lamentations*, 82; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 74.

especially in its common pairing with √שמם *qal* (1 Kgs 9:8; Jer 19:8; 49:17; 50:13; Ezek 27:35-36). Elsewhere, "whistling" occurs with fist-shaking as a sign of shock at Assyria's ruin (Zeph 2:15) and appears with hand-clapping, perhaps as a gesture of derision (Job 27:23). While none of these verbal occurrences feature any explicit mention of mockery of scorn (cf. Lam 2:16 below), the nominal form שרקה reveals more nuances of the gesture's possible meaning. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, to become an object of "whistling" is also to become an object of cursing or revilement (e.g., Jer 25:18; 29:18; Mic 6:16), in addition to fear and amazement (Jer 25:9 51:37; 2 Chr 29:8). Thus, much like hand-clapping, "whistling" in the wake of a city's wreckage communicates a dual response of possible astonishment and derision. "Shaking the head," however, is almost exclusively associated with scorn (cf. Job 16:4), as seen in its parallel occurrences with בזה (2 Kgs 19:21 // Isa 37:22), לעג (Ps 22:8 [7]), and חרפה (Ps 109:25).

In sum, the listing of these three gestures without any qualifiers suggests a complex internal disposition within the passersby, as they react to Zion's ruin. Through the paratactic juxtaposition of these three expressions, the unique colors of each bleed together into an ambiguous emotional experience—the predominant feeling of awe implied by their whistling shades the contempt expressed in their head-shaking and vice versa. The poetry also reveals the gestures' unity through devices like rhyme (e.g., between *sāpĕqû* and *šārĕqû*) and alliteration (e.g., between *rō*[*ʾ*]*šām* and *yĕrûšālā*[*i*]*m* in the line endings of the second couplets). As discussed above, the poem's precise presentation of these gestures themselves without simultaneously qualifying their meaning serves to highlight the reader's own response as a passerby, and the shift in voice from second person ("against you") in line 1 to third person ("against daughter Jerusalem") in line 4 helps to blur the imagined

distinction between postures of engagement with and observation of Zion.

Finally, just as the stanza plays upon the onlookers' perspective and their complex disposition toward the fallen city, it also features pieces of their vocal reactions in order to sharpen Zion's theological loss and to enhance the reader's experience of the scene. In the concluding tercet,[56] the reader overhears a collection of allusive phrases from their lips. The quotation itself is not explicitly signaled but is implied by the tercet's interrogative form and serves as a fitting vocal response from the shocked passersby, who attempt to negotiate the cognitive dissonance between Zion's previous glory and present downfall. We hear them say, "Is this not the city about which they say, / 'The perfection of beauty, / the joy of all the earth?'" The phrases cited in the second and third lines recall specific titles from Zion's hymnody: "perfection of beauty" (כלילת יפי)[57] is reminiscent of מכלל יפי in Psalm 50:2, and "joy of all the earth" (משוש לכל הארץ) is evocative of משוש כל הארץ in Psalm 48:3 [2]. Most importantly, in both instances, each designation carries tremendous theological import. As the psalmists indicate, it is out of Zion, "the perfection of beauty," that Yahweh himself shines (Ps 50:2; cf. Ezek 27:3; 28:12), and this "joy of all the earth" serves as God's holy residence, for which Yahweh is a steady fortress (Ps 48:2-4 [1-3]; cf. Jer 51:41). Zion's gladness arises only from Yahweh's victory, judgment, and guidance (Ps 48:10-15 [9-14]), all of which she now lacks. The earth that once looked to Zion as its joy has now become the grave into which she sinks (vv. 1-2, 9-10). Through these allusive epithets, the passersby lament the heights from which Zion has fallen, not simply in terms of her ruined beauty and stolen joy by also in terms of the Source of said beauty and joy, her now absent

[56] One might also interpret the clause as a couplet in a lengthened *qinah* meter (4:2 or 4:3). See Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 165.

[57] On the use of adjectives in the construct state (woodenly, "perfect of beauty" in Lam 2:15) and epexegetical genitives, see GKC §128x. The phrase here implies "perfect in (or with respect to) [her] beauty," as though her beauty reveals or confirms her perfection.

(and even abusive) God.

Beyond the theological content of these concluding lines, their interrogative form serves to locate the reader in the midst of a fragmented conversation reflective of Zion's shattered state. The poet presents the reader with a triply imbedded discourse that lends a feeling of "hearsay" to the line: (1) the speaker quotes (2) the onlookers, who quote (3) the nameless public (e.g., "they say" or "it is said" implied by שיאמרו). What's more, the quotations themselves are incomplete pieces that lack any verb or even a conjunction to tie the phrases together. On one hand, their broken presentation underscores the crowds' astonishment, as they grasp for words by which to make sense of the scene (cf. v. 13). On the other hand, the paratactic epithets, combined with the multiple layers of quotation, mimic the experience of standing amidst the crowd, overhearing snippets of conversations and generic reactions to the city ruins. The break from the repeated couplet form with the addition of a third line highlights their protracted gaze upon the destruction and their extended (even rambling) reaction to the devastation. These formal qualities enhance the poem's subtle posturing of the readers among (and as) the passersby. Both the listener and onlooker gawk in fractured astonishment at Zion's undoing, unable to find words of their own to make sense of its condition. Their inability to bear unique witness to the atrocity, as evidenced by their silent gestures and reference to traditional epithets, further underscore the necessity of the poet, who alone provides distinctive testimony concerning Zion's assault.

3.3.1.4.3. The Third Failed Healer: The Enemies (v. 16)

Having exhausted all expected options for assistance (namely, prophets and passersby), the poet in

verse 16 describes Jerusalem's third potential (but unlikely) "healer"—Zion's enemies—in a manner reminiscent of the onlookers in v. 15 (non-verbal expressions and direct speech) but with an emphasis on their unmistakable animosity. Like the above discussion of the passersby, the following will focus on the speaker's presentation of (1) their hostile gestures and (2) boasting discourse, as well as (3) the use of repeated poetic features to intermingle their reaction with that of the onlookers in v. 15.

First, the stanza's opening three lines detail three gestures made against Zion—opening their mouths (פצה פה), whistling (שרק), and gnashing teeth (חרק שן)—but unlike the motions presented in the preceding verse, the enemies actions are unequivocally hostile. As one would assume, the first gesture, "opening the mouth," elsewhere describes eating or swallowing (Ezek 2:8) and, when applied to the earth, devouring someone's life (Gen 4:11; Num 16:30; Deut 11:6). Consequently, the psalmist speaks of enemies who open their mouths against him like a ravenous and roaring lion (Ps 22:14 [13]; cf. Lam 3:46).[58] Given the gesture's association with speech (Judg 11:35-36; Ps 66:14; Job 35:16), "opening the mouth" may also prepare the reader for the gloating and hostile speech that follows, as suggested by the likely adversative meaning of על in line 1.[59] The second gesture, "whistling" (discussed above), takes on a more malicious and derisive tone when combined with "teeth-gnashing"—the stanza's third expression elsewhere associated with mockery (Ps 35:16), wicked schemes to harm (Ps 37:12), anger (Ps 112:10), and violent hatred (Job 16:9).

The poetry then works to intensify the enemies' reaction and to weave the three actions together into a unified display in several ways. In the first couplet, the "mouth opening" in line 1 plays upon the labial plosive "*p*" sounds, which literally require the speaker to open the mouth in imitation

[58] Cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, 74, who interprets the gesture as one of "scorn or insult, like sticking out the tongue."
[59] Salters, *Lamentations*, 161.

of the enemies. By interrupting the description of the gesture with the prepositional phrase עליך, the poet visually places the addressee in the middle of their gaping jaws (between "mouth" and "opening"), thereby foreshadowing (and hearkening back to) Zion's consumption (see line 4). The emphatic "all" in the second line multiplies and diversifies the throngs of Zion's opponents to include every socio-political entity who might challenge her, and the second person singular suffixes in the first and second lines further fasten these enemies to their adverse intentions suggested by על. Altogether, the poem's explicit focus on the enemies' snarling mouths, wordless sounds, and clenched jaws underscore their animalistic aggression against Zion and place the reader before their beastly growls.

Second, after presenting the enemy's gesture, the speaker plays a sound bite of their speech, characterized most strikingly by its list of asyndetic verbs that continue up through the verse's end. The fourth line reads, "They said, 'We have devoured" (אמרו בלענו). The use of √בלע identifies the enemies with Yahweh,[60] who has repeatedly "consumed" Zion (Lam 2:2, 8) even as an enemy (Lam 2:5),[61] and the verb's absolute occurrence lends their speech "an exclamatory" force.[62] Moreover, the physical images of (open-mouthed) "speaking" and "swallowing" connoted by אמרו and בלענו accord with the "hissing" and "teeth grinding" that precede it. The assonance generated by the repeated third common plural suffixes at the end of all four verbs enhances this blending of gesture and speech, bark

[60] Cf. Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 114–15, who proposes that בלענו is derived from II √בלע, based on the Arabic cognate *balaġa* ("to reach, attain"). According to Albrektson, this reading brings line four into closer parallel with the sixth line, where the enemy announces their attainment (מצאנו) of victory. The absolute occurrence of I בלע with a clear meaning "to swallow, devour" elsewhere in the poem (vv. 2, 5, 8) argues against any attempt to discern other possible roots. For a more extensive critique of Albrektson, see Salters, *Lamentations*, 162–63.

[61] Hillers, *Lamentations*, 46.

[62] Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, 138, n. 57. The Vulg. and Targum both retain the occurrence of the verb without an object. Cf. Pesh. and LXX, which supplement a direct object: εἶπαν Κατεπίομεν αὐτήν. Some, bothered by the lack of an object, argue to emend MT to בלענוה: e.g., Budde, "Die Klagelieder," 90; Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*, 153; *BHK*.

and boast together.

The final couplet intensifies the enemies' exultation through emphatic particles and staccato verbs. They declare, "Indeed, this is the day we've waited for. / We've reached [it]. We've seen [it]." The deictic underscoring of "the day," coupled with the opening particle גם, reveals the enthusiasm of their speech and, in light of the preceding בלענו, connects their moment of victory with "the day" of Yahweh's anger (vv. 1, 21-22).[63] By providing their direct speech, the speaker brings the reader back to this "day," where Yahweh's wrath and enemy violence coalesce into a horrific experience of cosmic proportions. Moreover, the reference to "waiting" builds backward from this time to introduce a sense of anticipation, hearkening back to Yahweh's own premeditated attack in v. 8 (cf. קו in v. 8 and שקוינוהו in v. 16). With the final word of the fifth line, the enemies return to the asyndetic syntax introduced in line 4, a device that reveals an agitated quality in their speech[64] and (once again) likens their frenetic activity to that of Yahweh, whom the poet paints with similar syntactic strokes in the punchy 3ms verbs in vv. 5-6. They conclude, "We've reached [it]. We've seen [it]." Unlike Zion's prophets who cannot "find" (ומצא) a word from Yahweh (v. 9), Israel's enemies, implicitly aided by Yahweh's withdrawn hand (v. 3), have finally "found" (מצאנו) or "attained to" (cf. Gen 26:12; Num 31:50; Judg 5:30) the day of Zion's destruction. Finally, though Zion has and will plead for God to "see" (ראה) her pain (v. 20; cf. 1:9, 11, 12, 20), she suffers only from the hostile gaze of her enemies, who now "see" (ראינו) or "experience" (cf. Esth 9:26) victory in her demise. Again, the near rhyme of the three first person plural verbs in the final couplet layers their actions upon one another and lends a poetic quality to their exultation, as if they are singing over the groans of Jerusalem (cf. v. 7). Like the

[63] Hillers, *Lamentations*, 46; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 97.

[64] Westermann, *Lamentations*, 146.

imbedded discourse of the passersby in v. 15, the fragmented presentation of their speech might also connote multiple voices, whom the reader overhears: "Babylon, 'We have destroyed her'; one local enemy[,] 'This is the day we have waited for'; another local enemy, 'We have achieved it'; and yet another, 'We have witnessed it.'"[65]

Finally, it is important to note the various ways in which the poet likens the enemies to the passersby. When examined side by side, the fifteenth and sixteenth stanzas share a striking number of features that serve to blend together the two "outsider" perspectives presented in the onlookers and enemies. With respect to content, both begin with nonverbal gestures and conclude with quotations of their spoken reactions. They have shared vocabulary between כל (modifying the subject in the second line of each), עליך (as the second word in the first line of each), ושרק (as the first word in the second line of each), and the relative particle ש. They feature similar syntax in the opening three lines especially, as seen, for example, in the delayed naming of the subject until the second line and the use of two 3cp perfect verbs (ספקו and שרקו in v. 15; פצו and שרקו in v. 16) immediately followed by a waw-consecutive imperfect verb (וינעו in v. 15; ויחרקו in v. 16). Most importantly, all of these shared qualities generate an abundance of aural connections unmistakable to the reader's ear. Even the enjambment of the opening couplet in v. 16 helps to intermingle the two parties by delaying its new thematic subject (enemies) until the second line, thereby allowing the "hand-clapping" in its opening line to apply firstly to the onlookers of v. 15, who have already exhibited a number of physical expressions. These obvious connections work against the lyric's centrifugal tendencies, felt in the reader's propensity to atomize the moment into independent scenes. Through these visual, semantic, lexical,

[65] Salters, *Lamentations*, 163.

syntactic, and aural links, the poet encourages the reader to envision the enemies alongside the onlookers, to diversify the crowds with neutral and hostile parties alike, and to hear the pieces of their conversations together. In these ways, much like the attempt to discern the meaning of their gestures, the poetry makes the task of distinguishing between friend and foe, sympathy and antipathy a difficult one. The multiple perspectives objectify Zion's suffering and render it observable prior to privileging her perspective in second person discourse (vv. 20-22).

3.3.1.4.4. The Fourth Failed Healer: Yahweh (v. 17)

Verse 17 returns to Zion's final potential "healer," the God responsible for her brokenness and yet the only one to whom she can (and will) turn for justice (vv. 20-22). Filled with phrases and ideas found elsewhere in the poem, the eighteenth stanza reasserts Yahweh as the ultimate agent behind Zion's destruction and explicitly strengthens the relationship between Zion's God and enemies.

The first two couplets are concerned with Yahweh's fulfillment of his plans: "The LORD has done what he planned. / He has executed his word, // which he decreed in ancient times. / He has torn down without mercy." Often predicated of God (Jer 4:28; 51:12; Zech 1:6; 8:14-15) and hostile enemies (Pss 31:14 [13]; 37:12; 140:9 [8]; Prov 30:32), √זמם frequently describes divine intentions for judgment against Israel or her enemies and can also imply a deterministic fulfillment of these plans (note the use of √זמם with √עשה in Jer 51:12; Zech 1:6; Lam 2:17; cf. Gen 11:6; Deut 19:19). In this first line, the speaker uses straightforward syntax (verb + subject + object) and plainly identifies Yahweh as the engineer of Zion's condition. The speaker suspends the use of figurative language, avoids enjambment, and speaks with haunting clarity. This deliberate style leaves little room for ambiguity,

thereby making Yahweh's calculated judgment crystal clear to the reader.

As is characteristic of Hebrew poetic style, the second line of the opening couplet intensifies the first with more specific and violent language. The selected phrase is an odd one. The combination of √בצע (*piel*) with אמרה is unique to Lam 2:14 and carries an ominous undertone. Although the idiom most basically conveys Yahweh's fulfillment of his word, this meaning is peripheral to the verb's broader significance. A *terminus technicus* among weavers,[66] √בצע (*qal* and *piel*) denotes severing the completed weaving from the thrum, and by extension, serves as a metaphor (1) for death—wherein the "thread" of one's life is "cut off," usually by God (Jer 51:13; Isa 38:12; Job 6:9; 27:8)—or (2) for unjust profits gained by "cutting off" one's share (Jer 6:13; 8:10; Ezek 22:27; Hab 2:9; Prov 1:19; 15:27; 22:12). Given that "cutting" is one of the final stages of the weaving process, √בצע (*piel*) occasionally describes the act of finishing one's work (Isa 10:12; Zech 4:9) or, in this case, fulfilling one's word. As the broader context reveals, however, the featured poetic image carries a violence that the English translation "fulfill" or "consummate" cannot convey. With careful diction, the poem uncovers the violence inherent in the realization of the divine promise itself. The act of "doing" what Yahweh "planned" not only *resulted* in the severing of Zion's lifeline but even *required* that Yahweh swing the divine blade in the first place as a prerequisite for completing God's tapestry of judgment. The weaver's work cannot be accomplished without the cutting.

As the third line makes clear, Yahweh's election to take up the Israel project, to interweave Yahweh's own life with and for Israel's life, always envisioned, even "commanded" (צוה), this "cutting" moment. The poet locates "his word" not in the warnings of the pre-exilic prophets nor in the

[66] *HALOT* 1:147-48.

threatened punishments at Sinai but in "the days of old" (ימי קדם), the prehistoric time of Yahweh's everlasting existence (Hab 1:12), Yahweh's battles against the beings of primordial chaos (Ps 74:2, 12; Deut 33:27; Isa 51:9), and Yahweh's creation of the world (Prov 8:22-23; cf. Deut 33:15; Ps 68:34 [33]). These ancient days can also denote the time of Israel's origins (Mic 7:20; Pss 44:2 [1]; 74:2), characterized by God's salvific presence and immanence (Jer 30:20; Lam 1:7; 5:21). By relegating Yahweh's intentions to punish Israel to this undatable past, the speaker underscores the tragedy of Zion's story—a tragedy seen not simply in her shocking afflictions, but also in her very beginnings, in the reality of her election, which, by virtue of the "weaver's" task, has always carried the risk (and fate) of amputation (Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68). According to the poet, despite Zion's ignorance, her life has always been bracketed by two divine "days": "the days of old" (2:17), where Yahweh decreed her life and fate; and "the day of his anger" (2:1, 16, 21-22), when God "cut" off the Zion masterpiece that had been in the making for millennia.

The fourth line confirms the violence of this fulfilled word in terms reminiscent of v. 2. There, the Lord "has devoured without mercy" (בלע אדני לא חמל) and "has torn down (הרס) in his wrath the fortifications of Daughter Judah" (v. 2). In v. 17, the poet combines these two thoughts and underscores the totality of the devastation by presenting the verb absolutely, without naming the object of God's destruction. Yahweh has simply "torn down and has not spared" (הרס ולא חמל)—a single verbal idea constituted by the potent combination of violent action and pitiless inaction. This merciless "tearing down," isolated on the fourth line, epitomizes Yahweh's disposition toward Zion.

The final couplet specifies the enemies as the primary means by which Yahweh's violent word has been executed: "He has caused the enemy to rejoice over you. / He has lifted the horn of your

adversaries." In stark contrast to God's "gladdening" (√שמח *piel*) activity throughout the Hebrew Bible, in v. 17 God does not give the people of Israel reason to rejoice, as is almost always the case (Jer 31:13; Pss 19:9 [8]; 46:5 [4]; 86:4; 90:15; 92:5 [4]; 104:15; Ezra 6:22; Neh 12:43; 2 Chr 20:27; cf. Isa 56:7; Ps 30:2 [1]), but rather brings joy to *their opponents*. Similarly, though, elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh exclusively "exalts the horn" (√רום *hiphil* + קרן) of Israel (1 Sam 2:10; Pss 89:18 [17]; 92:11 [10]; 148:14; 1 Chr 25:5; cf. Ps 75:5-6 [4-5]), in Lamentations 2, Yahweh cuts down the "horn" of Zion (v. 3) and raises the horn of their adversaries—a metaphor for increasing their (military) strength. The poetic syntax also strengthens the connections between Yahweh and Zion's enemies: like the enemies who open their mouths "against you" (עליך in line 1 of v. 16), Yahweh gladdens the enemy "against" Zion (עליך in line 5 of v. 17). Furthermore, the rapid activity predicated of the adversaries in v. 16 carries forward into the descriptions of Yahweh, as both parties serve as the subject of eight verbs in each respective stanza. The implications of these semantic and syntactic ties are stark. To the uninformed viewer, Zion's defeat may seem synonymous with the thousands of other cities destroyed by imperial conquest, but in the eyes of the poet, these conquering powers have a divine Commander, who plans, funds, and executes their victory. As the final couplet makes clear, "even the smiles on the faces of Zion's enemies were put there by Yahweh."[67] The Last Resort to whom Zion once turned is himself the enemy to whom she must beg for her life (vv. 18-19).[68]

3.3.1.5. A Desperate Testimony (*Zion Summoned to Action*) (*vv. 18-19*)

Having exhausted the list of Jerusalem's potential healers, the poem shifts in vv. 18-19 into a corporate

[67] Salters, *Lamentations*, 164.
[68] Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 98.

plea for Zion to cry out to God (with seven total imperatives and prohibitions) and sets the stage for Zion's heart-wrenching prayer in the poem's final stanzas. In many ways, these verses serve as the climax of the speaker's address (begun in v. 13), and their dramatic character is apparent from the beginning of v. 18. We will begin with an analysis of three exegetical cruxes in the opening lines and demonstrate their contribution to the *presentation* of the poem's violence and will conclude with an extended discussion of the speaker's commands, drawing special attention their *combination* and its implications for the total poem and for Zion's body in particular.

The opening couplet of v. 18 presents a variety of problems to the interpreter. On one hand, the grammar of the Masoretic Text is straightforward and introduces little to no difficulty for the translator: "Their heart cries out to the Lord, / Wall of Daughter Zion."[69] On the other hand, several complications arise in making sense of the poetic content in light of what precedes and follows. Three aspects in particular present trouble for the interpreter: (1) the use of a third person verb to introduce the stanza, when the remaining lines feature feminine singular imperatives/prohibitions, (2) the use of the 3mp pronominal suffix in לבם without a clear antecedent, and (3) the ambiguous reference to the "wall of Daughter Zion."

Interpreters have addressed the first and second issues in a variety of ways. In light of the imperatives that follow, many opt to emend the opening verb (צעק) in order to bring it into uniformity

[69] The second line of v. 18 in MT reads חומת בת ציון. On the significance of חומת, see below. Though many of the Versional witnesses reflect the occurrence of בת in MT (Vulg., Pesh., Targ.), LXX omits it, reading only Τείχη Σιων ("Walls of Zion"). It's possible that MT (and similar witnesses) have assimilated the term to other occurrences of "Daughter Zion" in the poem (2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13), perhaps through the dittography of מת in חומת. The LXX presents the *lectio difficiolor*, but the attestation of MT across other witnesses, coupled with the frequent reference to "Daughter Zion" throughout, leaves no urgent reason for emendation in accordance with LXX (*contra* BHQ).

with the rest of the stanza.[70] Others, however, make an effort to retain the MT,[71] especially given the fact that the Versional evidence collectively attests to (a) similar, if not identical, *Vorlage*(*n*).[72] These readers make sense of the ambiguous pronominal suffix in לבם in one of two ways: "their" refers either to the people of Jerusalem,[73] whom the poet describes in third person (as an aside to the reader) prior to turning back to Zion in line 2 to encourage her vocal lament, or the suffix refers to the dying children, in anticipation of their re-appearance in v. 19 (cf. v. 12).[74] For the latter, the reference to the crying "hearts" (לֵב) of the children at the beginning of the speaker's plea with Zion forms an inclusio

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[70] For an extensive review of the options, see Salters, *Lamentations*, 168. Though virtually all proposals change צעק to an imperative (צעקי), they differ in the way that they alter or make sense of לבם. Examples include the following: צעקי לבך ("schreie deines herzens" or "unverdrossen schreie"), proposed by Heinrich Ewald, *Die Psalmen und die Klagelieder*, 3rd ed., Die Dichter des Alten Bundes 1:2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1866), 335–36; צעקי לך, proposed by Bickell, "Kritische Bearbeitung der Klagelieder," 111, followed by Budde, "Die Klagelieder," 90; Max Haller, "Die Klagelieder," in *Die fünf Megilloth: Ruth, Hoheslied, Klagelieder, Esther*, HAT I:18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1940), 92–113; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 146, 143, who also accepts צעקי לבך as a possibility (cf. NRSV); צעקי לך מלא, proposed by Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder," 109; followed by Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 38; cf. G. R. Driver, "Once Again Abbreviations," *Textus* 4 (1964): 92; *BHS*; צעקי עליהם (i.e., "klage gegen sie [zum Herrn]"), proposed by Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, 7:38; צעי לבך ("turn your heart," on the basis of Jer 48:12), proposed by Felix Perles, *Analekten zur Textkritik des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig: G. Engel, 1922); צעקי קולך ("schreie unverdrossen"), proposed by Max Löhr, *Die Klagelieder des Jeremias*, 2nd ed., HKAT 3:2, 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), 14; צקי לבך ("pour out your heart," from √יצק) proposed by Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 166–67; צעקי לבתם ("cry out about their rage," reading *לִבָּה ["wrath, rage," related to Akk. *libbātu*] in place of לֵב ["heart"]), proposed by Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 116–17; צעקי לבם ("cry out from the heart," understanding the final *mēm* as an adverbial suffix; cf. Hos 7:14; Ps 142:2), proposed by Thomas F. McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations II," *Biblica* 49 (1968): 203–4; followed by Salters, *Lamentations*, 168–69; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 39–40; Terence Collins, "The Physiology of Tears in the Old Testament," *CBQ* 33 (1971): 34; Barbara Bakke Kaiser, "Poet as 'Female Impersonator': The Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering," *JR* 67 (1987): 178; CEB. Theophile Meek appropriately summarizes the confusion caused by the text (and the proposed solutions): "It is very difficult to explain how such a simple text became so corrupt" ("The Book of Lamentations: Introduction and Exegesis," in *IB*, vol. 6 of [Nashville: Abingdon, 1956], 21). Salters' comment that "arguments for the retention of MT as original are unconvincing, doctrinaire and tortuous" is overstated, paying little attention to the details (and implications) of the interpretations of those who favor MT (*Lamentations*, 170). The versions all attest to the indicative verb in MT (see below). For this reason—and other reasons addressed above—no emendation is necessary.

[71] See, inter alia, NIV, ESV, NASB, KJV, JPS, Berlin, *Lamentations*, 64, 74–75; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 307–11; Parry, *Lamentations*, 69, 83; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 127, 129, 161.

[72] LXX: Ἐβόησεν καρδία αὐτῶν; Vulg.: *calamvit cor eorum*; Targ.: צוח לבהון; See further *BHQ*.

[73] Provan, *Lamentations*, 75; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 74; NIV. Cf. the Western recension of Targum Lamentations, which supplies "Israel" as the antecedent of the 3mp suffix. See the discussion in Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, 139.

[74] Renkema, *Lamentations*, 308; Parry, *Lamentations*, 83; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 129, 160–62. Cf. Paul R House, "Lamentations," in *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, by Paul R. House and Duane A. Garrett, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 391–92.

with the mention of their "lives" (נפש) in line 6 of verse 19, given that both words (can) denote the interiority or very life of the human subject (cf. their parallel occurrences in Deut 28:65; 2 Kgs 23:3; Jer 32:41; Ps 84:3 [2]; Prov 2:10; 6:32; 14:10; 15:32; 19:8; 24:12; 27:9; 1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 6:38).[75] In this reading, the explicit mention of the children in v. 19 retroactively clarifies the pronominal suffix in the first line of v. 18 and thereby demands nonlinear modes of interpretation.[76] Functionally, the elliptical mention of the languishing children intensifies the urgency of the speaker's plea. As Berges notes, in light of the opening line of v. 18, it is as if the speaker exclaims, "Wenn Du keine Kraft mehr hast, um für dich selbst zu klagen, dann tue es für deine sterbenden Kinder."[77]

At the same time, the authorial selection of the pronominal suffix in place of an explicit identification of the heart's "possessor" generates a superabundance of meaning that extends beyond Jerusalem's children. Though, in light of their preceding (v. 12) and following appearances (v. 19), the children are included among the unnamed petitioners in v. 18aα, the generic group indicated by the suffix can be comprised of a host of more immediate options, whether the Jerusalem prophets (v. 14), the passersby (v. 15), the broken structures (v. 18aβ), or the collective populace represented by Daughter Zion herself. Because the speaker's address (vv. 18aβ-19) does not hinge upon any specific

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[75] Cf. *HALOT* 2:515: לב can denote "the organized strength of נפש." For the inclusio argument in Lam 2:18-29, see Berges, *Klagelieder*, 160.

[76] As Dobbs-Allsopp notes, the non-narrative character of lyric poetry necessitates such retrospective and prospective reading: "These poems [found in Lamentations], like lyric verse more generally, are dense and highly compressed. Each image or phrase, thought or emotion, requires mapping a complex web of connections. Any one of them will resonate both prospectively and retrospectively. Thus, a comprehensive and fully adequate reading of these lyrics will consist in a detailed journey through the multiple and complex streams of emotion and thought that get contemplated and evoked." See idem, *Lamentations*, 14. On the "retrospective" discernment of poetic form, see Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 10–13, discussed also in F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry* (New York: Oxford University, 2015), 192. Cf. Renkema, *Lamentations*, 308–9: "[T]he Israelite audience did not only listen in a linear fashion on the basis of what was previously said, they were also already attentive to what could be said on the basis of a previous utterance."

[77] Berges, *Klagelieder*, 160.

party "crying" out to the Lord, the pronominal suffix can expand exponentially, limited only by the number of sufferers discussed in the total poem.

In fact, over against the (modern) interpreter's concern with identifying (or editing away) the unknown petitioners, the poetry focuses instead on the act of "crying out" itself, its heart-felt desperation, and the divine recipient of these pleas, as if the only response to the suffering previously described—Zion's loss of leadership, structures, available "healers," even children—is the corporate plea for justice. The distended "them" plays only a supportive role in the line, rallying the masses for a universal protest and cranking the volume on the demand for a divine response. The details of their faces come into focus only as one visits and revisits the scenes presented throughout the poem. Given the atrocities presented in the poem overall, v. 18's opening line summarizes the poet's desired response from Zion, as clarified and performed in the final five verses. In this way, 18aα functions in many ways as a poetic heading, summarizing what follows.[78]

The third exegetical crux of the first couplet in v. 18 pertains to the meaning and function of the second line: "Wall of Daughter Zion." Again, though many resolve the interpretive difficulty through emendation,[79] the ancient witnesses appear to presume the consonants of חומת in MT, whether they interpret the noun as a singular (Targum) or plural noun (LXX, Vulg., Pesh.). Beyond the textual evidence, the MT reading presents no grammatical difficulties that would necessitate changes,

[78] Cf. CTAT 2: 887, which describes line 1 of v. 18 as a "sommaire anticipé."

[79] The proposed emendations vary considerably: המי בת ציון (impv. from √המה, "to roar, growl"), proposed by Budde, "Die Klagelieder," 90, and followed by Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 37–38; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 143, 146; Haller, "Die Klagelieder," 102; *BHS*; הבת ציון ("O Daughter Zion," with the vocative ה), proposed by Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 117–18, followed by RSV; בתולת בת ציון proposed by Charles-François Houbigant, *Notae criticae in universos Veteris Testamenti libros*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt/Main: Varrentrapp filium & Wenner, 1777), 479, and followed by Bickell, "Kritische Bearbeitung der Klagelieder," 111; Löhr, *Die Klagelieder des Jeremias*, 14; *BHK*; נחמת בת ציון (*niphal* feminine singular participle from √נחם ["be remorseful"], on the basis of similar participial constructions in Isa 52:2; Jer 46:19; 48:18; Zech 2:11), proposed by Hillers, *Lamentations*, 40; הומת בת ציון (*qal* feminine participle from √המה ["be tumultuous"] with the original fs ת- ending retained, as with פוגת in line 5 of v. 18), proposed by McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations II," 204.

and most importantly, the content resonates with the themes of the total poem, in which the walls (and structures) of Jerusalem figure prominently throughout (e.g., vv. 7-9). The interpretive onus lies not on those who (variously) make sense of the wall's meaning but on those who replace a preferred image of the poem with vocabulary and/or grammatical forms unattested by the poet.

As many have discussed, the "Wall of Zion" functions synecdochically and is best understood as a vocative, addressing Zion prior to the imperatives that begin in line 2.[80] As we have seen, the personification of the walls is not unique to v. 18, for they lament the destruction of Jerusalem with the populace in v. 8. Moreover, the above analysis has demonstrated at several points that the poetry consistently maps the pain of Zion's people upon that of Zion's structures (and vice versa). Given this near identification of Zion's architecture and her citizenry, it is only appropriate for the speaker to address the walls as *the* representative feature of the total city. Lying in ruins and unable to guard the city's most vulnerable inhabitants, the helpless walls must now raise their voices unto the God who has destroyed them (v. 8).[81] The wall's isolation on the second line underscores this tragic dimension by highlighting Zion's untouchable status—a solitary position derived not from her indestructible defenses and divine Defender but from her unparalleled destruction and divine abandonment.

At the same time, if read retrospectively, the wall functions not only as a synecdochal reference to Zion herself but also as an ironic epithet of God, who stands as Zion's protective

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[80] Proponents of this interpretation include Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 98; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 74–75; Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 167; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 161–62; Salters, *Lamentations*, 110; Parry, *Lamentations*, 69; NRSV, NIV, ESV, NASB, NJPS, KJV, CEB. Much of the Versional evidence favors this reading as well. Note the vocative readings in LXX, Targum (which translates the line שור קרתא דכנשתא דציון ["O wall of the city of the congregation of Zion"], implying that, while the interpreters retain the personification of the walls through the vocative address, they nevertheless had the literal city wall in mind; see further Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, 139, n. 64), and MT, which places the *athnaḥ* under אדני (implying a perceived separation between the Lord and the wall, such that the latter isn't understood as an appellative of the former). Cf. REB, which translates the wall as an adverbial accusative (see GKC §118d).

[81] Cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, 75; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 161–62.

boundary (cf. Zech 2:9 [5]).[82] The paratactic juxtaposition of the "Lord" and the "wall" across the couplet encourage this tragic association, while the emphasis on Yahweh's collusion with Israel's besiegers in the preceding stanza heightens the betrayal inherent in this ironic title. The inviolable defense assured by God has been revoked, and yet those who experience and witness such abandonment are forced to plead with their guardian-turned-oppressor. What's more, the poetic ambiguity only increases the line's dreadful irony, as seen especially in the overlap of the line's prospective ("Wall" as Zion herself) and retrospective ("Wall" as Zion's Lord) readings. In light of the stanza's total context, Zion's "wall" pleads for deliverance from and to Zion's "Wall." Her "defense" lies in rubble at the hands of her (enemies') "Defender." With nowhere else to turn, their future lies in the hands of "their Lord," however untrustworthy his hands have become.

The second and third couplets introduce the speaker's final and climactic call to Zion to "pour out" her grief before in a manner comparable to the devastation she has experienced. The poet begins, "Rain down tears like the river(s) / daily and nightly." In language reminiscent of the lament psalms (Pss 6:7 [6]; 39:13 [12]; 42:4 [3]; 56:9 [8]), the speaker encourages dramatic weeping and likens Zion's tears to the downpours that fill Zion's perennial streams (cf. 2 Kgs 3:17; 1 Kgs 17:7). Akin to Israel's God who sends and withholds the rains (Ps 74:15; Amos 4:7; Job 38:26), Zion is commanded to assume agency over her crying, "causing the tears to come down" ceaselessly until they flow with torrential intensity. Just as the city's young maidens "brought down (√ירד *hiphil*) their heads to the ground in v. 10, these tearful waterfalls push the poem's downward movement forward, leading the reader's eyes

[82] Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 11; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 311–12; Provan, *Lamentations*, 76. Despite agreement among these proponents that the "wall" refers to Zion's "lord," Renkema differs considerably in his interpretations of contextual details. He argues that the second line constitutes the cry of the city's children to their heavenly protector: "O wall of Daughter Zion!" The third line then introduces a new address by the speaker to Zion herself in light of the children's plea.

down the page, as if watching Daughter Zion's tears fall from her face into the streams below. Through the poem's descending movement, the collapse of Zion's structures and populace (detailed in the stanza's above) spills out from her eyes in perpetual grief.

The enjambed fourth line clarifies that Zion must cry "daily and nightly," a detail that extends her wailing indefinitely. As one whose existence has been defined by the "day" of Yahweh's anger (vv. 1, 16-17, 21-22), so she passes her days and nights in unending lament. More than a hyperbolic aside, this fourth line indexes Zion's new temporal reality: without festivals, without weeks and weeks of years, without agency by which to execute purposive action, Zion's waking and sleeping blurs together into monochromatic sorrow. The speaker calls forth from Zion the only action possible for her in this new and tragic reality—a reality where the "days and nights" once used to demarcate a meaningful life have regressed into a "daily and nightly" singularity. The aural similarity between *libbām* ("their heart") in the first line and *yômām* ("daily") subtly underscores this connection between Zion's despairing internality and her tear-full days.

The final couplet intensifies the initial command through two complementary prohibitions: "Do not give yourself respite. / Let not the 'daughter of your eye' rest." While the meaning of the speaker's commands is straightforward enough, the poet seeks Zion's (and the reader's) attention through stylized diction and syntax, as seen, for example, in the selection of פוגת ("rest"), a *hapax legomenon* featuring the archaic feminine ending ת-.[83] Derived from √פוג ("to grow numb"), the noun carries connotations of weariness and coldness[84] and, in this context, implies that the heat of Zion's fiery protest ought to match that of Yahweh's burning rage (vv. 3-4). Just as Zion's walls had "given"

[83] See GKC §80f.
[84] *HALOT* 3:916; BDB 806.

(נתנו) voice to their lament in v. 7, they must now "grant" (תתני) themselves no reprieve in their wailing—a lexical connection that further identifies Daughter Zion with her structures.

The surprise of the poet's word choice continues in the final line, where the subject of the prohibition shifts to "the daughter of your eye." Though rare, the phrase denotes the pupil of the eye and also functions as a metaphor for a prized possession or relationship (Ps 17:8; cf. Zech 2:12 [8]), akin to the "little man of the eye" (אישון עין) found elsewhere (Deut 32:10; Prov 7:2). With this idiom, the stanza sharpens the focus on Zion's sight, moving the reader's gaze from a general observation of her weeping into direct eye contact with the victim. The specificity of the image—the pinpointed attention upon Zion's exhausted eyes, swollen from grief—underscores the particularity of Zion's suffering, and the idiom itself reveals the primary source of her sorrow: namely, the *daughters* who waste away in her sight. For the speaker, the "daughter" of Zion's eye is permitted no rest precisely because the survival of her "daughters" depend upon the arousal of divine compassion. The lines' language also strengthens the connection between "Daughter Zion" and the city's inhabitants: without rest (√דמם), her eyes share in the fatigue and silence of the city's mourning elders (v. 10). Overall, the poetic precision of the final couplet elevates the meaning beyond a simplistic collection of prohibitions to include a range of phrases that sharpen the images of Zion's pain.

In verse 19, the poet's plea continues with four imperatives and climaxes by reminding Zion of her failing children. The first couplet follows from the call for continuous lament in the preceding verse by detailing the "nightly" weeping her suffering necessitates: "Arise! Cry out in the night, / at the beginning of every watch!" Over against the downward movement that has characterized Zion's

experience thus far, the poet calls for an upward resistance (√קום),[85] an uprising filled with Zion's shrill and deafening screams. Although √רנן (*qal*) typically describes shouts of joy, it can also indicate a loud call for attention (Prov 1:20; 8:3) or a wailing cry (cf. רנה in Jer 14:12; Pss 17:1; 88:3 [2]; 61:2 [1]; 106:44; 119:169; 142:7 [6]).[86] In light of √צעק in the preceding stanza, the verb "stresses a high pitch to the cry"[87] and serves to amplify the volume of Zion's weeping, described heretofore solely in terms of her tears. What's more, given the associations between √רנן and the (cultic) celebration of Yahweh's deliverance (e.g., Lev 9:24; Ps 5:12 [11]; 20:6 [5]; 32:7, 11; 33:1; 42:5 [4]; 47:2 [1]; 81:2 [1]; 95:1; 100:2; 107:22; 126:2; 2 Chr 20:22),[88] this verbal choice implicates Yahweh as the assumed recipient of her mourning. It also plays upon the ironic similarity between the noise of the worshipping crowds and the pandemonium caused by Jerusalem's invasion (cf. vv. 7-8, 22).

The speaker heightens the drama of Zion's painful display by summoning such screams "in the night / at the beginning of every watch"—the only time that such shouting (√רנן) occurs at night in the Hebrew Bible.[89] After reminding Jerusalem of her "nightly" call to weeping from v. 18, the poet literalizes the command in the second line, as if she might assume that the "night" detail was hyperbolic. The poet makes the "night" concrete by breaking it down into its constituent parts or "watches" (אשמרות), a detail that recalls the "wall" to which the imperatives are originally addressed,

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[85] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 75; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 162.

[86] On the multiple uses of the verb, see Norman E. Wagner, "רָנָּה in the Psalter," *VT* 10 (1960): 440, who concludes, at least with respect to the Psalter, that various meanings of √רנן "find their point of contact in the fact that they are loud cries or shouts which are directed to YHWH in an attempt to achieve results. The character of this shout was a summary of past events, a confession in YHWH's saving deeds. Whether this confession was for praise or help would depend upon the circumstances. In both cases, they were to be reminders to YHWH in order that He might continue to act in a favorable way toward His people."

[87] Salters, *Lamentations*, 173.

[88] See further R. Ficker, "רנן, *rnn*, to rejoice," in *TLOT* 3:1241.

[89] Cf. Job 3:7, where Job wishes that the "no joyful cry" (רננה) were heard on the night of his conception (or birth).

given the defensive purpose of sentry watches (cf. √שמר of אשמורה).[90] Though obscure, the phrase לראש אשמרות ("at head of the watches") likely suggests the beginning of each of the three nightly watches (cf. Exod 14:24; Judg 7:19; 1 Sam 11:11), rather than that of the first watch only.[91] Thus, the speaker calls for more than frequent emotional ostentation. Rather, much like the poem's acrostic form, he shapes Zion's grief into an organized protest, a disciplined demonstration against Yahweh's premeditated violence. No one—neither Yahweh, Jerusalem's enemies, nor the bystanders—are granted reprieve from Zion's shrieking. Until she receives justice for her emaciated children, her hourly moaning punctually awakens the world to her incomparable suffering.

The second and third couplets of v. 19 make explicit the addressee and reason for Zion's protest: "Pour out like water your heart / before the face of the Lord. // Lift up to him your hands /

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[90] Berges, *Klagelieder*, 162; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 75.

[91] The Versional evidence slightly complicates the discernment of the line's meaning. In contrast to MT (which reads לראש אשמרות), LXX attests (or interprets) a plural form of ראש and a singular form of אשמרות with a 2(f)s suffix: εἰς ἀρχὰς φυλακῆς σου ("in the beginnings of your watch"). Vulg., which reads *in principio vigiliarum*. attests a seemingly identical *Vorlage* to that of MT, but Targum reads בשירוי מטרתא דשפרפרא ("at the beginning of the watch of the first light")—evidence that the translator understood the second line as a contrasting thought to the "night" in the first line and therefore interpreted אשמרות not as "night watches" but as "day watches," an additional division of time prominent during the Roman period (cf. Matt 14:25). See further Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, 140, n. 68. At the very least, the Versional evidence allows for readings that interpret the second line both as a reference to the beginnings of multiple watches (LXX) or the beginning of a singular watch (Targum). In light of LXX, some have opted to emend MT to לראש אשמרתך (see *BHK*), but the divergence of LXX can also be attributed to "anderes Stilgefühl, kein anderer Text" (Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder," 109). See also *BHQ*; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 118–19.

As already implied by the Versions, the majority of interpreters understand the phrase in one of two ways. The speaker either calls for Zion to cry out at the beginning of all (three) night watches or at (the beginning of) the first watch only. Proponents of the former include Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 137; Provan, *Lamentations*, 76; Kaiser, *Der Königliche Knecht*, 340; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 65, 75; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 34; Parry, *Lamentations*, 70, 83; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 37; Salters, *Lamentations*, 173; *HALOT* 1:96. Those who interpret the line as a reference to the first watch only include CEB, Berges, *Klagelieder*, 163; G. Sauer, "שמר, *šmr*, to watch, guard, keep," in *TLOT* 3:1381-83. The majority of published translations ostensibly reflect the latter interpretation, although their renderings do not exclude the former: e.g., "as the watches of the night begin" (NIV), "the beginning of the watches" (NRSV, NJPS, ESV, KJV; cf. NASB). Cf. Renkema, *Lamentations*, 314, who translates the line, "from the first watch of the night" but concedes, "It is evident that the poets do not intend daughter Jerusalem to restrict her lament to the first watch, they simply urge her to persevere in her tearful prayer even when the usual time has arrived for rest and sleep." Overall, the evidence favors the first interpretation (the beginning of each watch) but not simply because this reading fits the radical nature of the speaker's commands. Judg 7:19 makes reference to ראש אשמורת התיכונה, where ראש can only be interpreted as the "beginning" of the middle watch rather than the "first" watch. As a result, it is best to understand the ל preposition distributively, indicating "each" beginning of the night watches. See Williams and Beckman, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, 45, 111; GKC §123c.

because of the lives of your children." With these final two imperatives, the speaker completes the portrait of Zion's grieving. First, he harnesses her shouting into prayerful streams, like others who "pour out" (√שפך) their "hearts" (Ps 62:9 [8]) or "lives" (cf. נפש in 1 Sam 1:15; Ps 42:5 [4]) in petition for Yahweh's deliverance. In this way, the poet identifies the internal headwaters of the tearful rivers in v. 18[92] and commands that they be indiscriminately "poured out" before Yahweh's "face," just as his wrath was "poured out" like fire (v. 4), leading to the "pouring out" of infant lives (v. 11). Through this lexical repetition, the poet enjoins Yahweh's anger to Zion's agony and the children's atrophy, painting each of them in cascading motion and unifying Zion's experience in a total collapse of divine, structural, and human realities. The reference to the face of the "Lord" directly recalls the face (cf. אף in vv. 1, 3, 6) of the same "Lord" who has cast them down (v. 1), swallowed them (v. 2), and rejected them (v. 7). In this light, Zion's plea requires sincere courage to stand before the one "like an enemy" once more.

The second and final imperative of the stanza complements the first, as the poet forms Zion's body into a lamenting posture, granting physical shape to her unexpressed pain. The speaker commands her to lift her hands (√נשא [*qal*] + כף) to him, an expression of desperate entreaty (Pss 63:5 [4]; 141:2; Lam 3:41; cf. √ידי + נשא in Pss 28:2).[93] The repetition of Zion's addressee ("to him") reinforces

[92] Collins, "The Physiology of Tears," 33–35.

[93] See also Keel, *Symbolism*, 318–23. Keel's discussion of the outstretched hands posture as it appears in the Lachish relief of Sennacherib's palace is particularly poignant for Lam 2:18-19. Though virtually all commentators acknowledge the meaning of Zion's outstretched hands (namely, lamentation or petition), some have a tendency to pietize the gesture, as if the speaker is calling for a trustful disposition toward Zion's Lord. See, e.g., Provan, *Lamentations*, 76–77; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 156–57. While this meaning is possible, the gesture might also convey simple surrender or a pleading for one's life. Keel's interpretation of the Judahite subjects before their Assyrian conquerors in the Lachish relief might also apply to our text: "In [the victor's] presence, [the inhabitants of Lachish] fall on their knees, and finally…fall completely to the ground…Their lives are forfeit. They are nothing but dust ready to surrender the last spark of life to the king in hopes of receiving it from him anew…[T]hey do not put their lives in the king's hands out of trust in him. It is because no other way is left for them to preserve their lives. Only reluctantly, imploringly do they relinquish it" (ibid.,

the terrifying Subject to whom Zion (and the reader) must not only speak but also reach out. This posture, though one of surrender and petition, nevertheless entails a bold resistance, as Zion pushes upward—"arising" and "lifting her hands"—against the divine gravity that has pulled her into the earth.

The speaker reminds her that she exerts this energy "because of the lives of your little ones // those weakened by hunger / at the corner of every street."[94] With language explicitly reminiscent of vv. 11-12, the poet reconstructs the image of Jerusalem's starving infants, recalling their fatigue (√עטף) and their fading lives (נפש). Rather than merely repeating the previous descriptions, however, the poet explicitly names their "hunger" (רעב) for the first time—implied by the children's question in v. 12—and places them at "the head of all streets" (בראש כל חוצות), a unique innovation from the plazas of the city (cf. ברחבות קריה and ברחבות עיר in vv. 11 and 12, respectively). Through repetition and innovation, the speaker brings closure both to the individual stanza and to his total address. With

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321). On this gesture, see also Brent A. Strawn, "Job's Hand on His Mouth as a Gesture of Reverence," *HeBAI* (forthcoming 2019). As Dobbs-Allsopp pithily summarizes, "God is a god to be feared. The poet's advice, appeal for mercy from the conquering general" (*Lamentations*, 98). Or according to Linafelt, "The poet has just exhausted the Hebrew language in an attempt to find enough metaphors to depict YHWH the arch-warrior; yet it is the same YHWH to whom Zion is to appeal" (*Surviving Lamentations*, 55).

[94] Many argue that the anomalous fourth couplet in v. 19 is a later gloss composed as a pastiche of 2:11-12 in order to explicate עוללֵיך in the sixth line. See, e.g., Ewald, *Die Psalmen und die Klagelieder*, 336; Budde, "Die Klagelieder," 90; Löhr, *Die Klagelieder des Jeremias*, 14; Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder," 109; Kraus, *Klagelieder* (*Threni*), 38; Wiesmann, *Die Klagelieder*, 157; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 34, 40; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 146; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 129, 163; Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 119; *BHK*; *BHS*. For those who see the final lines as suspect but are reluctant to confirm them as additional, see Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, 168; Salters, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Lamentations*, 174–75. Cf. Bickell, "Kritische Bearbeitung der Klagelieder," 111, who opts to delete the second and third lines of the stanza rather than the seventh and eighth lines. For those who retain the fourth couplet (ostensibly) as original, see Berlin, *Lamentations*, 65; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 307; Provan, *Lamentations*, 77; Parry, *Lamentations*, 70, 84.

Given that the extant textual witnesses all attest the fourth couplet, the problem is a redaction-critical rather than a text-critical one (Berges, *Klagelieder*, 129). Even if the fourth couplet seems like a suspicious mosaic of vv. 11-12, 21 (and perhaps Isa 51:20 or Nah 3:10), such lexical repetition isn't unique to these lines (as demonstrated throughout). However odd the additional bicola sounds/reads, when one considers it in context, it helps signal to the listener that the speaker's words are concluded and accentuates the children's plight, which figured prominently at the beginning of the speaker's address (vv. 11-12) and will continue to play a prominent role in Zion's own words (vv. 20-22).

respect to the individual stanza, Zion's scheduled cries at the "head (ראש) of every hour" correspond to the infants waning at the "head" (ראש) of every street, drawing time and space together. With respect to vv. 11-19 as a whole, the poet brings Zion (and the reader) back to scene that originally gave rise to his outcry: Zion's children. Such bookending highlights the little ones as epitomizing figures, transforming them from a tragic occurrence into "summary figures for the totality of the city's losses."[95]

In sum, the speaker's final exhortation in vv. 18-19 both recalls old images of Zion while also introducing new images that together pave the way for her climactic words in vv. 20-22. Two observations merit further consideration in this regard. First, the poet reaffirms the connection between Daughter Zion and the Jerusalem structures and populace primarily through lexical repetition (as discussed above): "causing to go down" (√ירד) in vv. 10 and 18; "wall" (חומה) in vv. 7-8 and 18; "being silent" (√דמם) in vv. 10 and 18; "head" (ראש) in vv. 10 and 19, "pouring out" (√שפך) in vv. 4, 11, 12, and 19; "life" (נפש) in vv. 12 and 19; and "child" (עולל) in vv. 11 and 19. These repetitions reinforce parts of Zion's original image, ensuring that new details provided in vv. 18-19 stand in continuity with and build upon these familiar features.

Second, the innovations presented by the speaker in these final imperatives pertain primarily to Zion's body. Whereas the poem's opening stanzas repeatedly presented aspects of the divine body (vv. 1-5) and the intervening stanzas discussed features of Zion's people (vv. 10, 12), neighbors (v. 15), or enemies (v. 16), the commands in vv. 18-19 fill out Zion's physicality for the first time, naming her eyes/tears, her standing posture ("arise!"), her voice, her heart, and her hands. The imperatives then

[95] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 55.

grant the newly embodied Zion (latent) agency, witnessed not only in the five conspicuous feminine singular imperatival endings scattered across the two stanzas but also in the dramatic meanings of the verbs themselves. In many respects, the poet's commanded image of Zion in vv. 18-19—standing strongly with arms lifted, shouting in the night—serves as the human complement to the virile divine warrior in vv. 1-5. Though Zion is battered beyond recognition in the poem's beginning, in vv. 18-19 the poet brings her body into focus, feature by feature, precisely as she works her way upright in tearful protest against her God—her nonviolent action set in stark relief against Yahweh's rampage. And yet, because her agency remains in the imperatival mood, there is a certain tragedy to it: these actions belong to a future imagined by the poet and not (yet) assumed by Zion herself. Given her inability to imagine such action for herself, the poet scripts meaningful action for her. Granted a self-defined space unique to her experience—dwelling in the tearful rivers *she* poured forth, passing each watch of the night in wailing *she* takes up, inhabiting a body that belongs to *her*—Zion is prepared (by the poet) to speak, even if it is "before the Lord" whom she cannot escape.

3.3.2. Zion Enraged by Yahweh: A Response to Divine Violence (vv. 20-22)

In vv. 20-22, we encounter Zion's words for the first time in the chapter, and like her God, her anger is palpable. In what follows, we will explore the gruesome content of her plea, the poetic devices that intensify their horror, and the ways in which the poem justifies its imagery, operative even already in Zion's opening commands.

She begins her fiery speech with orders of her own: "See, LORD, and consider / to whom you've done this." She first insists on Yahweh's gaze, imploring him to "look" and "regard," like the

speaker (v. 11), onlookers (v. 16), and enemies (cf. √ראה in v. 17) have implicitly done. Zion turns Yahweh's face in her direction, as if God, blinded by rage, has yet to set his eyes on the destruction left in his wake. With these initial verbs, Zion calls for Yahweh's attention in a manner that validates the total poetic project. Rather than summoning Yahweh's ear (e.g., "hear," "incline the ear"), Zion yells for the divine eye, directing its vision to the horrific images already "seen" by the reader via the poetic witness. Through these imperatives (voiced elsewhere in 1:11-12; 5:1), the poem recasts itself as an image collection—a photo-album meant primarily for divine consideration—and invites its human viewers to read its pages until its images are beheld, until Zion is "seen." For Zion (and the poem generally), it all begins with seeing—beholding the (literary) images of the victim—for "to see suffering embodied in real people is, de facto, to respond compassionately to end that suffering."[96]

The second line specifies where Yahweh should direct his attention, and this brief relative clause highlights two important factors that Yahweh must consider, as seen in each of the line's three words. First, the initial למי leads Yahweh to regard the victim. Rather than identifying herself either by name or with first person pronouns, she defines herself solely as the recipient of Yahweh's "dealings" (√עלל) and eschews any explicit grasping at covenantal claims. God must see her as the poet has represented her and as Zion now understands herself—namely, stripped of elect status and reduced to nameless object. The governing verb then reaffirms Yahweh's agency—prominent in vv. 1-8 and 17 especially—and encompasses the full range of Yahweh's abuse, given the word's associations with judgment (Lam 1:22; cf. 1:12) and violence (Judg 20:45; Isa 3:12).[97] Most importantly, the verb plays upon the "children" who epitomize and have borne the brunt of Yahweh's assault. Second, just as the first

[96] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 99.

[97] For a fuller discussion of the verb's violent overtones, see Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 57–58.

two words of the line underscore the victim(s), the concluding כה particle reminds Yahweh of the details of his actions: "Regard whom you have acted against *in this way*." Zion therefore draws upon the full poetic witness to this point and asks the Judge to consider the gruesome evidence against himself.

As many have noted, however, the line need not be read solely as the second half of an enjambed couplet—a dependent clause supplying the direct object to Zion's first two commands—but might also, in light of the questions that follow, be interpreted as a stand-alone interrogative:[98] "Whom have you treated this way?" This rendering, though similar, sharpens different features of the outcry. When read as a relative clause, the line emphasizes Zion as the overlooked sufferer (e.g., "See, O LORD, and behold, / To Whom you have done this!" [NJPS]) but when presented as an independent question, the line recalls the incomparable quality of Zion's suffering from v. 13 (e.g., "Whom have you ever treated like this?" [NIV]). Put another way, the former places לְמִי (Zion herself) as the governing focus of Zion's complaint, while the latter spotlights כה (Yahweh's action) which looks both backward (to preceding descriptions of violence) and forward (to the stanza's concluding questions) to fill out its meaning. The validity of these two interpretations of the second line enable simultaneous emphases on both the person and the experience of Zion—remembering her history without forgetting her face, heeding her voice without missing the trauma that gives rise to its trembling.

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[98] The majority of interpreters read the line as a dependent clause. See, e.g., NJPS, KJV, NCV, CEB, Hillers, *Lamentations*, 34; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 37; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 99; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 128. Among those who favor this reading, many also assert that the question implies an assertion of Zion's covenantal status (e.g., "See, O LORD, and take note / exactly to whom you have done this—namely, your covenant people!"). See Rudolph, *Die Klagelieder*, 226; Weiser, "Klagelieder: Übersetzt und erklärt," 67; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 143, 146; Parry, *Lamentations*, 84; cf. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 99. For those who maintain the relative clause reading but deny covenantal overtones, see Renkema, *Lamentations*, 318–20. Some, however, translate the line as an independent question. See, e.g., NASB, NRSV, NIV, ESV; Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, 7:38; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 119–20. On the implications of these two different readings, see above.

In the second and third couplets of the stanza, Zion details Yahweh's careless attention, epitomized in the suffering of her children. She cries, "Can it be that women eat their fruit, / their beautiful infants? Can it be that they are killed in the sanctuary of the Lord, priest and prophet?" As Hillers suggests,[99] Zion's questions in these lines reflect more than simple ethical outrage. While they may attempt to move Yahweh out of divine apathy, they also carry a sense of incredulity, as if she must convince herself of these scenes' validity. Three aspects concerning the *presentation* of these violent images merit further discussion: (1) their surprising occurrence, (2) the use of enjambment, and (3) the careful diction.

First, Zion underscores the barbaric experience of Jerusalem's mothers by seizing on readerly ignorance. To this point, the poet has articulated the gut-wrenching implications of Jerusalem's food shortage primarily in terms of motherly helplessness, as seen in the re-presentation of the children's voices, questions, and languishing bodies before their caretakers (vv. 11-12) and (Mother) Zion (v. 19). While the mothers' hunger can be assumed, such inferences float in the background of the preceding images, playing a secondary role to the mothers' visceral panic and grief at their children's malnourished state. Having just heard their innocent voices in v. 12, the reader by no means expects a leap from their "fainting" condition (v. 19) into the desperate feasting on their flesh for survival. Seizing upon the lyric's non-linear semantics, the poet opts not to present a general progression of the children's suffering (moving from hunger, to weakness, to death) but holds back the unforeseen image of their consumption until Zion speaks. In this way, though the reader may be privy to the extended accounts of the poet thus far, because the listener remains ignorant concerning Jerusalem's most

[99] Hillers, *Lamentations*, 47.

horrendous experiences, the poet is able to assimilate the reader into Yahweh's own (expected) revulsion and consequent compassion. Zion's accusing anger is felt rather than witnessed, received rather than observed. Like Yahweh, the reader could perhaps have taken note of the mothers' empty stomachs, given the clues granted by the poet along the way, but also like Yahweh, they require Zion's voice to paint the picture of their savagery in gruesome detail before they realize the inevitable result of the city's fall.

Second, Zion maximizes the shock of this revelation through the use of enjambment. When read alone, the stanza's third line suggests a range of possible meanings that don't necessarily (or completely) divulge a cannabilistic scene. For example, the opening particle אם, rarely used to introduce a question, could, upon first reading, just as well indicate a desiderative clause, especially given the imperfective state of the governing verb: e.g., "If only the women could eat their fruit!"[100] Having been told of Jerusalem's food shortage, the line could convey, even if only for a split-second, Zion's plea that her women be fed by the luscious yield of the land. Even the selection of "women" (נשים) rather than "mothers" (אמים) helps to forestall the metaphorical implications of "fruit" until the second line. It's only with the disclosure of "their beautiful little ones" that the total scene is laid bare before the reader.

Third, just as the appositional second line clarifies the meaning of the "their fruit," the line's diction magnifies the emotional conflict inherent in the women's experience. As discussed above, the poet intricately ties Jerusalem's "children" (עללי) to Yahweh's "dealings" (√עלל) in a manner that makes child abuse the definitive result of Yahweh's interaction with Zion and confirms God's

[100] See GKC §151e. Given the couplet's focus on the Jerusalem women, the selection of אם as the interrogative marker is implicitly (or consonantally) reminiscent of the "mothers" of the dying children in v. 12.

culpability for their "fainting" (vv. 11, 19). The couplet's final word (טפחים), though obscure,[101] then highlights both the intimate relationship between the mother and deceased (or devoured) infant and the repulsive experience of eating them. On one hand, √טפח apparently refers to the act of child rearing,[102] but others have argued, on the basis of √טפח ("to spread out") and the derivative noun טפח ("hand-breadth"), that the word could refer to the infant's small size (e.g., "children of a span long" [KJV]).[103] The suggestion of the children's tiny frame accords with the "fruit" reference of the first line, and the combined result is jarring: the mothers consume the bodies of their littlest ones, who sit

[101] The word טפחים is a *hapax legomnenon*, though the verbal root appears also in v. 22. The difficulty of discerning its meaning can be seen as early as the LXX and other Versions, which lack any consensus on proper translation. The LXX presents a double translation: ἐπιφυλλιίδα ἐποίησεν μάγειρος φονευθήσονται νήπια θηλάζοντα μαστούς ("the cook has made a gathering, infants nursing at the breasts shall be killed"). As Schäfer (*BHQ* comentary) notes, (1) ἐπιφυλλιίδα ἐποίησεν is a rendering of עלל, based not upon II √עול ("to suckle") but upon I √עלל ("to deal with, glean"), found in the second line of the stanza; (2) due to a phonological error or lexical ignorance, the translator interprets טפחים not with recourse to √טפח ("to care for") but in light of √טבח ("to slaughter, cook"); (3) φονευθήσονται possibly represents a later gloss, either (erroneously) clarifying טפחים as a verbal rendering of √טבח ("to slaughter, cook") or translating יהרג from the stanza's fifth line—a less likely explanation considering the presence of ἀποκτενεῖς ("shall you kill?") in the following line of LXX (see Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 121); (4) finally, νήπια θηλάζοντα μαστούς then provides an expansive correction to ἐπιφυλλιίδα ἐποίησεν on the basis of the correct root II √עול ("to suckle").

The other versions seem to reflect a similar, if not identical, *Vorlage* to MT but translate the *hapax* in a variety of ways. The Vulg. reading—*parvulos ad mensuram palmae* ("children of a hand-measure")—apparently relates טפחים to I טפח ("hand-breadth"), from I √טפח ("to spread out"). Targum's עולימיא דמתלפפין בסדינין ("children wrapped in fine linen") perhaps reflects the translator's reliance upon the Aramaic √*lpp* ("to swathe, or swaddle") to make sense of טפחים. See further Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, 141, n. 72.

[102] Those who contend for II √טפח ("to raise a child, bring forth a child") appeal both to context and Semitic cognates. With respect to the former, the verb טפחתי appears in v. 22 alongside רבה *piel* ("to rear") and, as a result, likely carries a similar meaning. With respect to the latter, the Akk. *ṭuppū* ("to raise children") and the Arab. *ṭafaḥa* ("to bring forth fully formed children") present possible evidence that supports the contextual assumptions. On the Akkadian evidence, see W. von Soden, "Zum akkadischen Wörterbuch. 6-14," *Or* 16 (1947): 77–78. On the Arabic evidence, see J. Barth, *Wurzeluntersuchungen zum hebräischen und aramäischen Lexicon* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1902), 26; G. R. Driver, "Hebrew Notes on 'Song of Songs' and 'Lamentations,'" in *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet von Kollegen und Freunden*, ed. Walter Baumgartner et al (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1950), 138. For those who favor this interpretation, see NRSV, NIV, NASB, ESV, JPS, CEB, *HALOT* 2:378; Hillers, *Lamentations*, 40; Berges, *Klagelieder*, 128, 165; Provan, *Lamentations*, 78; Kraus, *Klagelieder*, 37; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 65; Parry, *Lamentations*, 70; Albrektson, *Lamentations*, 120; Salters, *Lamentations*, 177–78.

[103] Those who interpret טפחים as a denominative from טפח ("hand-breadth") translate the phrase in one of two ways. KJV, for example, presents a more literal reading ("children of a span long"), but most derive the meaning from I √טפח ("to spread out; carry on the palms, dandle") and see טפחים as an abstract plural: e.g., "dandling" (BDB 381). For proponents of this reading see Rudolph, "Der Text der Klagelieder," 109; Westermann, *Lamentations*, 143; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 322.

helplessly and immobile in the palms of their hands. In general, the noun presents an image of motherly care and the infant's helpless dependence upon its parent for sustenance, all of which collapses in the couplet's tragic scene.

At the same time, the choice of טפחים is evocative of the similarly sounding תפוח ("apple"), a noun rife with connotations of physical (and sexual) pleasure (Song 2:3, 5; 7:9).[104] This punning both concretizes the "fruit" of the first line—specifying the flavor and feel of the women's food—and introduces, along with פרים, an element of delight into the savage reality. "The utterly abhorrent thought that a mother would be compelled to cannibalize her own children as a means of survival is made even more heinous by the sensuality and commonality implicit in the fruit imagery."[105] Through careful word selection and enjambment, the poet captures the dialectic of barbarism and satisfaction, bereavement and fulfillment inherent in the women's plight. As the first line presents the reader with a longed-for food supply, the second line details the infants, whose lost lives now feed that of their mothers. They "eat" (תאכלנה) because the "consuming" (אכלה) flame of Yahweh has ruined all ethical boundaries (v. 4), and Yahweh is the one summoned by Zion's invective to give an account for the aftermath.

The stanza's final couplet suddenly shifts from the carnage within families to that within the Temple. In a rapid succession of images, Zion moves Yahweh (and the reader) from horror to horror without granting any time for comprehension, much less contemplation, and the poetic features of the third couplet only intensify this confusion. First, by delaying the subjects ("priest and prophet") until the second line, Zion features the phenomenon of murder prior to identifying the victim—a

[104] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 15.
[105] Ibid.

feature that ushers the reader into the bewilderment of the scene, wherein we first encounter the massacre before recognizing the fatalities. In many respects, the deferred subject multiplies the body count, for any number of Jerusalem citizens could fill out the subject, especially the little ones or the starving mothers that precede. The syntax thus subtly blurs the stanza's two primary images together. Second, by setting the scene in "the sanctuary of the Lord," Zion implicates Yahweh in the mass execution, for their lives were ended in the one place guaranteed by divine protection. Because Yahweh's decision to "spurn" his sanctuary gave no regard to the bloodbath that would ensue (v. 7), Zion bears witness to the scene "before the Lord" (v. 19) concerning the inhabitants of the home he has left behind.

The twenty-first stanza plays a summative role within the poem. In the first two couplets, Zion appeals to the complete loss of her people through the use of two merisms: the "young and old" (lines 1-2) who lie on the ground in the streets, and "my maidens and my young men" (line 3), who have fallen by the sword. Working together, the two word-pairs suggest the full range of the Jerusalem population, encompassing all ages and both genders. The reference to "maidens" (בתולי) and "young men" (בחורי) specifically strikes an especially tragic tone, given their frequent appearance in contexts of joy (Isa 62:5 Jer 31:13; Zech 9:17) and their suffering in contexts of judgment (Deut 32:25; Jer 51:22; Ezek 9:6; Amos 8:13; Ps 78:63; Lam 1:15, 18; 2 Chr 36:17). As a whole, the stanza moves from images of their death without any identified executioner—they "lie" (שכבו) upon the ground and "have fallen" (נפלו) by the sword—to Zion's explicit accusation of God (lines 5-6), who has "killed" (√הרג) and even "slaughtered" (√טבח) without mercy. As Berlin notes, the latter verb's association with preparing meat for a meal—together with its aural evocation of the "little ones" previously mentioned— sharpens the

cannibalism image from the preceding stanza and, in fact, likens Yahweh to the butcher who prepares the meal of Jerusalem's children for their mothers.[106] The absence of any verbal object in this final couplet expands the verbal images such that they can encompass the breadth of poem's named victims. In Zion's eyes, "killing" and merciless "slaughtering" have become the defining actions of her God.

Verse 21 begins to draw the poem to a close not only by implying the total loss of Jerusalem's population but also by repeating several key images found earlier in the poem. Nine of the stanza's sixteen words have appeared previously in the poem—"ground (ארץ)" (vv. 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 15), "outside (חוץ)" (v. 19), "elder/old (זקן)" (v. 10), "maiden (בתולה)" (v. 10, 13), "kill (√הרג)" (v. 4, 20), "day (יום)" (, 7, 1 16, 17, 21, 22), "anger (אף)" (v. 1 [2x], 3, 6, 21, 22), "pity (√חמל)" (v. 2, 17, 21)—and this repetition serves more than a mere intensifying function. Rather, by placing fragments of the speaker's own dialogue into Zion's discourse, the poet both confirms the truthfulness of the speaker's witness (cf. v. 13)—as Zion herself corroborates his account—and presents Zion as the one in whom the disparate repertoire of images finds its culmination and unity. She masterfully weaves together the speaker's discussion of space ("ground" and "streets"), time ("day"), population ("old" and "maidens"), and theology, without, at the same time, merely parroting his words. She innovates within the repeated vocabulary—for example, separating the previously paired "elders (זקנים)" and "maidens (בתולת)" (v. 10) into new groupings ("young and old [זקן]" and "*my* maidens [בתולי] and *my* young men")—and supplements the poet's report with her own disturbing details (God "slaughtering," for example). In this way, she both recapitulates and extends the poem's imagistic repertoire, presenting herself as the

[106] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 76.

arbiter of the poem's meaning in her devastating critique of her God.

Zion's culminating role climaxes in verse 22, where her speech continues to draw together the preceding material while also placing a troubling exclamation point to the composition. Like the previous verse, Zion employs much of the speaker's rhetoric, with thirteen of the stanza's seventeen words having some correspondence to the earlier account, including Zion's mention of an "assembly (מועד)" (vv. 6, 7), aggressors standing "all around (סביב)" (v. 3), Zion "raising up (√רבה)" her children (v. 5), and the "enemies (איב)" (vv. 2, 4, 5, 7, 16, 17) that have "put an end (√כלה)" (v. 11) to them. Zion makes reference to these prior motifs as a means of both summarizing the poem's import and, more importantly, drawing them to a deathly conclusion. The inhabitants of the city that now lie slain (v. 21) have been replaced by "terrors all around (מגורי מסביב)" (line 2), and whatever "escapees or survivors (פליט ושריד)" we might assume have broken away are negated by "the day of the LORD's anger" (lines 3-4). Zion's disturbing use of irony continues in her use of the phrase "מועד + √קרא" typically a reference to the summoning of a sacred assembly (Lev 23:2, 4, 37), to describe Yahweh's signal for an enemy ambush. The mention of their "surrounding (מסביב)" attack only strengthens the collusion between divine wrath and Jerusalem's military adversaries (cf. סביב in v. 3).

The poem's final couplet brings Zion's discourse back to where it began: Jerusalem's children. Here, she takes no longer describes their loss with reference to the city's "women (נשים)" (v. 20) but identifies them as her own. They are "those whom *I* brought up and *I* raised (אשר טפחתי ורביתי)"—two verbs reminiscent both of Yahweh multiplying mourning and moaning (√רבה v. 5) and the children's cannibalized suffering (√טפח v. 21). In the final line, Zion draws closer to identifying Yahweh as an explicit enemy than at any other point in the poem. With careful control of poetic ambiguity, Zion

never names the "enemy (איב)" she accuses. Based on the word's occurrence elsewhere in the poem, its singular form could just as well refer to the human enemy whom Yahweh has empowered against them (vv. 2, 3, 7, 16, 17). Nevertheless, the nearest possible antecedent is indeed Yahweh, whose anger left no survivors (lines 3-4). By the end of the poem, the one "like an enemy" (v. 5) has perhaps, at least in Zion's estimation, become fully identified as an inimical force seeking her end and putting an end to the innocent children she's raised.

3.4. SUMMARY

The above analysis of Lamentations 2:11-22 yielded several important insights that will be especially important for later comparisons with the poetics of violence in ancient Near Eastern iconography. First, although the poet may occasionally make explicit mention of "all" or "every" (כל) individual in a given group (vv. 15-16), the poem prefers to imply the entirety of something with reference to its specific parts. This most frequently takes the form of word pairs: "king and priest" (v. 6), "rampart and wall" (v. 8), "children and sucklings" (v. 11), "priest and prophet" (v. 20), "young and old" (v. 21), "maidens and young men" (v. 21), and "escapees and survivors (v. 22). Whether they function as a merism or a hendiadys, these pairs expand the scope of an implied group while maintaining attention to its particular features. The composite image of the suffering community emerges from the description of its individual victims.

Second, just as vv. 1-10 build out the divine body with various references to Yahweh's feet (v. 1) or hands (vv. 4, 8), the poem's second half shifts its focus to the bodies of several different figures. The speaker makes mention of the "hands" and "heads" of the passersby (v. 15) as well as the "mouths" and

"teeth" of Zion's enemies. V. 11 provides a detailed description of the speaker's weeping eyes and spilled liver in imitation of the dying children whose lives are poured out in the streets (v. 12). After seventeen stanzas of virtual silence concerning Daughter Zion's physical suffering, the speaker scripts for her a series of defiant bodily acts: letting the tearful streams flow from her eyes, pouring out her heart before God, and lifting up her hands (vv. 18-19). In this way, poet ties together the physical suffering of the children, the speaker, and Daughter Zion and highlights their fluid-like condition as a foil for the physical strength exerted by Yahweh in vv. 1-10.

Third, perhaps the most important means by which the writer draws the poem's disparate images together is through repetition. In Zion's speech especially (vv. 20-22), the poet essentially summarizes the previous nineteen stanzas by referencing important figures or images from the speaker's third-person account (vv. 1-10) and address (vv. 11-22). Repetition of key people (priests, prophets, enemies), places (sanctuary and streets), and time periods (sacred assemblies and "the day" of Yahweh's anger) not only remind the reader of their presence in preceding stanzas but also help to blend the poem's various images of suffering and violence into a comprehensive whole.

Fourth, the speaker's account of the passersby among the four failed "healers" (vv. 14-17) provides a unique perspective by which the reader might enter the scene of Jerusalem's ruins. The ambiguous gestures attributed to them present a (relatively) blank canvas upon which the reader might paint their reaction to the images, and their direct discourse at the end of the stanza simulates the experience of standing among the crowds, overhearing their fragmented conversations. As anonymous outsiders, they represent another point of access into the Jerusalem scene and pose a question to the reader concerning the ethical import of viewing the poem's imagery and navigating

the tension between voyeurism, empathy, and ethical response.

Finally, the speaker's and Zion's address show recurrent concern with bearing truthful witness to the destruction of Jerusalem and its aftermath and, as a result, provide different "justifications" for the poem's images. The rhetorical questions in v. 13, for example, lament the insufficiency of any comparison by which to render Zion's suffering intelligible, while, at the same time, providing a literary trope—"your breaking is as great as the sea"—to imply its breadth. As discussed above, the combination of the questions and the following simile distinguishes the poetic description (and its literary images) as the sole trustworthy account and the only mode of discourse imaginative enough to express the breadth of Zion's pain. Later, the speaker appeals to Zion's children in order to justify his exhortation of Zion to protest her God, and this reasoning lays bare the theological rationale for the entire poetic witness—namely, that Zion might pour out her heart in God's sight so that God might "see" the violence collected in the poem's twenty-two stanzas (v. 20).

CHAPTER 4

IMAGES OF VIOLENCE IN ASHURBANIPAL'S BATTLE OF TIL-TUBA RELIEFS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The violence found in Lamentations 2 is not an anomaly. Beyond the other four poems of that biblical book and the many violent images that fill the pages of the Hebrew Bible more broadly, Lamentations 2 represents a particular literary memory within an even broader tradition of imaged violence in the ancient Near East. Many have explored comparable literary genres within and outside of the biblical corpus as a means of illuminating the content and structure of the Lamentations lyric sequence.[1] As a supplement to these comparative insights, I will now consider the poetics of violence as it figures in ancient Near Eastern iconography—specifically, the violent image repertoire of Ashurbanipal's palace reliefs in the seventh century B.C.E. I will examine two types of violence in these reliefs: the Assyrian conquest of foreign enemies and the royal lion hunt. Rather than surveying an array of conquest and lion hunt scenes, I will instead focus primarily on two exemplary compositions of each genre: the Battle of Til-Tuba images in Room 33 of the Southwest palace and the lion hunt scenes from Room C in the North Palace. A delimited selection of images will allow for a more careful analysis of how violence figures within each piece.

[1] See, inter alia, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*, Biblica et Orientalia 44 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), esp. 2-10 on the history of research; idem, "Darwinism, Genre Theory, and City Laments," *JAOS* 120 (2000): 625–30; Thomas F. McDaniel, "The Alleged Sumerian Influence upon Lamentations," *VT* 18 (1968): 198–209; William C. Gwaltney, "The Biblical Book of Lamentations in the Context of Near Eastern Lament Literature," in *Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. William W. Hallo, James C. Moyer, and Leo Perdue (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 191–211; William W. Hallo, "Lamentations and Prayers in Sumer and Akkad," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack Sasson, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995).

4.2. THREE REASONS FOR THE SELECTION OF THE BATTLE OF TIL-TUBA COMPOSITION

We begin with the poetics of violence in the conquest scenes of Ashurbanipal, with special attention to the Battle of Til Tuba reliefs of the Southwest Palace in Nineveh. Beyond its extremely violent content (discussed below), this composition serves as a profitable point of comparison with Lamentations for three reasons. First, the relief images, like the poetry of Lamentations, commemorate specific historical events. For the Lamentations poet, the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 and its immediate aftermath stand at the center of the work's violent imagery. Though the writer may employ generic lament phrases and images throughout, the poet grounds them in the experience of Zion's suffering after Jerusalem's fall. In a similar way, the Til-Tuba images are crafted as an historical project. The accompanying epigraphs on the reliefs (see below) identify the scenes as a depiction of Ashurbanipal's campaign against Elam (ca. 653 B.C.E.) and, more specifically, the defeat and decapitation of King Teumman in the culminating battle of Til-Tuba on the River Ulai.[2] Despite the project's clear propagandistic biases, the artists nevertheless show careful attention to rendering the battle's setting accurately, as seen, for example, in their painstaking rendering of the Til-Tuba topography and plant/animal life (discussed below). Their incorporation of the narrative of

[2] For a translation of the inscriptions, see Erika Bleibtreu, "Catalogue of Sculptures," in *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, ed. Richard D. Barnett, Erika Bleibtreu, and Geoffrey Turner (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 95; Pamela D. Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs: The Development of the Epigraphic Text," *JCS* 40 (1988): 22–35. For a detailed analysis of the epigraphs of the reliefs themselves, their relationship to corresponding texts among Ashurbanipal's library, and resulting reconstructions of the historical timeline, see John Malcolm Russell, *The Writing on the Wall: Studies in the Architectural Context of Late Assyrian Palace Inscriptions*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 9 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 154–99; Ernst F. Weidner, "Assyrische Beschreibungen der Kriegs-Reliefs Aššurbânaplis," *AfO* 8 (1932): 175–203; Oskar Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment nach ägyptischem Vorbild: Zu Planung und Ausführung der "Schlacht am Ulai,"* AOAT 266 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1999), 40–63; Julian E. Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 10 (1979): 96–101; Pamela D. Gerardi, "Assurbanipal's Elamite Campaigns: A Literary and Political Study" (Ph.D. diss.; University of Pennsylvania, 1987), 138–44; and Markus Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrer neuassyrischer Darstellungen* (Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon and Bercker, 1975), 287–97.

Teumman's defeat also corresponds to the records of the same events in Ashurbanipal's cylinder texts. The Til-Tuba relief composition, however skewed toward imperial interests, is intended to be, among other things, a visual tribute to Assyrian history.

Second, in addition to their overall historical quality, both the Lamentations poetry and the Battle of Til-Tuba composition present *similar kinds* of historical events: namely, the imperial conquest of an enemy nation. Although Lamentations and the palace reliefs commemorate different military conflicts, their repertoires of violence emerge from the experience of imperial warfare and bear witness to two opposing sides of this struggle. The relative temporal proximity between Ashurbanipal's Elamite campaign and Jerusalem's fall supports this connection: they were likely composed within a century of one another and discuss events separated by only seventy years (from the Battle of Til-Tuba ca. 653 to the fall of Jerusalem in 587). Their historical propinquity and shared content allow for a more nuanced investigation of how similar kinds of violence figure in unique ways and to what effect. At the same time, given that many of the campaign scenes etched upon the walls of Ashurbanipal's palaces also fit the previous two criteria for comparison, further justification for the selection of the Til-Tuba composition specifically is needed.

As a result, I have chosen to examine the Til-Tuba reliefs over other examples precisely because of their exemplary quality. With respect to the biblical material, one could argue that Lamentations represents the height of violent imagery within the biblical corpus. Though violence figures in many unique (and disturbing) ways throughout the Hebrew Bible, it reaches a certain density within the lines of these five poems that rivals, if not supersedes, that of other biblical poems. Such compacted violence, when combined with the density of poetic features within the composition,

makes for a masterful evocation of Jerusalem's suffering after 587. In search of comparable iconographic examples, the artistic repertoire of Ashurbanipal, more generally, and the Battle of Til-Tuba specifically constitute, for many, the zenith of the Neo-Assyrian visual tradition. For example, modern critics regard these reliefs as "arguably the finest large-scale composition in Assyrian art"[3] The Til-Tuba scene boasts an unprecedented level of complexity, seen in its "complicated distribution of episodes, circular positioning of events, or the use of concurrent episodes in time." These innovations and others result in "arguably the most complex and sophisticated narrative representations in ancient art."[4] Thus, the selection of the Til-Tuba compositions (and the lion scenes, discussed in chapter 5) allows for a comparison between two of the foremost representatives of figured violence within the biblical and ancient Near Eastern iconographic traditions. Among the many fruitful points of intersection between these two pieces itemized below, these three aspects in particular help ground the juxtaposition of *these* particular images with *this* specific text in their concrete features.

4.3. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BATTLE OF TIL-TUBA COMPOSITION

Prior to discussing the violence of the reliefs themselves, a word about the reliefs' placement and content is in order. The slabs were located in Room 33 of Sennacherib's Southwest palace, which possibly served as a vestibule and connected the terrace platform (overlooking the River Khosr) to Room 30 and led into the main part of the palace's Dual-Core Suite (Rooms 29 and 34; see fig. 4.1).

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[3] Julian E. Reade, "The Battle of Til-Tuba," in *Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum*, ed. John Curtis and Julian E. Reade (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 72.

[4] Zainab Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2017), 244. Cf. Wolfram Nagel, *Die neuassyrischen Reliefstile unter Sanherib und Assurbanaplu* (Berlin: Hessling, 1967), 29: "Auf jeden Fall findet man aber in der gesamten Altvordererasiatischen Kunst kein Massengeschehen, das als solches eindrucksvoller dargestellt wäre."

Found on the southeastern side of this large suite, Room 33 featured lion or sphinx colossi flanking the doorway from Room 30 and a multi-slab relief composition on the adjacent walls. The images were presented in two three-slab parts arranged on the eastern and western sides of this entrance.[5] Portions of the six slabs were discovered and excavated by Layard, who, in his second expedition, recorded their details and eventually removed them for shipment to London in 1850.[6] Despite their fragmentary condition, the outline of the reliefs remains "sharp" with their "details perfectly preserved," in large part due to their unique material.[7]

Unlike the majority of the sculptures in the palace, which were carved from a gypsum rock or alabaster, those found in Room 33 were made from the fine-grained fossiliferous limestone, used also to panel the walls of Rooms 29 and 30 nearby, though the slabs in these rooms were left uncarved.[8] A text on the back of the colossi in Room 33 identifies the material as NA_4.^{d}ŠE.TIR stone from Mt. Nipur, characterized by its small and elongated white flecks, similar to cucumber seed (as noted by Sennacherib)[9]—an effect that lent a "high finish"[10] to the composition and gave it extreme value when compared with the alabaster sculptures.[11] Because the inscriptions on the backs of the

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[5] On the arrangement of the Southwest Palace in general and the area surrounding Room 33 specifically, see John Malcolm Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), 34–93; David Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces* (New York: Oxford University, 2015), 121–53, esp. 136–37; Geoffrey Turner, "The Architecture of the Palace," in *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, ed. Richard D. Barnett, Erika Bleibtreu, and Geoffrey (London: British Museum Press, 1998), esp. 27-30.

[6] On the history of the excavation of these reliefs specifically, see C. J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria: The Surviving Remains of Assyrian Sculpture, Their Recovery, and Their Original Positions* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936), 180–81; John Malcolm Russell, *From Nineveh to New York: The Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School* (New Haven: Yale University, 1997).

[7] Austin Henry Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London: J. Murray, 1853), 458.

[8] See further A. P. Middleton, "Stone Analysis," in *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib*, 40–43.

[9] See *ARAB* 2.420.

[10] Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 446.

[11] Because the NA_4.^{d}ŠE.TIR stone is not mentioned in Sennacherib's palace building account of 694 B.C.E. or its near-duplicates, Russell argues that the originally blank reliefs consisting of this material found in Rooms 29, 30, and 33 were not installed until the near completion of the palace in 691 (*Sennacherib's Palace*, 90–91).

fossilferous slabs displayed Sennacherib's name and titles,[12] Sennacherib was likely responsible for installing them in the room, but, like those in Rooms 29 and 30, he left them blank throughout his lifetime. It wasn't until the reign of his grandson Ashurbanipal that the imperial artists chiseled new military exploits into its surface.

The dating of the images of the Room 33 reliefs to the reign of Ashurbanipal is confirmed by both inscriptional and formal evidence. First, as discussed above, the epigraphs confirm that Ashurbanipal's campaign against the Elamites is in view. Second, the formal features of the images themselves generally confirm the post-Sennacherib dating of the artwork. As many have pointed out, the artistic tendencies discerned in the Room 33 reliefs correspond almost entirely with those found in Ashurbanipal's North Palace at Nineveh.[13] At the same time, they also carry forward some features unique to the period of Sennacherib, including, *inter alia*, the dissolution of register divisions and ground lines in the Battle of Til-Tuba composition (see below). Because the extant image repertoire of the North Palace lacks these earlier representational idiosyncrasies, many have assigned the Room 33 reliefs to an earlier period in Ashurbanipal's reign, prior to the construction of the North Palace.[14]

The relief scenes of the extant slabs of Room 33 were arranged in two groups of three slabs each, with scenes extending horizontally across the surface in two parallel registers. The slabs are thus divided into four main areas (two horizontal halves per three-slab area). Each of the four areas bears

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[12] Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 459.

[13] For a detailed discussion of the stylistic differentiation between the reliefs carved under Sennacherib and those of Ashurbanipal, see Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 120–51; Margarete Falkner, "Die Reliefs der assyrischen Könige. Zweite Reihe. 1. Zehn assyrische Reliefs in Venedig," *AfO* 16 (1952): 30–34; "Die Reliefs der assyrischen Könige. Zweite Reihe. 4. Zwei assyrische Reliefs in Durham," *AfO* 16 (1952): 247–49; Nagel, *Die neuassyrischen Reliefstile*, esp. 31-39, 47-51. On the Battle of Til-Tuba relief specifically, see ibid., 27-30.

[14] Barthel Hrouda, *Die Kulturgeschichte des assyrischen Flachbildes*, Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 2 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1965), 115–17; Nagel, *Die neuassyrischen Reliefstile*, 27–30, as followed by Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 135. Cf. Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture," 101, 107.

the rendering of a specific historical event (or series of events) within Ashurbanipal's military campaign against King Teumman of Elam and King Dunanu of Gambulu.

Due to their fragmentary condition, it is difficult to discern any type of sequential relationship between the four major scenes carved in the upper and lower halves of each three-slab area. The lower half of slabs 1-3 depicts the Battle of Til-Tuba and the deathly fate of King Teumman, while that of slabs 4-6 shows the installment of Ummanigash, Ashurbanipal's puppet king, at Madaktu in Elam. Given their occurrence within the same region, the lower registers of slabs 1-3 and 4-6 exhibit a general progression from conflict with Elam (slabs 1-3) to its resolution (slabs 4-6), but a similar sequence is not as apparent for the upper registers, due in part to their fragmentary preservation. The image details and inscriptions in the upper half of slabs 4-6 identify the scene as an image of the king's victory procession in Arbela after Dunanu's surrender. The upper half of slabs 1-3 is almost entirely absent, but the remaining images of the Babylonian captives in slab 3 and the prisoners grinding at stones in slab 1 could perhaps be indicative of a second triumph scene in Nineveh (see below).

Within each of the four halves, the artists divided the compositions into three sub-registers—a common feature of the Mesopotamian relief tradition. Of the originally six registers defined in slabs 1-3, the bottom three registers, most of which have been well preserved, display the expansive scene of the Battle of Til-Tuba, which will be our focus in the following analysis. I will begin by identifying three general features of the composition before turning to a more focused analysis of the narrative and non-narrative scenes. In addition to identifying the kinds of violent images presented in the work, I will pay special attention to how the artists render violence, beginning with the composition's, movement, perspective, and figures.

4.4. THREE GENERAL FEATURES OF THE BATTLE OF TIL-TUBA COMPOSITION

This three-slab composition presents one of the most complex composite images of the ancient Near East (figs. 4.2-4.5). The scene is bounded by two geographical features: the hill of Til-Tuba on the left (which apparently continued on to another slab, now lost) and the River Ulai on the right, which flows vertically down the panel and serves as a visual conclusion to the battle. The intervening space is packed with a nearly indiscernible density of figures. Bahrani helpfully summarizes the initial impression of its complexity:

> At first glance, the three panels appear to depict a chaotic mass of bodies strewn across the pictorial space with little consideration for composition. The surface is densely covered with a mélange of horses, asses, chariots, and human bodies moving in all directions. Perspective is nonexistent or, at best, seems to change arbitrarily from one section to the next. There seems to be no focal point. Everything about the composition seems to be the opposite of what we are trained to see as "a composition." It is a clutter seemingly born of *horror vacui.*[15]

Within this overwhelming arrangement, the artists introduce subtle intimations at order that help orient the viewer amidst the violent chaos and aid interpretation. Three will be discussed here: (1) the battle's left-to-right movement, (2) the artist's use of registers and perspectival play, and (3) the sharp differentiation between Elamite and Assyrian figures.

4.4.1. The Composition's Left-to-Right Movement

First, as many have noted, the composition evinces a general movement from left to right and can be "read" in this manner: the Assyrians drive the Elamites down the hill on the left, pursue them across

[15] Zainab Bahrani, *Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 27–28.

the multiple registers of the intervening panels, and ultimately force them into the river filled with weaponry, carcasses, and drowned Elamites.[16] The rightward direction of the scene gives the viewer a sense of progress, as they make their way down the wall. At the same time, the scenic details resist such a simplistic "reading," as seen, for example, in the varied positions (facing left and right) of Assyrian warriors and the constant interspersing of horizontal figures. The circuitous narrative sequence of King Teumann's defeat (discussed below), which the artists have surreptitiously embedded (and captioned) within the mayhem, also complicates a unified left to right movement. Just as the composition acclimates the viewer to its general direction, it also immerses them in the chaos of multi-directional combat. This creates a dialectical experience between a certain confidence in Assyria's (rightward) military pursuit and the confusion produced by the conglomorated mass of Assyrian and Elamite bodies. In this way, within the world of the composition, Assyria's victory is both inevitable and in process, both assured and at risk in the overlapping violence.

4.4.2. The Composition's Use of Registers and Perspectival Play

A second ordering feature is seen in the composition's use of three defined sub-registers, which help to structure the fighters into groups with interesting perspectival results. These registers emerge immediately to the right of the mountainous landscape on the first panel and carry forward as far as the middle of the third panel, where they ultimately dissolve into a disorganized cluster of Elamite

[16] On the composition's left to right orientation, see Winfried Orthmann, "Neuassyrische und spätbabylonische Flachbildkunst," in *Der Alte Orient*, ed. Winfried Orthmann, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 14 (Berlin: Propylaen, 1975), 323; Yigael Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Study* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963), 2:442; Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, 70–72; Julian Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1983), 61; J. A. H. Potratz, *Die Kunst des alten Orient: Babylonien und Assyrien, Alt-Syrien, Alt-Anatolien und das alte Persien*, Springers Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen 323 (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1961), 267.

corpses and Assyrian archers. This organizational technique represents a return to the most common form of spatial representation in the Neo-Assyrian palace relief tradition. Prior to Sennacherib, registered compositions dominated the works commissioned by Ashurnasirpal II, Tiglath-pilesar III, and Sargon II—the artists of whom generally divided the orthostats horizontally into two registers (separated by an inscription), whose size best accommodated the height of standing human figures only. As a result, subjects were represented from a "worm's eye" perspective, wherein "virtually all figures are located on a single ground line—usually the lower border of the register—and depth is indicated by having closer figures overlap more distant ones."[17] From this perspective, the viewer sees the figures not from above—where they would be spread out across a depicted landscape—but from below such that they are able to catch sight of only those figures nearest to them, with all others stacked in an overlapping fashion in the background. In some sense, this perspective places the viewer on eye-level with the human subjects themselves, and topographical details are minimized in favor of the sequence of figural action. These images therefore stress horizontality "so that the level of movement is unchecked."[18] Over against the representational innovations of his grandfather Sennacherib (see below), Ashurbanipal's style, especially in the North Palace, demonstrates a preference for the registered composition, to the near exclusion of other forms of spatial rendering.

These preferences are evident in the Til-Tuba composition. The three registers display the military combat from an eye-level perspective, with the bottom lines of the registers serving as ground lines. The artists then generate a current of lateral movement down the wall, through both the stacking of extended parallel bands and the horizontal weaponry lines that physically connect human

[17] Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 193. See also H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 172–75.

[18] Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 173.

bodies and lead the eye down the register. The composition implies a three-dimensional space by overlapping the bodies and weaponry of the fighters. The floating corpses in the upper areas of the registers contribute to this sense of depth, for their presence implies that the battlefield continues (and recedes) between the stacked scenes. The artists reify this recession further by subtly reducing the size of Assyrian figures as one travels from the bottom of the image to the top, but this development is not consistently represented across the piece—a glitch that contributes to the composition's alienating quality. Some have even "read" a progression from the lowest to the highest registers: the lower two scenes display the ongoing combat while the third shows its aftermath with the piles of Elamite heads.[19] In these and other ways, the registers help to introduce an order into the otherwise disarticulate violence. They also bring the viewer down to the ground level of the battlefield itself and place the viewer's feet in the Til-Tuba soil. The sheer length of the composition enables the audience to walk the path of the charging cavalry alongside them, mimicking and thereby inhabiting the forward drive of their advance and the retreat of their victims.

Nevertheless, just as the composition complicates any simplistic left-to-right telling of events, it also arbitrarily abandons in places the ground-level perspective featured in the horizontal registers in favor of a more elevated viewpoint. These disorienting shifts are abrupt and confound any attempt to reconcile the different renderings of three-dimensional space. In addition to the "worm's eye" view

[19] Yadin, *The Art of Warfare*, 2:442. Given that the assessment of Elamite heads constitutes an individual episode within the sequence concerning Teumann's defeat, Yadin's reading could be more incidental than actual, especially given that no "progression" is ostensibly witnessed between the first and second bands. However, one cannot entirely discredit Yadin's inference into the relief's multidirectional narrativity—a feature that contributes both to the chaos and order of the scene. Cf. Ludwig Curtius, *Die antike Kunst: Ägypten und Vorderasien*, Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft (Wildpark-Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1923), 281, who recognizes a left to right progression from chariot warfare to the fate of the king in the upper two registers, while the lower register shows the Assyrian cavalry overtaking the Elamites.

discussed above, the artists also adopt a vertical method of indicating spatial relationships, wherein "depth is indicated by placing distant figures higher than closer ones."[20] In this convention (overwhelmingly favored and developed by Sennacherib in the southwest palace reliefs), the figures are anchored not by a single-ground line but by an shared topographical space, represented by background patterns (seen, for example, in the hill and river of our scene). The stacking of vertical figures in an open tableau, however crude to the modern eye,[21] connotes spatial recession and gives the impression of a high viewpoint, from which the onlooker peers down on the scene.

In the Til-Tuba composition, it is the image's two prominent topographical features—the battle mound and the River Ulai—that launch the audience into this "bird's eye" perspective. On the left-hand side, the hill begins in the middle of the third register and extends downward on a sharply sloped path until it reaches the bottom of the image. The artists imply its recession as the eye travels up the slab by freely stacking figures and weapons upon one another both in front of and along the edge of the hill. The geographical lines alone establish their connection and interaction in space. In the absence of defined registers, the viewer discerns the implied relationship between the freely arranged fighters based on their placement within the hill's conventional pattern. At the same time, the artists stifle the illusion of the hill's recession by eschewing perspectival diminution. Figural sizes remain largely consistent from top to bottom despite their differing distances from the viewer. The hill scene also retains features of a ground-level point of view, as seen, for example, in the profile view

[20] Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 193.

[21] For a critical elucidation and evaluation of spatial rendering in Sennacherib's reliefs, see Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 176–78. Cf. Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 191–92, who calls for an assessment of ancient perspectival conventions not on the basis of their realism but rather on their perception: "[H]ow easy is it for the viewer intuitively to construct a coherent space consistent with the perspectival cues presented in the image?" Regardless of the difficulties these perspectival methods may cause contemporary viewers, it's not certain that they presented the same for their ancient audience.

of the soldiers who flee down the precipice or, in the case of one fallen Elamite, tumble down from its height.[22]

The "bird's eye" perspective adopted by the Room 33 artists also appears in the representation of the river at the right-hand side of the image, where the elevated viewpoint and consequent illusion of depth appears more tenable. Seen from above, the river's "distance is tilted up and brought to the surface of the picture plain so that we can take in the entire river at a glance."[23] The swirly texture of the river holds together the variously oriented bodies, which, along with many fish and crabs, hover on the waters' surface. The image's most remarkable perspectival play, however, occurs in the battle area immediately adjacent to the river. Here, the so-called vertical arrangement expands leftward until it gradually shapes into the register lines carried forward from the second slab. This intermittent space represents the climax of the composition's violence, as the artists fill the terrain with Elamite bodies stacked horizontally upon one another. Were it not for the shrubs that pepper the landscape,[24] the viewer could assume at first glance that the corpses themselves, like the swirling patterns

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[22] On the features and problems of rendering depth in the vertical arrangement, see Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 176–78; Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 198–215. Their discussions pertain largely to the work of Sennacherib, given the prevalence of this artistic method in his southwest palace at Nineveh. Groenewegen-Frankfort explains the return to the horizontal arrangement in Ashurbanipal's reliefs by assuming that the planners of the North Palace must have considered Sennacherib's innovations "aesthetically barbarous." Russell more carefully explains the emergence of Sennacherib's preference for this spatial representation in terms of the king's explicit pride in innovation—an innovation that later artists perhaps considered "insufficiently intelligible." Cf. Valentin Müller, "Die Raumdarstellung der altorientalischen Kunst," *AfO* 5 (1928): 199–206, who argues for a lack of perspective in Neo-Assyrian (and ancient Near Eastern art): "Daher kann man nicht einmal von Ansätzen zur Perspektive sprechen, sondern nur von einem vollkommeneren Einarbeiten einzelner Naturbeobachtungen in die vorhandenen Formprinzipien."

[23] Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 28. See also idem, "The King's Head," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 115.

[24] For a discussion of the plant images in the Room 33 reliefs, see Erika Bleibtreu, *Die Flora der neuassyrischen Reliefs: eine Untersuchung zu den Orthostatenreliefs des 9.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, WZKMS 1 (Wien: Verlag des Institutes für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 1980), 215–17. According to Bleibtreu, the approximately 38 plants in the battle relief correspond closely to the pomegranate trees from Ashurbanipal's artistic repertoire, but she identifies them as "Laubbäume." At the same time, the chaotic arrangement of figures and objects complicates matters "so daß der Versuch einer botanischen Identifizierung müßig wäre."

indicative of the river, constitute the topographical background within which the foregrounded Assyrian warriors take their stand.

In their ingenious presentation, the artists wait to multiply the composition's body count until they can elevate and thereby distance the viewer from the warfront in the final slab, and the transition they facilitate between the "worm's eye" and "bird's eye" perspective is nearly seamless. As many have noted, the horizontal arrangement presented in lengthy registers, despite their consistency across the composition, remain only "loosely defined" throughout.[25] Figures and features spill over the registers in places, and ground lines occasionally disappear altogether. So, having established this inherent fluidity in the first and second slabs, the scene on the third slab transitions from a horizontal to vertical arrangement by dissolving the register lines into the Elamite bodies themselves.[26] Just when the ground line of the second register disappears, the artists arrange the prostrate fallen end to end as a means of extending the plain as far as the river's edge. The Assyrian soldier bearing Teumann's head in the second register no longer walks upon the constructed ground of the register but rather upon the pierced and decapitated corpses that accumulate across the battlefield. In this way, the artists provide a subtle transition between ground and elevated perspectives while also reifying the physicality of the slain. The Elamite figures that once filled the registers now bear the weight of their Assyrian killers.

Taken together, these two perspectives of the composition introduce an added sense of confusion to the tumultuous scene. First, the vertical arrangements on the left and right-hand sides enhance the implied recession of the three horizontal registers such that the upper registers appear further away than the lower register—an effect that further dramatizes the narrative of Teumann's

[25] Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 28.
[26] Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, 64.

head (see below).[27] Second, the dual perspectives help to render visually the composition's presented contrast of chaos and order represented by the vertical and horizontal arrangements respectively.[28] After the artists introduce the bounded registers in the first slab, the ground lines progressively deconstruct until they altogether dissolve in the third slab, where the vertical arrangement (and consequent abandonment of organizational principles) allows for an indistinguishable mass of war victims. Third, the arbitrary changes in perspective enable the composition to capture both the magnitude and the intimacy of the battle simultaneously. As Barnett notes, the "nameless genius…who designed and executed Ashurbanipal's reliefs" was able to "record emotion and atmosphere: individually the fleeing Elamites express their panic and excitement in lively mime…; collectively, the scenes of the mad confusion of battle at the bank of the Ulai…are a masterpiece of description and atmosphere, in contrast to which, when order is restored with victory [in slabs 4-6], the figures return to their ranks in neat processions of soldiers or prisoners."[29]

Both the horizontal and vertical perspectives mutually inform one another. If the ground-level perspective brings the viewer face to face with the individuality of Assyria's victims—granting them access to the visceral terror now frozen into the Elamite personalities—it thereby remedies whatever "objectivity" naturally inheres in this bird's eye perspective. At the same time. the elevated viewpoint

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[27] Chikako E. Watanabe, "A Compositional Analysis of the Battle of Til-Tuba," in *Proceedings of the 4th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, 29 March - 3 April 2004, Freie Universität Berlin.*, ed. Hartmut Kühne, Rainer M. Czichon, and Florian Janoscha Kreppner, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), 601–2.

[28] On the contrast of chaos and order in the Til-Tuba relief, see especially Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, 67, who discusses its implications both for the narrative of Teumann's head and for the broader composition (with slabs 4-6) as well. This contrast between chaos (associated with the enemy) and order (associated with the Assyrian warriors), constitutes one among many features of the Til-Tuba composition(s) that are the result of Egyptian influence, particularly in their representation of the Battle of Qadesh. For a slight refinement of Kraelin's thesis, see also Chikako Watanabe, "A Compositional Analysis of the Battle of Til-Tuba," 1:604–8; idem, "Pictorial Narrative in Assyrian Art: The 'Continuous Style' Applied to the Battle of Til-Tuba," *KASKAL* 3 (2006): 96–102.

[29] R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs: And Their Influence on the Sculptures of Babylonia and Persia.* (London: Batchworth Press, 1960), 20; idem, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1970), 30.

amplifies the emotional tension generated by war's individual encounters and, by proliferating this fretful experience across the landscape, normalizes the dread of Assyrian violence beyond its episodic instantiations. Much of the power of the composition therefore resides in its tension between both perspectives: that of the engaged participant and elevated observer. These shifting viewpoints not only work together to individualize Elamite genocide but also serve to preclude any settled observation of the war scene. The viewer searches in vain for reprieve from the Assyrian onslaught—an experience that magnifies the visual relief engendered by the juxtaposed scene of the aftermath across the doorway.

4.4.3. The Composition's Differentiation between Elamite and Assyrian Figures

A third important means by which the artists introduce order into the composition is seen in the differentiated features of the Elamite and Assyrian fighters. The Elamites are primarily distinguished by their fillets, which are knotted behind their heads and leave the tops of their hair exposed (fig. 4.6).[30] The majority of them are lightly armed archers—a detail that underscores their vulnerability—and their quivers are decorated with palmettes.[31] They are occasionally depicted manning carts or chariots, whose wheels contain anywhere from eight to sixteen spokes.[32] The Assyrian army, by contrast, boasts heavier armor among the infantry especially: their equipment includes body-sized, round-topped shields, pointed helmets,[33] and scale armor.[34] Alongside the

[30] T. A. Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* (London: Athlone Press, 1970), 83. On the representation of Elamites more broadly, see Peter Calmeyer, "Zur Genese altiranischer Motive X. Die elamisch-persische Tracht," *AMI* 21 (1988): 27–51, esp. 28-29; Julian E. Reade, "Elam and Elamites in Assyrian Sculpture," *AMI* 9 (1976): 97–99.

[31] Reade, "The Battle of Til-Tuba," 73. On their quivers specifically, see also Madhloom, *Chronology*, 51.

[32] On their (decorated) weaponry, see Madhloom, *Chronology*, 31.

[33] Ibid., 38.

cavalry, which charge down the landscape trampling the enemy, the foot soldiers often fight in pairs, with the well-armed spearmen protecting the lightly armed auxiliary archers (fig. 4.7).[35] Beyond the extreme historical detail with which the artists differentiate the fighters, the viewer can disentangle pro-Assyrian and anti-Assyrian forces simply on the basis of their ideological presentation. In accordance with the Neo-Assyrian representational tradition, the Til-Tuba sculptors eschew any portrayal of an Assyrian defeat, even at the level of individual combat.[36] The artists therefore cut through the mélange of violence smattered on the panels through their uniform presentation of particular figures (and topographical features). It is this detailed rendering that particularizes the combat, thereby ordering an otherwise indiscernible tangling of human and animal bodies.

The clear differentiation between the fighters is not necessarily matched by a stark demarcation of their bodies. Their overlapping arrangement complicates their individual distinctions. Rather than collecting Assyrian and Elamite soldiers into coherent ranks or even simplistically orienting the two factions in opposing directions, the artists instead intermingle them throughout the registers. They also introduce foreign mercenaries, which further historicize the conflict but also confuse the "good-guy/bad-guy" separation. The composition thus forces the viewer to peer through the entwined conglomeration of figures in order to distinguish friend from foe, but even then, the natural movement of the registers created by the horizontal and diagonal lines—created by the spears, bows and arrows, limbs, and deceased Elamites—that permeate them work against one's

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[34] For further details on the dress of Assyrian soldiers, see Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 120–21; Madhloom, *Chronology*, 68–70; Hrouda, *Die Kulturgeschichte des assyrischen Flachbildes*, 32.

[35] Reade, "The Battle of Til-Tuba," 73. On the appearance of foreign soldiers serving as auxiliaries for the Assyrian armies in the Til-Tuba reliefs, see Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrer*, 182, 186, 224–25. Cf. Madhloom, *Chronology*, 70.

[36] Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 24. For the conflict between the realism of the historical narrative reliefs and their ideological presentation, see also Irene J. Winter, "Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs," *Studies in Visual Communication* 7 (1981): 3.

attempt to settle one's eyes on particular fighters, at least for long.[37] The appearance of vegetation in the second and third slabs only exacerbates the problem of violent ambiguity. In the third slab especially, however distinguishable the Elamites and Assyrians are from one another, the image privileges a general viewing of the scene to such a degree that the abstract mass of warfare swallows up the captioned narrative of Teumann's head.[38] At initial viewing, the black and white factions of the conflict bleed together into a gray of human carnage. The audience must take a second (if not a third and fourth) glance in order to make out who are the victims, and who are the victors.

In sum, the composition has several features that help order the chaotic scenes—namely, the composition's left to right movement, its use of registers, and its distinct depictions of Elamite and Assyrian figures. As we've seen, however, the artists do not incorporate these aspects simplistically but instead retain several complicating factors that generate a more nuanced viewing experience. The rightward movement is continually interrupted by multi-directional fighting, registers emerge and disappear without warning, and irrreconcilable perspectives are juxtaposed without explanation. Assyrians, Elamites, and auxiliary fighters overlap one another across the landscape. And the total

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[37] On the unsettled quality of Neo-Assyrian sculptural arrangement, see especially Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, "The Forms of Violence," *October* 8 (1979): 17–29, esp. 19-21, who highlight the way in which the lack of a focal point in the Neo-Assyrian representation of war violence generates formal movement within the composition: "Nothing is more typical of Assyrian art than such mobilizing strategies. Any focused point almost invariably includes cues which keep us on the move. The sculptor manages simultaneously to bring a coherent centering to his scene and to transform every center into the margin of another (provisional) focus of our attention…[O]ur taking in of the reliefs is always a complex sequence of horizontal *and* vertical eye movements, of movements from left to right and from right to left, of following a 'story line' sometimes curved and sometimes straight."

[38] The Battle of Til-Tuba reliefs have been critiqued precisely because of the way the violent detail obfuscates the narrative (or climactic) presentation of Teumann's fate. See, e.g., Curtius, *Die antike Kunst: Ägypten und Vorderasien*, 282: "Im Grunde hat das Schlachtenbild aller Zeiten an diesem Widerspruch gelitten…Der assyirische Künstler will zu viel auf einmal." He nevertheless concedes that "alle Kritik muss verstummen vor seinem Erfindungsreichtum und der Grösse seines Entwurfs" (ibid., 282). Similarly, Potratz, *Die Kunst des alten Orient*, 268: "Leider konnte man sich auch hier nicht dazu überwinden, die Furcht vor Überdeckungen abzustreifen. So erscheinen alle Bildteile wie Streublümchen auf einer dekorierten Fläche. Von der Wahrnehmung der Bildteife durch die Künstler kann keine Rede sein. Die künstlerische Entwicklung war definitiv hängengeblieben." Cf. Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 26, who states that there is "so much distraction that sometimes the focus of the action is almost missed."

result is one of both orientation and disorientation, intimacy and distance, comprehension and confusion. With these ordering and disordering techniques, the artists re-create the strategy and chaos of warfare within the three-slab tableau.

4.5. SPECIFIC FEATURES OF VIOLENCE IN THE BATTLE OF TIL-TUBA NON-NARRATIVE SCENES

Having addressed three characteristic tensions of the Battle of Til-Tuba composition as a whole, I will now consider a sample of particular scenes as a means of identifying the violent content portrayed within the piece and analyzing the salient features of its presentation. I will first consider scenes that do not appear within the captioned narrative sequence, beginning with the fragmentary scenes found within the upper halves of the slabs. I will then examine three areas of the battle scene proper: the mound (slab 1), the fighting within the registers (slabs 1-3), and the river Ulai (slab 3). I will show that the artists present the Assyrian campaign in a manner that highlights the threat, stability, and inevitable progress of the empire over against the chaotic ranks of their enemies. The artistic privileging of Assyrian power has as its counterpart the "utilization" of Elamite suffering, wherein Elamite bodies are depicted in a way that minimizes empathy and contributes to the broader visual thesis of Assyria's victory.

4.5.1. Violence in the Captivity Scenes (The Upper Registers of Slabs 1-3)

We begin with the two extant scenes at the extremities of the top half of the Room 33 slabs (figs. 4.9=8-4.9). First, at the top of the far-left side of the image, a broken scene of the fourth register stands

above the battle and shows two prisoners, whose long coats likely point to their Babylonian identity (fig. 4.8). Their Assyrian captors stand behind their kneeling prisoners and bind them with ropes at their necks and fetters on their feet. All six figures face left, and the prisoners appear to work at mullers under the threat of punishment from the Assyrians' upraised maces. Though the fragmented image precludes any certain knowledge of the scene's details, many have identified the individuals as Nabu-na'id and Bel-etir, the sons of Nabu-shuma-eresh—the governor of Nippur, who, along with Bel-iqisha (the Gambulean leader) and Marduk-shuma-ibni (a Babylonian general), had incited Urtak, the king of Elam, to invade Assyrian-occupied Babylonia in 667 B.C.E.[39] Once Teumman usurped the Elamite throne in 664, Elam was eventually drawn into an anti-Assyrian alliance in 653, to which Ashurbanipal responded with a military campaign into the south that resulted in an Elamite defeat at the Battle of Til-Tuba. This Assyrian victory prompted a revenge tour against the neighboring leaders—including Dunanu (who had succeeded his father Bel-iqisha of Gambulu) and Nabu-shuma-eresh—for their instigation of Urtak's rebellion nearly fifteen years prior. In addition to capturing Dunanu and marching him through Arbela with the head of Teumman hanging from his neck, Ashurbanipal boasts of forcing the sons of Nabu-shuma-eresh to grind the bones of their father at the gates of Nineveh. Many interpret the fragmentary events in the upper register as a representation of this event, which would have taken place after some time after the Til-Tuba victory.[40]

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[39] For those who favor an identification of the kneeling prisoners with the sons of Nabu-shuma-eresh, see Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture," 99; Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, 58; Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 174–75. Cf. Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 28. Though a description of this event is lacking in any of Ashurbanipal's relief epigraphs or epigraph tablets, Cylinder B recounts the bone-grinding episode: "Nabû-nâ'id (and) Bêl-êtir, sons of Nabû-shuma-êresh, the [governor of Nippur], whose father Urtaku had aroused to fight against Akkad,—the bones of Nabû-shuma-êresh, which they had brought from Gambulu to Assyria, these bones I had his sons crush in front of the gate inside Nineveh" (*ARAB* 2.866).

[40] For further discussion of these events, see A. K. Grayson, "Assyria 668-635 B.C.: The Reign of Ashurbanipal," in *CAH* 3/2, 147–54.

In their depiction, the artists highlight the physical proximity of the Assyrian soldiers to the prisoners through the multiple lines that connect them: the individual arms of each soldier (one holding the head; the other holding the hair), the overlapping feet/legs of the three figures, and the rope held by the backgrounded Assyrian soldiers. This physical proximity coupled with the doubled presence of the Assyrian captors underscores the corporal control of Assyrian military power—a dominance confirmed by the artists' decision to foreground the smiting posture over that of the binding soldier behind him. This menacing stance captures the immanence of Assyrian violence: the empire will only allow resistors to live only insofar as they kneel under the shadow of imperial brutality. Furthermore, the near-identical replication of the motif across the two prisoners lends an appealing order to the oppression, delighting the eye with the pattern of forced labor. At the same time, the artist works against the generalizing tendency of the repetition by varying the individual details of the prisoners, as seen, for example, in their differing wardrobe and beard lengths. Such specificity humanizes the sufferers in a manner that also enhances the merciless characterization of the Assyrian war machine.

The remains of a second scene from the reliefs' upper halves appear on the opposite side of the three-panel section. Like the ordered repetition of the kneeling prisoners in slab 1, the upper half of slab 3 displays a procession of defeated prisoners in two parallel registers (fig. 4.9). The fragmentary nature of the image complicates the identification of its prisoners, but if we assume that the image of the kneeling captives represents Nabu-na'id and Bel-etir (the sons of Nabu-shuma-eresh) grinding the bones of their father, it is possible that the prisoner procession (located on the far side of the same register) depicts the Gambulean prisoners taken back to Nineveh after the destruction of Sha-pi-bel,

their capitol. Their Babylonian-style robes help support this conclusion. Because, historically speaking, the punishment of Nabu-na'id and Bel-etir took place after the procession of the Gambulean prisoners in Nineveh, some argue (tentatively, given the incomplete nature of the images) that the artists may have arranged the narrative sequence of the upper registers from right to left—opposite to that found in the battle below—and anchor the successive events in the single location of the Assyrian capitol.[41]

The processional scene itself features a high degree of repetition among the various figures. The men and women both wear cloaks indicative of their Babylonian/Gambulean culture but are clearly differentiated from one another, not only by their facial features (the men having beards) but also by the length of their tunics: those of the men fall just below the knee, while those of the women extend down to their feet. Both the men and the women wear "their hair in curls, falling on their shoulders, and bound above the temples with a band or fillet."[42] Several of the women are accompanied by their children, who wear either simple shirts or nothing at all, and their nakedness points to their vulnerability and helplessness. All of the adults hold out their arms, bent at the elbow, presumably in adoration or fear of a prominent figure (now missing). The heights of their hands increase as one reaches the front of the line, with the front male figures holding their hands as high as their foreheads. This subtle progression lends an air of anticipation to the image, as the viewer expectantly waits to see the one whom the prisoners approach. In many cases, their hands slightly overlap the body of the individual in front of them, creating a nearly unbroken horizontal pattern that

[41] Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, 71; Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 174–75. See also Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture," 101, who assumes that the upper registers of the first three slabs portrayed the "Nineveh review," which included Dunanu.

[42] Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 450.

leads the eye leftward across the procession and highlights the physical proximity of the prisoners.[43] Furthermore, the ground-level perspective places the viewer on equal footing with the subjects and implicates the viewer in the scene by closing the distance between the captives/captors and the onlookers.

Within the scene's repetitions and generalities, the artists integrate subtle variances that historicize and humanize an otherwise mundane scene. The artists animate the procession, for example, by posturing the women and children in different ways: some children stand tentatively beside their mothers, holding their hands; some clutch their mothers' legs in fear; others slightly walk ahead and turn back to face their mothers, who grasp their outstretched arms, perhaps as a desperate attempt to some sort of impatient activity. In one grouping, the mother and child glance backward together in full awareness of an Assyrian bowman, who propels the captives from behind. The unique features of each child enliven the procession, with their backward and upward glances and finicky postures evoking a range of experiences—whether timidity, curiosity, or even boredom. Despite their undifferentiated faces, no two images of the women or children are pure repetitions of one another. The subtlest arm position or backward glance individualizes each captive just enough to animate them uniquely. As Bersani and Dutoit note with respect to Assyrian representation more broadly, "The Assyrians never use a human face to tell a story. Faces interest them for their visibility, not for

[43] A wall fragment from Room 33 shows portions of two registers that appear originally belonged to the procession scene. The upper register reveals the lower halves of two figures facing left and wearing fringed coats like those of the Babylonian captives. The lower register shows the head of an Elamite (?) archer (also facing left). Given that the fragment fits the prisoner procession above, it likely confirms that the line of captives extended down at least the length of the third slab. On the fragment (BM124810), see A. Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures: Palace of Sinacherib* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1915), pl. 63; Richard D. Barnett et al., *Catalogue of Sculptures* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), pl. 315, no. 395.

their depth." They instead "represent an incredible variety of volumes in men's [*sic*] bodies."[44] Such attention to physical detail evokes a tinge of sympathy and introduces a tragic complexity into the otherwise automatic conveyor belt of nameless captives.

The four Assyrian captors presented in the scene play a similar role within the procession.[45] On one hand, their leftward orientation, comparable height, and angled arms embed them almost entirely within the Babylonian ranks such that a cursory glance might even overlook their presence. On the other hand, the artists have incorporated some understated discontinuities that reveal their domineering appearance. In the bottom register, for example, the thick, curved lines that outline the triangular shape of their bows stand in stark contrast with the softer lines that characterize the male and female bodies beside them, and the heavy weaponry they carry (swords, sheaths, and quivers) lend them a more angular presentation that implies a certain impenetrable density. In the upper register, the Assyrian's presence is more pronounced. Unlike the Babylonian men and women, who hold their arms in front of them, the soldier stands in the smiting posture: his right arm reaches in front of the shoulder of the male captive before him, as his left arm extends backward ready to strike. Even the "x" intersection of his chest armor marks him at the center of the processing figures. The

[44] Bersani and Dutoit, "The Forms of Violence," 24. When compared with that of Sennacherib, the artwork under Ashurbanipal is distinguished by the interaction of individual elements within the composition, seen especially in the prisoner processions. See further Nagel, *Die neuassyrischen Reliefstile*, 22–23; Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 129–34. With respect to the non-expressive rendering of the human face in Assyrian art more generally, H R. Hall remarks, "Thereis [*sic*] no real human portraiture in Assyrian art…The Assyrians however merely give us a conventional face of a man, of any man…Yet in spite of this sameness, the sumptuous figures give us an extraordinary impression of truth, with the detail of their robes and weapons and musical instruments, their chariots and trappings, their parasols, their thrones and their tents…Their men may all be alike, but the style is alive with energy and truth" (*Babylonian and Assyrian Sculpture in the British Museum* [Paris: Van Oest, 1928], 16–18). See also Silvia Schroer et al., "Menschendarstellungen," in *RGG* 5:1079-80. Cf. Sara Kipfer, ed., *Visualizing Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 285 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2017).

[45] Wäfler (*Nicht-Assyrer*, 225, nn. 1176, 1177) points out the "Zipfelschurzrock," worn by the soldiers in the procession scene discussed above, can be a defining feature of South-Babylonian attire. Given the context of Gambulean captives, Kaelin (*Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, 14) identifies them as such.

inclusion of the Assyrian fighters visually binds the prisoners into clusters before the viewer and emphasizes the abiding presence of Assyrian violence among their prisoners. The juxtaposition of the procession against the chaotic battle below intensifies the threat they pose, for the combat images demonstrate the merciless skill with which they wield the bows and swords they carry. In the contrast between war and procession, the artists present the viewer with two possible responses to Assyrian power: the bloodbath that follows from rebellion or the ordered survival of their families that follows from worshipful adoration before the looming blow of Assyrian violence.

4.5.2. Violence in the Non-Narrative Battle Scenes

In the same way that the prisoner scenes integrate individual features within the images' general movement, the Til-Tuba conflict demonstrates a remarkable attention to detail that animates the mayhem displayed across the composition. I turn now to discuss images on the reliefs that appear outside of the captioned narrative concerning King Teumman. I will analyze these scenes in three major sections: the hill of Til-Tuba (slab 1), the bottom and middle sub-registers (slabs 1-3), and the River Ulai (slab 3). By assessing the piece in this way, I follow the composition's general movement from left to right (or from hill to river) and its perspectival play, beginning with the action "nearest" to the viewer and working backward into the recesses of the battlefield. Within each scene, the artists present violence in multiple ways that underscore Assyrian strength, as seen in the visual contrast between the Elamite and Assyrian ranks (the hill), the rhythmic-like cadence of the Assyrian charge (within the registers), and the historicized—that is, geographical and, thus, identifiable—representation of the battle's setting (the river).

4.5.2.1. Violence at the Hill (*Slab 1*)

First, as discussed above, the extant battle scene commences on the left-hand side with the hill of Til-Tuba (fig. 4.10; cf. fig 4.3). The figures cut off at the edge of the panel suggest that the image originally continued onto an adjacent slab now lost to us, but the surviving image details the dissolution of the Elamite ranks before the Assyrian infantry and cavalry. The outline of the hill begins at a point equivalent to the third register and curves sharply down to the bottom of the slab, with figures freely filling in the resulting space. Fleeing fighters trace the terrain of the sloping ridge and lead the eye down the image in imitation of the Elamites' precipitous collapse. Two details concerning the presentation of violence in this scene merit further consideration: (1) the exaltation of Assyrian order in the Assyrian-Elamite contrast and (2) the inevitability of Assyrian victory in the collapse of the Elamite victims.

First, the conflict represented upon the hill-line features a sharp contrast between the Assyrian and Elamite forces that underscores the compacted power of Assyrian violence. This appears prominently in the initial encounter between the Assyrian infantry and their initial opponents at the top of the register. Three (pro-)Assyrian infantry—two overlapping bowmen standing behind a spearman, who protects their unit with a body shield—occupy the high ground, and two Elamites flee their immediate attack. The first turns backward with his arms raised to face the one who impales him, while the second overlaps the first and crouches with outspread arms. His quiver, appearing just slightly over the edge of his left shoulder, is now rendered useless, for his bow, along with many others, has been flung into the battlefield above him.

In this five-figure cluster, the artists present a vivid Assyrian-Elamite disparity that epitomizes Assyrian propaganda. A cursory glance reveals the obvious difference between the armed and organized Assyrians and their flailing, defenseless counterparts, but a closer look at their more detailed features reveals a more nuanced differentiation. For example, the attackers stand prominently in a vertical position with their knees straightened and feet planted in the descending terrain—a triangular posture that highlights the inviolable singularity of the imperial fighter. No pro-Assyrian features appear out of place: their image is one of control, synchronization, and precision. The composite image of the overlapping Elamites, however, stretches in multiple directions in a knot of contortionist positions. In contrast to the robotic unity of the three Assyrian faces, the Elamite heads turn against their bodies and face in two different directions (either up or down), which prompt the viewer to behold the entirety of the Assyrian unit. The knees of the pursued buckle before their attackers, and their bodies take on a limp fluidity that belies their exhaustion, weakness, and agony. In addition to these stylistic contrasts, the artists use the Assyrian's shield to indicate the Assyrian-Elamite division in a simpler manner. Its bulky intrusion visually demarcates the individuals into two factions. The thin line of the Assyrian's spear serves as the only perceivable bridge between the two miniature worlds of order and chaos. This isolated weapon leads the eye across the boundary between victor and victim in a manner that animates their encounter and exalts the power of Assyrian control. According to the image, chaos lies not in warfare per se but in the barbaric nations who align themselves against the empire. Militaristic violence alone traverses the chasm between their worlds.

Second, in addition to this obvious contrast between the Assyrian and Elamite forces, the artists also sculpt the inevitability of their victory into the gravity of the terrain itself. Among the ten

figures positioned upon the hill's ground line, only three of them are Assyrian, and yet, given the image's topographical presentation, the insecurity inherent in a lopsided conflict never figures into the viewer's consciousness. The composition implies a domino effect: the Assyrian spear at the top of the hill tips over the first two victims, who topple headlong one after the other into their Elamite counterparts down the ridge. Their flimsy characterization carries forward into the fallen: the third figure stands weaponless with his arms raised in terrified surrender; the fourth and fifth retreat down the precipitous hill, bearing arrow wounds that reveal the accuracy of the archers above them; and the final two, one of whom appears to pluck out his beard,[46] grasp for secure footing on the near vertical terrain, as the gravity forces their weapons away from their bodies. Every Elamite soldier on the hill is depicted in the process of flight, "no longer attempting defense, but giving themselves up to despair"[47]—all with the exception of one. In the vacancy left between the second and third escapees, the feet of a toppled victim emerge over the top of the hill line, and his vertical position epitomizes the fate of those who resist Assyrian victory, which appears as inevitable as gravity itself. The hill presents a world of Assyrian action and Elamite passivity. Their empire alone imposes its will upon history without effort.

The figures that fill the front of the mound confirm this ideology but also help to individualize the Elamite rebels. Much like the procession scene discussed above, the artists render their individuality through their posturing, as none of the defeated lie or fall in identical positions. Under the corpses and their weapons, the artists intermingle three particular incidents. First, an Elamite, struck by an arrow, mounts a falling horse, and both figures turn backward in anticipation of their

[46] Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 446.
[47] Ibid.

captors. They share the subtle remnants of a ground line with a runaway Elamite, whose limbs are entwined with that of the animal. At this ground-level perspective, we see the soldier's hand in front of the horse, while his front leg appears behind the animal. The horse's turning glance and the almost warped reach of its rear leg beyond the slab's edge indicate that the animal shares in the Elamites' fear and agony. The features of the animal—its strewn limbs, reins, bit, and rear musculature—are rendered in striking detail and mirror the twisted shapes of its Elamite counterparts.

A second scene appearing just below the ground line of the rider, though well-preserved, is more difficult to interpret. At a most basic level, a standing soldier bends over and pulls upon (an object in) the hand of a fallen Elamite, pierced twice by the Assyrian archers. The right hand of the fallen draws attention to the wound by pulling at the arrow in his left leg, and the reach of his left arm coupled with his extended right leg forms an unbroken horizontal line that guides the viewer across the slain and toward the auxiliary soldier, who perhaps attempts to wrest an object from his hand or perhaps drags the enemy away to decapitate him.[48] Two more Elamites are sprawled at the feet of the soldier, with the feet of the lower soldier pouring over the hill-line to the right. A lone quiver hovers in front of the standing imperial fighter. The mid-air suspension of this otherwise anomalous object further animates the mound's gravitational pull and the artists' realistic rendering of the battle's progression.

[48] The standing soldier lacks the distinctive conical helmet of the Assyrian fighters and the tied fillet of the Elamites. Wäfler has identified the pointed headgear with upturned flaps as that of auxiliary troops from Sam'al-Que. See idem, *Nicht-Assyrer*, 182, as followed by Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, 16. See also Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 446, who understands the scene similarly: "An Assyrian soldier, or ally, distinguished by a low round cap, and a kind of belt or shawl twisted round his breast, was dragging a body towards him, probably with the intention of cutting off the head." Cf. Reade, "The Battle of Til-Tuba," 72, no. 20, who (perhaps wrongly) interprets the figure as an Elamite trying "to pull a wounded friend to safety."

The step-like alternation of the Elamite corpses down the hill, guides the eye to the hill's third and final scene, wherein a chariot, occupied by an Elamite driver and an unarmed warrior with hands upraised in surrender, tramples an Elamite corpse and dashes away from what appears to be Assyrian cavalry and toward an Assyrian warrior, who holds an upraised sword. Trapped between chariot and sword, the Elamite figures look backward and forward in such desperation that they have no regard for their own slain, thus confirming the self-destructive chaos of the Elamites.

When viewed together, the individual episodes on the hill operate dialectically. Their flailing limbs and horizontal (or diagonal) extension add to the visual chaos of the composition. The multiple lines of movement inherent in the conglomeration of their bodies obfuscate the viewer's comprehension of the scene and resist analysis at the level of individual figures. Nevertheless, because the general impression of the scene's "violence" emerges solely through the combination of discrete bodies, their individuality subtly works against the composition's propagandistic function, given that, at least with respect to the hill, the creativity at work in the manifold depictions of suffering outweigh the (at times, banal) consistency of the Assyrian fighters. Though the order of the Assyrian ranks proffers a visual reprieve from the disarticulated victims, the undifferentiated repetition of the imperial warriors ultimately displaces interest away from the victors and toward the particular woes of the Elamite subjects. The presentation of their manifold sufferings may in fact foster an attention to the sufferer that contradicts the propagandistic interest of the total composition.

4.5.2.2. Violence within the Registers (*Slabs 1-3*)

Once the registers emerge next to the hillside, the individual encounters between Assyrian and Elamite soldiers multiply. In the bottom two registers of the first slab, the frantic movement characteristic of Neo-Assyrian relief representation increases (figs. 4.3, 4.11). Broadly speaking, the image affirms the insurmountable power of the Assyrian troops by presenting their dominant annihilation of Elamite fighters. Like the hill, the Assyrian troops appear in comparatively fewer number than their enemies: for example, the lowest register of the first slab features twelve total figures—four of which appear to be Assyrian (or pro-Assyrian) fighters—while the middle register presents an even more uneven conflict between ten total Elamites and four Assyrians. Though outnumbered, the Assyrians never falter, and the shift from an elevated to a ground-level perspective within the registers verifies their invincibility. The reader, now eye-to-eye with the Assyrian fighters, witnesses no Assyrian injuries, despite the disordered breakdown of Assyrian and Elamite ranks. Within the three ledgers, the horizontal sequencing of individual Assyrian-Elamite episodes results in the consistent overlapping of Assyrian and Elamite forces to such a degree that Assyrians and Elamites sometimes fight their respective enemies back-to-back with one another (as seen, for example, in the Elamite archers and Assyrian spearman of the lowest register). Even in the midst of such multi-directional combat and the near absence of any meaningful Assyrian organization, the Assyrians emerge unscathed. Their vertical posturing and spearman-archer pairings —in contrast to the crumbling clusters of Elamites—suffice to demonstrate their conquering presence over that of the Elamites.

The scenes within the registers also accelerate the composition's forward progression. The combination of weaponry lines, coupled with the insertion of horizontal bodies, bows, and quivers above the soldiers, accelerates the eye's movement down the register in a manner that significantly resists the viewer's attempt (or desire) to atomize its images. Their combat is more confusing than clarifying. As Layard originally observed, "From the number of figures introduced, and the complicated nature of the action, it is difficult to describe these important reliefs intelligibly."[49] Nevertheless, a closer look reveals a subtle pattern among the weapons, soldiers, and falling bodies, and the design serves as a conduit of the composition's violent movement down the slab.

We see intimations of a pattern in the three (somewhat) distinct scenes of the middle register (fig. 4.12). In the first conflict at the far left-hand side of the register, the artists introduce a fleeing chariot occupied by two Elamite soldiers. The charioteer on the right appears to fall from the vehicle with his arms outstretched, while the archer stands upright and faces the mound to his left, with his left arm holding up his bow and his right hand raised either in grief or reaching for another arrow. The horse, whose outstretched limbs imply a swift escape, tramples an Elamite fighter underfoot, his body twisting toward the ground for protection. The animal's forehooves overlap the garment of the Assyrian who introduces the register's second scene. Here, an Assyrian spearman, guarded by his tower shield, reaches above his head to impale his Elamite enemy. The artists create a tense dynamism within the scene by capturing the wounded just prior to his inevitable death: the weapon drives toward his torso (exposed by his flailing arms); the spear point grazes the edge of his tunic; his knee absorbs the initial impact of his collapse; and his left arm reaches to cushion the fall. The kill,

[49]Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 447.

though predetermined, remains in progress. The artists sustain the final flash of the enemy's life and thereby eternalize the dread that defines his (and others') existential confrontation with the Assyrian empire.

The third scene on the middle register of the first panel once again overlaps with what precedes it. As the pierced Elamite sprawls toward the floor, his body covers the legs of an auxiliary bowman and Assyrian spearman, who stand ahead of him. His right arm follows the vertical extension of the archer's body and guides the viewer's eye toward these newly introduced actors. In this final episode, the archer prepares to fire against a chariot, commandeered by three Elamite fighters: those on the left and right—both of whom have been pierced by a spear and arrows respectively—bowl over the front and back of the chariot. In contrast to their limp arms and bodies, which follow the contours of the twelve-spoked wheel below them, the Elamite archer between them stands upright. Having suffered an arrow wound himself, he raises his arms and bow into the air as a sign of surrender. Though fragmented, the head of the mule drawing the cart can be seen on the second slab, barreling into the ground ahead.

Within the overlapping scenes here (and replicated across the non-narrative registers scenes), a patterned display takes shape across the figures and lends a driving energy to the composition. The artists punctuate the register with staggered vertical figures—the Elamite archers on the chariots, the Assyrian spearmen, the auxiliary bowmen, etc.—and subsequently connect them with horizontal and diagonal lines, whether created by the elongated limbs of the horse (scene one), the downward thrust of the spear (scenes two and three), or the falling Elamite bodies. In the case of impaling spears or falling soldiers, these lateral lines often lead the eye both forward and downward, until, at the spear's

or body's lowest point, it overlaps the standing individual of an adjacent scene (e.g., scenes two to three), who once again draws the eye back to the middle of the register. The resulting alternation of vertical and horizontal directions of movement imparts a limping rhythm to the violence—a rhythm that lurches forward and stalls in alternating sequence. This rhythm, however irregular, is both anchored by the Elamite soldiers who garner enough strength to stand and driven by the weaponry that flattens all resistance.

As a result, the composition's power lies not simply in its display of dying and dead enemies, as if violent imagery alone sustains attention. Rather, the artists present violence in motion and even sculpt a visual rhythm (or even "musicality") into the forward progression of the Assyrian onslaught.[50] The alternation of standing and falling bodies within the individual episodes that fill the extended registers render imperial war (and human pain) in non-narrative sequence—a paratactic series of (un)related torment scenes strung together in a way that encourages movement down the composition in mimicry of Assyria's uninterrupted advance. This driving impulse, without any significant and isolated conflict to absorb the viewer's attention, prioritizes visual "progress" to the near exclusion of empathy. However individuated the Elamite details appear, the tableau's ultimate force is not in their facticity—in the sheer presentation of specific instances of suffering—but in their *arrangement*: their interspersal among Assyrian fighters, their placement in scene sequences, and their contribution to the movement of the register. In the eye's haste to witness where the Assyrian charge leads, it is easy gloss over the sufferers within the registers.

[50] Cf. A. Moortgat, "Die Bildgliederung des jungassyrischen Wandreliefs," *JPKS* 51 (1930): 152, who likens the arrangement of the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II to poetic meter and speaks of their "metrische Einheit" or "rythmische Einheit."

The stacking of dead bodies between the registers makes this point precisely. These lifeless victims aren't afforded the visual benefit of Assyrian soldiers/weapons to help draw the viewer's attention to their condition. Instead, they are stuffed into interstitial spaces and relegated to mere violent decoration, defrauded of all subjectivity. Their flattened shape makes them functional rather than intriguing: not only do they ominously frame (and thereby highlight) the violent actions above and beneath them but their feet also serve as visual guides that encourage the viewer to move along down the register. It is not necessarily that they are overlooked as much as they are "looked through" or "looked over"—anything but "looked at." They are collateral violence and function only to continue the Assyrian advance. Their corpses now lie in service of their killers by pointing the way of Assyrian victory. In light of these features, the guiding question generated by the stacked ground lines and their strewn bodies/weapons is not one of identity ("Who is it that suffers?") or intent ("Why do they suffer?") but purpose ("Where are these bodies pointing me?"). The artists thereby arrange the violence in a way that draws the reader not into solidarity with Elamite victims but into complicity with the forward cadence of the Assyrian war machine.

4.5.2.3. Violence at the River Ulai (*Slab 3*)

With the exception of the narrative scenes in the second and third registers (discussed below), the march of the Assyrians begins to disintegrate in the third slab (fig. 4.13), where, with the exception of some scattered Assyrian infantry and cavalry, virtually all vertical lines give way to the prostrate victims of the battlefield. The chaos of the image increases with the introduction of new flora and fauna into the scene: approximately thirty-eight shrubs gradually take over the landscape; fish and

crabs fill the water with Elamite bodies and weaponry; and carrion birds gnaw on the flesh of corpses at the top of the register. The detail with which the artists render these features, like that of the human figures, is striking. Each shrub has a unique design, with varying bough lengths, number, and size. The way the branches bend upon one another (especially in the lower area of the slab), coupled with the careful carving of every individual leaf, gives them a lifelike resemblance to the uncultivated flora of the riverbank. In a similar way, the textured scales, fins, and gills of the fish are visible from a distance, and their multiple orientations mimic their free range of movement in the water. Much like the individualized bodies of the Babylonian captives in the procession above, the five carrion birds at the top of the register peck at different parts of the corpses (eyes, legs, feet, and ribs) and boast distinct feathered designs particular to their species. The painstaking finish of the scene's largest vulture is especially noteworthy (fig. 4.14), for here, the viewer sees the rough crossing pattern of its feathers, its talons (digging into the lower body), and its rounded beak, as it pulls up the human meat from the rib area.

These natural elements help to "historicize" or reify the conflict and thereby underscore the particularity of the event represented. The artists ground the composition's propagandistic message concerning Assyrian power within the specific (and, by implication, unrepeatable) conflict with Teumman and his armies. The trees lend the composition an illusion of objectivity, as if the reader is witnessing live footage of the River Ulai. Moreover, their arrangement within the scene—with the largest trees located in the lowest register and the smaller plants appearing toward the top—help render the "bird's eye" perspective (discussed above) that adds yet another realistic nuance to the piece. The delayed appearance of the bushes and animals in the composition—if one assumes a left-

to-right reading—is perfectly timed. They not only allow for an accurate depiction of the landscape (showing increased vegetation near the water source) but also a new level of historical detail precisely when the thesis of Assyrian invincibility is nearly exhausted.

These historical nuances have a significant impact on the composition's message and reception. While the registers bludgeon the eyes with scene after scene of victorious Assyrians, the artists help to retain the suspension of disbelief with these realistic backgrounds and shifting perspectives, all of which function to underscore the "truth" of Assyria's unstoppable power. On one hand, the flora and fauna root the conflict in actual space and time. Assyrian violence is no longer valorized but verified. It is as documented as the Til-Tuba landscape and confirmed by the natural order itself. On the other hand, the bushes and birds also crowd the scene with further unreadable chaos. With the addition of these distracting features and shifting perspectives, the artists disorient the viewer and exacerbate the hunger for comprehension, which they satisfy with the ideology of Assyrian consistency. The multiple lines of direction found within the dozens of bushes and fish, coupled with their textured renderings, serve as a visual glue between the hovering bodies. Their presence unifies an otherwise disassociated arrangement of figures, and such spatial definition helps to distract from the image's constructed quality. These topographical details, coupled with the captioned narrative, blur the line between the ideal and the real and serve as the Trojan horse by which the artists disguise (and invade the viewer's mind with) the fantasy of Assyrian impenetrability.[51]

[51] As Bahrani notes, "[A]ccurate historical and ethnographic specificity is of the utmost importance. The horses and asses are beautifully carved in a linear, decorative, yet realistic style, whereas the Elamites are somewhat awkwardly proportioned…Realism is of great concern in some areas and less in others. Realism is suspended, just as it is utilized, for the sake of the narrative" (*Rituals of War*, 32).

With the exception of the soldiers who interact with Teumman and his son in the narrated scenes, the Assyrians are almost absent in the upper two-thirds of the composition. In the bottom register, where the previous two slabs had highlighted the Assyrian spearman and bowmen and their victory over Elamite chariots, the final slab present the infantry only insofar as they fire upon the drowning victims of the riverbank. Instead, the sculptors privilege the Assyrian cavalry and their unceasing charge toward the river. This development accelerates the speed of the Assyrian chase and, along with other key features of the third panel, brings the visual progression to peak intensity just before all momentum comes to a jarring halt at the river.

The thick vertical band indicative of the water provides a sudden but obvious concluding punctuation to the three-slab syntax. Having walked the distance from the hill down to the riverbank, the viewer experiences the tension between the growing speed of the downhill onslaught and the obvious end of the terrain. The resulting anticipation confers a further sense of inevitability to the Assyrian victory, while also resolving the question of the composition's movement. The river is the telos of the military campaign and, as such, brings a firm finality to the violence. Bounded by the land itself, the conflict remains not only historical but intentional—with a represented and geographical goal to which the soldiers are driving their enemies. Assyrian violence, though relentless, remains targeted. The horrors of war are bounded, narrated, and, at least with respect to the Assyrian figures, controlled. The visual parentheses created by the hill and the river aestheticize the killing spree to a degree. Within their frame, the acts of the imperial war machine become seem both gruesome and beautiful. The conclusion of violence (indicated by the river in the third panel) helps to ease the tension of Assyria's unconscionable warfare: they fight not only with ferocity but within (visually

bounded) containment. Beyond whatever strategic advantage the river supplied the Assyrians in the conflict, its representational purpose exceeds its historicity and casts a startling vision to the onlooker: even the land colludes with Assyrian violence and opens itself to be filled with the corpses of rebels.

In addition to the natural features and Assyrian soldiers, the third panel is most obviously distinguished by the multiplication of dead bodies. Notwithstanding the five or six Elamites found in the river, the artists fill the landscape with over twenty-five victims laid upon and around one another. They lie together in an undifferentiated mass of horizontal figures, some of them headless. Although the narrative scenes of the preceding two slabs show the piled Elamite heads, the viewer does not encounter their decapitated bodies in great number until the final slab. This innovation in Assyrian violence strips the Elamite body of any individuated identity and reduces their dignity to mere artistic utility. Unlike the unique flailing postures of the Elamites pursued upon the hill, the Elamites found among the shrubs appear in an almost uniform position of death, as if the overall composition tells a simplistic narrative development from Elamite flight (panel 1) to execution (panel 3) across its three panels. The sheer number of bodies once again disinclines the viewer from seeing any one figure specifically. Their generic repetition instead invites us to comprehend them in the collective. Lacking dynamism and individuality, they congeal into a singular static character representative of the "every (dead) man," who might resist Assyrian authority.

Now lifeless, their malleability and utilitarian value increases in two ways. First, like the Elamite bodies found between the registers in the preceding panels, the thick corpses and limbs of the third panel generate a superabundance of horizontal lines that heighten the urgency of the composition's rightward movement. The artists crowd the scene with corporal arrow markers,

directing the reader to the full stop created by the river. Second, the artists (and viewers) further objectify the bodies by using them to frame action sequences and foreground Assyrian characters. Corpses are multiplied not simply to demonstrate the number of individuals slain by Assyrian soldiers but also to render their suffering quotidian, to make Elamite death commonplace and therefore dismissible. In contrast to the occasional allowance of unfilled space in the lower registers of the first and second slabs, the third slab employs kenophobia without exception. Dead bodies themselves rescind into the background, intermingling with the trees and river. They accumulate to the point of invisibility: without any individualized traits to arrest the eye or distinct postures to suggest agency, they become the texture of the scene itself, the morbid pattern that undergirds the scene's integrity and therefore remains unnoticed until disrupted by the occasional Assyrian soldier. Their horizontal lines are the foil against which the vertical postures of the Assyrian agents stand in sharp relief. The artists transform the Elamite remains into the stuff of artistic structures that either frame the Teumman narrative or accentuate the Assyrian cavalry. Enemy corpses are only useful insofar as they become platforms for Assyrian violence. Violence figures in such a way as to enhance the portrait of Assyrian power while also minimizing whatever empathetic response suffering might evoke.

In summary, the images of the third slab feature subtle innovations in the composition's presentation of violence. The precision with which the artists depict the land's flora and fauna help to historicize the unrealistic propaganda of Assyrian invincibility, while the river's vertical stripe provides a natural frame for the total battle scene. Most importantly, the Elamite bodies multiply to the point of becoming irrelevant. The artists transform victims into decorative art useful for highlighting Assyrian power.

4.6. SPECIFIC FEATURES OF VIOLENCE IN THE BATTLE OF TIL-TUBA NARRATIVE SEQUENCE

Having examined the presentation of violence within the non-narrative scenes, I will now consider the most discussed aspect of the reliefs: the captioned narrative of Teumman's head. I will analyze the seven individual scenes that make up the narrative (and, where applicable, their captions) in sequence before turning to consider the broader implications of its particular telling for the meaning of the artwork as a whole. First, however, it is important to address how narrativity figures within Neo-Assyrian art more broadly and the Room 33 reliefs specifically.

The Battle of Til-Tuba reliefs carry forward the centuries-long tradition of visual narrativity. Though inchoate forms of this artistic feature precede the Neo-Assyrian empire by millennia,[52] the Neo-Assyrian artists in particular privileged and refined narrative presentation well beyond that of their predecessors. The "storied" character of their artwork has generated substantial interest among interpreters.[53] Overall, the narrative scenes are arranged in the so-called "continuous style,"[54]

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[52] On the beginning and development of narrative representation in the ancient Near East, see especially Irene J. Winter, "After the Battle Is Over: The Stele of Vultures and the Beginning of Historical Narrative in the Art of the Ancient Near East," in *On the Art in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Irene J. Winter, vol. 2 of *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 3–51.

[53] For various surveys and interpretations of historical narrativity in Neo-Assyrian art, see, *inter alia*, A. Moortgat, "Die Bildgliederung des jungassyrischen Wandreliefs," *JPKS* 51 (1930): 141–58; Hans G. Güterbock, "Narration in Anatolian, Syrian, and Assyrian Art," *AJA* 61 (1957): 62–71; Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture"; Holly Pittman, "The White Obelisk and the Problem of Historical Narrative in the Art of Assyria," *AB* 78 (1996): 334–55; Stephen Lumsden, "Narrative Art and Empire: The Throneroom of Aššurnaṣirpal II," in *Assyria and Beyond: Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, ed. J. G. Dercksen, Uitgaven van Het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut Te Istanbul 100 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2004), 359–85; Laura Battini, "Time 'Pulled up' in Ashurnasirpal's Reliefs," in *Time and History in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings in the 56th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale et Barcelona 26-30 July 2010, 2013*, ed. L. Feliu et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014); Winter, "Royal Rhetoric"; "The Program of the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal II," in *Essays on Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in Honor of Charles Kyrle Wilkinson*, ed. Prudence O. Harper and Holly Pittman (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 15–32; "Fixed, Transcended and Recurrent Time in the Art of Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Concepts of Time: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Kapila Vatsyayan (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1996), 325–38; Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 170–84; Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 215–22.

[54] This terminology is based on the typology proposed by F. Wickhoff in his study on the *Wiener Genesis*, where he examined the various ways in which literary content is expressed in pictorial means. He differentiates between the (1) "complementary" (*komplettierend*) method—representing one action by showing features of other actions that

elsewhere described by Reade as the "strip-cartoon effect,"[55] wherein the images suggest narrative development "by repeating the same figure who plays the central role in a story" across multiple images, thereby generating a "visual flow" that enables viewers to "read" the story.[56] This "flow" in Neo-Assyrian renderings is not necessarily a left-to-right or horizontal movement and, in some cases, works in multiple directions simultaneously, as seen in the Room 33 reliefs specifically.

The arrangement of narrative scenes in the Battle of Til-Tuba composition is complex, as many have discussed.[57] Bahrani notes the difficulty of interpreting the design: "The relationship between depiction of one moment in time and that of another is not obvious. There is no linear movement across space in an orderly chronological sequence. This relief cannot be read from left to right or from bottom to top or in any other direction that we might expect according to the rules of narrative representation. Time is not depicted as a linear progression."[58] The chaos of the reliefs alone problematizes the viewer's attempt to discern the presence of a narrative at all, much less the

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precede/follow it without repeating any of the actors—(2) the "distinguishing" or "isolating" (*distinguierend*) method—presenting the distinguishing moment(s) of an action narrative in isolated images—and (3) the "continuous" (*kontinuierend*) method—the presentation of an action sequence by a series of iconographically coherent/connected scenes. See *Roman Art: Some of Its Principles and Their Application to Early Christian Painting*, trans. S. Arthur Strong (London: W. Heinemann, 1900), 1–21, esp. 11–21. Cf. Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration*, 2nd ed., Studies in manuscript illumination 2 (Princeton: Princeton University, 1970), 33–36, who criticizes Weitzmann's terminology, favoring "simultaneous," "monoscenic," and "cyclic" methods, respectively.

[55] Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture," 63.

[56] Chikako E. Watanabe, "Styles of Pictorial Narratives in Assurbanipal's Reliefs," in *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, ed. Brian A. Brown and Marian H. Feldman (Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 247.

[57] On the presentation of the Teumman narrative in the Battle of Til-Tuba piece, see Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture," 96–101; "The Battle of Til-Tuba," 73–77; Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs"; Chikako E. Watanabe, "The 'Continuous Style' in the Narrative Scheme of Assurbanipal's Reliefs," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 103–14; "Pictorial Narrative in Assyrian Art: The 'Continuous Style' Applied to the Battle of Til-Tuba"; "A Compositional Analysis of the Battle of Til-Tuba," in *Proceedings of the 4th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, 29 March - 3 April 2004, Freie Universität Berlin*, ed. Hartmut Kühne, Rainer Maria Czichon, and Florian Janoscha Kreppner (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008); "The Classification of Methods of Pictorial Narrative in Assurbanipal's Reliefs," in *Proceedings of the 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago July 18-22, 2005*, eds. Robert D. Biggs, Jennie Myers, and Martha T. Roth (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009), 321–25; "Styles of Pictorial Narratives"; Russell, *The Writing on the Wall,* 166-200; Bahrani, "The King's Head"; Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, esp. 69-75; Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 23–55.

[58] Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 34–35.

narrative's opening scene. Although, as we will see, certain artistic features help to signal Teumman's presence, the "comic-book strip" is by no means intuitive: after beginning at the top of the second slab, the narrative proceeds rightward and downward, until eventually circling back across the middle register of the second slab (from right to left) and concluding in the upper section of the first slab (fig. 4.15). The confusion, however, is not incidental to the composition. As Bahrani has shown, the design reflects "a deliberate choice" by the artists to allow for maximum repetitions of the king's head throughout the composition—an important rhetorical feature discussed below.[59]

Finally, it is important to note that the artists employ three epigraphs throughout the visual narrative in slabs 1-3 (with six total epigraphs appearing across the extant Room 33 reliefs). Though the use of inscriptions alongside (or upon) the relief images extends as far back as Ashurnasirpal II, Ashurbanipal significantly develops the epigraph genre and thus allows for a more nuanced relationship between text and image. Under Ashurbanipal, their use, placement, and content become "highly specific."[60] In fact, Ashurbanipal alone eschews all other forms of inscription within his palace projects outside of the epigraph.[61] Embedded within the artistic scene itself, these inscriptions serve several practical/rhetorical functions. Visually, they focus the viewer's attention, such that "even an illiterate viewer's attention is drawn by their mere presence."[62] Their square and lineated texture interrupt the curved lines of the scene and distinguish the narrative sequence from the surrounding

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[59] Bahrani, "The King's Head," 116.

[60] Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 15.

[61] Russell's remarks concerning the close image-text relationship in Ashurbanipal's reliefs are telling: "[I]t is tempting to say that pictures have finally triumphed over text, and it is true that the visible texts now seem slavishly to follow the story of the pictures." In light of his review of the epigraph tablets, which he argues preceded the relief sculptures, he nevertheless concludes, "[W]hile a walk through the palace would have left no doubt that pictures had triumphed over words as the dominant mode of public expression, every one of these pictures probably began as a text, a genesis whose fossil remains are visible on the relief surface in the form of the epigraphs" (*The Writing on the Wall*, 216).

[62] Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 15.

chaos. For the literate viewer, the epigraphs verify the correct interpretation of the relief's topographical and ethnographic clues and clarify its details. "For the first time in Assyria the inscriptions are extensively commenting [on] the visual narrative."[63] Such commentary, however, provides more than a mere written parallel to the visual information. Instead, the epigraphs "amplify" the image by providing content unique to textual media (e.g., the direct speech of the enemy, names of figures and places, background information, and so forth).[64] As Russell concludes, "With this relief series, the epigraph as a formal narrative device has truly come of age."[65]

4.6.1. The Presentation of Violence in the Narrative Sequence

4.6.1.1. Scene One

The artists signal the beginning of the narrative in several ways. First, the sculptors locate the opening scene toward the middle of the upper register of the second slab, which serves as the apex of the composition—a location that, in the Mesopotamian artistic tradition, often contains the "culminating scene" of a given image.[66] Second, in addition to supplying the narrative with the slab's prime real estate, the artists draw the viewer's attention by disrupting the composition's established

[63] Natalie Naomi May, "Triumph as an Aspect of the Neo-Assyrian Decorative Program," in *Organization, Representation, and Symbols of Power in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 54th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Würzburg 20-25 July 2008*, ed. Gernot Wilhelm (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 477.

[64] See Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 16, following Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 25. The discovery of tablets containing collections of captions speaks to the intentionality with which texts were composed and chosen for the relief projects. Though only nine of the epigraphs written on the tablets were found on the reliefs of Ashurbanipal, their near verbatim agreement supports their inextricable relationship. Wiedner (followed by Gerardi) has argued that the tablets were collections of sample epigraphs from sample reliefs presented to the king. The scribes thus worked from the tablets to the relief—a process that bespeaks the intentionality of their detail and rhetoric. See Weidner, "Assyrische Beschreibungen der Kriegs-Reliefs Aššurbânaplis," 176; Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 19–21. Contrast Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture," 100, who argues that the scribes recorded the captions after the reliefs were completed.

[65] Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 167.

[66] Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 13.

conventions. Just as the opening scene appears, the baseline of the top-most register disintegrates, and Elamite bodies pour over the original parameters. The resulting chaos indicates a shift in spatial representation and enables the artists to re-arrange the figures in a manner most conducive to storytelling. Third, the artists take advantage of the perspectival freedom inherent in the vertical arrangement and use Elamite bodies to create a thick (and morbid) frame around the king's fallen chariot. The intermingling of horizontal lines generated by their limbs and torsos contrast sharply with (and therefore, underscore) the large wheel and drooped bodies of the king and his son, who fall from the chariot. Here again, corpses become part of the scene's textured background, like that found in the third slab. Fourth, within this setting, the artists anchor the scene with the expansive sixteen-spoke chariot wheel, whose circular shape stands as the conspicuous center of the right side of the upper register—a visual complement to the fragmentary chariot wheel on the left side. In many respects, these two wheels bookend the narrative development, given that the chariot on the left-hand side belongs to the next-to-final scene of the sequence. With respect to the opening scene specifically, the "x" formed by the entangled horses to the right of the chariot also helps to mark the sequence's beginning, especially since the crisscrossed positioning of the animals appears nowhere else in the composition, despite the numerous cavalry dispersed throughout. Finally, the artists supplement these attention-grabbing shapes with new imagistic content not primarily found in any stage "prior to" (that is, to the left of) the second slab: namely, the decapitated Elamite bodies and the deciduous trees/shrubs, whose vertical reach leads the eye upward to the falling king. Even the caption found in the second register directly below the king's chariot, though a part of a later scene, signals the presence of an innovation in the composition's spatial or temporal representation.

The narrative is told across seven different scenes. The first scene of the narrative sequence shows the Elamite king Teumman and his son Tammaritu being jettisoned out of their chariot (fig. 4.16). The vehicle is obviously broken: the royal occupants appear sprawled out below the overturned wheel, and the four leading horses have become entangled to the point that they rear in opposing directions. This humiliating scenario is reinforced by the details of the figures themselves. The artists portray them as "objects of ridicule, their bodies contorted, their arms and legs waving helplessly in the air—and the royal cap is falling off the king's head, revealing his receding hairline."[67] Though no specific Assyrians appear in pursuit of Teumman, the rightward onslaught of the Assyrian armies from the previous slab places the Elamite king and prince among the fleeing masses. Only the royal headgear helps to differentiate their status from that of their dying constituency.

4.6.1.2. Scene Two

The second scene (fig. 4.17) appears adjacent to the first without any demarcation between the repeated figures. Here, the prince looks back toward the destroyed chariot and leads his wounded father by the hand away from the wreckage. The wide gate of his legs indicates his rapid movement away from their pursuers, and the poor condition of his father intensifies this urgency. King Teumman stumbles forward with his back bent over, revealing the Assyrian arrow that has pierced him. The artists use their posturing to convey the fearful experience of the figures: Tammaritu's head and hand turn backward against his fleeing body to gesture toward his pursuers and wrecked chariot. Watanabe also discerns in their twisted position an aid to reading the narrative properly. The scene motions

[67] Watanabe, "The 'Continuous Style' in the Narrative Scheme of Assurbanipal's Reliefs," 107.

both forward and backward in narrative time. The figures' rightward movement leads the viewer to the following scene in the sequence, while Tammaritu's extended right arm "functions as a 'narrative signal' which directs the viewer's eyes to the 'cause' of the event and provides an explanation for the incident currently taking place."[68] Their contortionist position enhances the tense atmosphere of the scene and creates a visual bridge between the otherwise separate narrative moments.

4.6.1.3. Scene Three

In the third scene (fig. 18), the majority of which is found in the upper register of the third slab, Tammaritu and Teumman encounter their Assyrian captors. Four Assyrian soldiers approach the king and his son from the left with weapons drawn. At the rear of the unit, an auxiliary archer draws his bow against the Elamite leaders, while two Assyrian spearmen armed with tower shields prepare to impale their captors. All three figures (archer and spearmen) lean forward in their advance toward the king. The spearman even lift their back heels off the ground in anticipation of their next step. The imperial soldier closest to the king, however, stands upright and firmly planted on the ground line. With his axe raised above his head, he represents the culmination of the Assyrian pursuit against the Elamite royalty. Overall, the succession of horizontal lines created by their weaponry, coupled with the walking gate of the soldiers, heightens the immediacy of the Assyrian threat against the king's life. Any possibility of escape is precluded by the two Assyrian infantry behind the captives. Their smiting postures and axe/mace mirror that of their counterpart before Teumman, and their doubled presence suggests a certain depth within the Assyrian ranks, much like the scene of the prisoners grinding the

[68] Ibid., 109.

bones of their ancestors (discussed above). The axes and maces of the soldiers closest to the Elamite leaders stand out from typical warfare weaponry of their counterparts. They are symbolic, "as maces represented authority and were employed executions."[69] Surrounded and outnumbered by their captors, Teumann—whose injury has oddly moved from his back to his midriff—kneels in supplication, while Tammaritu draws his bow against the four soldiers before him. His outstretched bow mirrors that of the Assyrian archer and partially covers the Assyrian axe-man, underscoring their proximity.

The artists frame this third narrative moment with the first of three inscriptions, which reads, "Teumman, in desperation, / said to his son: / 'Use the bow (*^{m}te-um-man ina mi-qit ṭè-e-me / a-na* DUMU.UŠ-*šu iq-bu-ú / šu-le-e* GIŠ.BAN)."[70] Rather than commenting on the narrative, the caption supplements the image by providing the scene's backstory. The caption assumes the impending Assyrian charge and focuses exclusively upon the exasperated king, even providing a brief sound bite of his discourse. This shift away from the king entirely and toward the enemy marks a dramatic innovation in the epigraph genre of the Assyrian tradition, as Gerardi has demonstrated. Under the Ashurbanipal artistic campaign, rebels like Teumman are granted literary and artistic agency with profound rhetorical effect. The enemy "is given a much greater role in the narrative," and, through the use of direct quotation (seen in the epigraph just cited), is even allowed to tell part of the story "from his point of view."[71] This first epigraph adopts Teumman's perspective not only by providing his command to Tammaritu but also by drawing attention to his fear ("in desperation" or "in a collapse of

[69] Reade, "The Battle of Til-Tuba," 77.

[70] For the translation above, see Bleibtreu, "Catalogue of Sculptures," 95.

[71] Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 17–18.

mind" [*ina miqit ṭēme*]) and his familial relationship with Tammaritu, whom the writer identifies not by his name but as Teumman's son. The inscription, despite its brevity, provides a brief glimpse into Teumman's world and, at least for the literate viewer, focuses the scene not on the Assyrian prowess but on the enemy's desperation. Even for the illiterate or foreign beholder, the epigraph's placement above the king and his son opens the visual space above them and highlights their royal presence among the eight intermingled figures. Both visually and textually, Teumman and Tammaritu constitute the narrative's center.

4.6.1.4. Scene Four

The fourth scene (fig. 19) is the most complex of the sequence because it features a succession of overlapping narrative moments within a tight visual space. At first glance, there are few visual clues within the scene to distinguish it from the preceding depiction of their arrest. The artists leave no intervening space or border between them to suggest a temporal progression. Instead, the executioner of the fourth scene overlaps with two of the Assyrian infantry who stand behind Teumman and his son in the previous scene. Notwithstanding the temporal progression implied by the left-to-right movement between the two moments, there are only a couple of details within the scene to signal the story's advancement: the repetition of Tammaritu's headpiece (hardly distinguishable from that of his Elamite counterparts), the repetition of the mace in the Assyrian's hand (a weapon reserved for corporal punishment), and, most importantly, the appearance of a second inscription above the figures. In this event, Tammaritu kneels before an Assyrian soldier facing right. His arms clutch at his chest, while he bends forward in anticipation of the deathly blow. Behind him, the Assyrian strides

toward his victim and strikes the top of Tammaritu's head. His lifted heel and wide gate imply a forceful motion that adds a sense of dynamism to the scene. The Assyrian leverages his weight behind the mace, which he wields with both hands. Touching just the crown of Tammaritu's head, the weapon and its implied force make death all but certain. The artists present the viewer with the final glimpse of the prince's life.

The presentation of Tammaritu's corpse and Teumman's death also complicates the narrative moment. In the same scene of Tammaritu's execution, a beheaded corpse with outspread limbs covers the prince's knees. Under the unidentified decapitated body lies Teumman with his left arm outstretched beneath him and his hand awkwardly twisted. An Assyrian soldier bends over him and grasps the king with his left hand, while his right hand severs it from the king's body. At Teumman's left fingertips, another Assyrian soldier bends forward in a near-mirrored posture to pick up the royal headdress and quiver—the primary visual indicators that the man being decapitated is indeed Teumman. It is not until after one recognizes the king by virtue of his scattered accoutrements that one discerns, by process of elimination, that the decapitated body overlapping Tammaritu is yet another image of Tammaritu, shown in the aftermath of his execution.

Ultimately, the overlapping arrangement of the two moments—the capture and execution of the king and prince—imbues the sequence with a violent energy: just as one witnesses the smiting threat of the mace-wielding soldiers, the Assyrians complete the implied execution practically before one realizes that narrative time has progressed. The repeated figures blur together and introduce confusion into the sequence. On one hand, the stacking of Tammaritu upon himself hastens the act-consequence relationship between the Assyrian's mace and the beheaded body. The artists' decision

to integrate—rather than separate—these two Tammaritu images (which represent two distinct moments within narrative time) underscores the speed and power with which the Assyrian executes his prisoner. The milliseconds that separate the executioner's strike and Tammaritu's death aren't enough to distinguish past from present. Instead, the artists overlay Tammaritu's death upon his life as two flashes of a single moment in narrative time, with Tammaritu's being and non-being suspended together under the Assyrian strike. What's more, their liminal placement between the upper and middle registers complements their concurrent temporality. Their deaths carry an almost apocalyptic significance, as seen in the compositional and narratival breakdown they cause within the represented space. This arrangement also confirms the inscriptional account, which claims that the king and prince were beheaded "in front of each other (*mi-iḫ-ret a-ḫa-meš*)" (see below).

On the other hand, because of this complexity, the narrative must rely on subtle visual clues to guide the reader. In the beheading scenes, the viewer must make educated guesses at Teumman's and Tammaritu's identities until the narrative retroactively clarifies them (through items like the royal quiver and headgear, detached from their owner). One must weed through the muddled bodies and overlapping temporality to "read" the sequence in its proper order. Watanabe has identified two important "narrative signals" that assist the reader in this regard. First, the breakdown of the upper register guides the eye down toward the middle register to witness the execution's completion. Second, the two Assyrians, who bend down to cut off Teumman's head and to gather his headdress and quiver, face leftward in anticipation of the narrative's next scene.[72] The lines of the royal bodies reinforce these other clues: while Teumman's reach for his lost items point the viewer toward his

[72] Watanabe, "The 'Continuous Style' in the Narrative Scheme of Assurbanipal's Reliefs," 110–11. See also "Styles of Pictorial Narratives," 348–50.

identity, the extension of Tammaritu's right arm points the way of the story's next episode in the middle register. Even the sloping arrangement of Tammaritu's two bodies imitates the gravity that brings the prince's corpse to the ground. At the same time, these visual "signals" once again appear to have only retroactive significance. They are subtle variations that can only confirm a viewer's "reading" after s/he has made sense of its complex presentation. Contra Watanabe, the mere presence of narrative cues does not necessarily resolve or even strike a balance with the composition's near incomprehensibility, as discussed below.

The narrative's second inscription is suspended above the execution scenes. The longest epigraph of the three extant slabs, it mixes third-person description with the first-person voice of Ashurbanipal to amplify the iconography. Its six lines read, "Teumman, king of Elam, who in fierce battle / was wounded, Tammaritu, his eldest son, / took him by the hand, (and) to save (their) lives, / they fled. They hid in the midst of the forest. / With the help of Ashur and Ishtar, I killed them. / Their heads I cut off in front of each other."[73] Despite the length of the epigraph, only the final two lines pertain directly to the scene below. The other four fill out or confirm the preceding three episodes with details concerning Teumman's wound, Tammaritu's assistance ("by the hand"), and their flight. Their "hiding" the trees appears to be the only unrepresented episode in the visual narrative.

The inscription's major contribution to the artwork is not necessarily found in its narrative content but in its theology and ideology. First, despite the total absence of gods and goddesses in the Til-Tuba artwork, Ashurbanipal introduces Ashur and Ishtar into the conflict and names them as the guiding "support" (*tukulu*) in his campaign. Similarly, the king, though never depicted in the artistic

[73] Akk.: *^{m}te-um-man* MAN KUR NIM.MA.KI *šá ina* MÈ *dan-ni / muḫ-ḫu-ṣu ^{m}tam-ri-i-tú* DUMU-*šú* [GAL]-*u* / ŠU.II-*su iṣ-ba-tu-ma a-na šu-zu-ub* [ZI.MEŠ]-*šu / in-nab-tú iḫ-lu-pu qé-reb qiš-ti* / [*ina* KU]-*ti* AN.ŠAR *u ^{d}15 a-nar-šú-nu-ti* / [SAG].DU-*šú-nu* KU_5-*is mi-iḫ-ret a-ḫa-meš.* For the translation, see Bleibtreu, "Catalogue of Sculptures," 95.

composition, not only claims to be present at the battle but identifies himself as the sole executioner of Teumman and Tammaritu. He alone enacts the climactic episode of the compositional narrative. The epigraph therefore uncovers the hidden presence of the king and his gods within the scene and plays upon the king's absence throughout the total composition. Represented nowhere in this battle, the king, by virtue of the inscription, now appears everywhere, animating and performing the violence that fills the relief surface. The mention of the gods also provides divine support for the image's unrealistic propaganda: in light of the inscriptions, Assyrian invincibility, however improbable the thesis may seem, is legitimated as a reality made possible by the gods. The inscriptions themselves conceal the activity of the king and deities from all but the literate viewer—from all but the elite insider who can properly discern the true agent of warfare.

The epigraphs, however clarifying their content may be, nevertheless contribute yet another esoteric obstacle the viewer must hurdle to render Assyria's history intelligible. As we have seen in the complex arrangement of the narrative sequence, Assyrian violence, at least as it is presented in this piece, possesses multiple layers of nuance and meaning that, when coupled with the epigraphs and other features, attains to a certain beauty. The images, despite their violent content, glimmer with an aesthetic value, which capitalizes on the viewer's fascination and relegates the viewer's compassion to the periphery of the narrative reading. The artists infuse the sequence with subtleties, misdirection, and temporal play—all of which work together to foster an interpretive drive toward figuring out, as opposed merely to contemplating, the violent narrative.

4.6.1.5. Scene Five

In the fifth scene of the sequence (fig. 20a-d), an Assyrian soldier and auxiliary bowman carry the heads of Teumman and Tammaritu, respectively, back toward the camp on slab 1. The artists separate the two head-bearers from one another by interrupting them with two images of surrendering Elamites. The result is an alternating pattern of different but related stories: the soldier carrying Teumman's head walks toward a surrendering Elamite, who, though not mentioned in the Room 33 epigraphs, has been identified as Ituni, "the *šut rēši* of Teumman," on the basis of the North Palace inscriptions.[74] The fighter carrying Tammaritu's head then appears to the left of Ituni and walks toward Urtak—a relative of the king named in the epigraph above him—who offers his head in surrender. This "disruption" of the sequence allows the artists to accommodate other historical moments deemed important and to nestle the Teumman narrative within other Til-Tuba events.

The walking figures and their subtle placement among other events serve two purposes within the narrative. First, their leftward orientation points the viewer in the direction of the narrative's concluding episodes. Their walking serves as the sole visual cue that the sequence has shifted direction and now works against the general flow of the composition. Second, the figures provide an artistic opportunity to repeat the presentation of the royal heads, which constitute a major rhetorical locus of the image (discussed below). The carried heads indicate that the narrative has not concluded

[74] Though the Room 33 reliefs identify Urtak in the adjacent scene, they lack any information about the identity of the surrendering bowman in the scene here. Certain similarities between this episode and another captioned scene in the Til-Tuba composition of Room I of Ashurbanipal's North Palace led Julian Reade to identify the bowman as Ituni. The Room I caption reads, "Ituni, the *šut rēši* of Te-Umman, king of Elam, / whom he (Te-Umman) continually (and) insolently sent before me, / he (Ituni) saw my strong battle and with the iron dagger of his belt, / by his own hand, he cut the bow, the symbol of his strength (*^{m}I-tu-ni-i* LÚ.*šu-ut*-SAG *^{m}te-um-man* LUGAL KUR NIM.MA.KI */ šá ir-ḫa-niš iš-tap-par-raš-šú a-di maḫ-ri-ya / ta-ḫa-zi dan-nu e-mur-ma ina* GÍR AN.BAR *šib-bi-šú /* GIŠ.BAN *si-mat* Á.II-*šú ik-si-ma* ŠU.II *ra-ma-ni-šú*)." On the identification of this figure in the Room 33 as Ituni, see Julian E. Reade,"More Drawings of Ashurbanipal Sculptures," *Iraq* 26 (1964): 6; "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Culture," 97. For this translation of the inscriptions, see Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 22-23. On the significance of *šut rēši*, see below.

with the king's execution but, in fact, is moving toward a different climax altogether. Teumman's death is only the beginning. The walking soldiers are therefore transitional, shifting the narrative arrangement away from the river and toward the hill and altering the narrative's focus from the king's life to the king's head. This transitional function leaves ample visual space for the depiction of intervening battle stories.

As mentioned above, the middle register features two images of surrendering Elamites at Til-Tuba. Unlike the Teumman narrative, these episodes are not presented in the "continuous style" but instead are represented by their "epitomizing moments"—a visual technique used prominently throughout the Mesopotamian tradition. Rather than "telling" the story through the serial repetition of the protagonists, the images "sum up" the story with reference to the story's most defining or climactic moment. The narrative is iconic rather than discursive and relies on the drama of a single image to convey its significance.[75] In the Urtak episode of the Til-Tuba reliefs, the artists rely upon the captions, as opposed to the artwork, to identify the figures and "fill out" the background information. The Ituni narrative, however, lacks any clarifying remarks. The viewer depends solely upon certain iconographic aberrations to distinguish the surrendering Elamite official from the generic encounters that fill the three slabs.

The first of the two scenes encountered (when moving from right to left) appears across the second and third slabs and depicts the surrender of an unnamed figure (likely Ituni) (fig. 20c). The striking image shows a beardless Elamite individual standing before an Assyrian soldier. The Elamite bends forward with his bow set on the ground and places a knife on the weapon ostensibly to saw it in

[75] Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 13.

half. The Assyrian stands in the smiting posture: his left hand takes hold of the Elamite's hair, as he prepares to strike the Elamite with a knife. Dead bodies and shrubs decorate the space behind and around them.

Although the visual data alone does not identify the Elamite figure, the artists indicate the character's significance in a couple of ways. For example, the Elamite's beardless face sets him apart from his compatriots and likely identifies him as a eunuch, many of whom served within administrative and imperial ranks of the Neo-Assyrian (and foreign) governments.[76] The presence of

[76] Eunuchs played a variety of powerful roles within the Neo-Assyrian royal court, administration, and military. They occupied positions of authority (provincial governors, military commanders, treasurers of royal tribute) and tended to the king in many ways (e.g., bodyguards, house stewards, chamberlains for the king, his sons, and the women of his court). Known for their loyalty, they served to protect the king's wealth and person, and kings often rewarded their castrated servants with land grants and powerful positions. On the status and roles of eunuchs within the Neo-Assyrian empire, see, *inter alia*, Julia Assante, "Men Looking at Men: The Homoerotics of Power in the State Arts of Assyria," in *Being a Man: Negotiating Ancient Constructs of Masculinity*, ed. Ilona Zsolnay, Studies in the history of the Ancient Near East (London: Routledge, 2017), 64–74; Hayim Tadmor, "The Role of the Chief Eunuch and the Place of Eunuchs in the Assyrian Empire," in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and R. M. Whiting, vol. 2, Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2002), 603–11; Albert Kirk Grayson, "Eunuchs in Power: Their Role in the Assyrian Bureaucracy," in *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament: Festschrift für Wolfram Freiherrn von Soden zum 85. Geburtstag am 19. Juni 1993*, ed. Oswald Loretz and Manfried Dietrich, AOAT 240 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 1995), 85–98; Karlheinz Deller, "The Assyrian Eunuchs and Their Predecessors," in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East: Papers of the Second Colloquium on the Ancient Near East--the City and Its Life Held at the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan* (*Mitaka, Tokyo*), *March 22-24, 1996*, ed. Kazuko Watanabe (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999), 303–11; Jacob L. Wright and Michael J. Chan, "King and Eunuch: Isaiah 56:1-8 in Light of Honorific Royal Burial Practices," *JBL* 131 (2012): 104–8; Martti Nissinen, "Relative Masculinities in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," in *Being a Man,* 230–34; Omar N'Shea, "Royal Eunuchs and Elite Masculinity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 79 (2016): 214–21.

Much of the evidence concerning eunuchs is contested precisely because of the uncertain meaning of their designation: LÚ.SAG or *ša rēši* (woodenly, "he of the head")—a term that, though differentiated from *ša zigni* ("the bearded one"), is virtually synonymous with certainimperial officials in the Neo-Assyrian period. See *CAD* R (1999), 292-96. The debate centers on whether *ša rēši* refers to a political office (some of which may or may not have been eunuchs) or whether the term represents both an office and the castrated men that held it. For those who contest this conflation, see Stephanie Dalley, review of Raija Mattila, *The King's Magnates: A Study of the Highest Officials of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, *BO* 58:197-206; Luis R. Siddall, "A Re-Examination of the Title *ša rēši* in the Neo-Assyrian Period," in *Gilgameš and the World of Assyria: Proceedings of the Conference Held at the Mandelbaum House, the University of Sydney, 21-23 July, 2004*, ed. Joseph Azize and Noel Weeks, Ancient Near Eastern Studies 21 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 225–40. The evidence provided from the artwork has contributed significantly to the identification of *ša rēši* with Neo-Assyrian eunuchs. See especially Kazuko Watanabe, "Seals of Neo-Assyrian Officials," in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East: Papers of the Second Colloquium on the Ancient Near East - the City and Its Life Held at the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan* (*Mitaka, Tokyo*), *March 22-24, 1996*, ed. Kazuko Watanabe (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999), 313–66; Dominik Bonatz, "Bartlos in Assyrien: Ein kulturanthropologisches Phänomen aus Sicht der Bilder," in *Fundstellen: gesammelte Schriften zur*

beardless fighters in other scenes, however, may argue against this distinction. The most obvious sign that the image is conveying a significant moment within the battle is its unique iconographic content. Among the dozens of fighters displayed across the three slabs, the majority of the Assyrian fighters attack with bows or spears, with only a few soldiers bearing other kinds of weaponry (e.g., swords, knives, maces, or axes). In fact, the artists reserve these close-combat weapons solely for the Assyrian soldiers featured in the composition's narrative scenes. No Assyrian infantry battling generic (or non-narrated) Elamite fighters wield these smaller weapons. This artistic decision is likely a function of the narrative content itself, for, as mentioned above, these close-combat weapons were a primary means of execution. Nevertheless, the mere appearance of an Assyrian soldier brandishing a short blade in the smiting posture mirrors the other execution scenes above and indicates that a historically unique moment is in view. In a similar way, no other figures found within the tableau feature a soldier (Elamite or otherwise) sawing his bow in half. The height and muscular strength of the executioner, coupled with the Elamite's peculiar action and (beardless) appearance, distinguishes this visual moment from its surroundings and draws the eye to the iconic narrative on the register.

The first scene in particular is significant because it underscores the *threat* of Assyrian violence in an iconic fashion. In keeping with the execution images found throughout the composition, the Assyrian's smiting posture emphasizes the impending brutality of the state rather

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Archäologie und Geschichte Altvorderasiens ad honorem Hartmut Kühne, ed. Dominik Bonatz, Rainer Maria Czichon, and Florian Janoscha Kreppner (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 131–53. The designation *ša rēši* appears in the inscription above the Til-Tuba scene discussed above, and the beardless appearance of the surrendering Elamite confirms that the term likely identifies Ituni as a eunuch/official. This identity is further corroborated by his weaponry, given the common use of bows by eunuchs in warfare (Assante, "Men Looking at Men," 72).

than its accomplishment.[77] By focusing on the looming weapon, the artists immortalize Assyria's *potential* violence as a present reality for the viewer. In contrast to the multi-scene "telling" of the Teumman story, this event is presented by its epitomizing moment, which transforms the memory of Ituni's surrender into an enduring icon and resists the tendency of the historical narrative genre to relegate its events to an unrepeatable past. The absence of a caption over the Ituni scene helps to sharpen its present significance. Rather than simply "remembering" or memorializing an Assyrian victory, the visual image of the smiting soldier preserves the risk of imperial anger to resistors and presents the viewer, whether foreign or otherwise, with a choice of surrender or death.

Another narrative scene appears further down the register and depicts the surrender of Urtak, identified as a relative of Teumman in the adjacent epigraph (discussed below) (fig. 4.20d). Here, a bearded Elamite soldier sits on the ground impaled by an arrow and holds himself up with his left hand, bending backward against his body to look up at an Assyrian spearman standing behind him. His bow lies on the ground, as he grasps at his neck with his right hand. A single Assyrian soldier stands tall with both hands on his spear, which rests on the fallen bow, and looks down upon his pitiful captive. He holds the reins to his horse, which, like its owner, stands at rest behind him. Several features of the scene distinguish it from the register's violent milieu: the placid and proud posture of the horse and soldier; the inscription hovering above; and the bold vertical line of the Assyrian's spear; the extended head of the surrendering Elamite. Unlike the smiting scenes found elsewhere in the composition, this image emphasizes Assyrian distance rather than proximity. The wider space

[77] On the development of the smiting motif in ANE iconography and its import for comparable literary images of the Hebrew Bible, see LeMon, "YHWH's Hand and the Iconography of the Blow." On the broader prehistory of the motif in Egyptian iconography in particular, see Whitney Davis, *Masking the Blow: The Scene of Representation in Late Prehistoric Egyptian Art*, California Studies in the History of Art 30 (Berkeley: University of California, 1992).

between the two figures and stark division created by the long spear sharpen the contrast between Assyrian strength and Elamite weakness. He is doomed to grovel before the firm boundary of Assyrian weaponry.

The caption above the scene again illuminates the historical context of the epitomizing image by clarifying the captor's gesture and identity. The inscription reads, "Urtak, in-law of Teumman, who was wounded by an arrow, but did not die, called to an Assyrian to behead him, saying: 'Come, cut off my head. Take it before the king, your lord, and make a good name for yourself.'"[78] Like the first inscription of the narrative discussed above, the caption amplifies the image by parroting the enemy's discourse. The composition's propaganda is undeniable in Urtak's words, as the king's relative prefers his own decapitation and his executioner's glory over his own life. However troubling the death wish seem, the quote does its part in reinforcing the artistic focus on Elamite (be)head(ing)s and the almost magical power of the violent image upon its viewers (discussed below).

When viewed together, all of the narrative images on the second register demonstrate the power of artistic violence. The clever interweaving of the Urtak and Ituni scenes among the two Assyrian head-bearers brings the emphatic thesis of Teumman's head to the fore. As Russell remarks, the Urtak and Ituni moments appear both in the iconographic and epigraph records "as isolated and essentially unexplained cases of despair among Teumman's followers." They lack any substantial development in any written or visual sources and vanish almost as soon as they surface. At the same time, the juxtaposition of these two surrenders with the head-bearing soldiers coordinates their

[78] Akk.: *^{m}ur-*[*ta*]*-ku ḫa-ta-nu ^{m}te-um-man / šá ina* [*uṣ-ṣ*]*i muḫ-ḫu-ṣu la-iq-tú-u* ZI.MEŠ / *a-na* [*na*]-[*k*]*as* SAG.DU *ra-ma-ni-šú* DUMU KUR AŠ+ŠUR / *i-ša-si-*[*ma*] *um-ma al-ka* SAG.DU KU_5*-is* / IGI LUGAL EN-*ka i-ši-*[*ma*] *le-e-qí* MU SIG_5*-tim*. For the above translation, see Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 172, who bases his translation on that of Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 30. His alterations pertain largely to smoothing out Gerardi's more wooden rendering.

fearful submission with the king's fate such that "their desperate acts are thereby shown to be responses to the sight of the head of their lord being carried by the Assyrian, stark proof of the finality of their defeat."[79] Ituni and Urtak together thus embody the terror evoked by Teumman's head and demonstrate for the viewer one of the possible desired responses to the Til-Tuba images.

Despite their near irrelevance within the historical record, these iconic figures hold great significance within the total composition. Their theatric surrenders index the power of the image of the severed head specifically, for by paratactically interweaving their defeat among the severed heads, the artists suggest some relationship between the beheaded king and the submission of these Elamite officials. Their placement "after" the beheading in the (albeit circuitous) narrative sequence suggests perhaps, that it is only in "seeing" the carried heads that both figures lay down their arms and offer their lives. In this way, they *perform* the visceral terror that the total iconographic project has the power to evoke from its viewers and thereby help to bridge the distance between the visual "history" and the present viewing. The isolated and tangential roles of these two figures within the historical record in many ways work to their iconographic advantage, for they attain to an almost iconic anonymity. Urtak may be named, but Ituni remains unidentified. His nameless status and their fleeting appearance lend them a more generic than specific significance within the composition. They stand with the audience as frightened bystanders, who, having taken in Assyria's beheading power, choose submission over resistance.

[79] Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 173–74. See also Jean-Marie Durand, "Texte et image à l'époque néo-assyrienne," in *Dire, voir, écrire, le texte et l'image, 34-44* (Paris: Université de Paris VII, 1979), 15–22.

4.6.1.6. Scene Six

The final two scenes of the narrative show the presentation of Teumman's and Tammaritu's heads at the Assyrian base camp and their transport by an Assyrian chariot to Nineveh (figs. 4.21-22). These scenes, found on the upper register of the first slab and moving left to right, flow in the opposite direction of the broader composition and complete the circuitous route of the narrative sequence. In the first scene, the two soldiers previously transporting the royal heads now stand among impaled and decapitated Elamite corpses. Despite the scene's fragmentation, the diagonal lines drawn to the left and right indicate the Assyrian war camp—an identification confirmed by the mound of Elamite heads piled between them. The two spearmen present the heads of Tammaritu and Teumman to an Elamite ally or captive (attended by two beardless figures) for proper identification. The overall tranquility of the image contrasts sharply with the battles that rage in the registers below and highlights ordered (but gruesome) aftermath of the Assyrian victory.

4.6.1.7. Scene Seven

The final scene (fig. 4.22) borders the campsite and depicts the head's conveyance away from the battlefield (and out of the composition). Four individuals ride upon a chariot driven by an Elamite charioteer, and two Assyrian bowmen sit facing right with their legs dangling from the back of the vehicle. A third Assyrian soldier occupies the most visible position at the chariot's center and holds up Teumman's bald head, as the horse tramples over Elamite corpses in its escape. The narrative's final caption hangs high over the scene: "Head of Teum[man, king of Elam], / which in the midst of bat[tle], a common / soldier in my army [cut off]. To (give me) the good ne[ws] / they hastily

dispatched (it) to Assy[ria]."[80] The inscription confirms the iconographic focus on Teumman's head and re-introduces Ashurbanipal as the guiding voice of the narrative. The story unapologetically remains Ashurbanipal's to tell, and the caption establishes his invisible presence as the telos of the composition. At the same time, the epigraph locates the king outside of the battlefield events and therefore stands in tension with (or deconstructs) the scene 4 inscription, which acknowledged Ashurbanipal as Teumman's executioner. The play between presence and absence both situates Ashurbanipal as both the source and goal of Assyrian violence. The narrative sequence continues beyond the depicted events until the "good news" embodied in Teumman's dismembered head reaches the imperial leader.

4.6.2. The Performance of Violence in the Narrative Sequence

Having established the individual episodes and unique arrangement of the Til-Tuba narrative, we turn now to consider the broader implications of that narrative, particularly as it pertains to the iconographic repetition of Teumman's head. As discussed above, the artists go to great lengths to emphasize the defeated ruler's head in both overt and subtle ways. Overtly, the artists focus the execution scenes on the beheading moment itself (the mace reaching the top of Tammaritu's head; the soldier bending down to sever Teumman's head), and the separated heads appear five total times after their bodies are left behind. At a more subtle level, the almost circular shape of the "continuous style" arrangement places the decapitation moment at the narrative's turning point. The complex depiction of their deaths brings a flourish of interest to this climactic scene: the king and prince

[80] Akk.: SAG.DU ^{m}*te-um-*[*man* MAN KUR NIM.MA.KI] / *ša ina* MURUB$_4$ *tam-ḫa-*[*ri* KU$_5$*-su*] / *a-ḫu-ru-u* ÉRIN.ḪI.A-[*ya*] *a-na bu-us-*[*su-rat*] / *ḫa-de-e ú-šaḫ-ma-ṭu a-na* KUR AŠ+[ŠUR.KI]. For the translation, see Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 29.

overlap themselves and one another in a blurred temporal sequence; the upper and middle registers disintegrate into an undifferentiated space; and the sequence shifts from a rightward to a leftward orientation. The decapitation scenes occupy the most rightward point of the narrative arrangement and represent Assyria's furthest penetration into the Til-Tuba landscape. While one might assume that the death of the rebel leaders would conclude the historical record, the artists move the narrative's telos from Teumman's defeat to the head's arrival in Nineveh such that "the movement of the king's head across the composition is the major event of the narrative."[81] Once the heads are severed, the sequence turns backward against the broader movement of the composition to complete the story. This reversal, coupled with the submission of Ituni and Urtak, gives the king's head a prime place within the composition. The captions only confirm this prominent iconographic focus.

As Bahrani has demonstrated, the head's repetition is a major key to the purpose of the Til-Tuba iconographic project. It is the decapitated head itself, in addition to the narrative concerning the head, that reflects the composition's meaning. While the narrative itself may help to integrate the disparate images of violence, the story's arrangement remains counterintuitive and almost illegible without assistance, especially since the artists embed the sequence within the chaos of the total composition. And yet, regardless of whether one discerns the proper order of the narrative scenes, the royal heads serve as the anchoring "focal points" of the whole,[82] framed and highlighted by the odd body positions of Teumman and Tammaritu in the sequence's earliest episodes. This artistic decision corresponds with the emphasis on Teumman's head in the epigraphs (discussed above) and Ashurbanipal's Cylinder Texts that chronicle the king's Elamite campaign. Among the many ways

[81] Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 40.
[82] Ibid., 35.

these written texts fill in the narrative, they provide accounts of the divine omens against Elam that Teumman ignored to his peril (e.g., bodily sores, lunar eclipses, etc.). They also recount the terrified reaction of Teumman's subjects (Umbadara and Nabudamiq) when they witnessed the procession of their king's head into Nineveh.[83] Given this parallel emphasis on Teumman's head in the iconographic and inscriptional accounts, Bahrani argues that the head itself serves as a bodily omen akin to the sores Teumman failed to heed. It holds a symbolic function beyond Teumman's death: "The king's head on the relief signals the Assyrian victory, yet it is also a metonymic omen of terror itself, a sign that is more than a severed head of a defeated king. It becomes a message of a predominant Assyrian ideology of terror embedded into the visual narrative of war." In sum, "the subject of the Til-Tuba relief is the head."[84]

Even if Bahrani may be overstating the significance of the head for the composition's meaning—given the sheer breadth of violence within the visual space—her insights concerning the relationship between the head's repetition and its performative power are significant. As she argues, visual images in Assyria were not seen as mere copies of reality but were "indexical, because [they]

[83] Edition B, for example, records Umbadara and Nabudamiq's reactions: "Umbadarâ (and) Nabûdamiq, / nobles of Teumman, king of Elam / by whose hands Teumman had dispatched / (his) insolent message, whom I had detained in my presence / to await my decision, / saw the severed head of Teumman, their master, in Nineveh, / and insanity seized hold of them. / Umbadarâ tore his beard, / Nabûdamiq pierced his abdomen with his girdle dagger [Akk: *(I)um-ba-da-ra-a (I.ilu)nabû-damiq(iq) / (amêlu)rubê (meš) ša (I)te-um-man šàr (mâtu)elamti-(ki) / ša (I)te-um-man ina qâtê(II)-šu-nu iš-pu-ra / ši-pir me-ri-iḫ-ti ša ina maḫ-ri-ia ak-lu-u / ú-qa-'-u pa-an ši-kin ṭe-e-me-ia / ni-kis qaqqadi (I)te-um-man bêli-šu-nu qí-rib ninua(ki) / e-mu-ru-u-ma ša-ni-e ṭe-e-me iṣ-bat-su-nu-ti / (I)um-ba-da-ra-a ib-qu-ma ziq-na-a-šu / (I.ilu)nabû-damiq(iq) ina paṭri parzilli šib-bi-šu is-ḫu-la ka-ra-as-su*]" (vi.57-65). For this translation and transliteration, see Arthur Carl Piepkorn, *Historical Prism Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal*, vol. 1 of *Assyriological Studies* 5 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1933), 72–75. The annals correspond to what is found in the epigraph tablets as well (Texts A and E specifically). See Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 160; Weidner, "Assyrische Beschreibungen der Kriegs-Reliefs Aššurbânaplis," 181; Kaelin, *Ein assyrisches Bildexperiment*, 49–50, 52–53.

[84] Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 48–49. Cf. Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria*, Archaeology, Culture, and Society (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 121–48.

functioned through a relationship of contiguity to the signified."[85] Images served as substitutes for what they represented and, in some sense, carried their essence. This helps to explain the abduction or defacing of royal images by conquering nations—another feature witnessed in the Room 33 reliefs.[86] Simply put, representation "was thought to make things happen, not simply to depict."[87] As a result, artists placed careful emphasis on authentic representation of regional differences and ethnographic accuracy. The specificity with which the visual tradition depicts foreign and individual enemies increases across the centuries of the Neo-Assyrian period and reaches its greatest detail under Ashurbanipal. In the Til-Tuba scenes, Teumman is unmistakable. His hooked nose, sharp chin, lined (rather than curly) beard, and receding hairline appear with unfailing consistency. After his decapitation, the visible eye shown on the head in profile is closed in marked contrast to the open-eyed stares seen on his headless subjects. The closed eye, as Collins suggests, alludes to the injury or tumor narrated in the inscriptional accounts discussed above.[88] The artists thus carve his folly into his

[85] Similarly, Durand, "Texte et image," 15: "Le texte proclame quelque chose que reflète l'image, mais les Mésopotamiens croyaient aussi en ce qu'on pourrait appeler 'la présence réelle de l'objet représenté.'"

[86] When Nineveh was destroyed in 612, many of the details of the palace sculptures were damaged. In the Room 33 reliefs specifically, the attacking soldiers defaced specific characters within the narrative(s), including the Assyrians who decapitate Teumman and Tammaritu in slab 3 and Ummanigash—the puppet king of Elam installed by Ashurbanipal after Elam's defeat—in slab 5. As Reade remarks, "The subject-matter of these scenes, or at least their general tenor, would have been no mystery to any Elamites in the attacking forces, and they must have welcomed this opportunity of avenging the destruction of Susa. We may perhaps imagine them, still in their distinctive headbands, slashing angrily at the most offensive pictures as smoke began to blacken the ceiling" ("Elam and Elamites," 105). Cf. idem, "The Battle of Til-Tuba," 77; Irene J. Winter, "'Idols of the King': Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Ritual Studies.* 6 (1992): 13–42.

[87] Bahrani, *Rituals of War*, 53.

[88] On Teumman's distinct profile and its significance, see Paul Collins, "The Development of the Individual Enemy in Assyrian Art," *Notes in the History of Art* 25 (2006): 3–6; idem, "Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Violence: Warfare in Neo-Assyrian Art," in *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, ed. Brian A. Brown and Marian H. Feldman (Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 631–35. In Ashurbanipal's inscriptional account of Teumman's rebellion and defeat, mention is made of the many portents sent by the gods warning Teumman of his fate. These included signs in the sky (a lunar eclipse and the darkening of the sun) and bodily afflictions: "At that time an accident befell him (i.e., Teumman), and / his lip was paralyzed and his eye was twisted and / *gabaṣu* was placed in its midst [Akk: *ina ûmê(me)-šu mi-iḫ-ru im-ḫur-šu-ma / šapat-su uk-tam-bil-ma ênu(II) iṣ-ḫi-ir-ma / ga-ba-ṣu iš-ša-kin ina lìb-bi-ša*]" (Edition B, col. 5.10-12). For the translation and transliteration, see Piepkorn, *Historical Prism Inscriptions*, 62-63.

very body, and each feature was selected both for its symbolic and representative value. This transformed Teumman's image from a simple portrait into a substitute persona.[89] Ultimately, the tenfold repetition of his head across the extant Nineveh reliefs continually actualized his gruesome defeat.

For Bahrani, this performative dimension of Assyrian images gives us insight into the artists' selection of repetition (whether of the king's head within the narrative or of the Elamites' defeat throughout the visual space) as a governing device of the Til-Tuba project, especially since these grand repetitions seem unnatural when compared with the composition's meticulous attention to detail elsewhere. Features like the rubber-like presentation of Elamite bodies, the utter number of corpses over against a minimal number of Assyrian fighters, the circular shape of the narrative sequence, and the re-presentation of Tammaritu's body and the royal heads appear to be careless artistic decisions when juxtaposed with the birds' meticulous feathers or the Assyrians' textured beards. In light of the perceived near-magical power of Assyrian images, however, these representations take on a greater significance. They become a visual power play, where "the severing of the head and its subsequent transport and triumphal display are rituals of war." They become "visual and theatrical performances of victory."[90] When considered within their palatial context, the relief figures are enmeshed in a world of imperial beliefs and practices and merged with the living actors who inhabited the spaces where they were displayed. They were thus "part of the socially

[89] Beyond their distinguishing function, Teumman's facial features, like the swollen eye, also helped to characterize the figure represented, akin to the way Babylonian literature used bodily descriptions to indicate character defects. See further Benjamin D. Foster, "The Person in Mesopotamian Thought," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 121.

[90] Ibid., 55.

affective properties of the palace, its psychological arsenal."[91] Present at the boundaries of each room, they created liminal spaces within which the rituals of the state were effected and effective. As a result, the Til-Tuba relief presents the chaotic battle not solely for the sake of posterity's memory but for the sake of the empire's endurance and well-being—delivering as many blows against imperial enemies as there are images of their defeat. Given the (symbolic) power of these decapitated rebels,[92] the Til-Tuba reliefs ritualistically sealed the abiding presence of the state against all chaotic forces that might challenge Ashurbanipal as their divinely appointed ruler.

4.7. SUMMARY

Though the Battle of Til-Tuba composition may share in the broader tradition of Neo-Assyrian palace sculpture that demonstrates the power of the Assyrian state over enemy bodies, the Room 33 reliefs represent this tradition with unprecedented levels of complexity. Violent imagery, rather than evoking empathy, gives rise to fear and subtle complicity with the Assyrian war machine. With respect to its content, the reliefs display the horrors of close combat in an array of overlapping encounters. Elamite bodies suffer a host of injuries at the hands of Assyria's arm(or)y: enemies are impaled by spears, pierced by arrows, beheaded by maces and knives, trampled by cavalry and chariots, pushed down hills, and piled into faceless masses. The artists depict this suffering in ways that underscore Assyrian strength and inevitability, whether through the contrasting portrait of Assyrian and Elamite fighters or the almost rhythmic arrangement of vertical and horizontal lines in the registers. The Elamite corpses, with the exception of Teumman and Tammaritu, are stripped of identity and

[91] Collins, "Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Violence," 636.

[92] Dominik Bonatz, "Ashurbanipal's Headhunt: An Anthropological Perspective," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 93–101; Collins, "Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Violence."

transformed into textured frames and platforms for Assyrian action. These (and other presentation techniques) frame violence in way that draws the viewer into its presentation. As the audience follows the battle's movement and the narrative's progression back and forth across the tableau, they become not only voyeurs of represented (or aestheticized) pain but also Assyrian admirers—or fearers, rather—who can't help but follow the impressive (even beautiful, in parts) trail of violence to its visual conclusions. The image's chaos becomes both attractive and repulsive and highlights the Assyrian presence as the only ordering force in history.

As seen in the narrative particularly, the composition's violence plays more than a supplementary role to a visual thesis. It holds performative significance as well. This iconographic "performance" is flexed in two different ways. First, the composition consistently performs the response it seeks from its viewers. The Ituni and Urtak scenes, for example, stand as visual scripts for the audience, who, like the Elamite leaders, have also witnessed the beheaded king. The artists place them at the center of the composition to make them accessible to even the illiterate viewer and thereby encourage all onlookers to adopt their humiliating surrender before the unstoppable Assyrian machine. This demonstrated response then feeds into a second level of performativity, wherein the battle images influence reality based upon a perceived identity between representation and represented (see above). In this light, the Ituni and Urtak scenes—and all other encounters—become more than an artistic commemoration or even imperial propaganda. They instead etch Assyrian dominance into the present tense and keep the king's body count rolling. The composition's violence is no longer just interesting but impinging, not simply aesthetic but active. The figured bodies

multiply in(to) the present tense and assert their power for any viewer who sits under the protection or the threat of militaristic empires.

These (and other) insights gleaned through the meticulous assessment provided above help to establish illuminating points of comparison from Neo-Assyrian iconography by which to assess the poetics of violent imagery in Lamentations 2. As chapter 6 will demonstrate, key features like the reliefs' manipulation of perspective (employing both "vertical" and "horizontal" arrangements to provide both distance from and proximity to the scene), their use Elamite bodies to frame and texture the composition, their counter-intuitive (even cumbersome) narrative sequence, their assertion of the king's presence through the epigraphs (despite his absence from the visual representations), and their performative significance can inform our understanding of how Lamentations 2 imagines and leads the reader to visualize Jerusalem's suffering.

CHAPTER 5

IMAGES OF VIOLENCE IN ASHURBANIPAL'S LION HUNT RELIEFS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters conducted close analyses of the poetics of violence in Lamentations 2 (chapters 2 and 3) and Ashurbanipal's Battle of Til-Tuba reliefs (chapter 4). These separate studies, coupled with the examination of Ashurbanipal's lion hunt reliefs (chapter 5), provide the data sets by which to assess how violence figures in comparable ways in both the biblical and iconographic media (chapter 6). Overall, the project represents an extended case study in the use of ancient Near Eastern iconography to illuminate not only what (literary) images in biblical texts mean(t) but also "how" they mean. As discussed in chapter 1, such a comparison of literary and visual poetics is both interesting and intuitive in large part because of the neurological and cognitive relationship between viewing images in the world and visualizing them in the mind's eye. By paying attention to how a particular phenomenon figures in certain iconographic compositions, it is possible to glean insights how a biblical text guides the reader into imagining (or "seeing") that same phenomenon.

The current chapter is devoted to examining the (poetics of) violence in some of the most famous images of ancient Near Eastern art: the lion hunt reliefs that decorated the walls of Ashurbanipal's North Palace. Their unique combination of violence, naturalistic detail, and drama has fascinated audiences both ancient and modern, and their brilliant design makes them a tantalizing point of comparison with imaged violence in other media. Prior to assessing the lion scenes themselves, I will now address specific points of intersection between these images and Lamentations 2 as a means of justifying a detailed analysis of how violence figures in these visual media.

5.2. TWO REASONS FOR THE SELECTION OF ASHURBANIPAL'S LION HUNT SCENES

At first glance, representations of a royal figure slaughtering lions seem only generally comparable to the images of warfare and human suffering that permeate Lamentations 2 and the Til-Tuba reliefs. These compositions present clear categories of violent perpetrators and their victims—God/enemies against Zion vis-à-vis Ashurbanipal against lions—and, as we will see in the lion scenes, the artists render the sufferers' pain in vivid detail, much like the Lamentations poet. Comparison between the biblical poem and the palace reliefs could at the very least take into account the shared and divergent ways by which the respective artists present violent encounters between victor and victim (particularly in the singular) and to what effect. Beyond these broad correspondences, however, there are two further levels of correspondence between text and image that help to justify an extended look at the lion reliefs below.

5.2.1. The Brilliance of Ashurbanipal's Lion Hunt Reliefs

First, like the Til-Tuba composition, Ashurbanipal's lion reliefs represent what many claim to be the pinnacle of the Neo-Assyrian artistic tradition, whose attention to form and detail is on par with that of the Lamentations poet. There is no shortage of praise among modern art critics and historians for what the royal sculptor(s) accomplished in the leonine images of the North Palace. Deemed the "greatest [artist] of all" by Groenewegen-Frankfort,[1] the sculptor of the lion scenes created reliefs that

[1] H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 180.

not only represent "the finest sculptures from the North Palace"[2] but also "rank, without doubt, among the outstanding works of art of all time."[3] The Room C reliefs specifically "have been acclaimed, since their discovery, as the supreme masterpieces of Assyrian art."[4] They carry "an epic quality to which it is impossible to find a parallel in the ancient world."[5] Composed as the finale of the Neo-Assyrian artistic tradition, they serve as "das letzte grosse Wort der altorientalischen Kunst" and reveal the artist's keen eye for the animals' appearance and behavior.[6] The detail with which they depict the animals' suffering, posturing, and ferocity is "very close to reality"[7] and "presents the most perceptive rendering of animals in ancient Near Eastern art."[8] Barnett's words encapsulated well the modern fascination with these reliefs and the enthusiasm with which contemporary critics view them:

> With Ashurbanipal…the art of the sculptor in ancient Mesopotamia reached its fullest and final flower. By this date, the craftsman seems to have acquired a new freedom and inspiration in depicting man [*sic*] and beasts, a dazzling sureness of the chisel, based not only on age-old traditions, but also on observation of life and movement, resulting in a forcefulness and precision hardly ever afterwards recaptured... We can only speculate about the master craftsman behind these works…Whoever this nameless genius was, the man who designed and executed Ashurbanipal's reliefs…that man was an innovator in every direction. He can record emotion and atmosphere.[9]

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[2] Paul Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures* (Austin: University of Texas, 2009), 98. Cf. Elnathan Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism Fragment of Ashurbanipal (82-5-22,2)," in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 339: "Never before in Assyrian art has the relentless quarrel between man [*sic*] and beast been so dramatically portrayed as it was in the hunting reliefs of the North Palace of Nineveh."

[3] Dominique Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995), 156.

[4] Julian Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1983), 53.

[5] R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1970), 22.

[6] Ludwig Curtius, *Die antike Kunst: Ägypten und Vorderasien*, Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft (Wildpark-Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1923), 285.

[7] Henri Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, 5th ed., Yale Univeristy Press Pelican History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 189.

[8] Pauline Albenda, "Lions on Assyrian Wall Reliefs," *JANESCU* 6 (1974): 10.

[9] Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, 20. Such praise is also expressed by the palace's original excavators. See, e.g., Rawlinson's comments in a letter to the Secretaries of the Assyrian Excavation, as cited in ibid., 17.

These grandiose claims, however tied to modern aesthetic preferences, are nevertheless rooted in sincere astonishment at the lions' realism and the drama that inheres in the sculptors' compositions. A comparison between these images and Lamentations 2 juxtaposes the pinnacle of the Neo-Assyrian relief tradition with what could be considered some of the most careful poetry of the Hebrew Bible.

5.2.2. The Metaphoricity of Ashurbanipal's Lion Hunt Reliefs

Second, and more importantly, an analysis of the lion hunt in artistic representation provides a unique opportunity to explore the poetics of metaphorized violence in Neo-Assyrian art. As discussed above (chapter 4), the Battle of Til-Tuba relief shares a common *topos* with the Lamentations material (namely, the respective artistic representation of a particular and historical military conflict), but with the exception of common weaponry (e.g., the bow in Lam 2:4 and the chariot scene of Room C), the congruence between Ashurbanipal's lion reliefs and the biblical poetry is somewhat lacking. Animals figure only rarely in Lamentations as a whole (1:6; 3:10-11, 52; 4:3, 19; 5:18) and the book's only leonine reference (3:10) works in the opposite metaphorical direction of what we find in the royal hunt scenes. Rather than presenting God as the valiant hunter slaughtering wild beasts, the Lamentations poet instead claims that *God* is the lion who tracks him down and tears him apart (3:10-11).[10] On the surface then, the iconography does little in helping us determine the basic meaning of animal metaphors within Lamentations, as if the meaning of God hunting down the poet is unclear as it currently stands.

Despite this apparent lack of congruence, the lion hunt reliefs nevertheless offer an interesting point of comparison precisely because of their metaphorical significance. Much like

[10] For further implications of this divine metaphor here, see Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion*, 58.

poetry, the royal hunt scenes appear to traffic in metaphor as a primary mode of making meaning (see below). Given this shared feature of their respective poetics, we may look to Ashurbanipal's lion hunt scenes not necessarily to clarify obscure textual metaphors but rather to illumine how metaphoricity itself operates within the composition. At this level of comparison, we are able to glean insights into how a metaphor's component images figure, how the presentation of such component images impacts the meaning and reception of the metaphor itself, and how metaphorized violence as a whole differs from a more descriptive violence. The text and image intersect therefore not necessarily at the level of metaphorical content (kings, lions, or archery)—a topic explored by many to this point[11]—but rather at the level of metaphorized violence itself.

In chapters 2 and 3, I addressed the way in which the poet of Lamentations 2 employed imagery both for descriptive (e.g., relating the scene of Jerusalem's dying children) and metaphorical (e.g., casting Jerusalem's destruction as a divine war against Daughter Zion) purposes. In some sense, the selection of both the Til-Tuba reliefs and the lion hunt reliefs provide iconographic comparands for the former and the latter "kinds" of images in the biblical poem, respectively. In stating this, I recognize, of course, that the violence represented in the Til-Tuba composition cannot be reduced to a non-figurative (that is, purely mimetic) significance and that, in many regards, the reliefs seize on the historical event of Teumman's defeat to present a visual metaphor of Assyrian dominance, among other things. Conversely, as I will discuss below, the artists who arranged the images of the royal hunt—an iconic metaphor for the Neo-Assyrian kingship—staged the event as a (qausi-)historical reality in a manner that lent an almost mimetic significance to an otherwise transhistorical icon of

[11] See, e.g., Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*; Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*; Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 136–53.

royal order. Notwithstanding these caveats, the blurred lines between the mimetic and/or metaphorical "meaning(s)" of both iconographic compositions does not preclude the fact that the Til-Tuba and lion hunt reliefs feature different *kinds* of violence (both in content and in significance) that, broadly speaking, correspond to the poem's descriptive and figurative imagery, respectively. As a result, the addition of Ashurbanipal's lion hunt reliefs into the iconographic comparison—alongside the preceding analysis of the Til-Tuba reliefs (chapter 4)—presents the possibility of new insights into the poetics of violence of Lamentations 2, particularly as it pertains how the poem depicts the metaphorical encounter between (the bodies of) Yahweh and Daughter Zion (discussed in chapter 6).

5.2.2.1. The Prominence of the Lion Hunt in Mesopotamian Iconography

How then are the royal lion hunt and its representation in visual and literary media metaphorical and on what basis can we justify its figurative significance? A brief survey of the iconographic and literary traditions of the royal hunt in Neo-Assyrian and broader Mesopotamian history will reveal how the motif traffics in a range of metaphorical meanings. It iss well known that the lion served as one of the most popular symbols of (royal) power in the ancient Near East,[12] with the motif of the royal hunt in Mesopotamian iconography extending as far back as the fourth millennium[13] and its appearance in hymnic literature dating as early as the third millennium B.C., when Šulgi boasts in his "fearless"

[12] On the breadth and depth of lion imagery in ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian, and Levantine iconography, see especially Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, esp. 131-228.

[13] This is the so-called "Lion-Hunt Stele," excavated from Uruk (ca. 3000 B.C.E.). See, e.g., Winfried Orthmann, *Der alte Orient*, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 14 (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1975), 18, 182 (no. 68).

pursuit of an invading lion.[14] By the early second millennium, lion slaying had become an exclusively royal prerogative designed to represent the king's "ability to control the forces of the wild,"[15] and the epigraphic record of the Assyrian kings attests to this heroic feat across the generations.[16] By the time of the Neo-Assyrian kings, lion hunting had become synonymous with regal power and attained an emblematic status within the Mesopotamian iconography of the ninth through sixth centuries. These fierce cats decorated Neo-Assyrian palaces, weaponry, and obelisks, and even took center stage in the empire's official seal, which showed the king engaging in face-to-face combat with a lion[17] (fig. 5.1)—a motif found in both miniature glyptic art and as well as the North Palace relief program (Room S; fig. 5.2).[18] With respect to the palace reliefs specifically, lion hunting figures prominently in the artwork

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[14] Giorgio Castellino, *Two Šulgi Hymns*, Studi Semitici 42 (Roma: Istituto di studi del Vicino Oriente, 1972), 36–39, 117–19. Cf. Theodore J. Lewis, "*CT* 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths," *JAOS* 116 (1996): 41–45.

[15] Zainab Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2017), 244. The earliest evidence for the king's exclusive rights to lion-slaying is found on a clay tablet preserving a letter to Zimri-Lim, King of Mari, from a local official named Yakim-Addu (ca. 1750 B.C.). He petitions the ruler about what to do with a lion trapped in the loft of his house and eventually cages and transports the animal to the king. See *ARM* 2:106. For further discussion and examples, see Elena Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," *RHR* 198 (1981): 375; Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 346, n. 18; Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 166–67, n. 194.

[16] On the extant Assyrian inscriptions that boast in the king's hunting exploits and record the number of lions slain or captured, see Marco De Odorico, *The Use of Numbers and Quantifications in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, State Archives of Assyria Studies 3 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1995), 143–49. Based on the numbers presented in the inscriptional evidence, De Odorico presents the following totals for number of lions killed by relevant kings: Tiglath-pileser I (920), Ashur-bel-kala (300), Ashur-dan II (120), Adad-nerari II (360), Tukulti-Ninurta II (60[?]), Ashurnasirpal II (450), Shalmaneser III (399), Shamshi-Adad V (3), and Ashurbanipal (18). See further H. D. Galter, "Paradies und Paletod. Ökologische Aspekte im Weltbild der assyrischen Könige," in *Der orientalische Mensch und seine Beziehungen zur Umwelt: Beiträge zum 2. Grazer Morgenländischen Symposion (2. - 5. März 1989)*, ed. Bernhard Scholz, Grazer morgenländische Studien 2 (Graz: RM-Druck-&-Verl.-Ges, 1989), 243; Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 163–64.

[17] A. J. Sachs, "The Late-Assyrian Royal Seal Type," *Iraq* 15 (1953): 167–70; Suzanne Herbordt, *Neuassyrische Glyptik des 8.-7. Jh. v. Chr: unter besonderer Brücksichtigung der Siegelungen auf Tafeln und Tonverschlüssen*, State archives of Assyria studies 1 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1992), 134–46; Stefan M. Maul, "Das 'dreifache Königtum' - Überlegungen zu einer Sonderform des neuassyrischen Königssiegels," in *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens: Festschrift für Rainer Michael Boehmer*, ed. U. Finkbeiner, R. Dittmann, and H. Hauptman (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 395–402; Karen Radner, "The Delegation of Power: Neo-Assyrian Bureau Seals," in *L'Archive Des Fortifications de Persépolis: État Des Questions et Perspectives de Recherches*, ed. Pierre Briant, Wouter Henkelman, and Matthew W. Stolper, Persika 12 (Paris: De Boccard, 2008), 481–515; Davide Nadali, "Neo-Assyrian State Seals: An Allegory of Power," *SAAB* 18 (2009): 215–44.

[18] See Richard David Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668-627 B.C.)* (London: British Museum Publications, 1976), pl. XLIX, L, LII.

commissioned by Ashurnasirpal II (883-859) in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud and that of Ashurbanipal in the North Palace at Nineveh two-centuries later. Appearing nowhere else among the extant relief repertoire, the lions serve as artistic bookends to Neo-Assyrian power and represent the pinnacle of imperial artistry.[19] The artists render the animals with careful detail within an "established iconography" of lion types that, by the time of Ashurbanipal, trends toward an unprecedented realism.[20] Their realistic portrayal contributes to the implied historicity of the events represented in a manner that simultaneously enhances the metaphorical significance of the hunt itself.

5.2.2.2. The Figurative Significance of the Lion Hunt in Mesopotamian Iconography

The details of the iconographic scenes in the Neo-Assyrian period, in addition to the epigraphic evidence, help demonstrate the figurative meaning of the lions. Whether reported or represented, the lion hunt icon display and metaphorize various nuances of the royal persona, three of which we will discuss here: the hunt's cultic, mythic, and heroic significance.

5.2.2.2.1. The Hunt's Cultic Significance

First, the royal hunt was understood as a cultic act conducted by the royal priest-king on behalf of his subjects. The priestly office of Assyrian rulers is original to the kingship itself,[21] and the lion hunts

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[19] As Reade notes, it is "not improbable" that Ashurbanipal, "a known antiquarian, was consciously adopting an antique ritual practice" (i.e., lion-hunting) in his re-appropriation of lions within the palace relief repertoire ("Religious Ritual in Assyrian Scultpure," in *Ritual and Politics in Ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. Barbara N. Porter, American Oriental Series 88 [New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2005], 24).

[20] On the stylistic development of lion renderings in Neo-Assyrian art, see Albenda, "Lions on Assyrian Wall Reliefs"; Reade, "Religious Ritual," 22–25.

[21] Stefan M. Maul, "Der assyrische König - Hüter der Weltordnung," in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East: Papers of the Second Colloquium on the Ancient Near East - The City and its Life held at the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan (Mitaka, Tokyo), March 22-24, 1996*, ed. Kazuko Watanabe (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999), 207. Maul

were framed as religious acts—highly ritualized and summoned and/or empowered by the gods[22]—that demonstrated this identity. Their ritualistic quality is evident in the visual and literary evidence. For example, the leonine narratives etched on Ashurbanipal's North Palace walls depict the lion encounters as prominent rituals beheld by the public (see the discussion of Room C below), and the hunting scenes in Rooms C, S, and S[1] show attendants releasing the lions from cages for the king to battle in a controlled environment.[23]

Among the many inscriptional accounts of the encounter, most of them describe the king fighting in the plain (e.g., the Prism Fragment 82-5-22,2, the Great Hunting Text [K 2867+], Hunting Epigraph A in Room S[1] [slab A]),[24] but a tablet (K 6085) bearing a votive inscription written in honor of an urban hunting arena dedicated to Ishtar of Nineveh bears witness to the hunt as a staged event. Here, the king battles five lions face-to-face, quells "the tumult of eighteen raging lions (18 UR.MAH.MEŠ *na-ad-ru-ti uz-za-šu-nu* [*ú-šap-ši-ih*])" (K 6085, l. 6'b)[25] in a field, presents the dead lions to the public, and devotes the field of slain lions to Ishtar. On the basis of specific similarities between the Room C hunting narrative and K 6085, Weissert has argued quite convincingly that K 6085 bears

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contends that, at least with respect to Assyrian royal epithets, the king's priestly capacities are more original to his role as leader than kingship itself: "Ursprünglicher sind nebendem Titel *rubā'tum,* 'Fürst' die Titel 'Statthalter des Enlil' und 'Priester des Aššur.' Im Gegensatz zum babylonischen Königtum ist das assyrische Königtum stets, auch in der späteren neuassyrischen Zeit, in erster Linie als Statthalterschaft für die Götter angesehen worden."

[22] See the overview of the inscriptional evidence in Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," 374–80, who points out the integral roles deities play in imposing the royal hunt upon the Assyrian kings as a royal obligation and the divine empowering kings to accomplish impossible feats (as implied by the number of lion killings recorded). This religious assistance is related to the king's role as priest: "Mais cette faveur dont les dieux entourent le roi chasseur ou guerrier a sa source dans la fonction de grand prêtre que le roi exerce auprès des dieux" (379).

[23] See Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pls. IX (slab 16), LI (slab 11), LVII and LIX (slab E) respectively. Cf. the mention of released lions in Epigraph C from Room S[1]: "I, Ashurbanipal, king of the world, king of Assyria, for my great sport, an angry lion of the plain from a cage they brought out. On foot, three times I pierced him with an arrow, (but) he did not die. *At the command of Nergal*, king of the plain, who granted me strength and manliness, afterward, with the iron dagger from my belt, I stabbed him (and) he died" (Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 201; emphasis added).

[24] See the incisive analysis of the *topos* that characterizes these (and other) lion hunt inscriptions from Ashurbanipal in Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 341–46.

[25] This translation follows Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 345, fig. 1.

an archival copy (or *Vorlage*) to the inscription displayed on a stele shown at the top of the hillock in the Room C reliefs (fig. 5.3).[26] The mention of eighteen dispatched lions in K 6085 and the presentation of eighteen leonine corpses in the Room C reliefs possibly indicate a shared historical referent between the literary and artistic sources.[27] Weissert contends that even the eighteen figure has ritualistic importance and corresponds with the number of gates in the wall surrounding Nineveh: "[B]y killing eighteen lions in the Nineveh arena, Ashurbanipal symbolically secured each exit from the capital city, every gate and road leading out of it being secured by the killing of one lion."[28] Altogether, the Room C reliefs and the votive inscription testify to a planned hunting spectacle, carefully manipulated with the timed releases of eighteen lions, trained charioteers, and a viewable arena—all performed for an enthralled audience "to demonstrate the protective powers of the king" and to "realize the image of the brave hunter."[29]

Whether the Room C reliefs (and others) recount an isolated incident hosted by Ashurbanipal or a recurring royal tradition throughout the Neo-Assyrian period, the visual and inscriptional narratives indicate that lion-fighting was less an occasional rescue mission or a haphazard opportunity for the king to demonstrate his weaponry expertise and more of a highly ritualized event, indicative of the king's priestly and heroic office. As Strawn notes, the fact that the hunt was staged in its (possible) public enactment and *represented* as staged in the iconographic and inscriptional record "makes the reliefs even that much more remarkable: this hunt is meaningful *despite* the fact that it is orchestrated and planned, even to the last detail. Indeed, the careful planning that has gone into the

[26] Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 351–55.
[27] Ibid., 351, 355.
[28] Ibid., 335.
[29] Ibid., 356.

hunt demonstrates that this is meaningful business."[30] Though propagandistic manipulation is no doubt evident in the literary and artistic rendering, their presentation of the hunt as a (cultic) ritual bespeaks the figurative significance of the lion hunt itself, whether occurring in a live arena, recorded in inscriptional accounts, or etched upon the palace walls.

In addition to their ritualized status, the hunt also carried clear religious overtones that enhanced the king's priestly office. For example, the libation scenes, found in two of the extant hunting reliefs of the Neo-Assyrian period, reveal the hunt's strong ties to the rituals of the cult. Two unique hunt sequences displayed in Ashurnasirpal's Throneroom (Room B) at his Northwest Palace at Nimrud and in Room S[1] of Ashurbanipal's North Palace at Nineveh conclude with libation scenes, in which the king, dressed in priestly attire, pours wine over the slain lions' bodies (fig. 5.4).[31] As Reade states, "These are real rituals, even in the absence of other religious paraphernalia."[32] The libations transform the hunt from one of mere sport into one of presenting "offerings to the gods."[33] The striking parallels between the leonine libation motif and the libation rituals featured within Ashurbanipal's military triumph scenes solidify the sacral dynamics of royal beast slaying.

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[30] Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion,* 167.

[31] See Janusz Meuzyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu* (*Nimrud*), Baghdader Forschungen 2 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1981), Tafel 1; Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. LVII.

[32] Reade, "Religious Ritual," 22–23. Cf. Izak Cornelius, "The Lion in the Art of the Ancient Near East: A Study of Selected Motifs," *JNSL* 15 (1989): 56–68.

[33] Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art*, 153. Cf. Chikako E. Watanabe, "A Problem in the Libation Scene of Ashurbanipal," in *Cult and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Takahito Mikasa, Bulletin of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan 6 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 91–104. Watanabe draws attention to Ashurbanipal's unexpected position within the Room S[1] libation scene. When viewed within the extensive tradition of the iconographic representation of libations in Mesopotamia, Ashurbanipal occupies the place of what would normally be the worshipped figure. In contrast to the iconographic arrangement, however, the accompanying epigraph praises the deities as the source of the king's strength: "I, Ashurbanipal, king of the universe, king of the land of Ashur, whom Ashur and Ninlil endowed with supreme strength, the lions which I killed, I aimed the terrible bow of Ishtar, the lady of battle, at them. I offered an offering over them. I poured a libation of wine over them" (Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 54). Watanabe therefore notes another example of a conflict between the text and image of the reliefs, much like that noted in chapter 4 concerning the king's presence and absence in the Til-Tuba battle.

Beyond the events that the palace reliefs record, the staging of the lion images in Ashurbanipal's reliefs especially highlight the king's priesthood and evoke the religious dimension of these encounters. When battling lions, the Neo-Assyrian rulers are often presented in priestly ceremonial garb. Among the extant reliefs commissioned by Ashurnasirpal II and Ashurbanipal, nearly one third of the lion hunts feature the king wearing a *kulūlu* turban without the fez[34]—a headpiece associated with the *šangûtu* ("priesthood") of the king extending as far back as the crowning rituals of the Middle Assyrian period (cf. fig. 5.2).[35] Other details of the king's facial placid expressions and effortless engagement with the beasts evoke a ceremonial overtone, as Cassin explains:

> Assurbanipal porte la robe royale étoilée qui lui descend jusqu'aux pieds lorsqu'il affronte dans un combat singulier le lion. Son attitude est calme, presque hiératique. Il est coiffé de la haute tiare. Ses prises, qu'il saisisse la patte ou la queue du lion ou qu'il bande son arc, semblent faire partie d'un cérémonial réglé longtemps à l'avance, de même que la libation qu'il verse sur les corps des lions gisant morts à ses pieds.[36]

Altogether, these iconographic features frame the royal hunt as an efficacious ritual by which the royal priest secures and enacts the empire's well-being before and by means of the gods. Notwithstanding the possible historicity of certain isolated lion hunts (e.g., Room C and K 6085 above), the represented lion hunts in both literary and visual images function as icons for the king's sacral office and, as surrogates for the king himself, perform the hunting rites by which the king guarantees the state's victory over chaos.

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[34] Ursula Magen, *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen, Aspekte der Herrschaft: eine Typologie*, Baghdader Forschungen Bd. 9 (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1986), 128.

[35] Karl Müller, *Das assyriche Ritual*, MVaG 41 (Leipzig: JCHinrichs, 1937), 33; Magen, *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen*, 15–16, 25–27, 35–36. See also Michael B. Dick, "The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt and Yahweh's Answer to Job," *JBL* 125 (2006): 249–51.

[36] Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," 389.

5.2.2.2.2. The Hunt's Mythic Significance

Second, as a correlate to its ritualism, the lion hunt also carries mythic significance, which points beyond the represented brawl to the king's god-like status. Many have discussed the ideological connection between the king's hunting activities and Ninurta's battle against the chaotic (often leonine) Anzû.[37] In the Neo-Assyrian period, the inscriptional accounts of the royal hunts consistently credit Ninurta (together with Nergal) for the king's victories: for example, "Ninurta and Nergal who love my priesthood, / made prosperous for me (even) the animal(s) of the steppe (and) commanded me to go hunting (^{d}NIN.IB *ù* ^{d}IGI.DU *ša šangu-ti i-ra-am-mu /* MÁŠ.ANŠU EDIN *ú-šat-li-mu-ni-ma e-piš ba-'-ri / iq-bu-ni*)."[38] Ninurta played a prominent role in Assyrian royal ideology, as seen not only in the names of Assyrian kings—Tukulti-Ninurta I and II ("my refuge is Ninurta"), Ashurnasirpal II ("Ashur is the custodian of [his] son"—viz, of Ninurta), or Ninurta-tukulti-Ashur ("Ninurta is refuge of Ashur")—but also in the royal inscriptions and seals.[39] At the beginning of Neo-Assyrian prominence,

[37] See, e.g., Dick, "The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt," 252–56; Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," 378–79; Chikako E. Watanabe, "Symbolism of the Royal Lion Hunt in Assyria," in *Intellectual Life of the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented at the 43rd Rencontre Assyriologique International, Prague, July 1-5, 1996*, ed. Jirí Prosecký (Prague: Academy of the Czech Republic, 1998), 441–45; eadem, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia: A Contextual Approach*, Wiener Offene Orientalistik 1 (Wien: Institut für Orientalistik der Univeristät Wien, 2002), 76–82; Amar Annus, *The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia*, State Archives of Assyria Studies 14 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 56, 93-95.

[38] George G. Cameron, "The Annals of Shalmaneser III," *Sumer* 6 (1950): 18, 25. Other kings who appeal to Ninurta and Nergal in this way include Ashur-Dan II, Tikulti-Ninurta II, and Ashurnasirpal II. See further the references (and inscriptions cited) in Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," 378.

[39] For example, in the Middle Assyrian period, Tiglath Pilesar I credits Ashur and Ninurta for his political success: "Tiglath Pilsar, exalted prince, the whom the gods Aššur and Ninrta have continually guided wherever he wished (to go) and who pursued each and every one of the enemies of the god Aššur and laid low all the rebellious" (*RIMA* 2:27, vii 36-41; cf. *RIMA* 2:36, 1-4). In the first millennium, the annals of Adad-narari II (911-891) introduce the king as one "who acts with the support of Aššur and the god Ninurta, the great gods, his lords" (*RIMA* 2:143, 1-4). Shalmaneser III (858-824) acknowledges "the god Ninurta, who loves my priesthood" for granting him "all lands (and) mountains" (*RIMA* 3:28, ii:1-2). Šamši-Adad V (823-811) praises Ninurta in an extended hymnal inscription on a stele found at Kalhu (RIMA 3:182-88). See further the discussion in Annus, *The God Ninurta*, 39–47.

Ashurnasirpal II exalted Ninurta as the principal god of his new capital Kalhu, where he constructed a temple for the deity and erected the iconic stone reliefs featuring Ninurta's pursuit of Anzu at the temple entrance.[40] Others have pointed out the ways in which the language of the inscriptional accounts of Neo-Assyrian wars present the king's as the earthly realization of Ninurta's struggle against chaotic beasts.[41] With respect to the Ninurta-Anzû myth in particular, the icon appears in cylinder seals from this period,[42] and tablets bearing a Sumerian copy of its literary form were kept in Ashurbanipal's library.[43] Despite the overall decline in Ninurta's prevalence toward the end of the Neo-Assyrian period,[44] Ashurbanipal praises the deity for his successful hunt in the epigraph accompanying the hunting episode portrayed in the North Palace (Room S[1]): "I, Ashurbanipal, king of the universe, king of the land of Ashur, in my royal sport, I seized a lion of the plain(?) by its tail, and

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[40] See Ursula Moortgat-Correns, "Ein Kultbild Ninurtas aus neuassyrischer Zeit," *AfO* 35 (1988): 121, abb. 3. Ashurnasirpal mounted three stone slabs at the entrance to the Ninurta temple inscribed with the account of the temple's foundation. The praise of Ninurta reveals the deity's centrality for the newly established Assyrian capital: "The city Calah I took in hand for renovation…I founded therein the temple of the god Ninurta, my lord. At that time I created with my skill this statue of the god Ninurta which had not existed previously as an icon of his great divinity out of the best stone of the mountain and red gold. I regarded it as my great divinity in the city of Calah. I appointed his festivals in the months of Shebat and Elul. I constructed this temple in its entirety…I laid the dais of the god Ninurta, my lord, therein. When the god Ninurta, the lord, for eternity sits joyfully on his holy dais in his alluring shrine, may he be truly pleased (and) so command the lengthening of my days, may he proclaim the multiplication of my years, may he love my priesthood, (and) wherever there is battle or wars in which I strive may he cause me to attain my goal" (*RIMA* 2:295, 11-19). Moortgat-Correns also points out correspondences between the artistic design of Ashurnasirpal's Northwest palace and that of the Ninurta temple.

[41] See the evidence cited in Maul, "Der assyrische König," 210–13. As Maul argues, "Formulierungen im assyrischen Königsinschriften lassen erahnen, dass der König seinen Kampf gegen den Feind als Reaktualisierung des mythischen Kampfes des Helden Ninurta und sich selbst als dessen irdisches und gegenwärtiges Abbild begriff, das den Auftrag von An und Enlil zur Errettung des Landes (an Ninurtas Statt) zu erfüllen hatte" (210).

[42] See the examples cited in Watanabe, "Symbolism of the Royal Lion Hunt in Assyria," 442, n. 10.

[43] Jeanette C. Fincke, "The Babylonian Texts of Nineveh: Report on the British Museum's 'Ashurbanipal Library Project,'" *AfO* 50 (2003): 131, 144.

[44] After Ashirnasirpal II, no additional temples were constructed for Ninurta specifically, although the deity continues to appear in inscriptions, seals, etc. up through the time of Ashurbanipal. Ninurta's decline is correlated with the rise of Nabû as a result of Babylonian influence. See further Moortgat-Correns, "Ein Kultbild Ninurtas," 132–33; Annus, *The God Ninurta*, 44–49. Annus ultimately argues for an identification of the two deities (and others): "I conclude, then, that in Neo-Assyrian times Ninurta shared his identity with Adad, Nabû, Nergal, and Zababa, largely losing his popularity to Nabû from the 8th century onwards. *But the divine figure behind all these names persevered unchanged, if somewhat modified, for Assyrian purposes*" (46-47; emphasis mine).

at the command of Ninurta and Nergal, the gods in whom I trust, I smashed its skull with my own mace."[45]

This familiarity (or fascination) with Ninurta's defeat of chaotic beasts encouraged particular association with the king's own hunting exploits. Watanabe has even pointed out lexical and thematic parallels between inscriptional accounts of the king's leonine encounters and the Ninurta myth.[46] Among her examples, she cites the reference to the ^{giš}*nar'amtu* ("mace")[47] in the so-called "Broken Obelisk" (dated to the reign of either Tiglath-pilesar I or Ashur-bel-kala) and its almost exclusive appearance in Akkadian versions of the Anzû myth, wherein Ninurta uses the same weapon to cut off Anzû's wings.[48] She sees the mentions of "the chariot, the vehicle of my kingship" (^{giš}GIGIR *ru-kub* LUGAL-*ti-ia*) in Ashurbanipal's account of the hunt and the "open chariot" (^{giš}GIGIR *pa-at-tu-te*) used by other Assyrian kings (from Tukulti-Ninurta I up through Shalmaneser III)[49] as possible parallels to the "shining chariot" of Ninurta upon which Ninurta displays the eleven bodies of his slain monsters. As Jacobsen has shown, three cultic commentaries from the first millennium liken the king's return from war upon his chariot to the triumphant entry of Ninurta (or Nabû) after slaughtering chaotic beasts and even identify the king with the victorious deity.[50] Watanabe appeals to the descriptions of

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[45] Akk.: *a-na-ku* ^{m}AN.ŠAR.DU.A LUGAL ŠÚ LUGAL KUR AN.ŠAR^{ki} / *ina me-lul-ti* NUN-*ti-ia* UR.MAḪ *šá* EDIN-*šú ina* KUN-*šú aṣ-bat-ma / ina qí-bit* ^{d}*nin-urta* ^{d}U.GUR DINGIR^{meš} *ti-ik-li-ia* / *ina* ^{giš}*ḫu-ut-pal-e ša* ŠU^{II}*-ia muḫ-ḫa-šu ú-nat-ti*. For the translation above, see Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 54.

[46] Watanabe, "Symbolism of the Royal Lion Hunt in Assyria," 441–45.

[47] This is the translation proffered by *CAD* N (1980), 342 on the basis of the words verbal root *ru'umu* ("to cut off").

[48] See further Dick, "The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt," 254, who cites other lexical parallels between the weapons and fights of Neo-Assyrian kings to Ninurta.

[49] For references and further discussion, see J. N. Postgate, "The Assyrian Porsche?," *SAAB* 4 (1990): 35–38.

[50] In the first text Jacobsen cites (*KAR 307,* obv. 24-29), the king is equated with Ninurta: "The chariot from Elam without its seat carries in it the body of Enmesharra. / The horses that are harnessed to it are the ghost of Anzu. The king who stands in the chariot: / he is the king, the warrior, the lord Ninurta." A second example (*LKA* 71, obv. 7) identifies the king with Nabû: "The chariots that they have come with show of martial prowess from the desert and enter the center of the city: That is Nabû. He [has killed] Anzu." The final text (*CT* XV 44) referenced replaces Anzu with Enlil: "The chariots

the king hunting "on foot" (*ina šēpī* [GÌR$^{II.meš}$])—a detail that figures in the royal inscriptions, in the official seal motif, and in Ashurbanipal's iconographic rendering of the hunt.[51] In two inscriptions, the writers enhance the drama of the king's grounded combat by highlighting his "swift" feet (adj. *lasmu*/*lasmātu*/*lassamātu*).[52] The same root describing his speed appears in an inscription concerning the *lismu* footrace rite of Ninurta: "[T]he footrace (*li-is-mu*) which they run in the month of Kislimu before Bêl in all cult-centers is because Ashur sent Ninurta to capture Anzu. Nergal stated before Ashur: Anzu is captured. Ashur (said) to Nergal: 'Go! give the good news to the gods.'"[53] Although the precise significance of the specific event remains somewhat unclear, the footrace seemed to present the king with an opportunity to demonstrate his physical prowess and thereby to justify the lengthening of his reign.[54] The dramatic ritual identified the king's footspeed with Ninurta's slaughter of Anzu, and this lexical connection between the ruler's speedy lion hunting and the mythological underpinning of the *lismu* footrace, according to Jacobsen and others, provide further support for the ideological connection between the royal hunt motif and Ninurta's (or another's) victory over cosmic chaos. Watanabe summarizes, "thus it is likely that the Assyrian royal lion hunt has the same structure

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that they have come with great show of martial prowess. The third man on the chariot…took his hand and leads him in before the goddess and is showing the goad to the goddess and the king, because he is Nabû whom they sent against Enlil. He captured him." On these texts, see Jacobsen, "Religious Drama in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Hans Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts, The Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1975), 72–73, 95 nn. 56–58.

[51] See, e.g., Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pls. LI-LII.

[52] Ashur-dan II boasts, "I killed 120 lions from my open-chariot (and) on my swift foot (*i-na* GÌR^{II}-*ia la-sa-ma-te*) with my valorous assault" (Assur 4312a, rev. 24-26). On this inscription, see further Ernst F. Weidner, "Die Annalen des Königs Aššurdnân II. von Assyrien," *AFO* 3 (1926): 151-61. The same linguistic formula appears in the annals of Adad-nirari II: "I killed 360 lions from my open-chariot, with my valourous assault, (and) on my swift foot with spear" (*KAH* 2.123-24). For these translations, see Watanabe, "Symbolism of the Royal Lion Hunt in Assyria," 444.

[53] Jacobsen, "Religious Drama in Ancient Mesopotamia," 72–73.

[54] Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina Šulmi Īrub: die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der "akītu"-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr*, Baghdader Forschungen 16 (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1994), 101.

as the rite of Ninurta in which the king establishes and reinforces his kingship by killing lions in the same manner that Ninurta achieves his divine kingship by slaying monsters."[55]

The iconographic evidence also supports the literary links between the king's lion hunts and the divine realm. In Albenda's meticulous analysis of the lion hunt scenes in Ashurnasirpal's Throneroom (Room B) at Nimrud, she notes the triangular structure of the chariot scene, the apex of which occurs just above the king's headdress (fig. 5.4).[56] Ashurnasirpal stands at the center of the arrangement with his bow drawn, and a comparable motif, when framed within a winged disk, appears above the head of the king in other throneroom images that feature Ashurnasirpal riding toward or returning from battle (fig. 5.5). In these contexts, the figure holding the weapon within the winged disc is the deity Ashur (or possibly Ninurta).[57] Therefore, in the lion scenes, the "superposition of the image of a deity with the representation of the Assyrian king is of consequence, for the heroic stature described on the lion-hunt bas-relief is at once elevated from the realm of the human to the divine."[58] Despite Albenda's reluctance to identify the king with his divine counterpart, the iconographic representation of Ashurnasirpal positioned in a nearly identical fashion to that of Ninurta/Ashur—a motif appearing at the apex of the hunting image *without* any accompanying deity—at minimum hints at their visual identity specifically within the event/icon of the royal hunt.

The mythic significance of the royal hunt endures up through the reign of Ashurbanipal, as the inscriptional evidence shows. Weissert's incisive analysis of prism fragment 82-5-22,2 in the

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[55] Watanabe, "Symbolism of the Royal Lion Hunt in Assyria," 445.

[56] Pauline Albenda, "Ashurnasirpal II Lion Hunt Relief BM124534," *JNES* 31 (1972): 175, fig. 11.

[57] Albenda ultimately prefers that the winged disc be identified with Ninurta but concedes the possibility of Ashur. See the evidence cited in "Ashurnasirpal II Lion Hunt Relief," 176. For examples of the winged disc within the throneroom, see, e.g., Meuzyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, pl. 2 (B-11, B-5, B-3).

[58] Albenda, "Ashurnasirpal II Lion Hunt Relief," 178.

Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum demonstrates the close affinity between the lion hunts and the *akītu* festival(s) in Arbela.[59] Weissert assigns the fragment to the earliest of Ashurbanipal's prism inscriptions (Edition E, ca. 666 BCE) and argues for its placement after the account of Ashurbanipal's first Egyptian campaign. In the fragment, the scribes juxtapose a full version of the hunting *topos* Weissert calls the "Lion Hunt by Chariot (in the Plain)"—a genre found also in epigraphs of the North Palace Room S[1] reliefs and votive inscriptions—with an account of an *akītu* festival in honor of Ishtar, which Weissert locates at Arbela. The festival was held twice annually (in mid-Addar and mid-Elul), just before the bi-annual *akītu* festival in Ashur at the beginning of Nisan. The celebration was often associated with military triumphs, commemorating the king's recent campaigns in honor of the deity. In the case of 82-5-22,2, Weissert argues that the festival's triumph hailed Ashurbanipal's first major military success in Egypt.

He explains this "unexpected proximity" between the royal hunt and *akītu* festival in the prism fragment in terms of their "inherent affinity."[60] Drawing upon Lambert's and Jacobsen's analyses of the New Year festivals at Ashur,[61] he connects the account of the king's dispatching of lions "in the

[59] Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph."

[60] Ibid., 348.

[61] W. G. Lambert, "The Great Battle of the Mesopotamian Religious Year: The Conflict in the Akītu House," *Iraq* 25 (1963): 189–90; Jacobsen, "Religious Drama in Ancient Mesopotamia," 72–76. Cf. Karel van der Toorn, "The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and Their Bearing on Old Testament Study," in *Congress Volume: Leuven, 1989*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 43 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 331–44. Van der Toorn cautions against any assumption of a dramatic re-enactment of the combat myth but upholds the importance of the rites of the bi-annual festival for celebrating "the undiminished vitality of both the political and religious order." He concludes, "The Akitu-festival is not concerned with the rebirth of nature; its ritual is the answer, not to a cosmic crisis, but to the need for a demonstration, and thereby consolidation, of some of the central values of Babylonian civilization" (339). As Dick contends, however, the absence of any overt cult-drama need not nullify the presence of the dramatic within the liturgical procession to the wilderness *akītu* house. See "The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt," 259.

plain" with Ashur's battle "in the plain" against Tiamat and the hosts of evil staged annually in the *akītu* celebration:

> It is this role of the saviour king, attached to the image of the lion hunter, that may bridge the gap between the two seemingly disparate episodes in the Prism Fragment. We would like to suggest that by departing to a lion hunt in the plain, the king was believed to be following in the footsteps of his divine patrons—Ashur (at New Year) and Ishtar of Arbela (during her *akītu* held just a fortnight earlier): when the new year approached, Ashur, the king of the gods, and probably also Ishtar, his warrior daughter, were expected to subdue the mythical hosts of chaos in the plain; and the king, the ruler of mankind, was for his part expected to subdue the incarnate hosts of chaos, that is, the lions. This having been accomplished, the new year could unfold itself with all due security for men [*sic*] and livestock.[62]

The inscriptional evidence from both the broader Neo-Assyrian period and Ashurbanipal's reign specifically attests to the theological significance of the hunting event itself and its representation in literary and iconographic records. Barnett comments on the transhistorical significance of their representation: "In some form…the king is re-enacting the god's part, and the scenes have a partly symbolic character, and it is partly this which raises them from being merely secular scenes like the other hunting pictures to monumental art."[63] More than a mere opportunity to convey the king's physical strength, the lion-king encounter seems to concretize a cosmic conflict and identifies the ruler as the human agent of divine order.

5.2.2.2.3. The Hunt's Heroic Significance

Thirdly, in addition to the icon's priestly and mythic connotations, the royal hunt also demonstrated the king's heroism in figurative ways. By "heroism," I refer to hunt's connection to the king's

[62] Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 349.
[63] Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 13.

protection of his constituents as well as its evocation of the king's slaughter of human enemies. Obviously, the lion narratives present an ideal opportunity to announce the king's bravery, and both the inscriptional and iconographic accounts intensely dramatize the events. In the inscriptions, the kings boast of vanquishing hundreds of wild lions with various weapons and techniques (as discussed above). Many accounts also stage the royal hunt as a rescue mission, in which the ruler comes to the aid of helpless victims. For example, the epigraph on slabs A-B in Room S[1] of Ashurbanipal's North Palace recounts the lion hunt as Ashurbanipal's deliverance of his vulnerable subject:

> I went out. In the plain, a wide expanse, raging lions, a fierce mountain breed, attacked [me and] surrounded the chariot, my royal vehicle. At the command of Assur and Ishtar, the great gods, my lords with a single team [harness]sed to my yoke, I scattered the pack of these lions. [Ummana]pp[a, son of U]rtaki, king of Elam, who fled and submitted [to me…] a lion sprang upon him […] he feared, and he implored my lordship (for aid).[64]

Arranged in this way, the inscriptions use the hunt to enhance the king's traditional role as the attentive shepherd—the savior king who protects his people and livestock from chaotic predators.[65]

The North Palace hunting reliefs also highlight the king's heroism, albeit in different ways. On one hand, the artists intensify the drama through their naturalistic presentation of the lion's ferocity and occasionally crowd the scene with leonine attackers, who leap toward the king from multiple directions. On the other hand, other scenes isolate the lion and king and rely upon certain details of the king's image to underscore his brave persona: for example, the ruler's impassive countenance, the

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[64] Akk.: *ú-ṣi ina* EDIN *áš-ri rap-ši la-ab-bi na-ad-*[*ru-u*]*-ti i-lit-ti ḫur-šá-a-ni* ḪUŠ.MEŠ *it-bu-*[] */ il-mu-u* GIŠ.GIGIR *ru-kub* LUGAL*-ti-ya ina qí-bit* AN.ŠAR *u* [d][15] DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ EN.MEŠ*-ya x it x ri x* [] / [*t*]*i ni-ri-ya x* [] *el-lat* UR.MAḪ.MEŠ *šú-a-tu-*[*nu*] *ú-par-re-e* [] / [] *x x* [[m]*ur*]*-ta-ki* MAN KUR NIM.KI *šá in-nab-tú-ma iṣ-ba-tú* [GÍR.II-*ya*] / []*-nu-ti* UR.MAḪ *ina muḫ-ḫi-šú it-bi-ma* x x [x x] / [] *ip-làḫ-ma ú-ṣal-la-a* EN*-u-ti-*[*ya*]. See the tranliteratoin in Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs," 26. For the translation, see Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 201. The Prism Fragment 82-5-22,2 and the Great Hunting Text (K 2867+) also present the hunt as a response to the lions that have devastated cattle pens and sheepfolds. See the translations in Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 344, fig. 1.

[65] Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 343. See also Maul, "Das 'dreifache Königtum,'" 398–400.

lion's immense size and persistent attack (despite its arrow wounds), the absence of the king's protective arm bands in the face-to-face encounters, and the vividness with which the lion's pain is depicted.[66] Many of these features (and others) will be discussed with respect to the Room C reliefs below, but it will suffice for now to indicate the stunning balance that artists strike between realism and fantasy, truth-telling and propaganda in their convincing portrayal of the king's heroism.

Beyond the hunt's idealistic presentation and its clear ties to royal bravery, lion slaying also served as a striking metaphor for the defeat of human enemies in both the literary and iconographic record. As early as Ashurnasirpal II, the portrayal of the hunt carries "a dual meaning." In the chariot scene of Ashurnasirpal's throneroom (addressed above), the image's more literal significance "deals with the level of human activity, which exalts the king's prowess in the hunt." As Albenda notes, however, there is a "less obvious but more purposeful intent" that "asserts the divine power behind the king's success in battle against his enemies; and in this instance the lions may signify the foes who are attacked and subsequently defeated without hesitancy."[67] The artists signal the lions' metaphorical role in many ways, two of which merit further discussion.

First, the precise posturing of the dead beasts within Ashurnasirpal's throneroom at the Northwest Palace is reminiscent of fallen human enemies. At the throneroom's southeast corner (nearest the throne), the artists juxtapose two hunting narratives (of a bull and lion), each of which

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[66] Cf. Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture*, 77, who attempts to provide a naturalistic account for the king's face-to-face lion encounters (Room S[1]) by appealing to the smaller size of Asiatic lions or by assuming that the king is holding the rampant lion up after its death. See Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 171 for a helpful rebuttal. Barnett nicely explains the image's idealistic qualities not in terms of their naturalism but in terms of their performativity: "But what are we to make of this, on the whole, slightly improbable scene of wholesale slaughter by a royal huntsman of unerring skill, dressed in such unsuitable attire? Is it simply a sort of ritual or symbolic scene (as some believe), in which the king is traditionally pictured as defender of his people and their flocks against the beasts of the untamed desert? Did it really happen? Or was it merely the exaggeration and flattery suitably offered to an Oriental [*sic!*] despot? No doubt it is best to regard it as intended magically to ensure that what ought to happen, does" (*Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, 21).

[67] Albenda, "Ashurnasirpal II Lion Hunt Relief," 178.

cover one slab divided into two horizontal registers. The upper register of each displays the king hunting the beasts upon his chariot, while the lower registers show the libation ceremonies that follow (fig. 5.4). In the chariot scenes, the royal horses trample upon the body of a dead or dying bull or lion in a manner strangely reminiscent of the throneroom battle narratives, which also feature the royal chariot treading upon fallen human victims (fig. 5.5). The human and animal are "evidently interchangeable in that position," and these defeated figures are often sculpted with greater detail than their living counterparts.[68]

Second, the position of the lions in the libation scenes of the visual narratives is also evocative of defeated rebel kings, shown making obeisance before Ashurnasirpal. As mentioned above, the hunting reliefs of both Ashurnasirpal and Ashurbanipal conclude with victory ceremonies in which the king offers a libation on the carcasses of the defeated beasts.[69] Immediately adjacent to the slabs featuring the bull and lion hunts in Ashurnasirpal's throneroom, the artists etched a besiegement narrative: the upper register of the slab shows the Assyrian king and army firing against the city's battlements, and the lower register tells the aftermath, with the defeated king lying prostrate before

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[68] Mehmet-Ali Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), 16. Others have commented on the significance of the detail with which the artists render these beasts. In the artwork of Ashurbanipal especially—where the naturalism of Neo-Assyrian art reaches its climax—some note the visual correspondence between the particularity of the human and leonine victims. Edith Porada comments on the king-lion encounters of Ashurbanipal's palace and sees in their contrasting detail the lions' symbolic meaning: "[T]he fact that the king remains expressionless and impassive, in contrast to the fury and suffering of the lions and lionesses, must have fully conveyed the intended meaning of the representations, in which the lions were probably symbolic of the enemy forces threatening the realm" (Review of R. D. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh*, *AJA* 84 (1980): 535). Cf. Paul Collins, "The Development of the Individual Enemy in Assyrian Art," *Notes in the History of Art* 25 (2006): 1–8, who explains the increasing detail of Ashurbanipal's artists in terms of Egyptian influence. Enemies like Teumman obtain specific facial identifiers by the time of Ashurbanipal, and the hunted animals—in contrast to the, standardized rendering of the horses and dogs in the North Palace reliefs—gain unprecedented naturalism. This particularity enhanced the performative power of the image: as substitutes for the represented they "reconfirm the defeat and death of an enemy of the Assyrian state" (ibid., 7).

[69] Meuzyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, pl. 2, B-19; Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. LVII.

Ashurnasirpal (fig. 5.4). The paratactic juxtaposition of these episodes and the parallel modes of visual telling between the hunt and besiegement reveal the conceptual relationship between the lions or bulls and the human enemies: "Along the vertical axis, the libation scenes are placed directly under their respective royal hunt scenes, with the prostrate enemy placed underneath a battle scene…This positioning of the scenes clearly reveals not only how the royal hunt may be seen as analogous to the royal battle but also how the prostrate enemy is placed in a position analogous to that of the slain animals subject to the libation."[70] With only minor differences between them, the juxtaposition, positioning, and parallel narrative arrangement of the throneroom lion hunts and military battles underscore the conceptual correspondence between them, with each informing and serving as a metaphor for the other.

These similarities appear once more in the lion hunt scenes of Ashurbanipal. Just as the post-hunt libation scenes closely resembled the post-war tribute scenes of Ashurnasirpal's throneroom,[71] Ashurbanipal's North Palace reliefs featured libation ceremonies for both the hunt and military campaigns. The sole lion libation scene found in Room S[1] of the North Palace is visually reminiscent of the king's campaign against Teumman and the Elamites found nearby in Room I. After the Elamites surrender, the king is shown standing upon the battlements of Arbela pouring a libation upon

[70] Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship*, 19.

[71] The extant examples of post-war (or pre-war) libation scenes from Ashurnasirpal's reign are unfortunately too fragmentary for any further analysis. See the brief discussion in Magen, *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen*, 69; pl. 13.4. At the same time, the adjacent placement of the royal hunt narratives and the king's military campaign narratives within throneroom reliefs bespeaks their ideological resonance and affirms their mutually reinforcing character. See Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," 377, n. 98; Maul, "Das 'dreifache Königtum,'" 399, n. 52. Cf. Irene J. Winter, "The Program of the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal II," in *Essays on Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in Honor of Charles Kyrle Wilkinson*, ed. Prudence O. Harper and Holly Pittman (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 15–32.

Teumman's severed head.[72] The iconographic analogy between the two moments holds for the inscriptional evidence as well. The scribes recount the libation ceremonies over the lion carcasses and Teumman's head with the same ordering of episodes and with striking lexical repetition, as Weissert has shown.[73] Beyond mere coincidence, these similarities show that "whether it be hunted lions or defeated kings, the gestures of victory were staged in the same way,"[74] and this singular presentation of royal victory held tremendous import for royal ideology: "In the eyes of the ancient spectators the public image of the triumphant king and the public image of the lion hunter merged into a single figure—that of Ashurbanipal."[75]

The arrangements of the reliefs within Room S[1] of Ashurbanipal's North Palace confirm these particular correspondences between the libation scenes. The reliefs of this upper level at the palace's western corner (Room S[1]) contained extensive hunt scenes, war scenes recounting Ashurbanipal's final campaign against Elam (647-46 BCE), and a landscape panorama—including the iconic "Garden Scene," featuring Ashurbanipal reclining with his queen at a royal banquet.[76] Because the reliefs were

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[72] See Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. 25. For a detailed analysis of the libation genre in which the king acts as priest and an account of their similarities, see Magen, *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen*, 65–69. Many have pointed out the similarities (and significance) of the libation scenes following both the hunt and the battle. See, e.g., Albenda, "Ashurnasirpal II Lion Hunt Relief," 178, n. 42; Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," 376–77; Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 349–50, 352-53 (fig. 2); Reade, "Religious Ritual," 21; Dominik Bonatz, "Ashurbanipal's Headhunt: An Anthropological Perspective," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 96; Paul Collins, "Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Violence: Warfare in Neo-Assyrian Art," in *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, ed. Brian A. Brown and Marian H. Feldman (Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 629. Cf. Watanabe, "A Problem in the Libation Scene of Ashurbanipal."

[73] See the detailed comparison between the epigraphs inscribed on the North Palace hunting reliefs and other inscriptional accounts (e.g., epigraphs on tablets, historical prisms, etc.) in Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 352–53, fig. 2. Weissert also provides the iconographic parallels between the post-hunt (Room S1) and post-Til-Tuba (Room I) libation reliefs. Cassin notes further parallels between the language used to describe the royal hunt and that used to recount the king's military exploits. See "Le roi et el Lion," 376–78.

[74] Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 350.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pls. LXIV-LXV; Pauline Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs in the Bīt-Ḫilāni of Ashurbanipal," *BASOR* 224 (1976): 49–72; "Landscape Bas-Reliefs in the Bīt-Ḫilāni of Ashurbanipal," *BASOR* 225 (1977): 29–48; Paul Collins, "The Symbolic Landscape of Ashurbanipal," *Notes in the History of Art* 23 (2004): 1–6.

not found *in situ*, the original relationship between these different images eludes us.[77] In Albenda's proposed arrangement, the banquet scene and its accompanying landscapes occupied the center of the wall with the Elamite battle narrative on its left and the lion chase scenes on its right. This central arrangement—used elsewhere in the North Palace specifically (Room C, discussed below) and Neo-Assyrian palace relief arrangement more broadly[78]—juxtaposes the Elamite campaign and the royal hunt as parallel exploits that lead to an identical climax at the wall's center: the reclining king and queen in a highly symbolic garden. Even if one rejects the details of Albenda's arrangement, the presence of military and hunting episodes in yet another paratactic juxtaposition, like that of

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[77] When William K. Loftus first discovered the western corner of the North Palace in 1854, he noted the several reliefs that were found "several feet above and upon the flooring" in addition to the elaborate hunting scenes that already decorated the walls of the space—what Boutcher would eventually label Room S in his ground plan. See Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 18. The room sat at least twenty feet below the floor level of the North Palace and boasted two column bases (6 ft. in diameter) at an open portico entrance. Its oblong layout (25 x 65 ft.) was connected to the main complex by a 200 ft. ascending corridor (Room R). These architectural details implied the original presence of an upper story that once featured the diverse array of reliefs scattered about the Room S floor. Many have contended that the structure should be identified the originally North Syrian Hittite style *bīt ḫilāni*—a building "with a loggia on an upper floor with windows standing above a portico" (Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 18). See especially Bruno Meissner and Dietrich Opitz, *Studien zum Bît Hilâni im Nordpalast Assurbanaplis zu Ninive*, Abhandlungen der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 18 (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1940); Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 49–58.

Barnett (*Scultpures from the North Palace*, 17-20) has argued that the layout of the walls and reliefs upper rooms mirrored that of Rooms S, T, and V below. Kertai, however, proposes two problems with this assumption: (1) the number of fallen reliefs seems too few to have covered the walls of three entire rooms, and their artistic content does not divide easily into three spaces like that of Rooms S-V; (2) the extreme weight of the reliefs presents would have likely been too heavy for wooden floors/beams of an upper story to hold. Kertai instead concludes that the rooms of the upper level were located to the east of the lower rooms and quite possibly could have decorated the outer façade of the palace's ground level (20 ft. above Room S). See *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces* (New York: Oxford University, 2015), 180–81. With respect to discerning the arrangement of the slabs specifically, the paucity of data "precludes any conclusions concerning the original placement of the bas-reliefs" (Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 55).

[78] See, e.g., Holly Pittman, "The White Obelisk and the Problem of Historical Narrative in the Art of Assyria," *AB* 78 (1996): 334–55; Stephen Lumsden, "Narrative Art and Empire: The Throneroom of Aššurnaṣirpal II," in *Assyria and Beyond: Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, ed. J. G. Dercksen, Uitgaven van Het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut Te Istanbul 100 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2004), 359–85.

Ashurnasirpal beforehand, work together to "exalt the Assyrian king as a heroic and powerful figure against his enemies, whether the latter are human or wild beasts."[79]

5.2.2.2.4. Summary

The lion-hunting icon encapsulated several complementary aspects of the Assyrian kingship. However much the inscriptional accounts played up the threat that lions posed to the people, the hunting ritual itself, whenever and if ever it was performed, held little practical benefit for the imperial populace—at least not to the same degree that vanquishing rebel kings contributed to political stability. Instead, its representation in literary and iconographic narratives was primarily *symbolic* (indexing the king's roles as priest and protector), *mythic* (revealing the king's divine capacities) and *performative* (ensuring royal dominion against all chaotic forces, seen and unseen). As such, the hunts demonstrate the constructive power of violence in the hands of the king and distinguish the emperor as the sole human being savage enough to contend with chaos on behalf of the empire.[80] Lion slaying epitomized the institution of Neo-Assyrian kingship, and its iconic power lent itself to graphic representation in imperial imagery. It is this relationship between their violent realism and figurative import that make the lion reliefs tantalizing comparands to the vividity with which the Lamentations poet renders divine violence against Zion.

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[79] Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 58.

[80] "In the Assyrian royal lion hunt, the lion must have been perceived as conveying the essence of wild forces which is to be released at the moment of killing. The king functions as the only figure who is capable of bringing this power into society from the wild, thus reinforcing the supremacy of his kingship and assuring the continuity of life for the community" (Watanabe, "Symbolism of the Royal Lion Hunt in Assyria," 448). The king himself was often identified with the lion, extending as far back as the third millennium. On the king as lion, see Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," 355–401; Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 178–80; Watanabe, "Symbolism of the Royal Lion Hunt in Assyria," 446–47.

5.3. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LION HUNT SCENES OF THE NORTH PALACE

Having established the iconic significance of the hunt and its comparative suitability for the iconographic exegesis of Lamentations, I will now address the lion hunt scenes themselves, beginning with a general orientation to the North Palace itself and their arrangement therein.

In his approximately forty year reign, Ashurbanipal expanded the infrastructure of the imperial capital by reconstructing parts of his grandfather Sennacherib's Southwest Palace, expanding the Military Palace, and undertaking the construction of the North Palace (completed between 646 and 643).[81] The specific dimensions of the palace are unknown, but the structure stood smaller than its predecessor to the southwest (fig. 5.6). Its precise function remains unclear. In the so-called "Rassam Cylinder" (and its duplicate Cylinder A [K 8537], both completed between 644 and 636), Ashurbanipal recounts nine military campaigns and commemorates his rebuilding of the *bīt redûti* ("house of succession" or "place of retirement") of Sennacherib. At the cylinder's conclusion, the king reflects upon growing up as the crown prince in this "house of succession" and details the supplies and activities of its reconstruction.[82] Because the cylinder was discovered in the North Palace, many have equated Ashurbanipal's new palace on the citadel with the *bīt redûti* he describes,[83] but the inscriptional account doesn't quite align with the archaeological evidence. As Kertai notes, the *bīt redûti* normally referred to a residence intended for the crown prince rather than the king himself, but

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[81] Julian E. Reade, "Nineveh," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, ed. Erich Ebeling, Ernst F. Weidner, and Dietz Otto Edzard, vol. 9 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 417.

[82] See *ARAB* 2.835-38.

[83] See, e.g., Bruno Meissner, "Das bît ḫilâni in Assyrien," *Or* 11 (1942): 258; Meissner and Opitz, *Studien zum Bît Hilâni*, 4–6; Rykle Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 14; Simo Parpola, "The Royal Archives of Nineveh," in *Cuneiform archives and libraries: papers read at the 30e Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Leiden, 4-8 July 1983*, ed. K. R. Veenhof, Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul 57 (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1986), 233.

the North Palace bears no explicit indication that it housed the king's son(s). Also, Ashurbanipal describes the reconstruction of a structure originally erected by Sennacherib, and there is little archaeological evidence for a prior building at the northern end of the Nineveh citadel during Sennacherib's reign.[84]

While the palace's specific function and relationship to the Southwest Palace remains elusive, the sheer number of the lion-hunt monuments and their arrangement in the palace corridors may serve as signposts toward its purpose. There need not be any deterministic relationship between the content displayed on the wall reliefs and the function of a given room, but at first glance, the artistic layout of the building is more than suggestive. There appeared to be an intentional division of content between the rooms: military conquests were allocated to suites, while images of the hunt were relegated to corridors,[85] decorating Rooms A, C, E, R, and S (in addition to the scenes found upper room S1, the layout of which is unknown).

All of these rooms were connected to one another and, beginning with Room A, presented a single "story" across the multiple hunts shown (fig. 5.7).[86] Corridors A and R formed a descending hallway that brought residents down from Room D into the lower-level entrance/exit in Room S. Both corridors were lined with tall, five-foot, single-registered slabs—approximately two-thirds life-size

[84] See further Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, 168–69. Though he argues against the simplistic equation of the North Palace with the *bīt redûti* mentioned in the Rassam Cylinder, Kertai offers little else in terms of other solutions and provides an ambiguous conclusion: "The texts seem to make more sense if the *bēt redûti* is understood as both a general 'space of kingship' and a concrete physical manifestation in the form of a specific building. The North Palace was a physical manifestation of the *bēt redûti* of which perhaps only one existed at any time, but this remains unclear as long as we do not know the location of the *bēt redûti* before Ashurbanipal's reign" (169). Cf. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 5–6, who acknowledges the discrepancies between the Rassam Cylinder and the archaeological data and proposes the possibility that the *bīt redûti* refers to parts of the Southwest Palace, which Ashurbanipal reconstructed and embellished (e.g., Room 33 discussed above).

[85] Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, 184.

[86] Meissner and Opitz, *Studien zum Bît Hilâni*; Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 19.

(3'8" human figures).[87] One side of the hallways showed a procession going toward the hunt (as one descended toward Room S), and the other side showed the return (as one ascended into the palace's main suites/courtyards). For example, the four slabs that remain from the original sixteen in Room A originally decorated the hallway's south wall and featured a procession of at least ten royal archers, leading the king's hand-cart to the chase—their downward march mimicking that of those making their way out of the palace (figs. 5.8-5.9).[88]

Once one rounded the corner at the end of Room A, the southeast wall of Room R continued the downward march (figs. 5.10-5.11). The surviving slabs of this wall (slabs 1-6, 9, in addition to Boutcher's drawings of 7-8) fill out the journey begun in Room A. Attendants escort angry hounds, which pull against their masters with snarling faces, anxious to feed their lean bodies. They are accompanied by horses, mules, and huntsmen, all of whom carry nets, stakes, and other hunting equipment. Their parade proceeds along the length of the corridor. Though excavations failed to yield any post-hunt images from Room A, the remaining reliefs from the northwest wall of Room R (slabs 28-25, 23) reveal the palace's intentional design (figs. 5.12-5.13). Here, the attendants bunch together into groups of four to hoist the leonine trophies just slain by the king. A lone archer points the way for those bearing the (minimum of) four lion carcasses, while other guardsmen and other huntsmen carrying the smaller game (birds and hares) bring up the rear.

The hunting narratives reach their climax in Room S, where "the royal hunt was depicted both in full swing and in its conclusion."[89] Unlike the large-scale processional sculptures in the adjacent corridors, Room S displays multiple hunts in two- or three-registered arrangements, which allowed

[87] Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 48.
[88] Ibid., pls. II-III.
[89] Ibid., 19.

the artists to feature the king's expertise in different situations (fighting on foot, on horseback, or in a hiding pit) with many weapons (bow-and-arrow, spear, sword, or mace) against various animals (lions, gazelle, and onagers). Because each side of the room contained an entryway, the artists isolated the hunting scenes into four independent groups. First, the southeast wall featured the lengthiest relief composition and showed the king's battle against lions, gazelle, and onager in three independent registers (slabs 6-16). Second, after entrance *b*, the remaining, shortened side of the southeast wall showed the king, surrounded by attendants and oarsmen, hunting in a river by boat (slabs 3-5). Third, the surviving fragments from the northern end of the northwest wall (slabs 17-21) indicate a single scene spanning four slabs that show deer, stags, and does fleeing into a netted trap held by hunting attendants. They presumably run from the king, displayed on a slab now lost. The fourth and final image group stood on the other side of the pillared entrance *d* at the southern point of the northwest wall. Only Boutcher's drawings and miniscule pieces survive from this section, but the fragments suggest a similar theme to that of the third group: two huntsmen carry the carcass of a doe in a wooded setting, while a hound chases a deer up the mountainous terrain.

The remaining rooms that contained lion scenes—Rooms E and C—also participated in this broader narrative arrangement, albeit in a more tangential manner. Room A emptied into Room D, which served as a four-way connection point between Rooms B, C, and E (figs. 5.9, 5.7). Room C (discussed below) brought the king or his guests into the broad Court J and yielded the most extensive, expansive, and complete lion hunt narrative of the North Palace. Room E, however, served as a passageway into the "upper chambers" (Rooms S^1, V^1, and T^1) that lay above Room S. Like corridors A and R, the Room E hallway featured two larger scenes (one per wall). Rather than showing a

hunting processional, however, the artists sculpted a more idyllic scene set within the king's "game preserve" (*ambassu*). Only pieces of four reliefs survive (slabs 5-8, 13), but the extant images show off the exotic greenery of the royal gardens with an exquisite attention to botanical detail.[90]

On the south wall, female musicians (or possibly eunuchs) process rightward among the trees (toward the "upper chamber"). They are accompanied by a tame lion that looks backward across his body but evinces no signs of aggression (fig. 5.14). The musicians' movement gestures toward a related scene, which some consider "perhaps the most attractive of all Assyrian sculptures"[91]—the portrayal of a lion and lioness reposing among the trees (fig. 5.16).[92] Their presence may suggest the breeding of lions within the royal *ambassu* for hunting purposes, or they perhaps served as an idyllic portrait of the peaceable Assyrian empire after the king has conquered all chaotic forces. On the northern wall (fig. 5.15), the garden setting obtains, but the surviving images may imply a different atmosphere. Here, two attendants march rightward (toward Rooms, D, A, and R) and guide three leashed mastiffs ostensibly toward the hunt, but the dogs' still posture (over against the leaping mastiffs in Room R) may suggest yet another tranquil scene to complement the reliefs on the southern wall. Whatever the case, their movement coincides with the artistic procession arranged in Rooms A-S and may indicate the hunt's beginning within the *ambassu* itself, although the evidence is too scant to be certain.

Altogether, the layout of the hunting reliefs in the palace corridors tells a compelling visual narrative. By these images, the king, along with his family and royal guests, navigate the palace space

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[90] Art historians variously identify cypress trees, palm trees, grapevines, lilies, and marguerites all within the garden. See, e.g., Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 12, 38; Julian Reade, "Lions in a Garden," in *Art and Empire*, 83.

[91] Reade, "Lions in a Garden," 83.

[92] Moortgat argues for a connection between the musicians and the lions' calm demeanor, akin to an Orpheus motif. See *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia: The Classical Art of the Near East.*, trans. Judith Filson (London: Phaidon, 1969), 156.

as a microcosm of the hunt. As they leave their suites and courtyards toward the palace's lower western entrance, they walk alongside hunting attendants and prepare to enter the uncertain world of chaotic beasts. Whatever doubts concerning the hunt's outcome linger are then assuaged by the images on the opposite walls of the corridors: Ashurbanipal's victory, however monstrous his opponents, is as assured as the stone reliefs that display the leonine spoils. Upon arriving in Room S—the palace's most liminal space, accessible by the wild creatures that lurk outside the king's ordered realm—the palace audience witnesses a series of hunting campaigns in tangled confusion:[93] narratives scatter into multiple registers; image sequences move in opposing directions; settings shift without explanation (forest, mountains, rivers); and the hunting method and victim change with each series. The room as a whole thus speaks to the king's rightful place among the chaotic—his ubiquity, his versatility, his ferocity—as much as it witnesses to his hunting prowess.[94] The room stands less as a

[93] Cf. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, 192, who laments the effect that the arrangements of Rooms S and S[1] have upon the artistry: "Nevertheless, there is a curious discrepancy between the supreme artistry of the hunting scenes and the position in which they are displayed…In fact, the wall as a whole was never considered at all, and there is nowhere a unified mural decoration in relief. An individual scene might be given epic breadth...But the beholder was evidently supposed to concentrate upon episode after episode, and the impression which the wall made as a whole was never considered." This critique overlooks the possibility that "the impression" generated by the S and S[1] walls is precisely engineered. The artists may have been concerned not with mere intelligibility but with performativity—enacting, rather than simply displaying, the king's hunt.

Bersani and Dutoit demonstrate the unique narrativizing techniques of the Neo-Assyrian artists with reference to a Room S sequence. They argue that Assyrian art represents "a particularly striking case of: (1) a highly narrativized art (in which the story line is frequently presented both in images and in an accompanying cuneiform text); (2) extraordinarily ingenious strategies for diverting our attention from the stories thus emphasized; and (3) a successful narrativizing of critical response" (*The Forms of Violence: Narrative in Assyrian Art and Modern Culture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), 9). At the climax of one of the Room S lion hunts, the king impales the beast in the mouth, but rather than focusing the arrangement on this culminating scene, the artists integrate "counter-narrative" tendencies that keep the eye moving: e.g., the narrative's continual progression rightward, distracting formal features (parallel lines, broken lines, etc.), and the juxtaposition of the lion and horse in opposing movement. They therefore note a tension not only within the images themselves but also between the images and modern criticism. The reliefs demand to be read narratively, but this reading leads many critics at the same time to dismiss/devalue them for narrative reasons.

[94] Frankfort comments on tension inherent in the lion-king encounter and its resultant exaltation of the king's invincibility: "The thrill experienced time and again at this moment, when the outcome is uncertain and the powerful creature takes the measure of his opponent, left its trace in the artist's work; the lion just freed from its cage is drawn larger, more powerful, than when it is wounded and attacks. In certain renderings of the release it has a nightmarish

collection of visual hunting tales and more as a concoction of hunting virility, with multiple sequences pouring across one another in a tension-filled witness to the king's reg(n)al endeavors. And yet, each extant hunting sequence concludes with the death of the animals, now ready for transport through the palace hallways and toward the throneroom. The relief program thus gives the palace space itself a ritual significance and conforms its inhabitants into the empire's foundational icon—namely, the subduing of the ever-widening chaotic fringes into the embodied order of the king.

Given this arrangement, Kertai suggests a possible correlation between the relief topics and the purpose of the palace.[95] There is no apparent indication, at least according to the artwork, that the palace was intended for the crown prince, as is commonly suggested, for he does not appear in any of the extant reliefs. Rather, the intentional sequencing of the hunting journey(s) throughout the palace corridors likely indicates one of the structure's main functions. It's possible that the Room S portal faced outward toward a wooded terrain that may have served as an enclosed *ambassu* for the royal hunt itself.[96] This would corroborate the Room E reliefs that feature the tamed lions within the

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quality. In the fray the invincible king detracts from the lion's glory" (*The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, 187). Similarly, Collon underscores the king's "impassivity," which "contrasts with the hectic action which the artist has succeeded in conveying" (*Ancient Near Eastern Art*, 156). The king therefore enters into the chaos without succumbing to its amorphous tendencies. The Neo-Assyrian ideology undergirds the king's wild power and his unique ability to transgress the order-chaos boundary by presenting the king as both lion and lion-hunter. See especially Cassin, "Le roi et el Lion," 394–400; Dick, "The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt," 243–45, 261.

[95] Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, 183–84.

[96] As Turner notes, the northwest projection of the palace's northwest outer wall may have formed part of the game park's boundary, which might have carried to the southwest of the palace as well. The open entrance at Room S implies the presence of a protective enclosure beyond the palace proper. Thus, the *ambassu* might have stood to the west of the structure (see Reade, "Nineveh," 403), but this would require a southwest outer wall, traces of which have not been excavated. Alternatively, the *ambassu* may have been located on the outside of the citadel itself in the western area of the outer town (a la C. J. Gadd, *The Assyrian Sculptures* (London: British Museum, 1934), 46–47, 72). See further Geoffrey Turner, "Notes on the Architectural Remains of the North Palace," in *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 32; C. J. Gadd, *The Assyrian Sculptures* (London: British Museum, 1934), 46–47, 72; Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, 172; Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 49–53; Dick, "The Neo-Assyrian Royal Lion Hunt," 247.

parkland setting.[97] At the same time, the palace's relative distance from a large body of water—a geographical feature that consistently appears in the Room S visual narratives—may indicate that the hunting grounds were also located outside of the Nineveh citadel. Nevertheless, the palace's ritualistic layout may indicate that Ashurbanipal's revival of the royal hunt motif in both iconographic representation and public ritual may have coincided with the construction of a new palace dedicated to this activity.

In light of the residence's (possible) purpose, the artists and architects engineered the royal space in a such way that it encouraged more than mere viewing. The size and sequence of the images across the building engaged their audience and brought them into a narrative founded in the empire's archetypical conflict. In this way, the hunt became an *experience* in addition to a spectacle and filled out the palace as a *physical enactment* or ritual of the king's violence and order. This extended look into the palace layout thus confirms the ritual significance of the hunt's representation discussed above. More than decorative artwork, therefore, the sculptures were arranged in a manner that enabled the viewer not only to witness the hunt's occurrence but also to participate repeatedly in its unfolding display. Like the Til-Tuba composition, the images are performative in a two-fold sense. First, as images, they participate in that which they represent and, by virtue of their simultaneous realism and idealism, perform the outcomes they display. Secondly, as images within a broader palatial sequence, they invite the viewer walk through the journey of the fight they depict, not

[97] Despite the differences between the North Palace and Ashurbanipal's description of the *bīt redûti* in the Rassam Cylinder, the royal account of the *bīt redûti* garden is suggestive: "Tall columns I inclosed with (sheets) of shining bronze and laid (thereon) the cornices of its portico (*bît-ḫilâni*). That *bît-redûti*, my royal dwelling, I completed in every detail, I filled with splendid (furnishings). A great park of all kinds of fruit trees of … I planted at its sides" (*ARAB* 2.837).

necessarily by hunting alongside him (for the king alone fights),[98] but by walking through each moment until the carcasses of the chaotic beasts are returned to the palace. Their eyes render the icon a ritualized spectacle, continuously viewed and attested by successive generations. Attention to the palace's general structure shows us part of what the images as a whole intend to "do" (discussed further in chapter 6) and allows for a more informed look into the fascinating poetics of the famous Room C.

5.4. AN ANALYSIS OF THE HUNTING SEQUENCE IN ROOM C

If the North Palace hunting reliefs represent the pinnacle of the Neo-Assyrian artistic tradition, the Room C reliefs are the palace's crowning achievement. The sequence survives as not only the most complete of the palace's hunting narratives but also the most monumental. Unlike the three-part divisions seen in the Rooms S and S[1] reliefs, the Room C artists take advantage of the entire stone tableau to display two extensive narratives of the king's hunt, and all registers collectively contribute to the corridor's dual sequences. The artists complement this nearly life-sized arrangement with an attention to detail so sympathetic to the lion aggressors that it has evoked visceral responses from modern (and possibly ancient) viewers (see below). Rassam, who discovered the reliefs in a

[98] Kertai notes the breadth of the palace corridors that feature hunting scenes. They were apparently wide enough to accommodate riders on horseback (perhaps returning from the hunt in the adjacent park). See *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, 182. If so, the images' intended "audience" may not have been the royal family or guests but the king himself, who ritualistically actualized the hunt merely by moving about his home.

surreptitious excavation at the site by nightfall in December 1853,[99] captures the fascination elicited by these images in a letter to A. H. Layard soon after stumbling upon them:

> From what I can make out of the fragments, the sculptures in the passage have been most magnificent. The sculptures in [Room C] are almost entire and they represent hunting scenes and domestic affairs. The King here is the principal huntsman and is in the act of sticking a lance into a lion springing upon his chariot, whilst of others already pierced by many arrows, some of which are dead, others dying, are most beautifully and naturally portrayed upon the slabs. I venture to say that the art displayed in the treatment of both men and animals in these bas-reliefs surpass everything yet discovered in the ruins of Assyria…I have no doubt that all these sculptures which we have found will be wanted in England.[100]

Rassam's admiration of Assyrian artistry has only multiplied among modern viewers since their excavation.[101]

The Room C relief sequences covered all available walls in the corridor. Twenty-one of the room's original twenty-nine slabs were excavated in their original location, and an additional fragment from a twenty-second panel was also found. The artists relegated one hunting narrative to each wall, which allowed for the viewer to walk through each story as it unfolded down the corridor (fig. 5.17). The northeastern sequence spanned slabs 1-17—numbers 5-17 of which are extant (in addition to fragments)—and extended around the room's southeastern corner, which lead into Central Courtyard J. The southwestern wall held slabs 18-29 and, like its counterpart, displayed the hunt in a centric arrangement. Because not as many panels survive from this sequence (slabs 20-27

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[99] For Rassam's enthralling account of the palace's discovery, see the excerpts of his book quoted in Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 9–11.

[100] Hormuzd Rassam, a letter to Layard A. H. Layard (January 1, 1854) cited in Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 11.

[101] Barnett has even gone as far as to ascribe the composition to a foreigner, "such as a Babylonian master-sculptor," who used his eye for artistic detail to render the violence with unprecedented realism as a means of exposing "his master's [Ashurbanipal's] senseless cruelty" and expressing "his real hatred" of his oppressor (*Sculptures from the North Palace*, 13).

and part of slab 28), the relationship between the different scenes is more difficult to discern. At the same time, certain parallel features between the northeastern and southwestern arrangements evoke a superabundance of meaning surrounding the king.

In what follows, I will assess the poetics of violence in the twenty-two-slab composition. We will first discuss the three major scenes discerned on the seventeen remaining slabs of the northeastern wall: (1) the king's preparation for the hunt (slabs 4-8), (2) the spectators' movement toward the hunt (slabs 8-10), and (3) the hunt itself (slabs 10-17). Here, I will address the king's prominent placement in the visual sequence, the composition's presentation of the hunt as a transhistorical icon, and the sympathetic response evoked by the suffering lions. Afterward, I will discuss the dual images of Ashurbanipal on the southwestern wall and their relationship with the northeastern wall. I will conclude by looking at the artists' manipulation of time within the overall arrangement of Room C.

5.4.1. The Visual Sequence of the Hunt (Northeastern Wall)

5.4.1.1. Scene One: The Preparation for the Hunt

In the first scene (figs. 5.18-5.19), the artists stage the pre-hunt preparations in a manner that highlights the centrality and order of the king. The image extends across five slabs with the king occupying the most prominent location at the center (slab 5). He stands at a dividing point between two converging movements: attendants bring him his weaponry from his left (slab 4), while soldiers and assistants prepare the horses for the chariot to his right (slabs 5-8). The sculptors arrange both movements in three registers. The fragments of slab 4 indicate a procession of bowyers and fletchers

at the top level, who test the king's bows and prepare the arrows for battle. Like the Battle of Til-Tuba registers, the artists break up the monotonous line of royal attendants by placing them in a variety of postures—some eyeing arrows or stringing bows on their knees, others scrutinizing bows while standing, etc. The three fragments that remain from the second and third registers indicate a similar arrangement: processions of beardless attendants gather spears and bow-guards for the king's protection.

In all three registers, the majority of figures face the king on their right, but the artists render their common orientation in an engaging, rather than robotic, fashion. They regard one another with backward glances and, in many cases, work together to ready the king's weapons. Their bodies overlap in a series of connected lines of movement that eschew monotony and, most importantly, lead the viewer down the register toward the royal protagonist. The detail with which the sculptors present these seemingly insignificant assistants translates into that of the attendants themselves, who appear to perform their tasks with diligence and care.

The right side of this first scene is a near-mirror image to that of the armorers on the left. Extended lines of royal personnel process leftward toward the king in three registers that span a total of three slabs. Unlike the bowyers on the left, the movement in the top and bottom sections on the right side is almost nonexistent. The artists stage the different ranks of personnel in virtually identical fashion. Beginning with the attendants closest to the king, two beardless servants on each register hold stakes for canvas screens before the horses in order to obscure their sightlines to the lions that await them.[102] The vertical lines indicative of these screens held by the six attendants stand perfectly

[102] Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 12.

aligned across all three registers so as to create a visual frame for the royal chariot to their left. Behind these servants, the soldiers in the upper and lower registers unfold with set a pattern of ranks (moving from left to right): two spearmen, followed by four spearmen with round shields and seven or six spearmen (in the top and bottom registers respectively) with tower shields and helmets. Though depicted in a walking stance, they appear motionless and lifeless. As protectors of the king, their artistic function is reduced to that of enhancing their master. Their only differentiating features—their weapons—become decorative texture, pointing the way for the viewer to the principal actor of the Assyrian world.

Between these two ranks, the movement increases. The middle register shows four servants leading their horses toward the royal chariots to the left, and in contrast to the repeated bodies of soldiers above and beneath, the animals overlap and intersect in more animated ways. Their musculature and reins are evident, and the artists nicely capture the dynamic interaction between the skittish horses and their attendants, who guide the reluctant animals toward their royal owner. Also, the use of empty space between the horses highlights them as actors in the hunt drama. At the far right side of their register, a lone shieldsman stands as a bookend to the sequence's first scene.

Both sets of registers at the right and left side of the image converge on the royal chariot at the scene's center. Ashurbanipal dwarfs all other human beings and occupies the central and highest point of the multi-slab arrangement. Beneath him, servants hold vertical poles representative of the stakes that hold down the canvas screen around him. The canvas, however awkward to integrate within the ground-level perspective of the scene, enfolds the chariot within a rectangular frame and emphasizes his importance. In order to maximize the king's size, the sculptors reduce the proportion

of the pawns beneath him to almost half that of the bottom register on the left and right sides. Even within the chariot itself, no human assistant reaches a comparable height or size to that of his master. The king, reaching backward to receive his weapons, stands a head taller than the others.

The artists accent the scene's centric arrangement with their careful presentation of the emperor: the long locks of his beard elongate the king's profile and lead the eye upward through the extended crown, the point of which marks the pinnacle of the scene's converging movements. All human beings present themselves toward this royal center of gravity. At his entrance, peripheral action and backgrounded details evaporate. All connected lines of movement lead the viewer to behold the large, stoic fighter, anchored by the armored wheel beneath him. Only Ashurbanipal holds autonomous agency and serves as the wheel upon which the imperial order turns. From him alone emanates imperial balance, and his subjects exercise purposeful action only insofar as their deeds assist and look toward their towering ruler. The scene's only hint of disorder emerges from the unsettled horses, who, though tame, seem to resist their groomers. Such tension between a placid ruler and the anxious animals builds anticipation as "an ominous prelude" to the drama that follows.[103]

5.4.1.2. Scene Two: The Spectators of the Hunt

The second scene (slabs 8-10) introduces the royal hunt itself with an almost cinematic irony (fig. 5.3). Rather than presenting the king in vivid battle at the outset, the artists generate suspense by showing the Nineveh citizenry, as they make their way to view the violent spectacle from a nearby hillock. Once again, the scene unfolds with a near perfect symmetry. The hill, viewed from the "vertical

[103] Ibid., 12.

perspective" featured in the Til-Tuba arrangement, occupies the majority of the tableau, and its rounded edges demarcate the boundaries of the scene's action. Tamarisks and pine trees fill the landscape. Interspersed among them, groups of would-be spectators make their way across the hillside, likely to watch the king fight. Men and women alike travel in groups of three and four through the brushwood, motioning to one another with animated, even humorous, gestures: women are "jostling past their husbands, who carry their picnic repast in a bag slung over one shoulder and sternly elbow them back to their rightful position in the rear."[104] The size of the Nineveh citizens decreases as the eye travels up the slab, and some figures approach the scene at a distance, detached from any topographical groundlines. This implied recession helps to maintain the birds-eye perspective introduced by the hillside terrain. Upon and within the hill itself, the would-be viewers lift their legs in upward hikes and extend their arms to push aside the thick greenery. While all of the bystanders move leftward toward the room's opening scene, almost half of them glance backwards toward the hunting scene that follows. Their desire to look into what's ahead augments the urgent atmosphere. Altogether, their gestures lend a sense of excitement to the image and build anticipation within the viewer, who desires to witness the performance alongside them.

An arched gateway crowns the mound and introduces the hunt. Through its opening, we see a miniature image of the king slaying lions from his chariot. The icon is almost identical to that of the king's hunt in the room's third scene, with the exception of his orientation (facing right in the miniature scene and left in the reliefs that follow). With respect to the gate structure itself, the artists employ a common Neo-Assyrian representative technique, in which they emphasize what is

[104] Ibid.

important by eliminating all surrounding details. In the case of the arched structure, they present only the gateway and omit the adjacent walls that one would expect to extend outward on either side. The viewer must instead only assume their presence. The isolated gateway, though "unrealistic" by modern standards, highlights the hunt as the determinative event for the shuffling viewers and once more centers the king as the sovereign focal point of the scene.

The miniature icon that decorates the gateway lends significant depth to the meaning of the visual composition. Based on the size of stone parapets excavated from Nineveh, some estimate that the fifteen merlons sitting atop the gateway indicate a fifteen-foot area,[105] within which stood a wall relief bearing the chariot image and an inscriptional account of the event (possibly K 6085).[106] Thus, beneath the archway we are presented with an image of an image, and the artists' selection of a chariot scene from the battle proper introduces new layers of visual and temporal play that merit further discussion.

First, the presentation of the hunting icon on the hillock toys with represented time in the narrative sequence. The overall arrangement of the room reliefs implies a correlation between movement across the visual tableau and progression through time, such that the king's preparation for battle (scene 1)—represented at the far left of the room—precedes the gathering of the spectators (scene 2) and the hunt itself (scene 3), both of which unfold serially down the wall. Within this assumed "comic strip" style, the artists show us a miniature relief in the second scene, which, within the represented world of the hillock, is assumed to commemorate the king's former hunting exploits. The sculpture upon the hillside, therefore, testifies to the spectators about Ashurbanipal's hunting

[105] T. A. Madhloom, "Nineveh. The 1969-1969 Campaign," *Sumer* 25 (1969): 43–58; Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 53.

[106] See the argument in Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 351, 355–56.

success that precedes the event they are gathering to watch. At the same time, the visual reference backward to Ashurbanipal's hunt is also a reference forward, for it anticipates the victory to come in the room's third scene. The image of the image thus becomes a nod both to the past and to the future. As such, the represented relief indexes the hunt as a transhistorical reality—a governing imperial myth made manifest in the individual episodes of the Nineveh games. The immortalizing of the *particular* hunt portrayed on the northeastern wall of Room C is simultaneously the confirmation of the immortal or continual nature of the leonine conflict itself. Each hunt, though different in minute details, is exactly the same. They only compound upon one another as "images of images" in a visual feedback loop playing across each new generation of (royal) witnesses.

Second, the relief within the archway coupled with the viewers scattered on the hillside facilitates engagement. In this second scene, a non-royal audience can see themselves in the hustling citizens on the hillside with the vague premonition that they themselves may one day be seen seeing the imperial war on chaos. They thus *participate* in the regressing spiral and, in addition to "witnessing" the imaged event, *bear witness* to the king's acts of heroism by standing before them. Moreover, if, as Bahrani suggests, Mesopotamian images sought not only to represent but also to *perform* what they depict (see 4.6.2. above), the relief image on the hillock serves to enact the royal victory over chaotic forces while also ensuring the king's visibility itself. It underscores the hunt's visual status, transforming the icon from an iconographic record to be read into an iconic monument to behold. The hunting event becomes a spectacle, and with it, the audience moves from witnesses to participants. By showing both the hunt and its audience on the hillside, the artists guarantee the hunt's experience and its eyewitnesses, its occurrence and its audience. They are therefore drawn into

the drama not only of *this* particular hunt displayed in Room C but, through it, the king's entire reign metaphorized as a series of lion-slaying epics.

5.4.1.2. Scene Three: The Execution of the Hunt

After setting the stage for the hunt for both the king and his constituency, the sculptors reserve the majority of the wall space for the presentation of the "massacre"[107] itself in the room's third scene (figs. 5.20-5.23). The arrangement spans slabs 10-17 and is demarcated by two vertical lines of soldiers holding shields at either end of the scene. Stacked one upon the other, the warriors hold tower shields and spears pointed downward in order to prevent the lions from escaping the confines of the hunt. Archers stand behind each spearman for added support in the typical Neo-Assyrian military pairing. Both ranks (slabs 10 and 17) face inward toward the king, confirming the image's centric arrangement. Inside this outer line of defense, other divisions of attendants make their appearance. On the left side (slab 10), four soldiers provoke the lions with emaciated mastiffs, who strain against their leashes in aggression against the giant cats (fig. 5.20). Each master attempts to control his dog with slightly differing positions, and their natural differences contribute to the tension within the event. All of them, however, recede into the background of the scene's action in large part because of their comparatively smaller stature. The men stand at the same height as the dying lions nearby and appear insignificant in light of the royal chariot three slabs away.

On the right side (slabs 16-17), rather than instigating the lions with dogs, three bowmen drive the beasts toward the king on horseback (figs. 5.22-5.23). The panels showing these figures decorate

[107] Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, 99.

the room's shortened southeast wall, leading into Court J. Only after the scene turns the corner do the artists divide the space into two clear horizontal registers: the upper register features the galloping horsemen, while the lower register provides a unique glimpse into the hunt's beginning. Here, an attendant releases a lion from a wooden cage (nailed to the floor) by means of a rising door. Again, the artists dramatize their chaotic threat by toying with size. The crouching lion, prowling from his cage, dwarfs the almost child-like assistant standing above him. This subtle indication of their superhuman size magnifies the king's accomplishments, especially when one considers the numerous leonine carcasses that litter the adjacent slabs.

The scene therefore features two outer boundaries of figures that set the stage for the action at its center. Within the shieldsmen bookends, the ranks of spearmen and bowmen lead the viewer deeper into the hunting arena. From the left, the mastiffs represent the scene's final rightward movement, with the exception of the two spearmen on the royal chariots. All other action proceeds leftward toward Room D. The centric arrangement thus allows for two "readings" of the scene. If we proceed from the northern end, we follow the hunting event in sequence but encounter the aftermath of the hunt itself (slabs 11-13)—namely, the dying lions—before reaching the representation of its hero. In this reading, the artists mount tension within the arrangement by displaying the victims prior to the victor. They entice the viewer with the violence before revealing the perpetrator. If we approach the scene from the southern end, however, we witness the hunt's true beginning (the release of the lions themselves) before any other event. As we follow the sole living lion into the arena, we again encounter a leonine "no man's land" (slab 15), a corpse-filled landscape that, though smaller, underscores the king's ferocity and allows the audience to feel his presence prior to seeing it. At both

ends of the scene, the size of all human attendants falsely orients the viewer to a certain artistic perspective before exploding these established expectations with the impressive stature of the beasts and beast-slayer.

Taken together, the artists engineer the scene to encourage multiple entry points and various readings, all of which converge and conspire to exalt the royal figure at its center (fig. 5.21). With this arrangement, the details of the sequence, though important, remain secondary to the presentation of the lion-slayer himself. The artists make narrativity subservient to iconicity—that is, they show greater interest in showing that the king is a lion-hunter than in recounting the royal hunt as a distinct historical event. The action moves not toward the end of the story but toward Ashurbanipal in his chariot, "full of drama and diagonal movement emphasized by the line of the spears, the bodies of the galloping horses, and leaping lions."[108] He stands at the apex of a pyramid shape,[109] highlighted by the mammoth wheel beneath him, and distinguished by his crown at the image's highest point. His action, rather than the narrative telling, integrates the scene, as seen, for example, in the lone arrow hovering in the air above the leonine victims before him. The lions' life and death and the actions of the attendants all take their cue from the relief's iconic hero.

5.4.2. The Sympathetic Response Evoked by the Hunt (Northeastern Wall)

Despite the king's primary role, the figures that have received the greatest amount of attention in the Room C reliefs are the lions, whose graphic suffering and arrangement have evoked a range of sympathetic responses (figs. 5.20-5.22). As many have noted, the lions "are given as much attention as

[108] Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 245.
[109] Orthmann, *Der alte Orient*, 225.

the human protagonists,"[110] and the portrayal of the dying lions in particular "presents the most perceptive rendering of animals in ancient near eastern art."[111] In the six-slab area of the room's third scene, we encounter eighteen total lions. One prowls from his cage on the far right, and another charges the royal chariot within inches of the king's life. The sixteen beasts that remain, however, all show some sign of suffering and death. The artistic decision to sculpt sixteen dying lions across an extended tableau (approximately 5 ft. by 28 ft.) runs the extreme risk of perfunctory repetition and viewer disinterest, especially given the complete omission of any sculpted background features in the scene, notwithstanding whatever colors might have been painted in the intervening space. Rather than resorting to stock images of dead lions and lionesses, the artists show unprecedented care to each creature and enrapture their viewers with their realism. Their feel for naturalism "is effected especially in the variety of actions depicted so that each animal seems to possess its own unique stance."[112] No one lion replicates another, and each animal bespeaks a true concern for capturing the observed beasts. As Albenda notes, the eighteen lions present an array of postures that, taken together, show many different phases of leonine suffering prior to death. Some are halted by fresh arrow wounds and struggle to carry their bodies forward, "artfully shown by the dragging movement

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[110] Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 245.

[111] Albenda, "Lions on Assyrian Wall Reliefs," 10.

[112] Ibid., 4. Albenda nicely articulates the realism with which Ashurbanipal's artists advanced the Neo-Assyrian tradition of leonine representation: "The drawing of the lion on the Ashurbanipal reliefs is often defined with lines that tend to express the main movements of the animal, in contrast to earlier types where the stress is upon the demarcation of body features. Muscle details are softened and denote a fleshy torso, while the animal's weightiness extends to its extremities, especially to the large knobby paws. The face reveals many features modified from earlier types. The eye, drawn in true profile, is framed by narrow lids set into a fleshy area. Below the eye is a curved line often attached to the facial folds formalized into a three-pronged motif. The furrows on the shortened snout consist of delicate wavy lines drawn almost horizontally to the inner edge of the eye…Facial distinctions are made between the active and impassive lion, for in the latter type all wrinkles are omitted; furthermore, in the dead lion the eye becomes a narrow slit encased in a fleshy pouch, and between the double S-curve lines of the closed mouth and chin appears a small tongue…The ear is usually folded back, except in several instances where an open round ear is given to a dead lion…An exceptional aspect of the lion is the absence of a ventral mane, a feature found on all the animals of the preceding periods."

of the legs and the blood gushing forth from the mouth of the lowered head." Others bowl over and vomit blood or lie paralyzed, unable to drag their bodies any further from the carnage. Some lie lifeless on their backs or the stomachs with limp limbs and contorted bodies. Albenda explains further,

> In the drawing of dead lions on the Ashurbanipal reliefs no posture is identical…A lion whose heavy body is about to collapse to the ground stiffens at that moment of death immediately following a final turning action of the head…A detail of particular expressiveness is the rendering of the paws, each of which is distinct and paired to convey the contrasting motions of life and death, that is, animation and inertia. The heaviness of the dead form of a lioness poised just above the ground…is emphasized by the exaggerated curve of the neck, forcing the head to the chest, and limp foreleg. The forms of dead lions lying upon the ground present a variety of contortions. Lions with twisted torsos lie either on their stomach, on their back, or on their side. In some instances the limbs are drawn in foreshortened manner to denote that they project in space away from the body.[113]

The sheer number of bleeding lions in the scene presents a problem for the interpreter. Do the artists use multiple lions to imply a narrative progression through time or does the scene represent a single snapshot of the royal hunt episode? That is, do the eighteen lions depicted in slabs 10-17 represent eighteen distinct victims or do a fewer number of lions appear multiple times in a "continuous style," showing the viewer their progressive phases of death across the tableau? Ultimately, how many lions does the king kill in this third scene?

Some have contended for a narrative reading of the eighteen figures. Barnett, for example, argues that, though the artists lack "any knowledge of the laws of perspective," they have arranged the scene in such a way that "the successive moments of the hunt are unrolled side by side without a break." He writes, "Of course, not quite so many lions are implied by the ancient sculptor

[113] Ibid., 11.

simultaneously to have fought and perished as it would appear to our eye."[114] Rather, the artists employ parataxis and juxtapose successive moments of the lion hunt along the wall. As a result, "not more than three lions and one lioness need necessarily be supposed to be engaged."[115]

Nevertheless, the particularity and placement of each lion in the artistic field obfuscates any obvious sequence. Each animal appears on its own independent ground line without a clear organizing principle. On slabs 11 and 12, for example, we witness seven total lions, all of which face left in various suffering positions. Two of the lions on the far left vomit blood, and the lioness between them lies lifeless on her back. Beside them, two males, stacked vertically upon one another, stretch out their bodies. The upper lion appears suspended in the air, either laid out in death or leaping from the ground. The one beneath him turns his head backward against his body and closes his eyes in death. To their right, two more dead males lie in the open space, one on his back and the other huddled together on his stomach. The remaining three lions seen prior to the chariot in slab 13 still show signs of life: the lion above leaps to the left despite his arrow wounds; the middle lion stands on his four paws but hunches over in agony; and the victim at the bottom sits up spewing blood from his mouth.[116] In summary, the scene shows three lions in slab 11 (one dead, two living), four in slab twelve (all dead), and three in slab 13 (all living). None of the ten animals share a common groundline, nor do they evince any sensible progression from stages of suffering into death.

Any attempt to construe a narrative thus works against the details of the artistic data. All twelve victims face leftward, so one would assume that the artistic sequence would work in a parallel

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[114] Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 13.

[115] Ibid. Cf. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, 21.

[116] Cf. Dominik Bonatz, "Der stumme Schrei – Kritische Überlegungen zu Emotionen als Untersuchungsfeld der altorientalischen Bildwissenschaft," in *Visualizing Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, 55-74, who discusses the use of the body to convey emotional states in ancient Near Eastern art.

direction—moving from dying lions (right) to dead lions (left). Two of the three lions that appear at the far left of the image, however, appear standing, despite their lesions, with the deceased animals appearing to their right. So the scene's supposed right-to-left "narrative" ends not with the lions' death but with their suspended agony. If one assumes a rightward sequence instead—working against the lions' leftward bodily movement—the progression breaks down once more. After we see the dead lions in slab 12, we again find the animals fighting for their lives in slab 13. Thus, the details of the artistic arrangement—multiple ground lines, the absence of narrative logic, the unique rendering of each animal, and so forth—complicate any interpretation that assumes a temporal evolution within the hunting scene.

The artists instead present the viewer with eighteen individual leonine victims that suffer at the hands of the king and thereby enhance the king's military prowess.[117] Rather than facing a mere handful of ferocious predators, the king slaughters almost twenty of them. As viewers, we arrive late to the scene and see only one lion without wounds. With the exception of the lion escaping his cage at the far end of the room, all other aggressors at minimum bear the arrows of their hunter, with most of them already deceased on the battlefield. Amidst the chaotic arrangement of leonine shapes, the king's weaponry and presence integrates the scene: his drawn bow points the way of the hunt; his lone arrow suspended in flight holds the moment together and brings the scattered beasts into the orbit of his violent activity; and his galloping chariot erases all life in its path. Notwithstanding the lion that attacks the king from behind, all animals the chariot has already passed lie motionless (slab 15). The chariot's presence thus does not bode well for the lions that still cling to what remains of their lives

[117] For proponents of this position, see Albenda, "Lions on Assyrian Wall Reliefs," 10; Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 351, 354–56; Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures*, 99.

(slabs 10-13). The artists frame the king as the scene's governing catalyst—the annihilator whose pursuit drains the lions of vigor and whose presence annihilates all persisting vitality as it passes. What's more, the viewer following the visual narrative from the previous two scenes enters the arena against the scene's governing action. As the audience walks rightward down the corridor, the reliefs' action speeds toward them, and they encounter the victims and victor face to face. They stumble into the chase, and the lions run toward them for reprieve. Only after greeting ten dead and dying leonine bodies do they behold the one responsible for their flight.

In addition to the lions' realistic suffering and great number, their separated arrangement in the visual space also dramatizes the image's violence. Many have noted the relative emptiness of the North Palace hunting scenes and its effect upon the visual experience. Unlike the Til-Tuba relief, the "sporting scenes play with large areas of empty space to evoke the arena itself as well as the drama of spectacle."[118] In this "bold"[119] and "entirely new treatment of space,"[120] all elaborate accessories are reduced to an absolute minimum or eliminated. There is "nothing in these scenes…to detract from the actual or immanent disaster that befalls those who provide sport for the powerful."[121] The empty background coupled with the sporadic ground lines leaves the lions feeling "more vulnerable, more exposed," such that "each dying creature is alone in his agony."[122]

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[118] Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures*, 98–99.

[119] Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, 190.

[120] William Stevenson Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East: A Study of the Relationships between the Arts of Egypt, the Aegean, and Western Asia* (New Haven: Yale University, 1965), 126. Concerning the innovative quality of the reliefs, he writes, "Ashurbanipal's artists prove that it is not necessary to deal with the whole wall as a landscape unit in order to make new experiments with spatial arrangements."

[121] Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 180.

[122] Ibid., 180-81.

Their isolation within the pictorial space and graphic wounds combine to focus the viewer's attention upon their suffering and have the potential to evoke profound sympathy within the audience. Several art critics have noted the pity elicited by the lions. Moortgat, for example, notes the "intimacy" and complexity of Ashurbanipal's hunting scenes. Because of these features, "when we look at the king's contests with lions, we are moved not so much by a sense of the conquest of evil than by pity for the tragic fate of the beasts."[123] For Frankfort, the sympathy elicited by the images stems from their violent detail: "The love and care expended on the rendering on the dead and dying animals…turn these scenes, intended as a pictorial epic, into a tragedy in which the victims, not the victor, play the chief part. Viewed in a similar manner, the hunts of inoffensive game appear as elegies."[124] Smith also credits the lions' realism for the images' sympathetic power but emphasizes the connection between the scene's *emptiness* and its emotional impact. He writes, "The expressive relationships of the animals of Ashurbanipal set against a blank background creates a unique effect of *psychological connection*."[125] Thus, the sum total of the room's imagistic poetics works together to encourage a concern for and identification with the chaotic beasts in manner that can ultimately pull against the visual exaltation of the king. Woolley summarizes,

> The hunted beasts…are treated with an astonishing sympathy; each one of them is a *tour de force* of understanding realism; there is no suggestion of background, no scenic effect to localize the incident, for this slaughter of the animals is one of the universal verities and requires no setting: instead, they are scattered over the blank ground seemingly at random, and in the case of the lions their isolation is emphasized by the short register-line beneath each figure. In fact, however, their disposition is most

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[123] Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 157.

[124] Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, 190. Groenewegen-Frankfort writes of the reliefs' tragic genre in a similar manner: "It is strange to consider that shortly before the disastrous finale of the Assyrian Empire, the same people under whose dominion the world had shuddered brought forth an artist who revealed the depth of his fear and pity for these doomed creatures and raised his scenes to the stature of tragedy" (*Arrest and Movement*, 181).

[125] Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East*, 127 (emphasis mine).

> carefully calculated, and although each is a study complete in itself yet all are bound together into an artistic unity by the sheer stress of emotion. No rules of perspective apply here; what ties the picture together is the common feeling of rage, agony and defeat; the Assyrian monarch wanted to have portrayed in detail his prowess in the hunt, but the artist's summary is "*Sunt lacrymae rerum*."[126]

Unlike the Til-Tuba composition, in which human bodies crowd the artistic space and distract rather than attract sympathetic attention, the hunting scenes isolate the leonine victims, eschew all diversions, and depict bodily suffering in painstaking detail, and the corresponding differences between the elicited responses of both compositions are stark. Ironically, given the respective poetics of each piece, the sculptor "shows far more sympathy for these royal beasts than for defeated tortured human enemies."[127] In the room C reliefs, expressiveness is "always on the side of the animal victims; the hunters appear to be unaffected by their own violence."[128] Neither Ashurbanipal nor his attendants show any signs of physical exertion or emotion. Even their bodies "seem unaffected by the weight of the massive animals lunging toward them." Their stone-cold impassivity is unbreakable and only exacerbates the lions' painful predicament and viewer sympathy with it.

Lest one assume that such pity is a modern phenomenon only—felt only by viewers living in an age of wildlife conservation efforts—the ancient audience may also have shared in this sympathy. One of the Room S[1] relief sequences, for example, presents the king grasping a lion's tail with his left

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[126] Leonard Woolley, *The Art of the Middle East Including Persia, Mesopotamia and Palestine*, Art of the World (New York: Crown Publishers, 1961), 191 (his emphasis). Barnett speaks to the scene's emotional effect in similar terms: "However this may be, the total effect of this great piece of work does not seem to have quite the effect which the king who commissioned it intended. Ashurbanipal's sculptor of genius clearly felt such a sympathy for the suffering beasts, so uselessly brave, roaring and defiant or twitching in agony of death…that he transfers our sympathy to them, instead of our feeling admiration for, and gratitude to, their executioner. The whole scene has an epic quality to which it is impossible to find a parallel in the ancient world" (*Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, 22).

[127] Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art*, 153.

[128] Bersani and Dutoit, *The Forms of Violence*, 24.

hand and preparing to strike the animal with a mace in his right.[129] After the Neo-Assyrian capital was conquered, later viewers (perhaps enemy soldiers) eventually defaced the image by chipping away at the lion's tail "so that the lion has been, as it were, set loose."[130] Though the defacement may have been simply "humorous and symbolic,"[131] as Reade contends, it nevertheless may attest to the "psychological connection" Smith identifies as a part of the hunting imagery. "Modern sympathies with the dying lions may, in short, have been echoed in antiquity!"[132]

Some, however, dismiss these sympathy-laden interpretations as a byproduct of contemporary biases. Reade, for example, argues against the assumption that "the sculptor must have had some sympathy with his subject, and deserves our approval for his humanitarian approach."[133] Despite the obvious contrast between the royal hunter and his victims, we must not impose modern proclivities toward sympathy upon ancient audiences. We "should not forget that people for whom these sculptures were designed saw the king as the paragon of nobility and the lions as cruel enemies who deserved a painful, even ludicrous, death."[134] The artists' perceptivity and skill in rendering the lions realistically need not necessarily imply sympathy for the beasts on the part of the sculptors or the ancient viewers. Instead, as Collins notes with respect to the S^1 reliefs, it is important to remember their propagandistic purpose: "The aim of the artists was not to generate pity for the dying creatures but rather to highlight their raw, dangerous presence and to show how they, like the evil Teumman, collapse in agony at the hands of the Assyrian king who, through the support of the gods and his skill

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[129] See Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. LVII (slab D).

[130] Curtis and Reade, *Art and Empire*, 87.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion*, 166, n. 191. See also Jack Cheng, "Art and Empire at the Museum of Fine Arts," *NEA* 71 (2008): 234.

[133] Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture,* 53.

[134] Ibid.

with weapons, brings civilization to the chaotic and disordered world that the animals represent."[135] Ultimately, as with all other architectural elements of the North Palace, the artists may not have intended to attract attention to the sufferers at the expense of the king but rather wished to highlight the lions' suffering as in index of royal power.

These qualifications concerning ancient response to the reliefs and their commissioned purpose are important but need not minimize the sympathetic impulse catalyzed by the North Palace hunting scenes. First, Reade's argument against those who assume that ancient audiences may have viewed the lions with pity rests no less on divining the Neo-Assyrian mind than his interlocutors. The inscriptional accounts of the royal hunt may indicate the terrorizing threat lions posed to Mesopotamian civilizations, but innate fear of the beasts doesn't have to preclude fascination with or identification with them when presented with expressive images of their suffering. The defacement of the S^1 relief speaks to at minimum the possibility of such pity. Ultimately, our assumptions concerning the responses of ancient audiences must allow for a variety of possible sentiments rather than dismiss particular reactions as misaligned with a presumed ancient cultural mentality. Second, and most importantly, the artistic intent to dramatize leonine suffering for the sake of exalting the royal persona—however present or not—need not nor cannot encapsulate the power of the images to evoke emotions outside of (or even subversive to) the artistic intent.[136] Even if the sculptors sought solely to glorify their royal patron, the poetics of the Room C images (and others)—characterized by

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[135] Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures*, 99. Cf. Bersani and Dutoit, *The Forms of Violence*, 31.

[136] On the "ontology" of images and their capacities to elicit responses and/or interpretations beyond that intended by the artist(s), see, *inter alia*, David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001); David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images*, 1. paperback print. (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999); idem, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005); W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010).

isolated sufferers, realistic presentation, and emptied backgrounds—generate an atmosphere conducive to pity, tragedy, and viewer identification with the victim that has left its mark among generations of audiences, whether seen on the walls themselves or in the pages that have since interpreted them.

Finally, it is important to note the relationship between the hunt's metaphorical significance (discussed above) and its artistic impact. Part of the lion reliefs' power to captivate is rooted not only in their detail and design but also in their symbolic power. Groenewegen-Frankfort in particular praises the North Palace sculptors for their ability to take a millennia-old hunting motif and render it artistic and dramatic in ways that the war reliefs could never attain. The "historical epic," as she terms the war scenes, "was discursive and though astonishingly inventive in matters of detail, it lacked the very quality of all great art; being time-bound and space-bound, it never transcended the purely episodic." She continues,

> Throughout a period in which the violence of one small nation brought a staggering amount of suffering on countless peoples, pictorial art recorded battle after battle in a scenic display unhampered by metaphysical considerations, with a brutal secularity which, for all its freshness and vigour, had something shallow and naive. Victory was a man-made [*sic*] thing, it was devoid of the symbolical quality which it had had before both in Egyptian and Mesopotamian art, and which it was to gain later on in Greece in mythical form. And since victory was man-made [*sic*] and ephemeral, defeat also was a contingency; it lacked that touch of the tragic which gave to the Seti reliefs their peculiar dignity. The artist of the hunting scenes took up a motif as old as mankind [*sic*] and as unchanging; in doing so he not only displayed an astounding virtuosity in the handling of animal form, but showed that he possessed the emotional depth which could convey the tragedy of suffering and defeat, of desperate courage and broken pride.[137]

[137] Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 180.

For Groenewegen-Frankfort, Assyrian artwork only reaches the pinnacle of emotional depth as it escapes its narrowed focus on relating historical battles and enters into the vivid representation of imperial metaphors. In addition to their artistic brilliance, the lions of the North Palace elicit visceral emotional responses precisely because of their ahistoricity. Of course, as we've seen, the Room C arrangement relates the hunt as a part of a visual narrative, and the artists obviously show the viewer the hunt's public and staged quality, complete with spectators, royal assistants, and caged animals. Its figurative character, however, cannot be ignored. Once the narrative sequence reaches the actual hunt in the third scene, all background details disappear—no spectators, no monuments, no arena, no inscriptions—and the viewer beholds only the encounter itself, devoid of extraneous historical locators. There is, to return to Woolley, "no scenic effect to localize the incident, for this slaughter of the animals is one of the universal verities."[138] All action is distilled into a 28-ft. display of the dramatic tension that inheres between victim and victor—a conflict that transcends any particular history and encompasses the total range of imperial power. Such simplicity, artistry, and emotion experienced in the Room C images are an indirect result of the symbolic significance of the royal hunt and the freedom its ahistoricity afforded the sculptors. Ironically, the same motif that held the greatest potential to evoke awe and fear before the despot also retained a potent ability to arouse sympathy against its revered hero.

[138] Woolley, *The Art of the Middle East*, 191.

5.4.3. The Visual Arrangement of the Hunt (Southwestern Wall)

After the visual sequence that spans the northwest wall ends at the doorway into Courtyard J, the southwest wall introduces a brand new set of hunting images that, when considered alongside the northwest wall reliefs, introduces fascinating new wrinkles into the artistic narrative. Only eight relatively complete panels (slabs 20-27) and a fraction of another (slab 28) survive, but what remains shows striking similarities to the hunting scene on the opposite wall. The eight panels feature two images of the king hunting by chariot that are centrically arranged in an almost mirror image. In the first (slabs 20-21), the royal chariot, occupied by the king and three bearded attendants, speeds to the right, while the king turns backward with a sword in order to impale a lion that has climbed onto the vehicle (fig. 5.24). In the second (slabs 23-24), the chariot races to the left, giving the impression that the two kings will collide within seconds (figs. 5.25-5.26). Here, the king once again turns to fend off a lion that has sunken its teeth into the chariot wheel. Instead of a sword, he bears a lance and is assisted by three attendants: two bearded and one beardless. Viewed together, the symmetry between them is obvious. Scattered before, between, and behind the two chariots are the lions, which, like those on the northwest wall, occupy isolated ground lines and are shown in a variety of contorted positions. In addition to the postures already seen (lying down, vomiting blood, etc.), we encounter new images of violence and aggression as well: one stands upright with outstretched paws upon the chariot itself (slab 20); another stands up on its hind paws with an arrow piercing through his snout (slab 22); and another leaps into the air and bites into the chariot wheel from behind. Despite their resistance, none of the approximately thirteen beasts in the battlefield is depicted without a wound

inflicted by the hunter. At the far right side of the image, a lion stands poised in a wooden cage, ready to enter the fight.

The arrangement of the southwestern wall holds tremendous import for the meaning of the room's relief program. On its own, the wall features an icon of the hunt rather than a visual narrative. Though we lack the images that decorated the extremities of the room on this side, the wall's centric arrangement is obvious. The axis across which the room's content is reflected stands between the two royal images, and these mirrored appearances of the king preclude a narrative reading from one end to the other, especially when one considers the differences between the two chariots. As we will see below, Ashurbanipal wears different clothing in the two images and is accompanied by two different groups of attendants within the chariots. Unless one presupposes a wardrobe change within the hunt itself, there cannot be a sequential relationship between the opposing chariots. The artists instead incorporate two unique but symmetrical hunts mirrored in the royal figure. This centric arrangement therefore allows the artists to multiply the hunting persona and, as a result, to indicate the hunt's iconic significance beyond any particular historical instantiation.

5.4.4. The Manipulated History of the Hunt (Room C)

Considered together, the king's images on the northeast and southwest walls manipulate time within the visual arrangement and further reveal the hunt's transcendent meaning. As Watanabe has shown,[139] the artists have ingeniously connected depictions of Ashurbanipal across the corridor itself. The king appears a total of four times within the room (twice upon each wall) (figs. 5.27-5.30; cf. 5.17).

[139] Chikako E. Watanabe, "Styles of Pictorial Narratives in Assurbanipal's Reliefs," 345–67.

On the southwest wall, the flanking images of Ashurbanipal are distinct from one another in three respects (figs. 5.27-5.28). First, concerning the royal weaponry, the king at the left side wide of the wall (slabs 20-21) wields a sword, while the king on the right brandishes a lance only (slabs 23-24). Second, their attire also differs in subtle ways. In the "sword scene," as Watanabe calls it, Ashurbanipal wears upper armbands featuring large rosettes fastened by two parallel bands. He also dons rosette-styled bracelets on both wrists. In the "lance scene," however, the jewelry changes. The upper armbands show rosettes like those in the "sword scene," but rather than being affixed to two parallel straps, a smaller rosette is attached to a single band coiled around the king's left and right biceps. Also, the rosette bracelet, though identical to that found in the "lance scene," is seen on his right arm only. Third, as discussed above, the two royal chariots carry different groups of attendants. On the left, all three assistants to the "sword" king (two soldiers and a charioteer) boast beards, while only two the attendants in the "lance" scene have the same. One of the soldiers appears to be a beardless eunuch.

These seemingly idiosyncratic disparities between the royal images, once identified, reveal similar differences in the dual depictions of Ashurbanipal on the northeastern wall (figs. 5.29-5.30). There again, the royal images within the hunting sequence are mirrored across the visual tableau. In the narrative's first scene ("the preparation scene"), the chariot faces right, and the king reaches backward to receive his weaponry before the hunt. In the final scene ("the bow and arrow scene"), the chariot charges leftward through the sea of dead and dying lions, thereby creating a royal bookend to the northwest narrative. Upon further inspection, however, the discrepancies that preclude a (straightforward) narrative reading between the southwestern images of the king obtain also for the northwestern sequence. The king's jewelry and company in the "preparation scene" corresponds

closely to the "sword" scene on the opposite wall. In both images, Ashurbanipal wears rosette bracelets on both wrists, dons rosette armbands fastened by two parallel straps, and shares his chariot with three bearded attendants. These details change, however, in the "bow and arrow scene." Like the "lance scene," the king in the arena wears only one rosette bracelet on the right wrist. His armbands have changed from double-banded rosettes to single bands that coil around his arm, and he is protected by a bearded charioteer, a beardless soldier, and a beardless eunuch. The only differences between the "presentation" and the "sword" scenes on the one hand and the "bow and arrow" and "lance" scenes on the other pertain to weaponry. Such divergences between corresponding royal depictions may be more than incidental.

In summary, the four royal images in Room C can be divided into two groups that match across the corridor at opposite ends of the space (fig. 5.17). How then are we to understand the relationship between these two groups? Does the arrangement imply that the king has changed wardrobe and weaponry between preparing for and engaging in the hunt? Would this also necessitate a change in accompanying attendants? What then is the significance of the duplicate images on the opposing wall? Once again, the artists have made the telling of the hunting narrative subservient to the presentation and exaltation of the royal hunter himself. The replication of the two royal figures between the tableaus of Room C suggests that the king's change in attire or attendants within the same hunting sequence (northeastern wall) is not the byproduct of artistic oversight. Nor do they constitute a gap in sequence that the viewer must fill in by assuming that the king has switched outfits or the charioteers have changed shifts. Rather, even though these variations might be easily

overlooked, the composition intends to present two different images of Ashurbanipal and thereby to manipulate time within the visual account of the hunt.

These wrinkles within narrated time, among other features, help to elevate the king and his lion slaying to iconic status. The general content of the three scenes of the northeastern wall, for example, may follow logically from one to the other, but they do not flow seamlessly. The discrepancy between the two different Ashurbanipals found there transforms the sequence from a historical account to a transhistorical icon. Images from two different hunts converge into the same visual telling, and the two kings look across represented time at one another. Ashurbanipal, rather than the narrative itself, stands as the beginning and end of time. As one hunt blends into another, the visual sequence no longer relates the details of a single king-lion encounter but presents the hunt as the governing rhythm of Neo-Assyrian history. The king's multiple hunting exploits become visually simultaneous and intertwined such that the viewer who enters Room C stands at a cross-section of royal personas. The flanking kings on one wall intersect with the kings on the opposite wall, as distinct historical moments bend toward and within one another into the icon of the royal lion-slayer. Ashurbanipal takes on god-like status, and the audience is caught up into the ever-repeating myth of his victory.

5.5. SUMMARY

The analysis of Ashurbanipal's lion reliefs has yielded four primary insights. First, the icon of the royal hunt featured more than a visual witness to the king's physical strength or heroic prowess. As a prominent metaphor of imperial power, the image carried a figurative significance laden with cultic

and mythic overtones. As such, the hunt provides an interesting point of comparison with the biblical text, especially as both media employ images of violence in more figurative or metaphorical ways. Second, our analysis of the arrangement of the hunting reliefs within the North Palace revealed the ritualistic character of the hunt's artistic presentation. As viewers walked the halls of the palace corridor, they found themselves caught up in the king's hunting journey and sharing in the spoils of his repeated success. Third, the discussion of the Room C reliefs in particular demonstrated the connection between the poetics of the suffering lions and the sympathetic responses they have elicited. In particular, we noted their realistic details, isolated appearances, and emptied background as contributing aspects to the compassion they often evoke. Once again, their figurative significance also allowed for artistic freedom in rendering their pain. Finally, when considering the total relief composition of Room C, we indicated the ways in which the artists manipulate time within visual narrativity to present the lion hunt as the controlling icon of Neo-Assyrian power and to exalt the king as the governing actor of its history.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: THE POETICS OF VIOLENCE IN LAMENTATIONS 2 AND NEO-ASSYRIAN ART

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The vast repertoire of violent content witnessed in the biblical and iconographic sources is manifest; the question that motivates the present study, however, is whether and how these sources might someone inform one another. How can the unique arrangement of the Til-Tuba battle or the lion hunt help us understand *how* violence figures within the Lamentations literature? Alternatively, how might the biblical author's perspective on, say, the victim illuminate the compositional decisions of the Assyrian artists? Can the "power" of violence in the textual image enlighten us on the "power" of violence in the artistic image—and vice versa? To address these questions, I will pursue a comparative analysis consisting of four parts. I begin with an analysis of the (1) the *selection* of violence, where I will examine *what* violent content is shared (or not) between these sources and how these comparisons and contrasts in violence reveal two unique views of history and divine agency. (2) I will then discuss the *presentation* of violence in both the reliefs and the biblical poem. This section will assess *how* violent imagery figures in both works, with special attention to the depiction of the human (or divine) body, the manipulation of perspective, and the framing of individual sufferers. (3) The third part will address the *integration* of violence in both works and will explore three techniques by which the artist(s) and/or poet(s) draw together disparate imagery into a unified whole: (i) the "multiplication" of generic and individual figures, (ii) the repetition of key images, and (iii) the manipulation of temporal experience. (4) Finally, I will conclude with a look at the *justification* of

violence in text and image—namely, the governing purpose that gave rise to the respective works and the power they wield(ed) for their audiences back then and here and now.

6.2. THE SELECTION OF VIOLENCE IN TEXT AND IMAGE

I begin by identifying the respective ranges of violent content provided in the biblical poem and Ashurbanipal's reliefs. Rather than merely itemizing the various images, I will address points of intersection before discussing some significant divergences between the two collections. While the violent images within Lamentations 2 and the palace reliefs may have several areas of overlap, I focus my remarks here on three primary areas. First, I will address their shared selection of military defeat—especially their divergent depictions of defeated leaders—as a means of revealing their distinct philosophies of history: Assyria's politically-driven understanding over against Zion's theological focus. Second, I will examine their common selection of victors and victims, where I will consider their shared concern with the *invisible* characters that enable military victory. Third, I will discuss the obvious discrepancy between the images of suffering women and children that figure prominently in the Lamentations material and their absence in the Assyrian war images.

6.2.1. The Selection of Historical Defeat

First, to state the obvious, both the poetry and the Til-Tuba composition relate episodes of military and societal defeat, albeit from different perspectives. The Assyrians may boast about what the Judahite poet laments, but both artists address varying aspects of violent collapse. Within these divergent collections, both pieces discuss or depict the extermination of societal leaders specifically.

In Lamentations 2, the poet describes Zion's "kingdom and her leaders" being profaned and cast down to earth (v. 2c), the rejection of "king and priest" (v. 6c), and the exile of "her king and her princes" among the nations. The elders of Jerusalem are described sitting on the ground in silence, heaping dust upon their heads, and donning sackcloth (v. 10), and the poem concludes with priest and prophet being "killed in the sanctuary of the Lord" (v. 20c). In sum, the speaker incorporates a range of leadership offices (political, cultic, and familial) but retains the anonymity of the individuals that filled them. We are told about the loss of their office with wide-ranging descriptions—whether emotional (God "rejecting"), religious ("profaning"), metaphorical ("cast to the earth"), or historical (exile, mourning rites, death)—but never provided the identity of the specific occupants.

In the Til-Tuba reliefs, the defeat of Elam's leaders holds the center of the composition's message. Unlike the Lamentations poet, who mourns the destruction of the city's leaders more generally, the Til-Tuba artists engineer the arrangement to make the defeated leaders known. Teumman's closed eye and balding head, repeated across the tableau, are unmistakable to the viewer. If the iconographic clues are insufficient to identify the depicted king, the epigraphs mention him by name, and all other distinguishable victims in what remains of the reliefs are the king's relatives and constituents.[1] Also, as the circuitous narrative makes clear, the Neo-Assyrians relate the leaders' defeat

[1] Note those whom the iconography distinguishes as important but remain unidentified within the composition's epigraphs. The royal annals and Room I epigraphs help fill out the details: e.g., Nabu-na'id and Bel-etir (sons of the governor of Nippur, whose father had incited Urtak to rebel against Assyria) are shown grinding the bones of their father in Nineveh in the upper register of slab 1 (fig. 4.8); and Ituni (the *šūt rēši* of Teumman) is shown cutting his bow in surrender before an Assyrian executioner in slab 5 (fig. 20c). On the opposite wall, where the composition continues, slabs 4-6 incorporate images of other distinguished figures. Nabu-damiq and Umbadar (nobles of Elam) are shown twice: (1) standing before the royal chariot bearing boards that contained Elam's insolent messages against Ashurbanipal in the upper register of slabs 5-6 and (2) witnessing the torture of Elamite and Gambulian captives in the upper register of slab 4. The punished captives may be Mannu-ki-ahhe and Nabu-usalli, attested in Text E as the *šanu* (deputy) and *ša muḫḫi āli* (city overseer) of Dunanu, whom Ashurbanipal had tortured by removing their tongues and flaying them. There are two further Gambulians pictured to the right of the punished captives shown with severed heads hanging from their necks.

graphically. The victims are stripped of all dignity and bear their punishment in their bodies, whether by beheading (Teumman, Tammaritu, Urtak; figs. 4.16-4.20), beating and enslavement (Nabu-na'id and Bel-etir grinding the bones of their father; fig. 4.8), or torture (the Gambulian captives; fig. 4.9). Exile, where permissible among those who first surrender, is not merely portrayed but reinforced with shameful symbolic acts. In slabs 4 through 6, for example, Gambulian captives (Dunanu and Samgunu) must bear the heads of Teumman and Ishtar-nandi around their necks, while Nabu-damiq and Umbadar are forced to carry tablets that contain the rebellious words sent to Ashurbanipal by their former king.[2] The artists' decision to incorporate epigraphs coupled with the distinguishing features in the iconography leave the viewer (and reader) with no doubts concerning who is defeated.

A brief foray into their shared presentation of defeated leaders shows that the Neo-Assyrian program becomes most specific where the poem simply is not, and this discrepancy reveals two distinct views of history. The Jerusalem leadership operates on the periphery of Lamentations 2. They represent one among many different facets of loss that the city experiences, and the poet eschews any inclination to elevate Zion's exiled leaders as *the* or even *a* primary example of Zion's suffering. They stand anonymously alongside the city's dying mothers, young girls, children, or elders as important but not emblematic or *the most* important members of society. The unnamed leaders stand in stark contrast to the other highly (and repeatedly) specified figures in the poem—especially Daughter Zion and her God. The relief artists, by contrast, *only* highlight figures of prominence, with those in more

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Russell identifies these figures as Dunanu and Samgunu on the basis of Text A. They are made to carry the heads of Teumman and Ishtar-nandi, respectively. See further John Malcolm Russell, *The Writing on the Wall: Studies in the Architectural Context of Late Assyrian Palace Inscriptions*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 9 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 174–81.

[2] For a discussion and translation of the epigraph tablets that record these events, see Russell, *The Writing on the Wall*, 162–64.

"plebian" roles receiving nothing more than minor cultural identifiers (whether attire, weaponry, or hairstyles). Rather than granting any historical *individual* a mention, the poet distinguishes the city's inhabitants *collectively* with the figurative Daughter Zion and thus distills the conflict to a one-on-one encounter between God and God's metaphorical Daughter, the city of Jerusalem. By contrast, the Neo-Assyrian program epitomizes the clash between nations in the death of Elam's historical representatives. Moreover, while the poem remains relatively generic on the kinds of suffering Jerusalem's leaders endure (focusing more on their absence than their pain), the Til-Tuba composition graphically relates the rebel leaders' fate. Lamentations reserves its explicit descriptions for more vulnerable individuals—namely, mothers and children (see below). Ultimately, the simple contrast in the appearance of leadership within the artistic pieces demonstrates two opposing ideologies of history: that of the Neo-Assyrian royalty that equates victory with the decapitation of arrogant leaders and that of the biblical poem, wherein kings and priests join hosts of other victims in a violent history engineered and executed by Jerusalem's God.

6.2.2. The Selection of Victors and Victims

Second, the image repertoires of the poem and the Til-Tuba reliefs also intersect (and diverge) in their presentation of warfare and characterization of the victors and victims. In Lamentations 2, the writer consistently makes reference to the nameless human "enemies" responsible for invading and destroying Jerusalem. Zion's adversaries attack the city without divine hindrance (v. 3b), take the "walls of her palaces" by divine right (v. 7b), raise their voices (v. 7c), open their mouths against Zion (v. 16a), and boast in their triumph (v. 16b-c). As the poem unfolds, the enemies' aggression and joy

increases, not necessarily through a narrative progression but in the degree of violence enacted. After taking the walls (v. 7) and rejoicing in victory (vv. 16-17), the poem concludes with the combatants swarming into Zion without leaving "any who escaped or survived" (v. 22). The enemy activity concludes and climaxes with their most horrific act: putting an end to the children Zion "brought up and raised" (v. 22c)—although the singular איבי could just as well refer to Israel's divine aggressor.

In the Assyrian iconography, the "enemy" designation changes from that of the victor to the victim. The adversary is no longer the imperial invader but the invaded, who endure many different forms of corporal suffering. Thus, the "enemy" in Lamentations, as the military victor, corresponds not to the "enemy" presented in the Neo-Assyrians artwork (whether foreign army or beast) but to the imperial fighters that inflict suffering. Nevertheless, their respective presentations of defeat are similar at a more general level. The biblical poet, like the imperial artists, distributes much of the blame for Jerusalem's fall to the specifically *human* fighters that take the city, and in the Til-Tuba composition specifically, the Assyrian annihilation of the Elamite armies corresponds to the dying survivors described in Lamentations.

Though many of the details concerning the presentation of the "enemy" will be discussed below, it is important to note some general parallels between the victors and victims in text and image. Unlike the striking contrast between the anonymous leaders in Lamentations 2 and the named leaders at Til-Tuba, both compositions do little to distinguish the particular identities of the human victors. The biblical poem once again leaves the victors unnamed, refusing even to identify their national or ethnic affiliations. The human "enemies" remain stock characters that largely function as the anonymous beneficiaries and executors of a divine plan to destroy. Similarly, the imperial fighters

in the Til-Tuba composition receive few, if any, individualizing traits. They are identified solely by their Assyrian attire, weaponry, rank (occasionally), and, in the case of the auxiliary soldiers, their nationality. All of these features ultimately work together to distinguish the Assyrian army as a collective unit rather than to pinpoint military leaders of distinction.

Specificity within the "enemy" (or victor) ranks of both pieces is reserved exclusively for the *invisible* actors on the battlefield. In Lamentations, Yahweh is the only aggressor to receive a name and serves as the primary attacker who plans and executes the battle. Among the five or six explicit mentions of human enemies (vv. 3, 7, 16, 17 [2x], 22), Israel's foes are the recipients of divine action four times: God withdraws "his right hand [i.e. his protection] from before the enemy" (v. 3b) and delivers Jerusalem's walls "into the hand of the enemy" (v. 7b); God causes "the enemy to rejoice" over Zion and lifts "the horn" of her adversaries (v. 17c). Even when the invaders boast as if they have achieved victory for themselves (v. 16), the poet corrects their ignorance by restating the real Mastermind behind the conquest (v. 17). The reader cannot mistake Jerusalem's true—and only *named*—attacker: the diety. Both the divine name (vv. 6b, 7c, 8a, 9c, 17a, 20a, 22b) and the powerful epithet "Lord" (vv. 1a, 2a, 5a, 7a, 18a, 19b, 20c) appear seven times each in the poem. Yahweh is the obvious subject of numerous verbs of violence and is the only being unambiguously identified as "like an enemy" on two occasions (vv. 4a, 5a; cf. v. 22). God alone is described as a warrior like that found in the Assyrian army (or Ashurbanipal himself): he strings his bow and readies his hands "like a foe" to kill "all who delighted the eye" (v. 4). Thus, the points where the violent content of the poem and the reliefs intersect—namely, that of war and weaponry—are also those places where they diverge, given

that the biblical poet decorates the invisible Yahweh, rather than the imperial invaders, in the killer's accoutrements.

The Til-Tuba artists also stay quiet concerning the names of the imperial conquerors, with the exception of a few figures unseen in the battle. Rather than representing these invisible power brokers symbolically, they relegate their presence through the epigraphs only. In the inscriptions, Ashurbanipal speaks in first-person claiming to be the sole actor and victor. Concerning the defeat of Elam's leaders, he boasts, "With the encouragement of Assur and Ištar, I killed them. / Their heads [Teumman and Tammariu] I cut off in front of each other" (slab 3).[3] He epitomizes his instrumental role in the second half of the composition, where he appears in his royal chariot before a procession of Babylonian spoils: "I, Ashurbanipal, king of the world, king of Assyria, / with the encouragement of Ashur and Ištar my lords, my enemies / I conquered. I attained whatever I wished" (slab 6).[4] In both cases, though Ashurbanipal never appears in the Til-Tuba terrain (or in any other historical combat scene),[5] he and his gods not only receive credit for the victory but achieve it for themselves with no mention of the generic human pawns engaged in battle. Where the biblical poem footnotes the enemies as anonymous recipients of Yahweh's overt destruction, the representation of historical campaigns in Neo-Assyria instead disguises its protagonists within the cuneiform—a truly subtle message, hiding in plain sight, that if read, reveals the illusion beheld by the reader. Assyrian soldiers may flood the visual tableau, but they are the puppets of an unseen presence (both royal and divine)

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[3] Pamela D. Gerardi, "Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs: The Development of the Epigraphic Text," *J. Cuneif. Stud.* 40 (1988): 31.

[4] Ibid., 32.

[5] As Reade notes, the Neo-Assyrian artistic tradition shows a gradual shift away from portraying kings fighting in historical military campaign across the centuries. This may reflect the growing absence of the Neo-Assyrian ruler on the battlefield as the empire expanded. See idem, "Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, ed. M. T. Larsen, Mesopotamia 7 (Copenhagen: Academisk Forlag, 1979), 331.

pulling the strings of every execution. It is not until the fighting expands into a more metaphorical (or mythic) level—namely, the hunt—that the royal actor visually demonstrates his warrior-like boasts and prowess. Interestingly, the biblical poem also equips Yahweh with the bow and arrow not when he trounces through Zion's towns to destroy, but when he faces the poem's only named victim: Daughter Zion (v. 5).

Moreover, the tension between the content of the epigraphs and the sculpted images in the Til-Tuba reliefs helps to reframe the perspective of Lamentations 2. While both compositions name the invisible forces that guide or sanction the violent events they display, the biblical poem devotes much of its literary imagery to describing the divine actor in a way that the visual images of the reliefs do not. As discussed above, the Til-Tuba iconography focuses exclusively on the Assyrian armies and relegates Ashurbanipal's presence to the epigraphs only. Thus, if one were to "combine" the distinct perspectives of the Lamentations 2 and Til-Tuba imagistic programs, one might say that Lamentations 2 serves as the iconographic "scribe," who witnesses the images of Jerusalem's destruction and chisels out the epigraphic account of their history, unmasking the divine ruler who executed and sanctioned the violence. The poet represents the artistic "insider" who looks beyond the atrocities of the Neo-Babylonian soldiers—penetrating the city's defenses, exiling its leaders, and filling its streets with corpses—to discern the divine King who is "like an enemy" to the Judahite people and, as a result, provides a robust imagistic account of this fierce Warrior. At the same time, just as the iconography of the Til-Tuba reliefs presents a strong visual corrective to the named agents of violence in the epigraphs—attributing Teumman's execution to the soldiers on the ground rather than Ashurbanipal—so the poem's descriptive account of Jerusalem's condition after 587 (replete with

felled structures, starving mothers and children, gawking passersby, boasting enemies, and so forth) serves to historicize the reported suffering by anchoring the theological account in a lived reality tied to an authentic communal experience in the sixth century.

6.2.3. The Selection of Women and Children

Other points of contact in the kinds of violent content presented could (and will) be named, but before moving into a more detailed comparison of the poetics of violence, a final comment concerning a major divergence between the image corpora is necessary. While the biblical poet and the Neo-Assyrian artists both incorporate images of military conflict, bodies in pain, and enslavement, the imperial sculptors consistently avoid a certain image that figures prominently (if not, preeminently) in Lamentations 2—namely, the suffering of women and children. In the Room 33 slabs, we see mothers and their young children lined up as prisoners and threatened by Assyrian soldiers, but the artists maintain their dignity. They appear healthy, dressed, upright, and calm. They hold the hands of their young children, who, in some cases, appear to be playfully unfazed by the severity of their circumstance. Unlike Lamentations, images of torture are reserved almost exclusively for adult male fighters, leaders, and animals.[6] A mere acknowledgement of this discrepancy may speak

[6] See, especially, Ariel Bagg, "Where Is the Public? A New Look at the Brutality Scenes in Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions and Art," in *Making Pictures of War: Realia et Imaginaria in the Iconology of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Laura Battini, Archaeopress Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology 1 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 57–82. Bagg has catalogued and quantified the different types of "brutality scenes" in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and iconography. By "brutality scenes," he denotes scenes that show or tell of acts of cruelty committed *after* a battle or siege (thereby bracketing the accounts/depictions of inevitable wounds inflicted in combat). His findings are quite striking. Among the extant Neo-Assyrian *artistic* renderings of historical campaigns, he identifies 12 different kinds of atrocities depicted (e.g., impalement, flaying, etc.) and groups them according to victim, whether (1) enemy soldiers, (2) members of the elite, or (3) civilians. Ashurbanipal's relief program shows the highest concentration of brutality images (19 examples out of 54 total) with the greatest variety (showing 7 of the 12 possible types). In the total Neo-Assyrian iconographic repertoire available to us, Bagg finds only one *possible* depiction of sexual assault or abduction by Assyrian soldiers against an Arab woman, depicted in

to a possible awareness of the empathetic power of these kinds of images on the part of the Assyrian sculptors. The presentation of emaciated children within the tableau may well have had the capacity to nullify the viewer's fascination with (and even delight in) the majesty of the Assyrian war machine. In many ways, Lamentations 2 leaks the photos denied by the Assyrian propagandists, and the power of its protest lies in its refusal to hide these images until we, along with Yahweh, "see" (and thereby feel) Zion's dying populace (v. 20).[7]

6.2.4. Summary

In summary, the poem and image intersect in their concern with representing societal or military defeat and they hold a common interest in highlighting the invisible forces responsible for the represented victory. Ultimately, the two image repertoires diverge not simply in their differing perspectives of the conflict (victor versus victim) but also in the kinds of violence the pieces are willing to reveal. The Neo-Assyrian reliefs avoid all images of a suffering citizenry and instead focus

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the fragmentary relief from Room J of Ashurbanipal's North Palace. See Richard David Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh* (*668-627 B.C.*) (London: British Museum Publications, 1976), pl. XXXIII. The inscriptional record reflects a similar concern with avoiding accounts of civilian torture (6 examples out of 50 total). See the collected data in Bagg, "Where is the Public?," figs. 6.1, 6.12.

[7] It is important to note, however, that these dignified portraits of foreign citizens may pertain not only to the empathetic (and anti-Assyrian) responses that images of a suffering citizenry might elicit but also to the artists' careful construction of the royal image, as Stephanie Reed has argued. She writes, "[I]n text and image, we can observe each ruler's anxiety to fulfill the duties of royal office required by the gods, and to justify the traditional titles of great Mespotamian rulers: not only 'king of the world," but also 'pious shepherd'" ("Blurring the Edges: A Reconsideration of the Treatment of Enemies in Ashurbanipal's Reliefs," in *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter*, ed. Irene Winter, Jack Cheng, and Marian H. Feldman, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 26 [Leiden: Brill, 2007], 113). Reed contends that the reticence surrounding the torture of conquered citizens bespeaks Assyria's acknowledgement of human vulnerability and its need to balance the king's dual (and divinely given) role as both conqueror and protector (the empire's ideological and practical commitments, respectively). Cf. Julian E. Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, ed. Mogens Trolle Larsen, Mesopotamia 7 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 340, who notes that, in the representations of the king on stelae (a more public iconographic genre), the king figures most frequently not as warrior but "as a worshipper, as high-priest of his god."

their history on the defeated rulers over whom Ashurbanipal wields power. Lamentations, however, leaves all political powers anonymous and brings the reader continually to the city's dying children and their mothers.

6.3. THE PRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE IN TEXT AND IMAGE

After discussing "what" kinds of violence appear in the biblical poem and the images, I will now analyze "how" violence and suffering figure in these sources. In what ways do the respective artists stage these images for the reader/viewer? Where do they focus the "eye" and to what effect? To whom do they grant emotion in suffering's presentation? What perspective and information are granted to the reader/viewer? What details are denied and left to the imagination? Some of these matters have already been touched on above, so, in what follows, I will discuss three primary aspects of the presentation of violence in the Neo-Assyrian iconography and the biblical poem: (1) the presentation of violence enacted and suffered in human bodies, (2) the perspective granted to the reader/viewer within the violent images of each work, and (3) the presentation of those who suffer violence, particularly the unique means by which the respective artists control viewer response by isolating the sufferer, whether through the use of individual ground lines (as seen in the Room C reliefs) or, in the case of Lamentations 2, through enjambment.

6.3.1. The Presentation of the Body

The body plays a prominent role in the construction of suffering for both the Lamentations poet and the Neo-Assyrian artists. In these pieces, the body serves not only as the locus of violence itself but

also the primary indicator of suffering's aftermath, variously expressed through things like the tears of the victim or the mocking gestures of the enemy. In this section, I will examine how the body figures in image and text in three major parts. (1) I will review the body's representation in the Neo-Assyrian images before turning to the biblical poem. (2) I will then assess the bodily descriptions of four collective groups (elders, maidens, passersby, and enemies), which—I will argue—help to fill out and foreground the poem's primary encounter between Zion and her God. (3) I will then conclude with an extended examination of the three individuals to whom the poet grants robust bodily profiles (Yahweh, Zion, and the speaker). For Yahweh, we will demonstrate how the poem constructs the divine body in a verbal manner, while carefully withholding any description of the divine gaze. For Daughter Zion, we will discuss her simultaneously strong and vulnerable portrait, and the concluding argument will address the way in which the poem demonstrates the power of its own imagery through the speaker's bodily suffering. As one who physically reacts to the sight of Zion's dying populace, the speaker dramatizes the empathetic disposition sought by the poem from its readers.

6.3.1.1. The Presentation of the Body in the Neo-Assyrian Reliefs

The representation of the body in Ashurbanipal's reliefs differs slightly depending on the genre of the pictorial composition. In the historical narratives, the body identifies the figure. The characteristic Assyrian helmet and weaponry may pinpoint the imperial soldiers overtly, but these features alone do not distinguish the victor from the victim. Rather, the artists sculpt the victory and victimhood into the bodies of the opposing sides. Only the Assyrian soldiers and their auxiliary counterparts stand uprightly with their feet firmly planted on the groundline beneath them. Their postures are controlled

and calm without any wasted movement, their arms outstretched only to wield their weapons or execute their enemies. Their Elamite opponents, however, appear flimsy and flailing. Their bodies are contorted and their limbs outstretched in multiple directions. Even when standing on their feet, they bend, thrash, and turn their heads against their torso. They suffer wounds and are trampled underfoot, stacked upon and around one another in horizontal and diagonal arrangements. No one soldier looks identical to another, but their individuation is less a means of drawing attention to their suffering and more an indirect consequence of the chaos that is their collective identity. Their heads and bodies are the texture of the composition, filling in the space between the stalwart Assyrian figures.

The strong Assyrian physique and posture carries into the lion hunt compositions but achieves special distinguishing marks in the royal persona. In Room C, for example, the king's body towers above his subjects and expands to outsize the lions and attendants that share the pictorial space. His elongated beard and extended locks mark his virility and highlight the royal profile. The definition in his arms underscore his strength, and the careful detail of his hands and fingernails draw attention to his mastery of the sword, spear, and bow. As would be expected in ancient Near Eastern art, the drama of his image lies in the movements of his body and their consequences rather than any facial disposition.[8] By contrast, the artists relegate all demonstrative expression to the leonine victims. Like the Elamites at Til-Tuba, they contort their limbs, arch their backs, lie prostrate, and roar in agony from the arrow wounds they carry. Their suffering is vivid: blood seeps from the wounds; intestinal liquids spray from their bellies; and vomit pours from their mouths. All aspects of their

[8] On the relative absence of represented emotion in the figures of ancient Near Eastern art (and the problems surrounding the proper interpretation of these figures), see the discussion in Sara Kipfer, ed., *Visualizing Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, OBO 285 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2017), esp. 1-156.

bodies—faces, limbs, torso, and tail—writhe together to convey their suffering, and their isolation on distinct groundlines draws attention to their singular presentation. If the Til-Tuba scene uses the human body to convey Assyrian dominance, the Room C artists lend greater detail to the leonine bodies and thereby intermingle tragedy and triumph.

Careful attention to the body in image leads us to consider the various presentations of the body in the biblical poem. Who receives bodily description and to what effect? With whom does the poem populate the landscape? Answers to these questions will help us understand the care with which the writer engineers the poet's emotional impact. We begin with the poem's description of "collective" bodies—various groups distinguished by a common corporal feature or action—before addressing those individuals who receive specific bodily description.

6.3.1.2. The Presentation of Corporate Bodies in Lamentations 2 (*Elders, Maidens, Passersby, and Enemies*)

First, there are four different groups whom the poet identifies with corporate bodily descriptions: the elders (v. 10a), the young women (v. 10c), the passersby (v. 15), and the enemies (v. 16). They are presented to the reader with plural subjects and plural verbs—a feature that lends a generic or anonymous—not to mention numerous—quality to their appearance. After the eyewitness has painted the portrait of Jerusalem's destroyed infrastructure (vv. 5-9) and its vacated leadership (v. 9b-c), the poet fills the scene with the first two groups discussed here: the silent "elders of Daughter Zion," who sit in sackcloth heaping dust upon their heads and the "maidens of Jerusalem," who bring their heads down to the ground (v. 10; cf. v. 21a). As previously discussed, the merismus created by the

juxtaposition of young and old, male and female, implies that the entire Jerusalem population shares in their mourning rituals and thus multiplies the number of bodies implicated. The poem focuses on their heads and their lowly position—sitting upon the ground and bringing their heads down to the earth. Cut down to a ground level, we see only the sackcloth that veils the rest of their bodies. With the exception of the dust that covers their heads, they are a monochrome sea of figures covered in their dark, coarse mourning garments.

The passersby (v. 15) represent a third group embodied in the text. Rather than focusing upon their posture (like that of the elders and maidens), the speaker instead builds up a scant bodily profile through their gestures. They clap their hands against Zion, whistle, and shake their heads against the city (v. 15a-b). Further attention to their mouths is also implied by their direct speech quoted in v. 15c. As discussed in chapter 3, the poet presents these gestures without defining them, leaving the reader to guess the attitudes that give rise to them, whether contempt or pity. In this way, the bodies of the passersby remain expressive but generic—composed of clapping hands, whistling mouths, and shaking heads. The poem uses their bodies and quoted voices to make them fully present beside the ruins but refrains from explicitly painting sympathy or scorn in their bodies. Their physical presence frames the razed city and its dying population, and they stand fixated upon the scene of destruction. If the reader should choose to identify with their position, the poet grants them a body to inhabit—a body contemptuously or compassionately moved by the surrounding suffering.

Immediately after the passersby appear, the speaker tells of the bodily gestures of a fourth group: Zion's enemies (v. 16). In contrast to the more fulsome descriptions provided for the other groups discussed above, the poem focuses our eyes solely on the adversaries' mouths: they open their

mouths against Zion, whistle, gnash their teeth, and boast in having "swallowed up" the city. This "close-up" view of their jaws hides all other features and defines them solely by their appetites. The poetic "camera" is too close, as it were, to gain any other impression. We see their tongues moving in speech, their teeth gnashing and chewing, and their lips wet with spit as they whistle and hiss, but no other profile features are granted. Their smacking is both repulsive and frightening, and the poem magnifies the fear by hiding their faces and bodies from the reader. The audience is granted intimacy without identity, as the enemies' nameless appearance fills the scene with their aggression.

Taken together, the bodily images of these four groups play an important role without occupying the poem's center. The poet sets each group in its entirety before the reader in one moment and then employs a succession of images/actions to fill in the details of the homogenous collective. Their power lies in their implied number and in the theoretically limitless capacity of the third plural verbs that describe them. They overwhelm through hyperbole and homogeneity—through the imagined possibility that everyone in the given demographic takes part without any exception considered. They, like the figures that fill the *horro vaccui* space of the Til-Tuba scene, are the backgrounded texture of the poetic scene. The poet spotlights them without pinpointing any single individual among them and, as a result, retains the emotional impact of their anonymity and plurality. Their bodily descriptions help to personalize their collective presence but do nothing to place them at the poem's visual center. They appear and then recede, rarely, if ever, to return in the poetic witness. Their generic presence ensures their role as supporting cast members—significant but peripheral figures to the poem's central conflict and key victim (and perpetrator). They are the nameless bodies that fill up the purview of the "mind's eye" as it scans the city streets. They are the

Jerusalem "extras," friends and foes whose bodies function to frame and expand the magnitude of Zion's suffering rather than to key in on its meaning.

6.3.1.3. The Presentation of Individual Bodies in Lamentations 2

In addition to the bodily descriptions of these four groups, there are three individuals, whose bodies the poet pieces together across the lines and stanzas of the piece. Each of the bodies is displayed in a manner unique to the given personality, but their physical presence abides throughout the lyric event and captivates the hearer's attention. These three individuals are Yahweh, Zion, and the speaker.

6.3.1.3.1 The Presentation of Yahweh's Body

First, the poem gradually constructs the divine body through key verbs and images in the first nine verses. The speaker references specific bodily features throughout these verses, sometimes in an almost redundant fashion to ensure that God's body comes into view. Within the poem's first three words, we are told of God's "anger" (אַף), otherwise evocative of Yahweh's "nose." In a bit of tragic irony, this is the only facial feature the speaker describes repeatedly (vv. 1 [2x], 3, 6, 21, 22), and its bodily reference is only incidental, standing behind the word's emotional valence. The divine profile otherwise remains virtually undescribed, and Yahweh's concealed presence takes on severe theological consequences by the poem's end (discussed below). The same stanza that introduces his "anger" concludes with a reference to the "footstool of his feet" (v. 1c). The redundancy of the phrase ensures that God's body isn't overlooked in the metaphorical reference to Israel and thus continues to figure in the readerly imagination.

The poem then builds up the image of God's body in two ways. First, the poet makes explicit mention of certain bodily features. After beginning with Yahweh's feet in v. 1, the poem focuses the following stanzas on the hands of God. In vv. 3-4, God has withdrawn his "right hand" (i.e., his protection) from before the enemy, exposing Jerusalem to attack, and then readies his hand at the bow like a foe. A few stanzas later, God stretches out the measuring line in preparation for destruction and does not withdraw "his hand" from devouring (v. 8). These specific references to the divine body, though rare, complement the poem's second means of implying God's physical presence: the repetition of tactile verbs. In the first nine stanzas alone, Yahweh is the subject of over thirty active verbs, most of which entail different forms of physical destruction.[9] God "casts down" (√שלך *hiph.*) the beauty of Israel (v. 1b), "tears down" (√הרס *qal*) in rage the fortified cities of Judah (v. 2b), "strikes down" (√נגע *hiph.*) the kingdom and her leaders (v. 2c), "cuts off" (√גדע *qal*) the horn of Israel (v. 3a), and "destroys" (√שחת *piel*) both Zion's strongholds (v. 5b) and the tent of meeting (v. 6a). He "pours out" (שפך *qal*) his wrath (v. 4c) and "demolishes" (√חמס *qal*) his booth like a garden (v. 6a). In vv. 4-5, the physical profile of the divine archer emerges, as Yahweh "treads" (√דרך *qal*) his bow (v. 4a), "readies" (√נצב *niph.*) his right hand, and "kills" (√הרג *qal*) all the precious ones of Israel. Later, he "stretches out" (√נטה *qal*) the measuring line for destruction, "hands over" (√סגר *hiph.*) the city's walls, and "destroys" (√אבד *piel*) and "shatters" (√שבר *piel*) its gates.

Notwithstanding the other 3ms verbs that convey divine attitude or intention, these verbs help to fill out the divine body via violence, much like the royal persona represented in the lion hunts.

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[9] See the list of verbs provided in Heath A. Thomas, "A Neglected Witness to 'Holy War' in the Writings," in *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem*, ed. Heath Thomas, Jeremy A. Evans, and Paul Copan (IVP Academic, 2013), 75, n. 19. Thomas does not include the additional seven 3ms verbs for which Yahweh is the subject in v. 17. Overall, Thomas draws out the connotations of divine judgment evoked by the verbal and image selection in Lamentations 2.

In the Room C program, Ashurbanipal figures principally in the arrangement no less than four times, and the artists conceal little of the royal persona. Ashurbanipal is unmistakable. At the same time, the artists present their leader as actor and aggressor rather than as homeostatic center. In keeping with the representation of Neo-Assyrian kings, Ashurbanipal's face features nothing more than his identifying markers (lengthy beard, royal cap, and weaponry) but his body stands strong without wavering before his fierce opponents. The artists instead detail the king's musculature, hands, and weaponry, but they represent him in a subtly destabilizing manner. The same visual lines that lead the eye upward to the divine profile also lead the viewer away from his person to see the havoc caused by the royal weaponry. For example, in the royal archer image on Room C's northeastern wall (figs. 5.21, 5.30), we see three parallel lines created by the spears of the two attendants (immediately adjacent to one another) and the king's bow string (slightly removed to the left). Bersani and Dutoit note the way that the space between these parallel lines subtly de-centers the viewer's attention. In crossing the space between bowstring and spears, we are drawn away from the central space and toward the violence portrayed at either side of the chariot. "The line of the bowstring moves us toward the scene at the left and away from the potentially magnetic space between the bowstring and the spears…[O]ur eye is always crossing this space in order to follow the contradictory cues on its edges…This constant mobility leads us to postulate an aesthetic pleasure brought about not by aesthetic objects but by the spaces between their constituent parts."[10] The Assyrian hunt is as much about the movement of the eye betwixt the human and animal objects—thereby mimicking the violent actions implied by the image—as it is about the king per se. The appearance of the lone arrow

[10] Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, "The Forms of Violence," *October* 8 (1979): 26–27.

above the dying lions in the battlefield reinforces the emphasis on the king's violent activity and agency.

To a greater degree than that of the Neo-Assyrian artists, the Lamentations poet eschews bodily presentation in favor of bodily action and constructs the divine profile verbally, but no less imagistically. Each of the actions listed above is lexically unique, with few repetitions (e.g., √תשח in vv. 5 and 6), and they all require physical exertion to perform. The divine body is the imagistic consequence of destructive action, and the poet specifies God's physical appearance through a variegated profile of violent techniques. The divine musculature, fingers, feet and hands blur in the mind's eye as Yahweh hews, overthrows, stretches, and strikes down. In this way, Yahweh's physicality is both revealed through the poem's broad verbal repertoire and concealed behind their focused impact upon the victim(s). The poetic camera remains almost entirely concerned with the movements of God's hands and the direct objects they encounter, with occasional fixation on the devastating ability of his "right hand." We only catch glances of Yahweh's body in the spaces between debris, fire, and bone.

With this verbal focus on Yahweh's body, the poem pays little explicit attention to the divine face, but the few remarks made in this regard hold tremendous affective import for the Zion-Yahweh conflict. As we just discussed, the poet uses a range of vocabulary words to describe Yahweh's destructive actions in vv. 1-9 with very few repetitions, but there is one exception to this pattern: the consistent references to Yahweh "swallowing up" (בלע) Zion (vv. 2, 5 [2x], 8, 16). The repetition of this metaphor pays indirect attention to the divine mouth and indirectly (even if only epiphenomenally) fills out the divine profile. This subtlety complements the hidden reference to Yahweh's "anger/nose"

(אף) throughout the poem (vv. 1, 3, 6, 21, 22). Taken together, these hints imply the proximity of Yahweh's countenance to Zion's structures and populace, and the references to God's "anger/nose" in particular bookend the poem with Yahweh's wrathful profile. Like the mirrored images of Ashurbanipal in Room C, all of Zion's suffering takes place between the dual references to Yahweh's face (vv. 1, 22)—underscoring Zion's inability to escape her divine oppressor. Elsewhere, the poet makes explicit reference to God's "face" (פנה) only in v. 19, where the speaker encourages Zion to pour out her heart "at the face of the Lord." If God's anger/profile (אף) represents the poetic boundaries of Zion's suffering, the poet therefore encourages Zion to seek the limits of God's punitive presence by appealing to that same face. The poem therefore bears consistent witness to the identity of God (as seen in the use of the divine name in vv. 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 20, 22) and occasionally points out the divine face (v. 19) and its features (especially the mouth and nose) even if only generically.

And yet, the poet keeps one aspect of Yahweh's profile hidden from both Zion and the viewer: the divine eyes. Though the poem makes frequent reference to the sight or the eyes of others (e.g., human enemies in v. 16, the speaker in v. 11, and the prophets in v. 14, Daughter Zion in v. 18), the writer withholds the divine gaze from the reader, and Zion is refused access to the one divine faculty powerful enough to grant a stay to her suffering.[11] Her plea in v. 22 that God would "look" at (ראה) and "behold" (נבט *hiph.*) her (cf. 1:9, 11, 20) is a desire to meet God's eyes for the first time in the poem. The writer withholds this most personal feature of God's face from the reader as well, placing them in

[11] The Hebrew Bible often makes a connection between divine sight and compassion and/or salvation (Exod 2:25; 3:7, 9; 4:31; Pss 10:14; 34:16 [15]; 72:14; 91:8; 106:44; 102:20-21 [19-20]; cf. the petition that God "see" in prayers for intervention: e.g., 1 Sam 1:11; Isa 37:17; 63:15; Pss 9:14 [13]; 13:4 [3]; 17:2; 25:18-19; 35:17; 59:5 [4]; 80:15 [14]; 84:10 [9]; 119:153). Conversely, the hidden face of God is connected to human suffering and God's punishment (e.g., Pss 27:9; 30:8 [7]; 44:25 [24]; 69:18 [17]; 88:15 [14]; 102:3 [2]; 104:29; 143:7; Isa 8:17; 54:8; 57:17; 64:6 [7] Jer 33:5; Ezek 39:23-24; Mic 3:4). In Lamentations 2, Zion's lack of access to God's vision is paralleled by the prophets who "have not found a vision from the LORD" (v. 9).

solidarity with Zion's suffering. God, though named, remains physically anonymous. Yahweh is present in physical destruction and scalding anger but absent in the refusal to reveal to Zion God's most expressive feature. Like a masked criminal, God acts "blindly" in rage, destroying Zion indiscriminately without "beholding" her. The collection of poetic images therefore becomes an exercise in gaining sight of God's eyes (or forcing Yahweh to look at what he does not see) and thereby gaining access to the one feature Israel consistently leans on in covenant interaction: divine relatability.

The poem's call for God to see Zion can also be instructive for understanding the power of the violent images in the Neo-Assyrian reliefs. In both the Til-Tuba and lion hunt compositions, Ashurbanipal claims responsibility for beheading rebels and hunts down lions in the Nineveh arena, and the artists withhold little in representing these violent actions. While the ancient Near Eastern tradition pays little attention to sculpting emotion into human faces (especially that of the Neo-Assyrian king), the question lingers as to whether Ashurbanipal "sees" the suffering his hands inflict in the Room C reliefs. More importantly, the dispassion of king's face in the hunting arena poses a broader question concerning whether or not Ashurbanipal "sees" the (implications of the) imagery of his entire relief project. The mere fact that the king would commission and approve images like these (and many others!) in the royal residence bespeaks a failure to attend to the "power" of such depicted violence to evoke responses that are antithetical to the Neo-Assyrian regime. The images of bleeding lions and decapitated kings speak beyond their pro-Assyrian function and demand that the gods and king behold their tragedy as well as their triumph (see further below).

6.3.1.3.2. The Presentation of Zion's Body

The second figure that receives extensive bodily description in the poem is Zion, and the contrast between the features privileged for the personified city and Yahweh are significant. The fluid connection between "Daughter Zion" herself and the constituents of the city she represents has been noted before,[12] but the writer doesn't construct Zion's body through the bodies of the populace alone.[13] That is to say, though the poet carefully ties Daughter Jerusalem to the city's mothers and children specifically, the personified city also stands as an embodied sufferer in her own right throughout the poem's twenty-two stanzas.

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[12] Many have discussed the significance of the "Daughter Zion" metaphor in terms of its historical (i.e., the personification of cities in the city-lament genre), poetic (e.g., the befitting use of בת for metrical purposes), or rhetorical purposes (e.g., connoting emotional tenderness toward the vulnerable city). See, *inter alia*, Aloysius Fitzgerald, "Mythological Background for the Presentation of Jerusalem as a Queen and False Worship as Adultery in the OT," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 403–16; "BTWLT and BT as Titles for Capital Cities," *CBQ* 37 (1975): 167–83; Elaine R. Follis, "The Holy City as Daughter," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOTSup 40 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); M. E. Biddle, "The Figure of Lady Jerusalem: Identification, Deification, and Personification of Cities in the Ancient Near East," in *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective*, ed. K. Lawson Younger, William W. Hallo, and Bernard F. Batto, Scripture in Context 4 (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 1991), 173–94; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*, Biblica et Orientalia 44 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993); idem, "The Syntagma of *Bat* Followed by a Geographical Name in the Hebrew Bible: A Reconsideration of Its Meaning and Grammar," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 451–71; Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, Semeia Studies 58 (Atlanta: SBL, 2007); Mark J. Boda, Carol J. Dempsey, and LeAnn Snow Flesher, eds., *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 13 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012).

[13] It is important to note the breadth of the personification beyond that of the city's remnant. Westermann writes, for example, "The notion of 'personifying' here would be inappropriate if by that one meant nothing more than the equating of a some*thing* with a some*one*, of an object with a person. The essential point of this comparison is that, through it, the history of a people is accorded a characteristic usually reserved for a personal story. A whole people acquires the traits of an individual, someone whose destiny involves the possibility of suffering" (*Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation*, trans. Charles Muenchow [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994], 124.).

Alternatively, Kim Lan Nguyen has asked the question, "[W]ho would identify with Zion?" She points out that the Lamentations poet never identifies Zion with the surviving people completely, as seen in the numerous references to Daughter Zion's "priests" (1:4), "her children" (1:5; 2:19), "her prophets" (2:9), etc. See also Lam 1:6, 7, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19; 2:10, 14, 21; 4:2, 7, 13. For Nguyen, Daughter Zion is transhistorical in a sense—"the *personification of the city, a center of civilization with a history and a people*" (288)—and this holistic designation allows the community to identify with the city itself, name the sins of Zion (historically), and protest the unjust suffering of the innocent remnant. See idem, "Mission Not Impossible: Justifying Zion's Destruction and Exonerating the Common Survivors," in *Daughter Zion: Her Portrait, Her Response*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Carol J. Dempsey, and LeAnn Snow Flesher, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 13 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 269–91. The presentation of the city as a possessor" of items befits the ANE tradition, in which the "daughter of GN" represented the city goddess to whom the city's populace and riches belonged. See Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Syntagma of *Bat*."

First, the most common way the poet draws out Zion's appearance is through the city's various titles. The "daughter" metaphor itself both genders the city and reduces it to that of a helpless child. As Berlin notes, the appositional genitive operates here like a diminutive—"Dear Little Zion" or "Sweet Little Zion"[14]—and reframes the divine-city conflict from one of socio-political proportions to that of a personal (even domestic) assault from the fierce, towering Warrior against a defenseless girl—a daughter ostensibly belonging to "him."[15] In v. 13 (cf. 1:15), the poet specifies the addressee as "Maiden Daughter Zion (ציון בת בתולת)," a title that pinpoints her youthful, unmarried status and perhaps highlights her pitiable condition further.[16] Even the number of these occurrences appears intentional. The "daughter" title appears twelve times (vv. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13 [2x], 15, 18 [2x]) with various proper names—e.g., Daughter Judah (vv. 2, 5), daughter of "my people" (v. 11), and Daughter Jerusalem (vv. 13, 15)—and the "Daughter Zion" reference appears seven times, which corresponds directly with the seven uses of both the tetragrammaton (vv. 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 20, 22) and the authoritative "Lord (אדון)" (vv. 1, 2, 5, 7, 18, 19, 20) in the poem. The titulature alone stages the poem's governing conflict and reveals Zion's hidden strength. At first glance, the reader is presented with an unfair, one-sided fight between a "maiden" and her armed "lord," and yet, the equal, seven-fold repetition of both names (coupled with the lament of Daughter Zion herself) upholds the strong agency of the latter, who stands up in the fight as many times as her God appears. Her name and gendered body, as

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[14] Adele Berlin, *Lamentations: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 12.

[15] As Kathleen O'Connor writes, the Lamentations poet follows the prophetic tradition and presents the personified city as "the punished wife of Yahweh, who fulfills all the prophecies against her in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea" (*NIB* 4:1020). Mandolfo notes, however, that in contrast to the prophets' presentation of Zion as Yahweh's adulterous wife, Lamentations, through the voice and characterization of Daughter Zion, shifts the focus from her marital relationship and "morally reorients the rhetoric by focusing on herself as bereaved nurturer. In this discourse, she is first and foremost a mother, not a wife—a self-description that eschews the sexualization of her identity in the Prophets" (*Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*, 89-90).

[16] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 12.

primary designations of vulnerability, belie her grit, witnessed in Zion's unexpected survival across the poem's ravaged landscape.

In the description of Zion's body, the poem focuses on those features largely minimized in the divine portrait. While God's body engages in its continuously violent motion, Zion sits immobilized in her suffering, and this stillness permits a more detailed description of her expressed grief. Her body, though gendered through the "daughter" metaphor, receives very little attention overall. The speaker laments the "breaking of the daughter of my people" (v. 11b) and likens her breaking to be "as great as the sea" (v. 13). The speaker suggests a body bruised and broken from divine violence, but leaves the kind and location of the wounds to the reader's imagination. The only other direct reference to her body is found in v. 19, where the speaker exhorts her to lift up her hands as a posture of petition.[17] Otherwise, the poem (and the speaker specifically) summons the reader back to the one feature denied in Yahweh's profile: Zion's face. We overhear the speaker summon her to let "tears stream down like a river / daily and nightly" (v. 18). He also focuses our attention on "the apple [lit. daughter (בת)] of her eye," indicative both of her pupils and the children whom she cherishes. The poet describes those whom Yahweh attacks in Zion's home as "the precious ones of the eye" (v. 4), again giving figurative reference to Zion's face and, more importantly, framing the event through her perspective. Her eyes and the tears that flow from them are constitutive of her total person so much

[17] One could argue that the architecture described in vv. 7-9 also contribute to the physical makeup of Daughter Zion, given the consistent use of the possessive genitive concerning them: "the walls of her palaces" (v. 7b), "the walls of Daughter Zion" (v. 8a), "her gates" (v. 9a), "her bars" (v. 9a), and so forth. The distinction between Zion and her structures/subjects appears elsewhere in the poem (e.g., "her king and her princes" in v. 9b), but the line between understanding these things as possessions belonging to Zion (akin to a queen's palace) or constituents of her person (akin to a part of the body) is blurred. Whatever the case, the poet's alternation between masculine and feminine possessive pronouns is particularly interesting in the poem's first section. While the temple complex is described as "his booth" (v. 6a), "his assembly place" (v. 6a), and "the house of the LORD" (v. 7c), all other physical aspects of the city belong to Zion alone. The differentiation between "his" and "hers" is clearly drawn, as Zion's structures, even those belonging to Yahweh, are explicitly disowned by God.

that her heart must also be "poured out like water" in God's presence (v. 19b). Focusing in on this feature to the near exclusion of other physical aspects personalizes Zion, placing her close enough to the reader for them to see her pupils. Such proximity augments the empathy and wins the reader over in her petition against God. Seeing her leads to seeing *with* her.

6.3.1.3.3. The Presentation of the Speaker's Body

The poet models this empathy for the reader in the third figure granted a bodily profile in the poem—the speaker. Through sympathetic gestures, the poetic witness appears to suffer not only *with* but also *like* Zion in vv. 11-13. Just as Zion's eyes pour forth tears and she is encouraged to pour out the physical seat of her thoughts/emotions (her "heart") before God, the speaker's "eyes are spent with tears" (v. 11a), his "stomach churns" (vv. 11a), and his "liver is poured out on the ground" (v. 11b). It is important to note, however, that the construction of Zion's image in vv. 18-19 follows from the speaker's own imperatives. The audience sees her as the speaker summons her to be, not necessarily as she is—though her vocal response in vv. 20-22 may indicate a willingness to heed the speaker's invitation. The shared portrait between speaker and Zion is not simply a matter of empathetic imitation but also one of emotional projection. In some ways, the speaker leads her to pour forth and show forth the wounds and tears which he himself has. His spilling bile and flowing tears are reactive and reflective of the children whose lives are "poured out at the breasts of their mothers" (v. 12), just as they are physical evidence in the witness he seeks to provide concerning her incomparable suffering (v. 13). His grieving body is the model to which he calls Zion out of her physical anonymity in vv. 18-19. His physicality evokes her physicality, and his commands reveal her as an embodied subject even as they script

meaningful action for her. The speaker leads both Zion and the reader in "pouring out" the body's pain, connecting all three parties together in a collective testimony to unjust suffering. The explicit reference to entrails and other internal organs lend an element of revulsion to the experience, underscoring, if not its injustice, at least its horror.

The poet's emphasis on "pouring out" bodily liquids in the presentation of Zion and the speaker mimics that of the lions in Ashurbanipal's North Palace reliefs. On both the northwestern and southeastern walls of Room C, the artists depict the lions' agony and death in many ways—dragging limbs, contorted bodies, arrow wounds, and arched backs—but one of the most visceral techniques is the exposure of bodily fluids. Though some arrows stick cleanly out of the skin, many of the lacerations ooze blood down their legs and torsos, and several lions sit up to vomit blood and bile (figs. 5.20-5.22, 5.26).[18] Such detail differs from the rather sterile wounds depicted in the Til-Tuba composition, where, despite the abundance of impaling spears/arrows and decapitations, the wounds are clean and the bleeding staunched. Even at the climax of the narrative, as the Assyrian soldier saws off Teumman's head and carries it down the register, the king's body appears unreal, as if the head has popped off a toy action figure. The brutal violence is somehow sanitized in this way, reflecting more the Assyrian mastery of foreign bodies than the bloodied reality of those bodies themselves. This technique, along with other representational methods, eschews or controls viewer sympathy in a manner not replicated in the lion reliefs. There, both ancient and scholarly records attest to sincere empathy for the dying beasts—a reaction lacking in modern and ancient witnesses to Ashurbanipal's

[18] Cf. the fascination with the "dying lion" relief fragment (likely belonging to Room S) expressed by John Curtis, "The Dying Lion," *Iraq* 54 (1992): 113. The fragment shows the animal vomiting blood.

military campaigns. Such a contrast confirms what we might assume: namely, that there is a correlation between the vividness of bodily suffering and sympathetic response.

In the case of the poem, it is important to note that the "fluids" that characterize the bodily images of Zion and the speaker have as their source the suffering of Jerusalem's children. The speaker's liver is "poured out" (√שפך *niphal*) upon the ground (v. 11) as a response to the children's lives, which are "poured out" (√שפך *hithpael*) at their mothers' breasts (v. 12). The speaker later commands Zion to share in this posture (√שפך *qal*) in v. 19. The poem thus generates a chain reaction of empathetic imitation generated by what the speaker "witnesses" (cf. v. 13) in the Jerusalem streets and culminating in Zion's protest.

In this way, the poem uses the bodily descriptions of the speaker and Zion to model for the reader the desired effects of its verbal imagery. The speaker's suffering is described in either passive or stative terms—his eyes are "spent" (√כלה *qal*) with tears, his stomach "churns" (√חמר *poalal*), and his liver is "poured out" (√שפך *niphal*)—as though these afflictions are what the sight of Jerusalem (and its children specifically) have "done" to him. This is involuntary rather than elected solidarity. The total project is thus one of leading the reader and/or God to "see" Jerusalem with the expected result that these images hold their own agency and impose themselves at will upon their viewers. Just as the speaker suffers alongside of and as a result of Zion's babies, so the hearer (whether human or divine) will also be subjected into co-suffering with Zion's children through the experience of the poem's imagery. The children's "poured out" lives are particularized in the speaker, commanded in Zion, and ultimately embodied in the reader, who is willing, if not actually coerced, to see what God chooses not to.

6.3.1.4. Summary

Attention to the way the body figures in the Neo-Assyrian artwork provides an interesting point of comparison for examining the poem's presentation of the same. In the preceding discussion, we noted the poem's use of collective bodily description to fill out the imagined landscape and populate the scene in a manner comparable to that of the Til-Tuba composition. This background of various bodies helps to foreground the more particular descriptions of Yahweh, Zion and the speaker. Second, we examined the verbal construction of Yahweh's body and appealed to the presentation of Ashurbanipal in the Room C reliefs as a point of comparison. Just as the Assyrian artists drew attention to the activity of the royal body, so Yahweh's body appears in the Lamentations poem as a consequence of his destructive actions. We also discussed how the poem makes mention of many aspects of the divine face specifically but consistently withholds any mention of God's eyes, thereby confirming Zion's petition for Yahweh's gaze. For Daughter Zion and the speaker, we argued that the poet uses their bodily profiles as a means of fostering readerly empathy, akin to the visceral portraits of the lions seen in the Room C reliefs. Ultimately, the relationship between their bodily suffering and that witnessed in the children helps to reveal the power of the poem's imagery to act upon the reader/viewer and to elicit a response.

6.3.2. The Presentation of Perspective

The varied use of perspective represents a second point of comparison between the presentation of violence in the Neo-Assyrian artwork and the biblical poem. By perspective, I refer to the way in

which the artwork or poem grants access into the scene. After a brief review of the use of perspective in the Assyrian work, I will address three different forms of perspectival play in the poem: (1) the poem's general approach from "far" to "near" Zion, (2) the poem's specific integration of voice and perspective to enhance these perspectival changes, and (3) the poem's strategic use of the "worm's eye" point of view in the description of Zion's children.

6.3.2.1. Perspective in Neo-Assyrian Iconography

As previously discussed, Ashurbanipal's artists attempted to blend two primary forms of rendering perspective in their reliefs. The first, popularized by Ashurbanipal's grandfather Sennacherib, provides a "bird's eye" view of the scene in a vertical arrangement, in which figures, dislocated from shared groundlines, are scattered across the tableau and held together by certain geographical patterns (mountain lines, rivers, and so forth). The second, attested in the Neo-Assyrian period as early as Ashurnasirpal II, offers a "worm's eye" perspective in a horizontal arrangement, where figures overlap one another across extended, unifying groundlines. In the Til-Tuba composition the combined use of both perspectives yields a chaotic scene with multiple entry points. The reader witnesses the violence from both elevated and ground-level perspectives in a manner that evokes both the magnitude and intimacy of the battle. While the extremities of the scene (the Til-Tuba mound and River Ulai) situate the viewer at a distance from the fighting, the three-tiered registers that organize the middle of the three-slab space position them as engaged participants. Moreover, the awkward transitions (or lack thereof) between such arrangements, however crude to modern eyes, contributes to the mayhem of the violence and disorients the viewer through its abrupt changes. The Teumman narrative, for

example, largely takes place at the top of the visual space and thus at a distance from the viewer (as an almost backgrounded event). The sequence descends into the second register, however, precisely at its most climactic moment—Teumman's decapitation—and thereby uses this "closer look" to guide the reader into its most important event.

Room C also features both perspectives but does not blend them in the same manner. The artists use the vertical arrangement in the narrative's second scene to provide a broader outlook on the crowds, who make their way to the Nineveh arena. The "bird's eye" perspective provides the context for the composition's detailed depiction of Ashurbanipal's hunting event. Once in the arena, the artists prefer the "worm's eye" perspective almost exclusively, although hints of the vertical arrangement are seen at the scene's edges, where the artists have stacked Assyrian attendants and their mastiffs to frame the lion encounters. Otherwise, the viewers witness the king and the dying beasts at ground level, and this perspective enables an intimate (and gruesome) access to the hunt. In Room C, the rare use of the vertical arrangement functions solely to provide background and context to the composition's royal action.

6.3.2.2. Perspective in Lamentations 2

With these artistic perspectives in mind, I will now consider the biblical poem's own manipulation of "bird's-" and "worm's-eye" perspectives and the implications of these various points of view for the meaning and experience of the poem. I will begin by exploring the poem's broad perspectival movements and will demonstrate how changes in poetic voicing draw the reader closer to Zion as the poem unfolds. I will then assess more specific perspectival shifts in vv. 1-10 with specific attention to

how the movement from "bird's eye" to "worm's eye" ingeniously interacts with the use of direct speech. Finally, I will point out the co-inhering relationship between abrupt perspectival changes and the poem's most alarming image—Zion's dying children—in order to show how the poet capitalizes on point of view techniques to render the children more immediate.

6.3.2.2.1. General Perspectival Movement in Lamentations 2

The manipulation of perspective in Neo-Assyrian iconography introduces an interesting comparand by which to assess the same in Lamentations 2. The fluctuation between "far" and "near" in the Til-Tuba reliefs operates at several different levels within the poem. First, as we consider the broader perspectival movements within the poem, changes in voice across the twenty-two stanzas move the reader from "bird's eye" to "worm's eye," from dispassionate observation to intimate engagement. As many have noted, the first ten verses of the poem describe Zion's destruction in third-person. The poem shifts suddenly into first-person in v. 11 with a personal account of the scene's impact upon the speaker. Verse 13 serves as a bridge between the speaker's self-description and an apostrophe to Zion, as all first-person references disappear in v. 14ff (notwithstanding the direct discourse of the enemies in v. 16 and Zion in vv. 20-22). The apostrophe that governs vv. 13-19 incorporates various third-person descriptions (prophets in v. 14, bystanders in v. 15, enemies in v. 16, and Yahweh in v. 17) but re-orients them around the addressee (e.g., "your prophets" in v. 14). The second-person voice climaxes in the imperatives of vv. 18-19, which give way to the grand finale of Zion's own first-person account. These final stanzas stage the Zion/Yahweh conflict in the severest of terms, isolating both parties in an I-Thou encounter in which the hearer does not participate. The poem therefore progressively inches

the reader toward Zion herself, beginning with a dispassionate observation of her destruction (vv. 1-10), moving through the sympathetic account of the speaker (vv. 11-19), and culminating in the overheard speech of Zion herself. The poem's points of view alone close the perceived distance between the hearer and the sufferer, eventually bringing us within ear range of Zion's lament.

6.3.2.2.2. Specific Perspectival Movements in Lamentations 2

The poem's content then supplements this incremental movement with dramatic shifts in setting. This "advance" toward Zion is seen predominantly in the third-person account (vv. 1-10), in which the speaker frames his tour of Zion's ruins as a descent from the heavens into the streets. The first stanza opens with the entire cosmos in view: God "has cast from the heavens to earth the beauty of Israel" (v. 1). Jerusalem is introduced as "the footstool of [God's] feet"—a metaphor that privileges the divine outlook and dwarfs the Judahite capital as a piece of heavenly furniture. The second stanza draws closer to the city but holds the entire nation in view: God has devoured "all the settlements of Jacob" and torn down "the fortified cities of Daughter Judah." The entire "kingdom" and "her leaders" fall headlong to the ground and share in Judah's cosmic descent to earth. Despite the absence of any concrete setting in the third stanza, its language retains this "bird's eye" perspective with references to "every" (כל) horn of Israel being cut down and God's fire consuming "all around" (סביב). Even the reference to God's "right hand"—given the size of the divine body in v. 1—implies a perspective big enough to encompass "the enemy" (armies presumably) and "Jacob" (whether Jerusalem specifically or the Judahite populace as a whole).

Notwithstanding v. 4 (discussed below), the following stanzas (vv. 5-9) descend from a 10,000 foot perspective into the heights of Jerusalem itself with an extended look at its architecture. Once again, the approach is progressive. We begin with "Israel" (v. 5a) itself before the poet specifies the referent as "all her palaces" and "her strongholds" (v. 5b), circumscribing the totality of Jerusalem construction. The speaker then conducts a tour of its most prominent complexes (vv. 6-9). Verse 6 introduces the temple as God's "booth" (v. 6a) and thereby privileges the divine perspective once again. We advance toward the sanctuary not from the ground but from the heavens, where the majestic complex appears as a mere makeshift tent vulnerable to the elements. It is not until v. 7 that the writer brings the reader close enough to see the rejected "altar" (v. 7a) within the "sanctuary" or "house of the LORD" (v. 7). After an initial mention of the "walls of her palaces" in v. 7b, the final two verses of the section (vv. 8-9) then move outside the temple to regard the city's defenses. Another subtle descent appears here. In verse 8, the poet again uses the implied size of the divine body to expand the wall's height and breadth, across which Yahweh "stretches" the measuring line. This "bird's eye" view quickly collapses in v. 9, however, as we consider the "ground" (ארץ) into which the gates have sunk.

Verses 10-12 complete the falling action of the previous stanzas. Verse 10 provides the first face-to-face encounter with Jerusalem's populace at ground zero. With both feet in the dirt, we see the elders sitting on the "earth" (ארץ) heaping dust upon their heads and the maidens, who bring their heads to the "ground" (ארץ) in mourning. The speaker joins the devastated population in v. 11—his liver is poured out on the "ground" (ארץ)—and solidifies the reader's "worm's eye" perspective. The

crash landing from the heavens begun in v. 1 has reached its tragic terminus in "the streets of the city," where children and sucklings fade toward death.

The true genius of the poetry resides in the interaction between the perspectival play, poetic content, and voicing. First, the speaker does not use first-person language until the tenth stanza secures the artistic perspective at ground level. This position within Jerusalem itself not only permits the detailed description of Zion's children in vv. 11c-12 but also brings the poet and reader close enough to overhear the children as they suffer. The poet withholds all direct discourse from enemies and victims alike until the speaker has brought the listener within earshot of the Jerusalem residents. Only after we are on the ground with the maidens and in the streets with the children does the speaker record the little ones questioning their mothers: "Where is the grain and wine?" (v. 12a). This "closer" perspective also enables the speaker to overhear and record the surprise of the passersby (v. 15), the boasting of the enemy (v. 16), and the protest of Daughter Zion (vv. 20-22). Even the apostrophe to Zion (vv. 13-19) is facilitated by the protracted descent in vv. 1-10, for the speaker does not plead with the personified city directly until inhabiting "the plazas of the city" (v. 12). That is, Zion is not addressed until we are brought close enough for us to hear her (vv. 13-19), and more importantly, we are not permitted to hear her until the speaker introduces a final theological detail that transforms "where" we are in the poetic space. As the speaker recalls the dying children in the "street corners" (vv. 19d), he also repositions the city (and the reader with it) before God when commanding Zion to pour out her heart "before the face of the Lord" (v. 19b). The Jerusalem setting itself is transformed into a space fraught with theological tension. Though Zion will recall familiar locales in her lament—the "sanctuary of the Lord" (v. 20c) and "the streets" (v. 21a)—the city's direct

discourse holds the reader before the "face" of God (cf. v. 22b) and thus concludes the poem with its most disturbingly intimate perspective.

6.3.2.2.3. Perspectival Movement and Zion's Children in Lamentations 2

One final aspect concerning the perspective of violence in the poem is its use of various devices to highlight the poem's most horrific image. As discussed above, the Battle of Til-Tuba reliefs seize on the interplay between horizontal and vertical arrangements to emphasize the climax of the imbedded narrative. They bring the presentation of Teumman's beheading from the top to the middle register as a means of bringing the episode "closer" to the viewer and thereby manipulate the artistic space to enhance its propagandistic function. Such techniques are analogous to similar tendencies within the Lamentations poem, where the writer heightens the shock of imagistic content with key perspectival changes.

Four examples bear out this artistry. First, within the extended "descent" that spans the first ten stanzas especially, the writer incorporates an anomalous shift from the "big-picture" to a more intimate setting in v. 4. After verses 2 and 3 bring "the fortified cities" and the "surrounding" area of Judah into view respectively, verse 4 leads the reader into the "tent of Daughter Zion." Though the descriptions of the divine body and the tent metaphor perhaps maintain the "broader" outlook of the preceding stanzas, the movement into the domestic space of "Daughter" Zion is obvious and abrupt, especially as it coincides with Yahweh bearing arms and killing "all who delighted the eye" (v. 4b). As the poetic analysis previously showed, the phrase connotes not simply Zion's valuables but also her people, including her children. The reference to her "eyes" invites the reader to see the world from her

perspective and, coupled with the influence of the domestic setting, foreshadows the suffering infants, who will both bring the speaker's "eyes" to tears (v. 11a) and lead him to prohibit Zion from resting her "eyes" (v. 18c). The author augments the shock of Yahweh's inimical violence against Zion's children with the sudden movement away from the expanse of Judah's territories into the intimate setting of a devastated home.

Second, once the poem has led the listener to the Jerusalem soil, the writer signals the introduction of the children's image by introducing the first-person voice. The arrival into the city streets coincides with the speaker's dramatic emotional display. The description of the poetic image in v. 12 also incorporates the first use of direct speech from Zion's inhabitants and leads into the speaker's apostrophe to Daughter Zion in v. 13. The poet thus bookends the already shocking image of dying children with a rapid succession of voice changings—shifting from third to first person in v. 11, quoting the little ones' question in v. 12, and addressing Zion in v. 13. Third, when this image re-appears in v. 19, the writer once again spotlights their appearance with new verbal features. The language used to describe the children in v. 19 is directly (even suspiciously) reminiscent of that in v. 12, but the speaker sidesteps a mere repetition of poetic content by switching into the imperative mood, its first occurrence in the poem. The series of commands intensify the poem's urgent tone and seizes on the poetic image to encourage Zion's lament. As soon as the children re-appear, they are cited as grounds for divine protest. Finally, in the poem's final stanzas, the images become almost intolerable to hear, and the poet draws further attention to their grotesque witness by placing them in Zion's mouth. Yet again, the writer employs timely perspectival changes to attune the hearer's ear to the poem's marquee image and, as a result, to enhance their vividness and proximity to the listener.

6.3.2.3. Summary

Study of the blended perspectives in Neo-Assyrian artwork provides an interesting data set by which to probe the use of the same in the biblical poem. The artists' ability to capture both breadth and depth within the warfare scenes and individual suffering in the hunting scenes emerges from these manipulated points of view, and the above discussion notes similar movements in Lamentations. The poet not only brings the reader into greater proximity to Zion as the poem unfolds but strategically withholds changes in voicing and direct speech until the listener has been brought into Zion's streets. There is thus a concerted effort across the various figures of speech to facilitate the reader's advance. This gradual movement from "far" to "near" is not without interruption, however. Just as the Neo-Assyrian artists switch into horizontal arrangement to highlight iconic encounters, so the Lamentations poet paints a more intimate setting when describing the city's children as a means of intensifying the reader's encounter with this tragedy.

6.3.3. The Presentation of the Sufferer

A look into the presentation of the body and perspectival play in the poem (in light of the Neo-Assyrian artwork) has shown two subtle ways by which the "power" of violence is rendered. I will now consider how the iconography and biblical poem present the sufferer. More specifically, I will compare the framing techniques the text and image employ—isolated groundlines in the Neo-Assyrian art and enjambed couplets in Lamentations 2—to draw attention to pivotal violent episodes in their compositions. As we will see, the poem features enjambment not simply as an

accommodation to the *qinah* meter (3+2) but also as a primary means of cordoning Zion off and spotlighting the personified city as an individual unit of attention.

In the analyses of the Neo-Assyrian sculptures, we noted the various methods by which the artists drew attention to important violent episodes. For the Til-Tuba composition, the sculptors use the very feature that obscures focused attention—the proliferation of bodies—to frame the executions of prominent leaders. The Elamite corpses are so numerous that they have become integrated into the texture of the tableau as a gruesome background. As a result, the artists signal the presence of a noteworthy execution both by carving out an empty space among the bodies and by using the distinctive appearance of the epigraphs to catch the viewer's eye. For the lion hunt scenes in Room C, the sculptors employ an opposite technique. Instead of embedding the iconic encounters within a mass of disparate lines, the artists empty the background entirely and isolate each leonine victim on a solitary groundline within the blank space. Alongside them, the king's height and size attract the viewer's eye to the royal persona.

The poem, though not an exclusively visual composition, nevertheless finds comparable ways of drawing the attention of the "mind's eye" to the poem's critical figures and moments. Like the Room C reliefs, the poet uses enjambment to isolate those who suffer. Among the many effects of enjambment identified by Dobbs-Allsopp within the Lamentations lyric sequence, he notes the device's ability to control or focus the audience's attention, particularly when the completing line (or *rejet*) pinpoints key subjects or topics.[19] The poem's opening couplet, for example, exhibits a Verb / Subject + Object form, wherein the poet delays and thereby isolates the poem's iconic encounter

[19] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Effects of Enjambment in Lamentations (Part 2)," *ZAW* 113 (2001): esp. 375-77.

between "the Lord" and "Daughter Zion" in the second line. The use of the redundant *nota accusativi* makes the relationship between אדני and בת ציון as one of abuser and victim unmistakable. The enjambed couplet quarantines Zion and her Lord into a single unit of attention that cuts through the dramatic cry of the opening line and underscores the governing conflict of the poem.

As the first eight stanzas unfold, the content of the *rejet* shifts from one of "subject+object" to that of "object" alone. Rather than segregating the Zion/Yahweh encounter, the poet focuses all attention on the victim, who stands alone on an isolated "groundline." According to Dobbs-Allsopp, "the *rejet* frames the object in these first eight stanzas no less than 11 times (2,1b. 2a. b. c. 3a. 4b. 5c. 6b. c. 7b. 8a)," which is especially striking given the fact that "object enjambment occurs six other times in the whole of Lamentations!"[20] Moreover, the objects relegated to the *rejet* in Lamentations 2 are variegated without a single repetition among them: "the beauty of Israel" (v. 1b), "all the settlements of Jacob" (v. 2a), "the fortified cities of Daughter Judah" (v. 2b), "the kingdom and her leaders" (v. 2c), "every horn of Israel" (v. 3a), "all who delight the eye" (v. 4b), "assembly and Sabbath" (v. 6b), "king and priest" (v. 6c), "the walls of her palaces" (v. 7b), and "the walls of Daughter Zion" (v. 8a). The writer never re-uses a Jerusalem epithet (e.g. "Daughter Zion") among these isolated objects. Though this form of enjambment recedes in vv. 9ff (cf. vv. 9c, 14a, 15b), it returns with a vindictive bite in Zion's concluding words (vv. 20a, 20c, 22a; cf. v. 20b).

In vv. 9ff, the focus shifts away from Jerusalem as an object of divine wrath toward Jerusalem as suffering subject, and the type of enjambment used assists in this transition. Subject enjambment continues to relegate the city or its people to the second line, leaving the reader to behold the victims

[20] Ibid., 376.

in solitude (vv. 10a, 10c, 21a, 22b; cf. v. 21b).[21] Elsewhere, the speaker delays the vocative to the *rejet* (e.g., "Daughter Jerusalem" in v. 13a and "Maiden Daughter Zion" in v. 13b), and on a few occasions, the poet presents the sufferers and their action (subject + verb) in the first line and uses the second line to fill out the setting behind the victim. This device predominates the speaker's testimony concerning Jerusalem's little ones. For example, in verse 12c, the first line draws attention the dying children as subjects—"as their lives are poured out"—before locating them "at the breast of their mothers" (see also vv. 12b, 19b, 19d) in the second line. Altogether, this method focuses the lens of the mind's eye on the subject before bringing in the blurred background behind them.

These various forms of enjambment spotlight Zion and its constituents as the center of visual scrutiny. In vv. 1-8 especially, the object enjambment characterizes Yahweh as the subject of violence and sole perpetrator of abuse, and the diversity of objects featured in these stanzas cordons off the victim as the one to whom the listener must attend. By presenting a collection of different "sufferers" in this way, the writer fills out the character of "Daughter Zion" (introduced in v. 1), constructs a detailed profile of her suffering, and forces the reader to regard her repeatedly. Just as the elaborate and isolated presentation of the Room C lions was instrumental in evoking viewer sympathy, so the Lamentations poet enhances the empathetic response inherent in hearing of Zion's destruction by consistently separating and focusing on the sufferer as the primary unit of attention.

[21] Cf. the use of subject enjambment to introduce new topoi in the poem (e.g., the passersby in v. 15a, the enemies in v. 16a) comparable to subject-object enjambment in v. 1.

6.3.4. Summary

The above discussion demonstrated the utility of using ancient Near Eastern iconography for determining how violence figures in written imagery. By analyzing the various means by which Neo-Assyrian artwork depicted human bodies, manipulated perspective, and framed images of suffering, we were able to uncover comparable techniques in the biblical poem and vice versa. First, attention to the actions of the king's body in the hunting reliefs led us to consider the verbal means by which the poet constructs the divine body. There I argued that the poem carefully withholds description of God's eyes as a means of heightening the urgency of Zion's plea for God to "see" her suffering. Second, we appealed to the blending of vertical and horizontal arrangements in the Neo-Assyrian reliefs in order to note how the poem gradually shifts from "far" to "near" Zion and integrates changes in voicing to facilitate this perspectival approach. Finally, we compared the use of isolation in the Room C reliefs with the lineation of the biblical poem and discussed how enjambment focuses the reader's attention on the isolated figures of the *rejet*. In the aggregate, these observations prove the payoff of ancient Near Eastern iconography for understanding the poetics of imagery in the biblical material.

6.4. THE INTEGRATION OF VIOLENCE IN TEXT AND IMAGE

The previous discussion focused predominantly on the "presentation" of key poetic images. We reviewed the various ways that the Neo-Assyrian artists position the viewer to see violence in the palace sculptures in order then to illuminate how the biblical poet leads the reader to visualize its content—particularly as it pertains to what is revealed and concealed about human/divine bodies, what images are privileged by shifts in perspective, and what is highlighted through framing

techniques like enjambment. Now, I will consider the "integration" of violence in the iconography and poetry. By "integration," I refer to the unifying features of the poem's imagery—the way the images hang together and relate to one another across the fabric of the poem. Three techniques will be discussed: (1) the "multiplication" of violence, wherein I will address the way the artists fill the visual space (whether literal or imagined) with repeated figures, whether generic or unique; (2) the "integration" of violence, which will examine the shared "nonnarrative" means by which the compositions hold together, and (3) the "temporality" of violence, which will explore the unique ways both the reliefs and poems manipulate time in the viewing/reading experience.

6.4.1. The Multiplication of Violence

I begin with an exploration of how the Neo-Assyrian artists expand violence within the visual space and to what effect. I will then consider four ways in which the biblical poem "multiplies" images of violence in the biblical poem: (1) totalizing language, (2) word pairs, (3) expanded backgrounds, and (4) ambiguity.

6.4.1.1. The Multiplication of Violence in Neo-Assyrian Iconography

Much of the power of the Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs lies not simply in the details of the violence portrayed but also in the proliferation of suffering within the tableau. In both the Room 33 and Room C reliefs, victims abound and multiply across the visual space in various ways. The Til-Tuba artists, for example, incorporate so many Elamite victims that they are integrated into the fabric of the background. As discussed in the previous analyses (chapter 4), the *horror vacui* obfuscates

comprehension and gives rise to the image's chaotic character, but the choice to fill up the empty space with maimed and decapitated corpses (notwithstanding the Assyrian soldiers and geographical features) elevates violence as the fundamental characteristic of Neo-Assyrian history. Violence is woven into the fabric of the composition itself. The Til-Tuba reliefs in particular overwhelm the viewer with the sheer quantity of suffering rather than its specific quality. As opposed to drawing out the individuality of any single victim (with the exception of the Elamite leaders in the narrative sequence), the artists simply replicate the generic Elamite figure and contort each body into a range of stock positions and wounds. The lines of Elamite bodies and Assyrian soldiers accumulate in multiple directions and thus encourage the eye's movement across the scene. Collectively, the chaotic combination of these otherwise flat figures bears witness to the power of Assyrian strength.

The Room C reliefs proliferate suffering in an altogether different manner. Over against the dozens of wounded and decapitated bodies that decorate the Til-Tuba landscape, the hunting arena privileges the experiences of eighteen meticulously rendered lions. Their number still exceeds that of their royal conqueror, but their isolated placement, realism, and individuation attract rather than overwhelm the viewer's focused attention. In contrast to the omnidirectional orientation of the Til-Tuba figures, the "quality" of the lions' represented agony and the empty space between them in the Room C program holds the reader's gaze in a manner that comes close to undermining the piece's propagandistic function, or does undermine it, according to some interpreters (see 5.4.2.).

6.4.1.2. The Multiplication of Violence in Lamentations 2

Given these two artistic methods, does Lamentations "multiply" suffering figures in a comparable or contrasting manner? I will discuss four ways the poem accomplishes this. Two of these methods— the use of totalizing language and ambiguity—correspond to Til-Tuba's tendency to multiply the "quantity" of violence within the visual space. The other two—word pairs and expanded backgrounds—serve to heighten the "quality" of violence, much like Room C's unique attention to each dying lion.

6.4.1.2.1. The Use of Totalizing Language

First, the most obvious way that the poem expands the "scope" of violence within its imagined space is through the use of totalizing language (references to "all" or "every"). This technique figures a total of eleven times in the piece, with the majority of these instances using the noun כל to expand either (1) the extent of the devastation (God devours "all the settlements of Jacob" [v. 2a], cuts off "every horn of Israel" [v. 3a], kills "all who delighted the eye" [v. 4b], devours "all her palaces" [v. 5b]), (2) the number of human participants ("all who pass along the road" [v. 15a], "all your enemies" [v. 16a]), or (3) the scope of the landscape ("the joy of all the earth" [v. 15c], the head of "every street" [v. 19d]). The poem also features סביב as another means of extending the effects of God's violence: Yahweh burns against Jacob "all around" (v. 3c) and summons Zion's enemies "from all around" (v. 22a). For many of these examples, the writer introduces a more or less generic image (e.g., "palaces" or "enemies") and uses totalizing language to multiply the line's image. Akin to the Til-Tuba arrangement, such multiplication pays only passing attention (if that) to the details of what is represented and works

instead by cloning a rather simple image or idea and reduplicating it. The exaggerating language contributes little to the line's meaning outside of its expansive function. Put differently, the expanse or multiplication *is* the function.

6.4.1.2.2. The Use of Word Pairs

Second, typical of Hebrew poetic style, the writer will often opt for word pairs to depict a given whole. God rejects "king (sg.) and priest (sg.)" in his anger (v. 6c) and causes "assembly and Sabbath" (v. 6b) to be forgotten. He sends "rampart (sg.) and wall (sg.)" into mourning (v. 8c), as "child (sg.) and suckling (sg.)" faint in the streets (v. 11c). Even the prophets see "emptiness and treachery" (v. 14a) and "empty and seductive" oracles (v. 14c), contributing to Jerusalem's "mourning and moaning" (v. 5c). In Zion's concluding protest, she describes the "priest (sg.) and prophet (sg.)" that are killed in the Lord's sanctuary (v. 20c) and the "young (sg.) and old (sg.)" that lie in the streets (v. 21a). While each of these pairs may function differently in its immediate context, the frequency with which the poet employs the pairs strikes the ear and speaks to its importance for the lyric performance.

On one hand, these word sets proliferate new vocabulary by which to detail certain verbal images. Rather than "leaders," we see "king and priest" (v. 6c), and in place of "fortifications," we see "rampart and wall" (v. 8c). This attention to detail is also seen in the use of pairs that are not immediately juxtaposed: "settlements" and "fortified cities" (v. 2a-b), "kingdom and her leaders" (v. 2c), "enemy" and "foe" (v. 4a-b), "palaces" and "strongholds" (v. 5b), "booth" and "assembly place" (v. 6a), "altar" and "sanctuary" (v. 7a), "gates" and "bars" (v. 9a), "king and princes" (v. 9b), and "elders of

Daughter Zion" and "maidens of Jerusalem" (v. 10a,c).[22] The additional nouns elicited by the pairing technique fill in the mental images with nuancing detail and thereby multiply the figures within the image by diversifying them.

On the other hand, the selection of predominantly singular pairs (cf. "my maidens and my young men" in v. 21b) often builds out the plural with reference to the particular. In the case of the "young and old" (v. 21a) dying in the roadways or the "rampart and wall" (v. 8c) that mourn their destruction, for example, the poet selects two individual extremities of the given nominal category to suggest the diverse whole of the Jerusalem population or its fortifications, respectively. The use of merismus or synecdoche in this way privileges attention to a duality of representative examples (and the heterogeneous range implied by their combination) over a more homogenous collective represented in plural nouns. In the subtlest of ways, the poet is able to multiply the scope of suffering while retaining readerly focus upon singular victims, events, or ideas. Furthermore, the aural similarity that accompanies many of the pairs also contributes to the abundance of meaning generated by their combination. The repeated sounds in *ḥēl wĕḥômāh* (v. 8c), *ta'ănîyyāh wa'ănîyyāh* (v. 6c), *'ôlēl wĕyônēq* (v. 11c), *šāwĕ wĕṭāpēl* (v. 14a), or *ná'ar wĕzāqēn* (v. 21a)—albeit to varying degrees of alliteration and assonance—knit the nouns together and blend their semantic ranges as a means of suggesting, once again, a whole that is bigger than the sum of its parts.

[22] Many of these pairs demonstrate Alter's argument for "structures of intensification" across the parallel lines: e.g., "booth" and "assembly place" (v. 6a), "altar" and "sanctuary" (v. 7a), "gates" and "bars (v. 9a). See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, new and rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 1-28. 75-103.

6.4.1.2.3. The Use of Expanded Backgrounds

A third means by which the poem expands the scope of its violent imagery is by manipulating the "background" or "setting" of the mental image for these nominal pairs. In these cases, the writer will feature a singular noun that is then modified by a setting presented in plural form. For example, in v. 11, the speaker claims to suffer "because child (sg.) and suckling (sg.) faint / in the streets (pl.) of the city." Of course, the combination of both עלל and יונק carries a meaning beyond the singular referents of the two nouns, as discussed above. Nevertheless, the poet will later use plural references to the children without hesitation—"your little ones" (v. 19c), "those weakened by hunger" (v. 19d), "their beautiful little ones" (v. 20b)—as well as plural verbs and pronouns. In vv. 11-12, however, the children figure for the first time as two singular nouns that are then multiplied across the "streets (pl.) of the city." This technique, however understated, gathers attention to singular referents that are then scattered across a repeated landscape. The poet retains the reader's focus on the individual sufferer, who is then proliferated among Zion's numerous streets. Later, the speaker states that they faint "like one wounded (sg.) in the plazas (pl.) of the city." Zion herself then mimics this language in v. 21a: "They lie down on the ground in the streets (pl.), young (sg.) and old (sg.)." Again, the poem seizes on the range of individuals implied by the merismus and increases their number by stretching the background of the verbal image. The technique underscores the brutality and gruesomeness of the images—as if one body was disarticulated and strewn across a cityscape.

6.4.1.2.4. The Use of Ambiguity

Fourth, as addressed in 2.2.2. and 2.3.4., the poem seizes on ambiguity to multiply nominal referents. Two examples bear this technique out. First, the final couplet of verse seven describes the noise heard within "the house of the LORD, / as on the day of assembly." The simile alone tragically increases the assumed volume of the cries, rendering them comparable to the shouting heard on Jerusalem's loudest and most exuberant feast days. The poet enhances the visual dimensions of the image, however, by withholding the explicit subject of the couplet's governing verb (נתנו). The nearest possible subject is "the walls of her palaces" in the preceding line, but the "enemy" to whom God has handed over these walls is another enticing possibility. Though other subjects could be named, the poet's refusal to identify the source of the shouting allows for the visual presence of all possible parties (walls, enemies, citizens) contributing to the din within God's house. Second, the final couplet of v. 10 uses ambiguity and the temporality of poetic reading in order to blend one set of images into the other. The tenth stanza opens with a description of Zion's elders, who sit silently on the ground, heaping dust upon their heads. The elders serve as the only named subject until the stanza's concluding line. The final couplet (lines 5-6) is enjambed and delays the introduction of a new subject to the *rejet*: "They bring their heads down to the ground, / the maidens of Jerusalem." In the temporal unfolding of the poem, the listener assumes that the subject of the fifth line's verb (הורידו) has not changed from the elders described to this point. It is not until the surprising twist of the *rejet* that the mind is prompted to re-construct the scene (or rearrange the poetry) with these new mourners. The poet thus seizes on the unnamed subject of the fifth line to expand the purview of the grieving populace and to draw together the two groups (elders and maidens) into the same verbal image. The

blending effect that results from this ambiguity multiplies suffering and violence more generally, sacrificing differentiation and clarity for the sake of quantity.

6.4.1.3. Summary

Though the poet is not afforded the same methods by which to repeat or multiply a given image as an artist working in relief, an awareness of how the Neo-Assyrian sculptors expand the scope of suffering and to what degree has provoked an analysis of how suffering is proliferated in the biblical text. The palace sculptures feature a range of methods—whether repeating figure after figure in a generic manner, overlapping figures with little differentiating features, or rendering each sufferer uniquely—and the poem also "multiplies" victims both in generic and specific ways: generically through the simple repetition of totalizing language, and specifically, both by opting for word pairs in place of plural descriptors and by expanding the visual setting of individual sufferers.

6.4.2. The Integration of Violence

A fundamental feature of the experience of lyric poetry is the tension it creates between integration and disintegration. A verbal medium structured solely by human language and its features, the lyric event walks the line of conflict between centrifugal forces that threaten to break the poem into unstructured nonsense and centripetal forces that hold the words and stanzas together in an intelligible whole.[23] As a non-narrative mode of discourse, the lyric poem lacks a grounding chain of

[23] Edward Stankiewicz, "Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Poetry," *Semiotica* 38 (1982): 217–42; Daniel Grossberg, *Centripetal and Centrifugal Structures in Biblical Poetry*, SBLMS 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), esp. 5-14. On the tension between lyric's cohering and disintegrating features (and its non-narrativity especially), see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry* (New York: Oxford University, 2015), 178–214; idem, "Poetry of the Psalms," in *The Oxford*

events by which to guide its utterance and must rely instead on the components of language itself to hold the composition together, including meter, rhyme, wordplay, and metaphor. Analogously, the Neo-Assyrian reliefs discussed above present a range of images within the broad visual space and employ a variety of artistic techniques by which they imply their unity for the viewer—a unity that is not easily or simply to be identified with a "grounding chain of events." These include but are not limited to the artists' stock presentation of human figures, the use of registers, the incorporation of geographic details, the foregrounding of key persons/events, or the arrangement of events into snippets of narrative progression. With the latter, the artists incorporate narrative sequences as a feature of iconographic presentation, but the "chain of events" does not constitute the center of meaning upon which the entire iconographic arrangement is built. Like Til-Tuba and Room C, the events are interrupted or non-intuitively connected in a manner that forces a breakdown in the sequence and ultimately makes the narrative subservient to the broader meaning of the composition. In the following section, I will consider the integrating function of repetition in the Til-Tuba and Room C reliefs as a point of comparison with the repetition of Yahweh's anger in the poem. In light of the Neo-Assyrian reliefs, the frequent references to Yahweh and/or his anger serve not only as thematic reminders but instead constitute the pillars upon which the poem's image repertoire stands.

Handbook of the Psalms, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University, 2014), 79–98; idem, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," in *The Evolution of Rationality: Interdisciplinary Essays in Honor of J. Wentzel van Huyssteen*, ed. F. LeRon Shults (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 348–56; Brent A. Strawn, "Lyric Poetry," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 437-39; Katie M Heffelfinger, *I Am Large, I Contain Multitude Lyric Cohesion and Conflict in Second Isaiah* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 36–53.

6.4.2.1. Integrating Forces in the Neo-Assyrian Reliefs

First, the Battle of Til-Tuba reliefs demand particularly "strong" centripetal forces to counteract the chaos of amassed bodies that threaten to disintegrate the composition. Many of these orienting or cohering aspects were discussed earlier (4.4-4.6). The artists depict a sharp differentiation between Elamite and Assyrian fighters to facilitate recognition, and they present a broad left-to-right movement (from the Til-Tuba mound to the River Ulai) across the three slabs, expedited by the three horizontal registers. Embedded within the carnage, they also show the sequence of King Teumman's capture and beheading, but, as previously noted (4.6), the events are not arranged in a consistent pattern and instead weave through the visual space in shifting directions and across multiple registered levels (fig. 4.15). A narrative sequence of sorts is present but, in many ways, contributes only to the composition's chaotic disintegration rather than any clear coherence. The narrative is "told" by means of episodes that change directions and move between registers with little or no visual cues to guide the viewer. The composition thus "hangs," as Bahrani and others have shown, not on the "telling" of the Teumman story per se but on the repeated and episodic presentation of the scene's climax: the king's decapitated head. Teumman and his associates are the only distinguishable faces among the masses, and the artists draw the viewer's attention to their fate with captions and framing techniques. The composition thus exists not simply to narrate an Elamite defeat but to perform repeatedly Teumman's execution and to demonstrate Ashurbanipal's timeless mastery over his opponent's body. "Repetition" keys the viewer on the piece's core significance.

Second, the Room C reliefs exhibit a general unity and a relatively discernable progression in their arrangement. The innumerable bodily lines that characterize the Til-Tuba reliefs are not present

here. Instead, the artists suspend the dying lions in an empty background. The one-sided conflict between the victorious royal hunter and his game is unmistakable to the viewer, but the basic recognition of this encounter does not resolve the centrifugal forces within the reliefs. Here again, the artists present the royal hunt in a narrative-like fashion, beginning with the king's preparation for battle, up through the lions' execution in the Nineveh arena. At the same time, the sculptors' preference for symmetrical structures over narrative intelligibility muddles the meaning of the sequence. As previously described, representations of the king face one another across distinct narrative episodes (on each wall) and the changes in royal weaponry and wardrobe suggest that multiple different hunts are in view. The repeated depictions of the royal hunter—magnified in his chariot and elevated above his contemporaries—are the primary orientation points of the visual composition. Ultimately, the visual narrative is eschewed as a predominant centripetal force within the image and instead becomes subservient to the exaltation of the king as the timeless, transcendent victor over chaos.[24]

[24] Bruce F. Kawin's work concerning the effects of repetition in film and literature lend theoretical support to these insights. Kawin distinguishes between positive and negative types of repetition. In the former, a word or experience "is repeated with equal or greater force at each occurrence," but in the latter (what he calls repetitiousness), the word or experience "is repeated with less impact at each recurrence, repeated to no particular end, out of a failure of invention, or sloppiness of thought" (*Telling It Again and Again: Repetition in Literature and Film* [Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1989], 4). When occurring positively, repetition has a building or emphasizing function: "Repeated enough, a word or idea or phrase or image or name will come to dominate us to such an extent that our only defenses are to concede its importance or turn off the stimulus completely" (49-50). For a helpful summary of Kawin's work, see Brent A. Strawn, "Keep/Observe/Do -- Carefully -- Today! The Rhetoric of Repetition in Deuteronomy," in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. Brent A. Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 220-25.

6.4.2.2. Integrating Forces in Lamentations 2

Lamentations 2 exhibits a range of centripetal features that hold the (lengthy!) lyric together across its twenty-two stanzas. Many of these forces are created through exclusively linguistic means. The acrostic form, for example, shapes and guides the reading experience across the disorienting (shifts in) content.[25] As Berlin explains: "The world of Lamentations has been disrupted; no order exists any longer in the real world. But as if to counteract this chaos, the poet has constructed his own linguistic order that he marks out graphically for us by the orderly progression of the letters of the alphabet."[26] Within this broader structuring technique, the poem builds bridges across its disparate stanzas with poetic voicing (e.g., unifying the otherwise disparate list of prophets [v. 14], passersby [v. 15], and enemies [v. 16] within the speaker's address) and the consistent rhythm of the *qinah* meter, notwithstanding the use of alliteration and assonance to bridge disparate elements within and across individual lines.

Beyond these more linguistic modes of integration, the poem's imagery also works to hold the extended reflection together. In a manner analogous to the repeated head of Teumman in the Til-Tuba reliefs or the fourfold repetition of Ashurbanipal in Room C of the North Palace, the composite image of the poem hangs on the person and emotion of both Yahweh and Zion. With respect to the former, the six appearances of the Yahweh's "anger" (אף) are concentrated in the poem's beginning (vv. 1 [2x], 3, 6) and ending (vv. 21-22) and thus bookend the work with this thematic affect. After the poem saturates the reader with divine anger in the first six verses,[27] the poem re-iterates the theme in

[25] On the significance of the acrostic in Lamentations, see, *inter alia*, Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations,* 30; Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations,* 17-23; Berlin, *Lamentations,* 4-7.

[26] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 5.

[27] Cf. the additional vocabulary of anger used in vv. 1-6: עברה in v. 2, חמה in v. 4, and זעם in v. 6.

the poem's conclusion as a means of bridging the total composition and connecting Zion's lament to the original cause of her suffering. The sevenfold use of the tetragrammaton follows a similar pattern. As soon as the descriptions of anger cease, Yahweh appears in four consecutive verses (vv. 6-9) and is not utilized again until the conclusion of the speaker's address (v. 17) and Zion's lament (vv. 20, 22). The אדני references then fill in the gaps of the tetragrammaton's absence but again cluster at the extremities of the poem (vv. 1, 2, 5, 7, 18, 19, 20). Both Yahweh's presence and his nearly hypostatic wrath therefore span the poetic utterance. Zion's mentions, however, pervade the poem at even more frequent intervals (vv. 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 18), especially if we consider her other epithets: Daughter Judah (vv. 2, 5), Daughter of My People (v. 11), and Daughter Jerusalem (vv. 13, 15). These lexical repetitions and bookends work alongside the poem's broader construction of Yahweh's and Zion's "bodies" (see above), all of which help to hold together the disparate and dis-integrating presentation of Zion-Yahweh conflict. The poem therefore finds its integration in the tension between Zion, revealed to the reader at consistent intervals, and Yahweh, whose explicit identity stands at the extremities of the poetic witness.

6.4.3. The Temporality of Violence

The use of narrativity within the Neo-Assyrian reliefs and the poem merits a final comment concerning the appearance of the same in Lamentations 2. It is important to consider how the relief and biblical compositions use their visual arrangements to manipulate time. After a brief review of temporal play in lyric poetry more broadly, I will revisit the blending of historical episodes in the Room C reliefs in order to illuminate the theological significance of the biblical poem's temporal

arrangement. Just as the reliefs integrate multiple moments in time to exalt the king's transcendent power over chaos, the poem, I will argue, ties together the scattered episodes of Zion's experience through the transcendent presence of Yahweh—the only individual in the poem who figures in all parts of Zion's temporality.

6.4.3.1. Temporality in Lyric Poetry

Beyond the specifics of this particular biblical poem, lyric poetry in general operates in an analogous fashion to that of the palace reliefs in that, whatever narrative developments it may feature within its composition, it ultimately places them in service of a present-tense "performance"—that is, the narrative is rendered subservient to whatever the poem/image seeks to accomplish in the "now." As W. R. Johnson puts it, "[I]n lyric poems, the story exists for the song," rather than the song merely facilitating the story.[28] With respect to lyric specifically, the poem achieves its "present tense" experience primarily through apostrophe—the direct address to an absent or inanimate being in the first person—which takes up whatever past events may be described and articulates their significance for the I/Thou encounter that is (re)enacted by the poem's reading. The lyric reading is therefore not timeless (that is, outside of time) but "a moment of time that is repeated every time the poem is read."[29] Such a "moment of time," though perhaps unde(rde)fined in terms of its placement relative to other events in a (temporal) sequence, remains concurrent with the poem's utterance. According to Culler, this sublimation of past events into the poetic reading is in fact the defining feature of lyric poetry:

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[28] W. R. Johnson, *The Idea of Lyric: Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry*, Eidos (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), 35.

[29] Jonathan D. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 295.

> The fundamental characteristic of lyric, I am arguing, is not the description and interpretation of a past event by the iterative and iterable performance of an event in the lyric present, in the special 'now,' of lyric articulation. The bold wager of poetic apostrophe is that the lyric can displace a time of narrative, or past events reported, and place us in the continuing present of apostrophic address, the 'now' in which, for readers a poetic event can repeatedly occur. Fiction is about what happened next; lyric is about what happens now.[30]

We see this phenomenon at work within Lamentations 2. The poem describes the experience of a real historical event: the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587. At the same time, there is no mention of any relative or absolute date, nor does the poet provide any clear sequence of the destruction (e.g., besiegement, destruction, invasion, killing). The writer only speaks of the indeterminate "day" of God's anger (vv. 1, 21, 22) or the "day" of the enemy's victory (v. 16), distinguishable only from "the day of an assembly" (v. 7) and "the days of old" (v. 17). Time becomes relative to the poem's utterance *without* any external temporal anchors. Even the poem's use of narrativity is too episodic to provide any insights into the timeline of Jerusalem's fall in 587. Where narrative sequence briefly appears, it details isolated, even metaphorical, moments: Yahweh strings his bow, readies his hand, and kills (v. 4); God plots, measures out, and executes the destruction of Jerusalem's walls (v. 8); the children question their mothers, faint, and die in the city streets (v. 12). There is thus linearity (at times) without full blown narrativity. These fragments of narrativity may pique interest in the stanza(s) at hand but dissolve quickly into the "event" of the spoken poem itself. The past is taken up into the "now" of the speaker's (vv. 1-19) and Zion's addresses (vv. 20-22), both of which articulate the *significance* of this history for the present responses they desire to elicit.

[30] Ibid., 226.

6.4.3.2. Temporality in the Neo-Assyrian Reliefs

Here again is a place where the poetics of the Neo-Assyrian reliefs may inform our understanding of the biblical material. The reliefs, like the poem, depict historical conflicts in Neo-Assyrian history and employ narrative-like devices to present them to the reader. They also interrupt and re-arrange these sequences in a counter-intuitive manner so as to sublimate these narratives into the governing theme or persona of the composition. Room C specifically presents hunting exploits from different moments in time and mingles them in such a way as to render them simultaneous within the visual experience of the image. Such temporal play serves, among other things, to exalt the presence of the king, whose victory over chaos thereby transcends time itself. The unique composition of the throneroom sublimates every historical performance of the royal hunt under the king's mythic conflict and reveals each episode to be a mere outworking of a timeless royal victory.

6.4.3.3. Temporality in Lamentations 2

When juxtaposed with the poetics of Lamentations 2, these reliefs not only help us see *that* the poem re-arranges and fragments historical experiences—a phenomenon discernable in any cursory reading of the poem—but it also illuminates the (theological) *significance* of this temporal play. As previously stated, it is the speaking/hearing of the poem that constitutes its primary temporal anchor. The ancient or modern reader may have knowledge about the timeline of Jerusalem's fall and the resulting conditions that gave rise to the composition of Lamentations, but the poem has no regard for recounting the story "correctly." Through the use of multiple voices, imperatives, and the direct speech, the poet blurs temporal experience—drawing together the "past" of Jerusalem's fall with the

"present" of the speaker's address and the "future" of God's desired intervention. The poem switches between verbal aspects,[31] verbal moods, voices, and perspectives, all of which find their sole temporal coherence within the "now" of the poetic address.

And yet, within the chaos of this temporal play, the poem establishes the Zion-Yahweh interaction as the transcendent encounter around which all of the historical events are oriented. Among the many images and metaphors used to paint the portrait of the Jerusalem wasteland, few figure enough times within the piece to attain a temporal endurance that transcends the poem's past, present, and future. Daughter Zion, of course, is one example because she is the subject of the suffering experience. But God stands as the only other persona rendered permanent in the poetic world. God is the mastermind who plots her devastation in the primordial past (vv. 8, 17), the demolishing force who destroys her structures in "the day of the LORD's anger" (vv. 5-9), the petitioned one who withstands Zion's accusation in the present (vv. 20-22), and the absent one who withholds a prophetic word for Jerusalem's future (vv. 9, 14). Yahweh is the only being to figure in all

[31] A closer look at the use of perfective and imperfective aspects within the poem may provide further insight into its construction of past and present events. The poet clearly prefers perfect (65 total) over imperfect (15 total) verbs and, in large part, segregates their use into particular sections of the poem. Of their 65 total occurrences, 36 perfect verbs appear in vv. 1-11 and 19 of them appear in vv. 14-18. Both of these sections focus on descriptive accounts of the city's destruction (vv. 1-11) and its aftermath (prophets, bystanders, and enemies in vv. 14-18). The remaining 10 occurrences are found in Daughter Zion's own account of the city's losses (vv. 20-22). The distribution of the poem's 10 waw-consecutive imperfect verbs, which predominantly carry a preterite meaning, complement that of the perfect verbs (5x in vv. 3-6; 4x in vv. 14-17). Conversely, the 15 uses of the imperfect cluster in the speaker's account of the dying children (1x v. 12) and in the speaker's urgent questions for Zion (v. 13), with other occurrences carrying forward the imperatives to Zion in v. 18 (1x) and Zion's questions of God (2x in vv. 20 and 22). By way of comparison with the distribution of perfect and waw-consecutive imperfect verbs, the imperfect appears only 3x total in vv. 1-10. This disparity suggests that the poem prefers perfect verbs to refer (back) to Jerusalem's fall and the population's suffering and reserves the imperfect aspect for vivid portraits of the city's children and the present-tense utterance of the poem's performance (e.g., vv. 13, 20-22). At the same time, any clear-cut demarcation between "perfect=past tense" and "imperfect=present/future tense" is complicated by the six stanzas that juxtapose the two aspects, sometimes indiscriminately (vv. 1, 10, 15, 18, 20, 22). Cf. Benjamin D. Giffone, "A 'perfect' Poem: The Use of the Qatal Verbal Form in the Biblical Acrostics," *Hebrew Studies* 51 (2010): 49–72; Iain W Provan, "Past, Present and Future in Lamentations 3:52-66: The Case for a Precative Perfect Re-Examined," *VT* 41 (1991): 164–75; Jan Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew: A New Synthesis Elaborated on the Basis of Classical Prose*, Jerusalem Biblical Studies 10 (Jerusalem: Simor LTD, 2012), 411–34.

three poetic voices—third person description (vv. 1-11), the speaker's address (vv. 17-19), and Zion's prayer (vv. 20-22)—and stands present as the governing force of the poem's jumbled temporal articulation. Just as the Room C program combines distinct historical moments into a simultaneous presentation and orients the room around the mirrored portraits of Ashurbanipal, so the poem stations the Zion-Yahweh encounter at every key moment in its temporal construal (past, present, and future). The repetition of God and Zion across time distills the piece down to *this* definitive relationship, which remains constitutive of Jerusalem's existence—and perhaps, also, of God's. This confirms, within the temporality of the poem, the composition's governing thesis—"How he clouds in his anger, / the Lord, Daughter Zion" (v. 1)—and it's response: "LORD, look and see to whom you have done this!" (v. 20).

6.5. THE JUSTIFICATION OF VIOLENCE IN TEXT AND IMAGE

Both the Lamentations poem and the Neo-Assyrian reliefs also suggest particular *reasons* for their respective composition. Some of these purposes are readily apparent to modern viewers and readers. The campaign reliefs, for example, underscore the military invincibility of the Neo-Assyrian state, while the hunting reliefs exalt the king's supernatural power over chaotic forces in the world. Conversely, Lamentations 2 (and the sequence as a whole) provide(s) images of violent memories in order to give linguistic shape to communal grief. But in both cases, the question of *why* they were composed and *for whom* raises interesting points of intersection concerning the "power" of their images/imagery. With these interests in view, the following will discuss the surprisingly "private" audience of the reliefs and the implications of this viewership for the understood purpose of the

sculptures. Rather than serving a primarily *external* propagandistic function, the carved images were apparently thought to wield a power of their own, able to influence imperial success and impinge upon the gods. This section will conclude by addressing the *Sitz*(*e*) *im Leben* of the Lamentations literature—both private and public—and will ultimately argue for the "power" of the written image in light of the power of the Neo-Assyrian artistic one.

6.5.1. The Purpose of the Neo-Assyrian Reliefs

6.5.1.1. The Audience of the Neo-Assyrian Reliefs

First, the *audience* of Assyria's violent images served as a guiding force for their content and presentation, but the question of the intended and/or potential viewer(s) of Ashurbanipal's palace reliefs remains debated. Several factors have naturally led many to assume that the palace images had a propagandistic function, especially when we consider their idealized portrait of warfare (without any Assyrian casualties or defeats), their apparently extreme attention to the accuracy of geographic landscape and depiction of foreigners, their sheer size, and their concern with telling the "story" of the battle. Many suppose that the gruesome acts against rebels that they show told "a cautionary tale" to a public viewership "in order to dissuade disloyalty and rebellion and courtiers alike."[32] Winter has even accounted for the predominance of the historical narrative genre among the palace reliefs with recourse to an assumed foreign (and therefore public) audience for the images. Because visual narratives demand a lesser degree of shared cultural experiences and previous knowledge in order to make sense of what they portray (over against the more iconic images that decorated Ashurnasirpal's

[32] Reed, "Blurring the Edges," 106.

palace in the tenth century), the Assyrian artists helped to lower "the common denominator of what would be intelligible to a heterogeneous audience" by decorating the palaces of later kings with historical narrative scenes. Winter's argument is ultimately predicated on the assumption that the palace reliefs were intended for—or at least witnessed by—at minimum, foreign courtiers.[33]

Recent research, however, has challenged the public viewership of these images and argued that the palace reliefs did not function, at least not primarily, as imperial propaganda. Ariel Bagg, for example, has analyzed the content and context of the so-called "brutality scenes"—images depicting cruel acts against Assyrian enemies in the aftermath of battle—in the extant Neo-Assyrian iconographic and inscriptional repertoires. In his search for the intended and potential audiences for the iconography in particular, he identifies three possible viewer groups: the king and royal family (with access to the total palace program), the Assyrian and foreign visitors (with possible access to the courtyards and throneroom suites), and the servants/courtiers/dignitaries (with possible access to both the private and public areas of the palace.[34] He also considers five variables that would affect accessibility and reception of the reliefs: (1) the function of the room (private or public) in which a given relief is displayed, (2) the size of the depictions and number of registers, (3) the length of the

[33] Irene J. Winter, "Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs," *Studies in Visual Communication* 7 (1981): 29–32. She cites two primary points of evidence that imply the reliefs' public viewership. Notwithstanding the data she uses to demonstrate the empire's expansion and diversity across the centuries, she appeals (1) to Ashurnasirpal's Banquet Stela, which details the 70,000 guests (including foreign delegates) invited to the palace's dedication, and (2) the presence of historical narratives in public reception rooms and the throneroom of the Nimrud palace. See also the extended study of potential audiences for Sennacherib's palace in Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival*, 223-40.

[34] Cf. Russell, *Palace without Rival*, 223-40, who combs through the inscriptional evidence and gathers *twelve* possible audience categories for some or all of the relief compositions: king, crown prince/royal family, courtiers, servants, foreign employees, foreign prisoners, future kings, gods, Assyrians, provincials, subject foreigners, and independent foreigners. Many of these groups could simply be considered subcategories of Bagg's taxonomy.

room, (4) the lighting of the room, and (5) the position of the images on the slab (especially for the miniature detail of many scenes).

6.5.1.2. The Power of the Neo-Assyrian Reliefs

With these factors in mind, Bagg demonstrates quite compellingly that these brutality scenes had a more private than public function. According to his research, only 15 of the 56 extant brutality scenes in the Assyrian iconographic repertoire were located in areas accessible to the public (courtyards and thronerooms). Bagg writes, "The fact that the brutality scenes in the more private wing are almost twice as many as those in the more public wing (26 to 15) is a rough but clear indicator that not all the depictions of cruelties were intended to be seen by a wide public."[35] In fact, a third of the brutality scenes in the private areas were located in personal apartments, reserved exclusively for the royal family and high-ranking dignitaries. When one also considers factors like lighting, room length, and the size of figures in multi-registered compositions, the assumption that the public could engage *all* or even *most* of these reliefs—especially in a prolonged manner, necessary for discerning detail—seems increasingly difficult to uphold.[36] This does not deny that on more "propagandistic" artifacts, brutality scenes were intended for broader audiences, as seen for example, in Esarhaddon's Til-Barsip and Zincirli stelae, which feature the king binding two defeated rulers by their lips.[37] But, in light of the public's relatively minimal access to the violence portrayed in the palace reliefs (and described in

[35] Bagg, "Where is the Public?", 69.

[36] See also Russell, *Sennacherib's "Palace without Rival,"* 252-57.

[37] The use of a single, iconic image, rather than a visual sequence, on these stelae indicates their intended accessibility as well. Cf. David Nadali, "Images of War in the Assyrian Period: What They Show and What They Hide," in *Making Pictures of War*, 85, n. 19. It's also important to differentiate between the relatively *private* display of brutality *images* over against the intentionally *public* execution/torture of rebel leaders. See Karen Radner, "High Visibility Punishment and Deterrent: Impalement in Assyrian Warfare and Legal Practice," *ZAR* 21 (2015): 103–28.

royal inscriptions),[38] it is possible that whatever access citizens of foreign visitors may have had to the visual war narratives (and their brutality scenes) was more *incidental* than intentional. At minimum, it seems safe to say that the public was not the primary *raison d'etre* for their sculpting. As Nadali writes, "Maybe the presence of an audience was *not* the indispensable requirement for the value of the pictures: it did not give pictures the right to exist."[39]

Perhaps then a broad(er) viewership for the reliefs was only secondary to a more private (and powerful) audience. The violent scenes were sculpted instead for the eyes of the kings (both present and future) and their gods. Russell notes that the building accounts of Ashurnasirpal II, Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon each specify that the gods were invited into the respective palace upon its completion, and these same accounts feature messages to royal posterity, instructing the deities to maintain and restore the palace in subsequent generations.[40] Notwithstanding the artists themselves, these were the only beings with the access and time necessary to behold and study the total repertoire of violence in the palaces.[41] First, the reliefs serve to commemorate previous victories as a reminder and guarantee of the military success of *future* kings. As Nadali writes, the palace becomes "the container of the conquests of the king in space and time and the emphasis on the celebration of the military outcomes by eternalizing the event in sculpture is the base for the construction of the

[38] Bagg, "Where is the Public?," 60-62.

[39] Nadali, "Images of War," 86 (emphasis mine). Elsewhere, he writes, "Again, visibility is not primarily important: it was enough to know that pictures of war and the figure of the king were there regardless if they were perceived and directly seen by the viewers. Indeed, the role of a physical viewer in the flesh seems quite irrelevant in this context" (85). Perhaps Nadali overstates his case, given that some of these violent scenes were indeed displayed in public locations and that the materials and time required to design and sculpt these reliefs imply that it was important that *someone* see them (even if it was the king alone). Nevertheless, Nadali's argument for the power of these images beyond their perlocutionary effects is a significant corrective to those who assume the reliefs were primarily propagandistic.

[40] See the data cited in Russell, *Sennacherib's "Palace without Rival,* 223-40.

[41] On deities as the primary, if not unique, addressees of the bas-reliefs, see Nicolas Gillmann, "Les bas-reliefs néo-assyriens: une nouvelle tentative d'interprétation," *SAAB* 19 (2011): 203–37.

Assyrian memory, kept in one space and built upon vast victories to establish the present."[42] Second, with regard to the *present* king, the dedication of the palaces to Assyrian deities in particular suggests that these images were commissioned for something more than just the ruler's aesthetic enjoyment of himself.[43] Rather, in light of whatever "magical" power that Assyrians believed images to have, the portrayed violence was in some way performative and determinative of the king's reign. The representations petitioned the deities and anchored the empire in the eternalized etchings of military success.[44] The present king, and his successors, were similarly situated as both petitioners and victors—both now and in the future.

6.5.2. The Purpose of the Lamentations Sequence

6.5.2.1. The Date of the Lamentations Sequence

With this rather exclusive audience in mind for the Assyrian reliefs, we may consider the audience and *Sitz*(*e*) *im Leben* of the Lamentations sequence—a topic not without its fair share of issues and scholarly debates. Adjudicating the purpose(s) of the composition of the Lamentations sequence involves a range of questions that often lack concrete data. First, beyond the detailed arguments

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[42] Nadali, "Images of War," 86.

[43] Reade describes the Assyrian palaces as "a massive corpus of *personal* propaganda" ("Ideology and Propaganda," 331, emphasis mine).

[44] On this performative dimension, see Zainab Bahrani, *Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 50-55,197-206; eadem, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria*, Archaeology, Culture, and Society (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 121–48; Paul Collins, "Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Violence: Warfare in Neo-Assyrian Art," in *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, ed. Brian A. Brown and Marian H. Feldman (Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 636–38; Nadali, "Images of War," 86; Gillmann, "Les bas-reliefs néo-assyriens." *Contra* Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), esp. 95-103., who differentiates "magic" representations from "mimetic" ones. She includes the historical narrative reliefs in the latter category. Because the events to which they refer are not relivable, they only "re-present" what they depict, rather than making the portrayed events present.

concerning the particular date(s) of each poem,[45] the majority of scholars assume that (the majority of) Lamentations was penned soon after 587 and appeal to a range of features within the book to corroborate this argument. The poem's vivid imagery, for example, may suggest the writer's temporal propinquity to the events,[46] and the poetry's somber tone, devoid of any knowledge or hope of rebuilding the city, implies an exilic rather than post-exilic timeframe.[47] These rather generic criteria, though untenable on their own,[48] have received more tractable support from (1) intertextual studies, which have discussed the affinity between the language of Lamentations and that of Ezekiel[49] and Second Isaiah, especially,[50] and (2) linguistic evidence,[51] both of which suggest a mid-sixth century timeframe.

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[45] See the examples cited in Iain W. Provan, *Lamentations*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 10–11; Delbert R Hillers, *Lamentations*, AB 7b (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), xviii–xix. Cf. the discussion in Heath Thomas, *Poetry and Theology in the Book of Lamentations: The Aesthetics of an Open Text*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 47 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013), 8–11.

[46] Cf. Berlin, *Lamentations*, 33, who counters the weakness of this assumption: "a good poet can convey immediacy even if he was not present."

[47] Cf. F. W Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 10, who notes a "striking difference" between Mesopotamian city laments, used as a part of the foundation-razing ceremonies prior to the rebuilding of a given temple, and the Lamentations literature—namely, the "the complete absence in Lamentations of any mention of God's return to Jerusalem or the restoration of the city and temple."

[48] Note the examples cited by Berlin, *Lamentations*, 33. There is often a gap between trauma and composed articulations of grief: "Trauma takes time to find literary expression."

[49] Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife*, SBL Dissertation Series 130 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 20.

[50] On the literary allusions to Lamentations in Second Isaiah and their rhetorical function, see Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, SBT 14 (Chicago: A.R. Allenson, 1954), 44–46; Carol A. Newsom, "Response to Norman K. Gottwald, 'Social Class and Ideology in Isaiah 40-55," *Semeia* 59 (1992): 73–78; Mary Donovan Turner, "Daughter Zion: Lament and Restoration" (Emory University, 1992), esp. 150-61; eadem, "Daughter Zion: Giving Birth to Redemption," in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible*, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, SemeiaSt 44 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 193–204; Patricia K. Tull Willey, "The Servant of YHWH and Daughter Zion: Alternating Visions of YHWH's Community," in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 267–303; Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66*, Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences (Stanford: Stanford University, 1998), 127–30; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*, 103–20; Heffelfinger, *I Am Large, I Contain Multitude Lyric Cohesion and Conflict in Second Isaiah*, 82–116; Parry, *Lamentations*, 162-68.

[51] F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Linguistic Evidence for the Date of Lamentations," *JANES* 26 (1998): 1–36.

6.5.2.2. The Sitz(e) im Leben *of the Lamentations Sequence*

A search for the genre and *Sitz*(*e*) *im Leben* of Lamentations raises several issues comparable to that of the viewership of the palace reliefs. In the initial application of form criticism to the poetic sequence, Gunkel, following Jahnow, identified each of the five poems with one of three genres: the funeral dirge (chs. 1, 2, 4), the individual lament (ch. 3), and the communal lament (ch. 5).[52] Gunkel, however, acknowledged that the uncharacteristic elements had been introduced into the Lamentations iterations of these forms and explained these genre mixtures as a feature of Lamentations' late(r) date.[53] The genre discussion only thickened with the introduction of ancient Near Eastern comparands, like that of the Sumerian city-laments.[54] For our purposes, we need not examine the nuanced merits of these analyses except insofar as they hold import for the assumptions consuming the poetry's function in Judahite society. Many of the forms discerned above—whether indigenous to Israelite society (communal lament, funeral dirges) or derived from foreign cultures (city-laments)—have a decidedly *public* purpose and performance. They exist for the sake of the ceremonial life of the community—whether by articulating corporate grief over the city's loss (funeral dirge), pleading for

[52] Hermann Gunkel, "Klagelieder Jeremiae," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, ed. Hermann Gunkel and Oskar Rühle, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1929), 1049–52; Hedwig Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung*, BZAW 36 (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1923). See also Westermann's comments (*Lamentations*, 59-61) on these forms and their unique juxtaposition in the book.

[53] The "mixed" quality of the Lamentations sequence is somewhat of a consensus among interpreters. E.g., Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 46: "We may, therefore, frame the tentative theory that the catastrophic events of the fall of Judah led to a deliberate fusion of hitherto comparatively separate types;" Hillers, *Lamentations*, xxviii: "it seems that the writer had no liturgical or literary models which he followed slavishly." Berlin (*Lamentations*, 24-25) goes as far as to see the book as "a new, post-586 type of lament," which she calls "the Jerusalem lament." On Lamentations as a marker of generic innovation and development in Judahite literature, see especially Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E*, trans. David Green, Studies in Biblical Literature 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 151–59.

[54] See, inter alia, Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion*.

reversal of a calamity (communal lament), or rehearsing a tragedy as a foil to the burgeoning hope of a restored society (city-laments).

As a result, many have posited or tacitly assumed that such public "use" of the Lamentations literature may be *original* to its composition,[55] but, once again, the evidence in this regard is unclear.[56] The biblical witness provides some evidence for the public recitation of lament after Jerusalem's fall (Jer 41:5; Zech 7:3-5; 8:19). The poet's preference for alternating voices, for example, might imply a type of public performance with different voices cast for each role, and public recitation of the Mesopotamian city-laments might also lead us to assume the same for the comparable Lamentations literature. But even these ideas remain equivocal at best. First, the evidence for exilic mourning liturgies, though suggestive, is rather scant and does not demand any explicit connection to Lamentations proper. Moreover, the same formal qualities that might lead one to posit the book's dramatic performance also work against this assumption. Of course, the poet's preference for first-person voice in the lyric sequence does not disqualify its use in corporate gatherings (as the book's reception has shown), but the predominance of the lyric "I" coupled with the poems' often sudden—even disconnected!—alternation between voices (speaker, Zion, "everyman," community) suggests that (at least *some* of) the poems may *not* have been composed with liturgical performance in view. There isn't even a consensus regarding the number of voices within the work.[57] With respect to the

[55] Many have argued for the public recitation of Jerusalem in cultic settings. Kraus (*Die Klagelieder*, 15-22), influenced by the Mesopotamian comparands, argued for its reading at the temple's restoration in 515 B.C.E. Others argue for its use in variously defined mourning ceremonies: e.g., Weiser, "Klagelieder," 298-300; S. P. Re'emi, "A Theology of Hope: A Commentary on Lamentations," in *God's People in Crisis*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 79; Hans Jochen Boecker, *Klagelieder*, ZBK 21 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985), 12–13; Hillers, *Lamentations*, xl. Westermann argues for the book's origins in oral laments (*Lamentations*, 58-60).

[56] The use of Lamentations in Jewish and Christian liturgies is, of course, well known. On its liturgical reception, see Berges, *Klagelieder*, 32-35.

[57] Thomas, *Poetry and Theology in the Book of Lamentations*, 91.

Near Eastern comparands, Judah's significant adaptation and innovation within the city-lament genre precludes us from assuming that the Lamentations literature played a similar—namely, *public*—role in sixth century Jerusalem. Quite simply, it cannot be decisively argued either way whether Lamentations was originally written for private or public use.[58] As Provan states, "We are completely in the dark so far as this question is concerned."[59]

6.5.2.3. The Visuality of the Lamentations Sequence

Within this debate, however, it is important to note the way in which the *visuality* of the poetry may invite, if not even privilege, a more private readership. Just as Zion herself pleads for God to "see" her, so the poetry itself desires to be *seen* (even privately!) as much as it wants to be heard. As Gottwald has noted, the acrostic form that structures the five poems of the book (in various ways) holds tremendous import for not only for the *meaning* of the lyric poetry, as many have discussed, but also for its *visuality*. Gottwald argues that the symbolic significance of the acrostic structure—employing the full range of alphabet as a representation of grief's complete articulation—emerges not from listening to the poem but from *seeing* it: "For the most part, the Hebrew acrostic appeals to the eye and not to the ear…By listening to Lamentations one, two and four, and possibly even three, one would hardly be aware of the form. To state it in a positive way: the form of the acrostic is basically

[58] Cf. Renkema, *Lamentations*, 46-47, who imagines a more private *Sitz im Leben* for the poems. He argues that "Lamentations was recited neither in a liturgy nor even less in the ruined temple buildings…but rather in gatherings of Jerusalemites and Judeans who had remained behind, recited as a means to express and clarify their distress, as a stimulus for reflection and as an appeal and as an appeal for renewed faith in God and prayer to YHWH." The poems thus had (at least, originally) a smaller, non-cultic audience in view—written as much for reflection as for performance. Albertz (*Israel in Exile*, 156-57) follows Renkema here and situates Lamentations 2 especially in this "everyday assembly" setting.

[59] Provan, *Lamentations*, 20. Others share this agnostic position: Parry, *Lamentations*, 7; Berlin, *Lamentations*, 35-36.

conceptual and not *sensual*"[60]—at least, we must add, not sensual in an auditory manner given the poetry's inclination toward "doodle" (sight) as well as to "babble" (sound).[61] Chapters 2 and 3 discussed various visual features within the poetry of Lamentations 2, and such nuances are not available for contemplation by a listening corporate body.

6.5.2.4. The Power of the Lamentations Sequence

Like the virtual "invisibility" of the palace reliefs (at least, with respect to a public viewership), the poem's appeal to the readerly eye suggests much about the "power" of its words and images. First, these visual dimensions, noticeable only to the writer and the individual reader, accommodate a particularly *private* audience, just as its aural features make the poem equally well suited for *public* performance, whether in cultic or non-cultic settings. That is, the poem solicits individual reflection as much as it pleads for communal reception.[62] Even if Lamentations 1-2 were originally composed for ritual mourning ceremonies in the exilic period, the poetry itself contains a "power" or purpose beyond its expressive utility. Its subtle petition to be beheld by a reader is a mimesis of Daughter Zion's urgent demand for someone (or better, Someone) to witness her suffering (1:9, 11, 20; 2:20). As Linafelt has argued, Lamentations 1-2 are especially concerned, as survival literature, not with the *interpretation* of pain but with its *presentation*—with bearing witness to pain's facticity rather than

[60] Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations,* 30. See also W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 198-99.

[61] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2000), 270–81. By "babble," Frye denotes poetry's various sound associations (rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and punning) and "rhythmical initiative" by which it delights or plays to the human ear. "Doodle," however, refers to lyric poetry's relation to the pictorial, as seen in its typographical appearance on the page, its jagged margin, or, in the case of biblical poetry, its acrostic arrangement.

[62] It is interesting to note that the *private* recitation of Lamentations is commended by the Talmud for the observance of the Ninth of Ab (*Ta'anit* 30a). That is, the book's reception does not solely favor the book's corporate dimensions.

discovering its meaning.[63] Like the palace reliefs, the presence of a *public* viewership/listenership does not give the poetic images the right to exist: "such description needs no other validation than the fact and experience of the pain that has given rise to it."[64]

The poem's accommodation to a more private audience also speaks to the performativity of its imagery. In addition to the many cathartic functions of the poet's words—giving language to suffering and objectifying grief into a manageable reality—the poem seeks not only to express but to effect change within its painful world.[65] The images bear witness to Jerusalem's suffering, and in doing so, persuade and impinge upon the audience(s) of the composition. On one hand, the images indeed seek out a *human* response. The images of violence solicit ethical action from those of us who overhear the speaker's words with the result that we, too, "are implored to 'look' and 'see' Zion's unparalleled pain and are meant to be lured away from neutrality and toward the concerns of those who have suffered."[66] On the other hand, the poem's attempt to persuade a listening public (past or present) holds little potential benefit, given the insufficiency of a human response to the sufferers described. The structure and content of Lamentations 2 in particular exposes this reality. For example, the speaker, who describes Jerusalem's suffering and bears witness to the divine violence against the city (vv. 1-19), epitomizes the role of the empathetic observer, moving from faithful reporter (vv. 1-10) to compassionate activist (vv. 11-20). And yet, despite the even physical sympathy the speaker displays

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[63] Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 35–61, esp. 43–49. Similarly, Berlin writes: "The burden of Lamentations is not to question why this happened, but to give expression to the fact that it did…Past and future have little place in the book. It centers on the 'present'—the moment of trauma, the interminable suffering. The book is not an explanation of suffering but a re-creation of it and a commemoration to it" (*Lamentations*, 18).

[64] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 49.

[65] Cf. Parry's comments concerning the book's formation of an ethical readership in *Lamentations*, 228-32.

[66] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 43.

(v. 11), the poetic voice laments the limits of human action: "To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, Virgin Daughter Israel? Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?" (v. 13).[67] Moreover, if we can assume that Lamentations is written by and for sixth century Judahite survivors, the poetry seems to serve a more cathartic or expressive function than a persuasive one.[68] There is no need to convince the victims of 587 to "see" and respond to Jerusalem's tragedy.[69] They lived it.

Once more, akin to the palace reliefs, the "power" of these literary images rests not necessarily in their persuasion of the masses but in their attraction—and even conversion—of the divine.[70] Many interpreters have spoken to this dimension of the book's imagery. For example, Dobbs-Allsopp writes,

> in gathering these fragmented images of human suffering, the poet wants to do more than only ensure the enduring memory of this terrible event, though that in itself is a

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[67] Insofar as one might read Second Isaiah as a composed "response" to the Lamentations literature, the work's opening command to "comfort" God's people (40:1; cf. 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; 54:11) speaks not only to a reversal of God's demeanor but also confirms, as a direct answer to Zion's plea for comfort (1:13), that Yahweh's witness alone possesses the ability to restore Zion adequately. That is, Lamentations cannot be "resolved"—notwithstanding the obvious theological tensions between the two biblical voices—until the divine audience has been sufficiently reached. Cf. Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets*, 103–20.

[68] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 49-50. Cf. Kathleen O'Connor's discussion of Lamentations' "theology of witness" in *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), esp. 96-109. She speaks of the book's persuasion of human and divine audience, albeit in different ways. With respect to the former, she writes, e.g., "Daughter Zion is looking for someone to help her re-orient herself, to turn her life away from the trauma that has overtaken her being. She declares unequivocally what she needs from a comforter: someone to see the truth of her destroyed world and to grasp the encroaching despair and anger in which she dwells. She needs a faithful and empathetic witness to her pain" (98). In some sense, however, the poetry itself *performs* this witness through the voice(s) of the speaker(s) just as it solicits that witness from the reader.

[69] Discussions within photography speak to the ability of suffering images both to elicit and to discourage an ethical response. John Berger, for example, acknowledges the tension between empathy and powerlessness that characterizes our response to photographs of agony. "We are seized by them…As we look at them, the moment of the other's suffering engulfs us. We are filled with either despair or indignation…We try to emerge from the moment of the photograph back into our lives. As we do so, the contrast is such that the resumption of our lives appears to be a hopelessly inadequate response to what we have just seen." The discontinuity between the viewer's experience and the image is experienced primarily as moral inadequacy, resulting only in a minor donation or a lament of the human condition (*About Looking* [New York: Pantheon, 1980; repr., New York: Vintage International, 1991], 37–40). Susan Sontag also addresses the need for images of atrocities as a memorial to victims vis-à-vis the ways in which they render the viewer as voyeurs, who take delight in the aesthetics of mutilated bodies. Such images can solicit feelings ranging from helplessness and fear to a sentimental sympathy, the latter of which makes us feel both morally upright because of our compassion and innocent of responsibility because we have not inflicted pain. See eadem *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), esp. 95–103.

[70] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 50: "The one whom these poems…are desperately trying to persuade is God."

> praiseworthy accomplishment. He also means to set them beside his more directly voiced utterances…as a means for winning God's regard and for commanding compassion….These poems stake all, it would seem, on the conviction that the mere sight of Jerusalem's bruised and battered population is sufficient to reawaken God from God's silence and inactivity and move God to responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion.[71]

Parry also grants that "the primary audience was YHWH" and that "all the strategies employed by the author to draw the implied readers to comfort Zion were actually employed simultaneously to persuade *YHWH* to fulfill this role."[72] Berlin agrees: "The poet's purpose in dwelling on suffering is, in my view, to make God see the suffering of his people, with the hope that this will provoke a response from him….The utter meltdown of life as it should be is what the poet is conveying, and what he wants God to notice."[73] Ultimately, the speaker in Lamentations leverages the written image to "tenaciously persist in trying to engage God."[74]

In summary, there is a certain "magic" to the poem's words that attempts, however credulously, to impinge upon the divine world, and, like the palace reliefs, the poem's images contain a power regardless of any presumed "public" audience. As Heinz Schlaffer has argued, lyric, at its most original expression, resists the disenchantment of the world, precisely through the invocation of the spiritual world.[75] Culler calls this the "evocation of poetic power," wherein the speaker's address to an absent other reveals the lyric's pretension and can even be a source of embarrassment. The poem navigates the tension between credulous enchantment—presuming, in this case, to engage the very God responsible for violence—and cynical disenchantment, fearing that the poetic address is mere

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[71] Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 42. Similarly, Gottwald (*Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, 94) writes, "In truth, the chief characteristic of the prayers in Lamentations is that they are *motives* calculated to arouse God to action."

[72] Parry, *Lamentations*, 232.

[73] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 9-10.

[74] O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 127.

[75] Heinz Schlaffer, *Geistersprache: Zweck und Mittel der Lyrik* (München: Hanser, 2012).

artifice and thus ineffective.[76] Lamentations 2 carves its images onto the page, seeking not simply to move the indifferent bystanders but primarily to catch God's sideward glance. Like the palace reliefs, no public audience need read them to justify their writing. Should the poems be stowed away from human eyes and ears, the imagery nevertheless lies upon the page as a witness for and against God, who must attend to the poetic act—like Ashur or Ishtar in the lion hunt scenes. The poem's "power" lies therefore not only in its perlocutionary import—the *possible* persuasion of human or divine response—but in the illocutionary effect of thrusting images of suffering into God's presence, of performing the act of bearing witness to dying children and articulating Jerusalem's protest "before God's face." Jerusalem's worship ceremonies don't give the poetic images the right to exist, nor do their reception in religious communities—however important these texts were and are for the poetry's enduring value. The images "work," quite legitimately, on their own. Their "power" persists precisely because of the *original* Audience, whom the poet dares to address with censored photographs of Jerusalem's aftermath, even if that Audience declines to comment within, or even to notice, the Lamentations sequence.

6.6. CONCLUSION

The present work has conducted an extended study of the poetics of violence in Lamentations 2 and Ashurbanipal's palace reliefs as a test case for demonstrating the utility of ancient Near Eastern iconography for gleaning new insights into how specific phenomena—in this case, violence—figure in biblical poetry especially. As such, this study represents a (re)turn to a phenomenological approach

[76] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 229-30.

to the iconographic exegesis of the Hebrew Bible—an approach that is original to the subdiscipline of biblical iconography and that has since developed in various nuanced ways. As chapter 1 discussed, Othmar Keel's *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, introduced ancient Near Eastern iconography as an invaluable resource for historical critical exegesis. Keel demonstrated how these images enable the contemporary interpreter to "see" through ancient Near Eastern eyes, and his fundamental understanding of these images as *Denkbilder* ("thought pictures") freed him to locate the image-text relationship not necessarily in their temporal or geographical propinquity but rather at the level of their shared phenomena (God, enemies, worship, and so forth). [77]

Among the many developments and methodological refinements that biblical iconography has witnessed in the intervening decades since *Symbolism* first appeared (see 1.1., 1.2.2.), the discipline has seen a return to a more phenomenological approach to the image-text comparison (1.1.3.), and the present work represents a particular outworking of that approach. The current project has asked whether iconography can be used not only for the purpose of gleaning insights into how ancient Near Eastern culture(s)—and consequently, (a) certain text(s) of the Hebrew Bible—might "think about" a given phenomenon but also how the means by which a certain phenomenon figures in the iconographic repertoire might inform our understanding of the same in the literary imagery of (a) certain text(s) and vice versa. Chapter 1 justified this kind of phenomenological comparison between the biblical and iconographic sources with recourse to neuroscientific and cognitive studies that have shown a biological and psychological relationship between viewing images with the eye and imagining them in the mind's eye. With respect to the "mind's eye" specifically, Elaine Scarry's work,

[77] Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 8.

among others, has demonstrated the connection between mental imag(in)ing in the act of reading and the way a literary image is written. In light of these (and other) data, an analysis that compares how a given iconographic work leads the eye to behold a certain phenomenon (like violence) to how a biblical poem (like Lamentations 2) guides the reader in imagining that same phenomenon is not only interesting but also (neurologically and cognitively) intuitive. The meticulous analyses of Lamentations 2 (chapters 2-3) and Ashurbanipal's Til-Tuba (chapter 4) and lion reliefs (chapter 5) provided a foundation upon a which one might conduct an extended assessment of their respective poetics (see above). Overall, the present work sought to demonstrate the interpretive value of such a phenomenological approach in biblical iconography.

While I have chosen to analyze the phenomenon of violence in Lamentations 2 and Ashurbanipal's reliefs, the method employed here need not be limited to this biblical poem only nor to these iconographic compositions. The selection of other monumental images like Sennacherib's Lachish reliefs might provide a more nuanced insight into the way in which the Lamentations 2 poet frames Jerusalem's structural damage. Or the consideration of victory stelae like that of Naram Sin (twenty-second century) or Eannatum (twenty-fifth century)—sculptures commissioned for public visibility—might balance out the more "private" setting of the palace relief program and thereby illuminate the function of the imagery in Lamentations 2 in a different manner. Conversely, an analysis of the (major features of the) entire Lamentations sequence—especially as it pertains to broader imagistic movements and structures of coherence across its five poems—might illuminate how the discrete relief compositions of Ashurbanipal's palace interact with and intersect with one another to allow for an experience of Assyrian violence that is larger than the sum of its individual

images. Furthermore, an examination of glyptic art in the ancient Near East, particularly as it pertains to the presentation of violent deities, might prove useful for understanding the construction of Yahweh's destructive profile in the Lamentations literature. Future appropriation of this approach need not even limit itself to the phenomenon of violence. One might explore, for example, how the poetics of sexuality in Song of Songs might compare to the same in the lead inlays of Tukulti-Ninurta I (thirteenth century), which feature a variety of erotic images.

In any case, such a phenomenological approach—at least one concerned with comparative poetics—would proceed with robust analyses of the biblical and iconographic sources followed by a dialogic comparison of their content and modes of presentation. It must also be recognized that the selection of a certain biblical text (corpus) for comparison with certain ancient Near Eastern images—rather than others—will necessarily (de)limit the kinds of insights available to the interpreter. Though the incorporation of additional iconographic examples of violence or other biblical texts in the present study might provide different insights into the poetics of biblical violence, the possibility of expanding the comparison does not invalidate the results presented here. Rather, the insights generated by the juxtaposition of these specific comparands in the above test case invite further application of such a phenomenological approach to other (kinds of) texts, images, and phenomena of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern iconographic repertoire. In summary, the present work has argued for the usefulness this approach to iconographic exegesis—not to the exclusion of other iconographic methods but rather as a complement to them—and I conclude here with a general review of what the iconographic and biblical sources considered in the current test case share in their presentation of violence.

Beyond the specific exegetical insights itemized in the discussion above, the present work has shown broad levels of correspondence between the poetics of violence in Lamentations 2 and the Til-Tuba reliefs. Although several commonalities could be itemized here, I focus these remarks on three of the most important insights. First, the violence as it figures in Neo-Assyrian iconography and Lamentations 2 carries an episodic quality. Despite the breadth of the relief program (covering multiple slabs or even entire rooms) and the length of the poem (extending across twenty-two stanzas), the visual and literary works stand as self-contained compositions that hold together not by means of an uninterrupted chain of represented events but through the repetition of key figures and perspectival play. While each work may contain certain historical identifiers that situate the represented violence in a particular past event (the fall of Jerusalem, the execution of Teumman, or the lion hunt in the Nineveh arena), their arrangements facilitate engagement and experience of the violence they recount rather than mere comprehension of the historical episode that has given rise to these poetic and artistic reflections.

Second, Lamentations 2 and Ashurbanipal's reliefs present violent images in a manner that both contributes to and threatens to undermine the integrity of the visual or literary composition. On one hand, the images of suffering and violence constitute the thematic center around which the broader compositions are oriented. Even if one cannot discern the precise arrangement or the Teumman sequence in the Til-Tuba reliefs, it is impossible to overlook the intertwined bodies and weaponry that cover the visual tableau. Similarly, despite the breakdown in the hunting narrative of Room C, Ashurbanipal's confrontation with the lions and the graphic rendering of the animals' suffering are unambiguous to the cursory viewer. Finally, while the length of Lamentations 2 may

obfuscate the reader's attempt to discern its detailed movements and changes in voice or perspective, the consistency of its violent imagery—and Yahweh's aggression against Daughter Zion specifically—anchor the prolonged rhetoric in a governing theme. The repetition of violence thus stands at the center of each composition, and the poet or artists supplement this hermeneutical integration by structuring the violent imagery into narrative sequences and patterns (see 4.6., 5.4.).

On the other hand, the same violent imagery that orients the viewer or reader in the experience of these visual or literary works also works against their thematic cohesion. In the Til-Tuba reliefs, figures spill over groundlines and registers, and the violent narrative of Teumman's beheading winds around the composition in a circuitous (non-intuitive) fashion. In the Room C reliefs, the sequence of the king's hunting prowess in the Nineveh games expands to incorporate episodes from other (non-contemporaneous) hunting exploits and the gruesome images of the dying lions lie scattered across the open background without any cohering structure. Similarly, Lamentations 2 eschews any kind of orderly account of Jerusalem's destruction and instead compounds verb upon verb—image upon image—to convey the aggression with which Yahweh tears down his "Daughter." In all three cases, violence both orients and disorients the viewer as the centripetal and centrifugal force of these compositions.

Third, as a correlate of violence's integrating and disintegrating effect in these works, all three pieces arrange their violent content in a manner that bridges the temporal gap between the represented events and the viewer. The repetition of Teumman's head across the winding Til-Tuba sequence exercises a performative function that transcends the execution of this single Elamite king and impinges upon any rebellious ruler who might contest Ashurbanipal's power. The Room C reliefs

interweave episodes from distinct hunting expeditions to underscore the king's transhistorical dominance over chaos, and as discussed above, Lamentations omits any temporal details by which the reader might reconstruct the history of Jerusalem's fall and instead anchors the reader in "now" of the poem's utterance—arranging the violent imagery around the past of Yahweh's primordial plans to destroy the city (v. 17), the present of the city's bereaved and cannibalistic mothers (vv. 12, 19, 20, 22), and the (potential) future of Yahweh's regard for Zion (v. 20). For both the iconography and the text, violence is not recounted or repeated but re-presented with each new viewing or reading, as the arrangements demonstrate (or perform) their import for each new generation.

APPENDIX

FIGURES

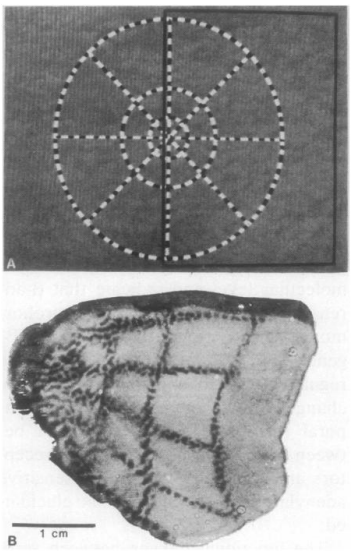

Fig. 1.1. Comparison an image viewed by the monkey in a deoxyglucose experiment (A) and the pattern of brain activation produced by the stimulus (B). After Tootell et al, "Deoxyglucose

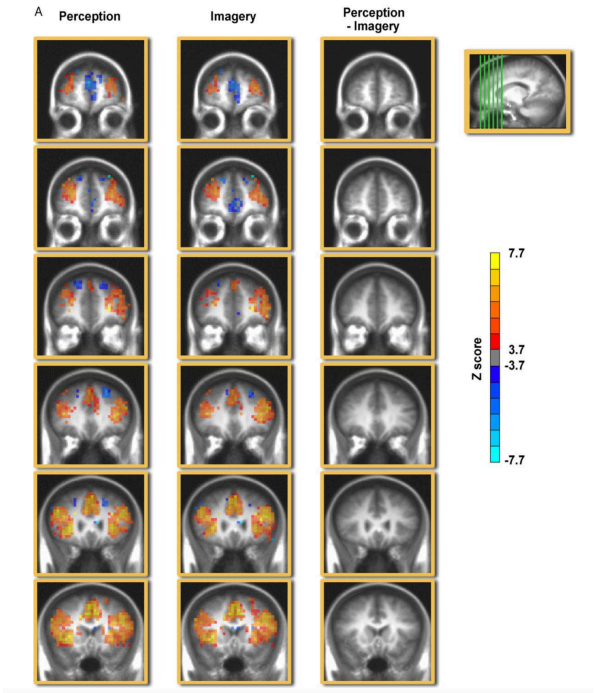

Fig. 1.2. Composite of fMRI activation maps from fifteen individuals. Six coronal slices through the frontal lobe. Left column: perception. Middle column: imagery. Right column: Contrast between perception and imagery. After Ganis, Thompson, and Kosslyn, "Brain Areas," 231, fig. 2.

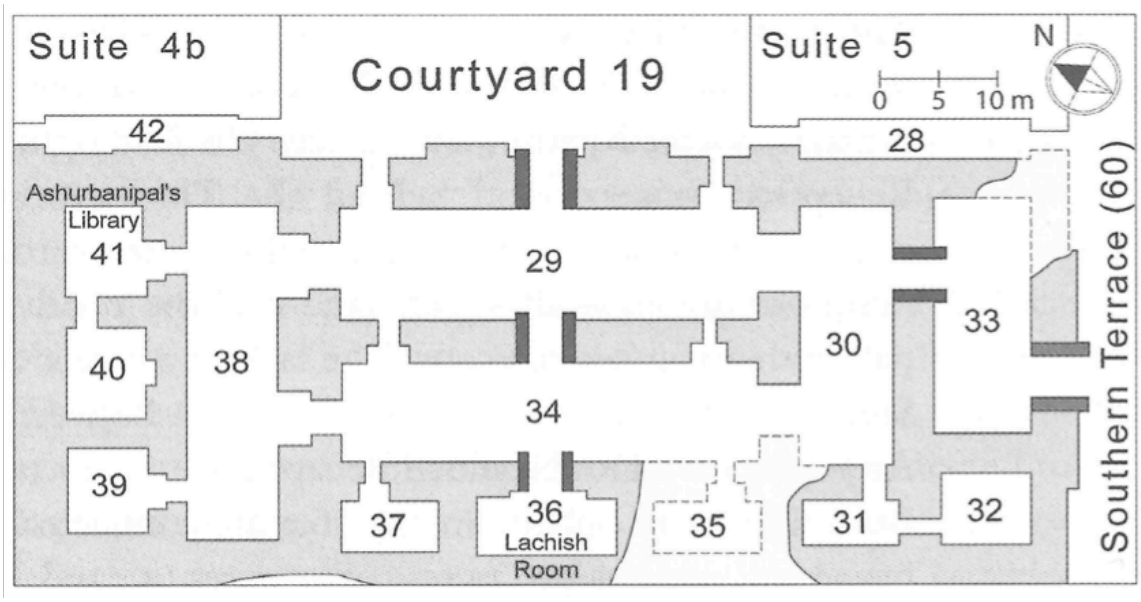

Fig. 4.1: Layout of the southwest corner of Sennacherib's palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, 136, fig. 6.5.

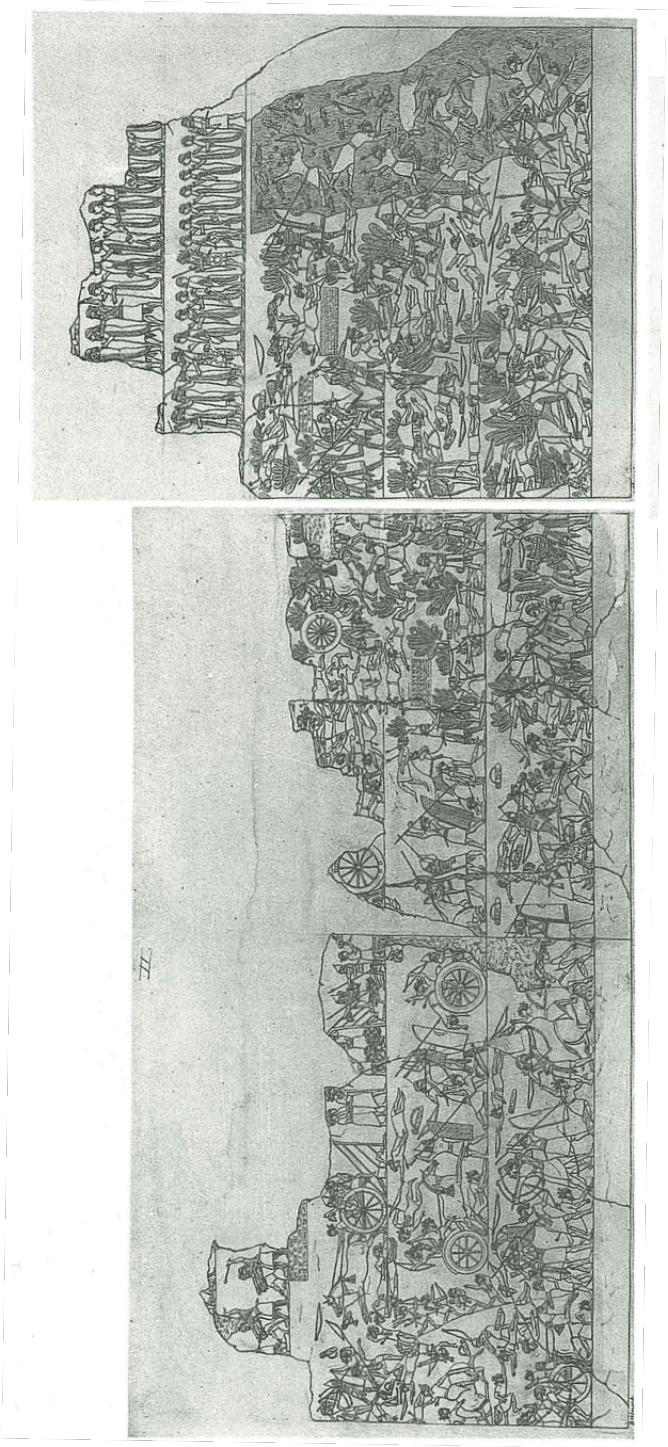

Fig. 4.2: Layard's line drawings of the Battle of Til-Tuba Reliefs. Slabs 1-3. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh,* pl. 286.

Fig. 4.3: Slab 1. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 289.

Fig. 4.4: Slab 2. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh,* pl. 293.

Fig. 4.5: Slab 3. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 297.

Fig. 4.6. Detail of an Elamite chariot. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh,* pl. 290.

Fig. 4.7. Detail of an Assyrian spearman and auxiliary archer. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh,* pl. 289.

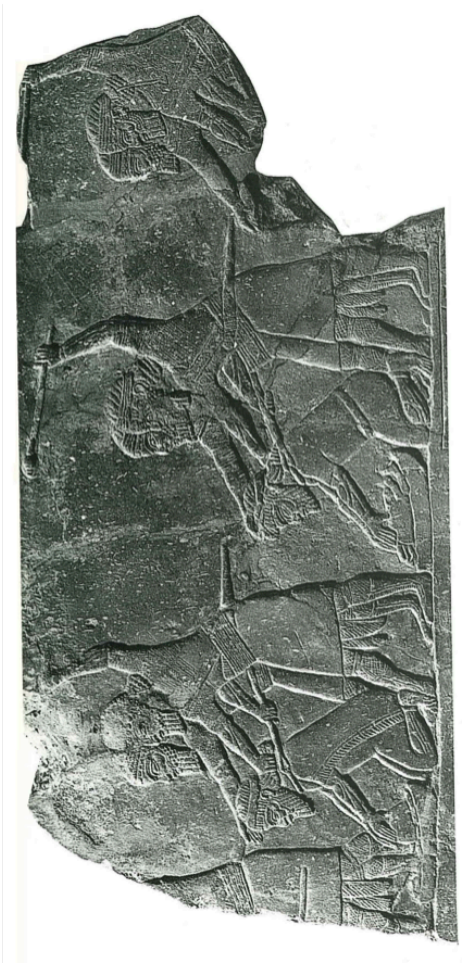

Fig. 4.8 (left): Prisoners kneel and grind at stones before their Assyrian captors. Detail of the upper half of slab 1. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 289.

Fig. 4.9 (right): A procession of Babylonian captives. Detail of the upper half of slab 3. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 298.

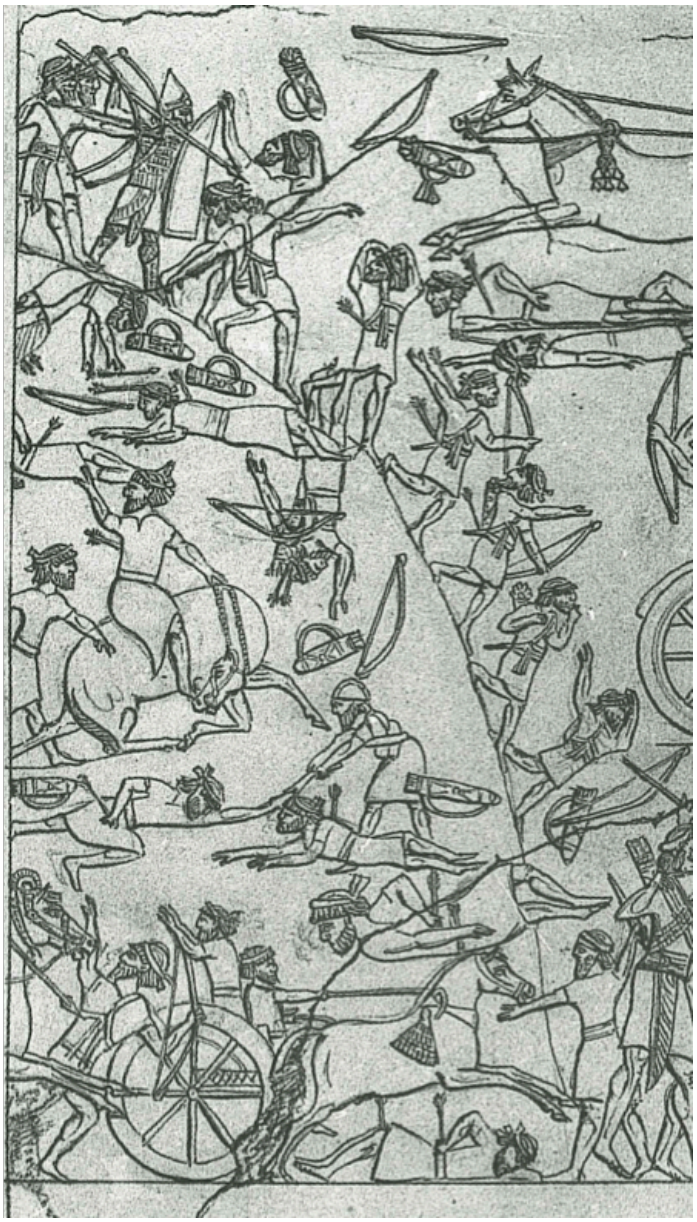

Fig. 4.10: Detail of the hill scene. Layard's line drawings of slab 1. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 288.

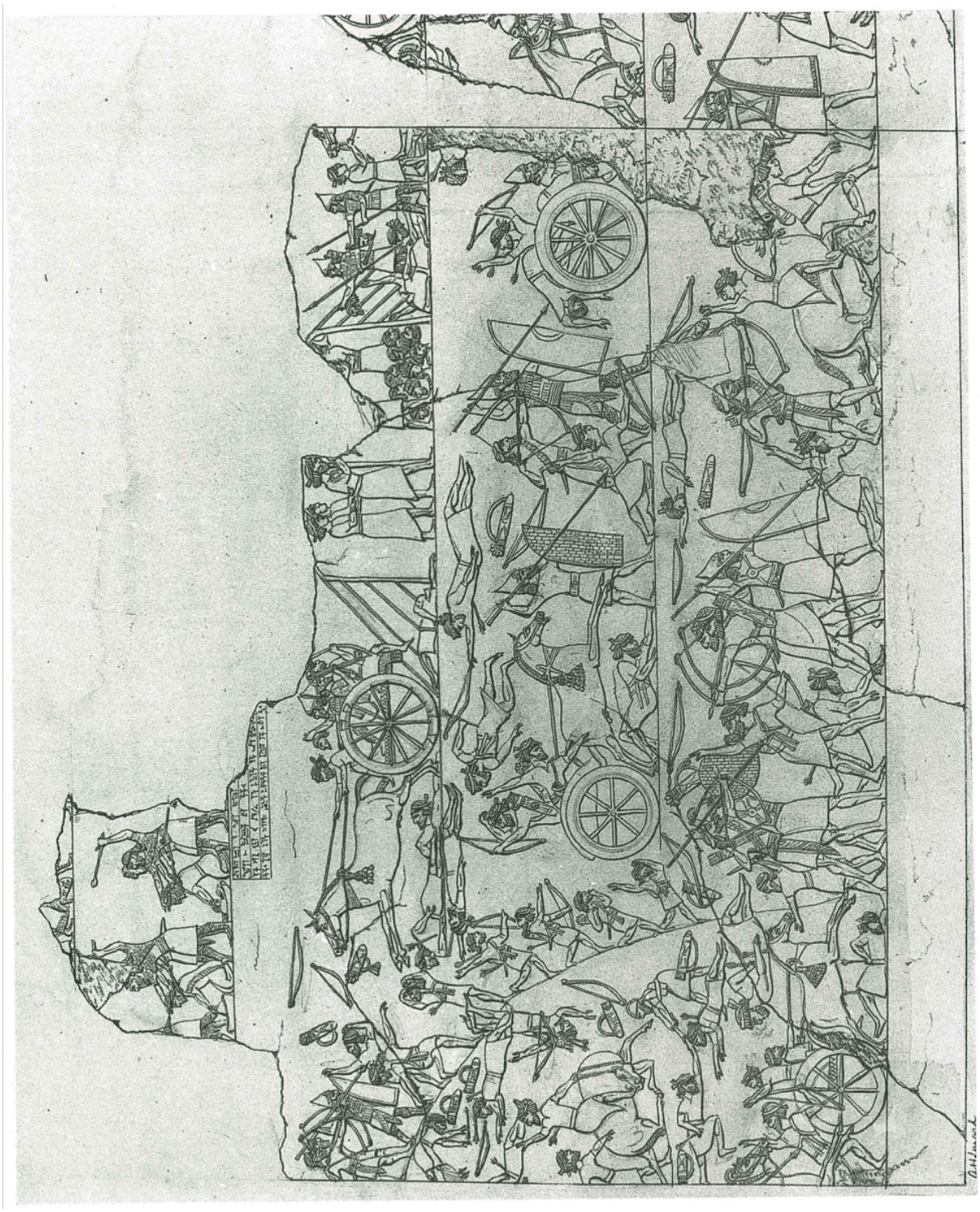

Fig. 4.11: Layard's line drawings of slab 1. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh,* pl. 288.

Scene 1 **Scene 2** **Scene 3**

Fig. 4.12: Detail of the middle register of slab 2. Layard's line drawings. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 288.

Fig. 4.13. Layard's line drawings of slab 3. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 288.

Fig. 4.14: Detail of a vulture eating from an Elamite corpse. Slab 3. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 298.

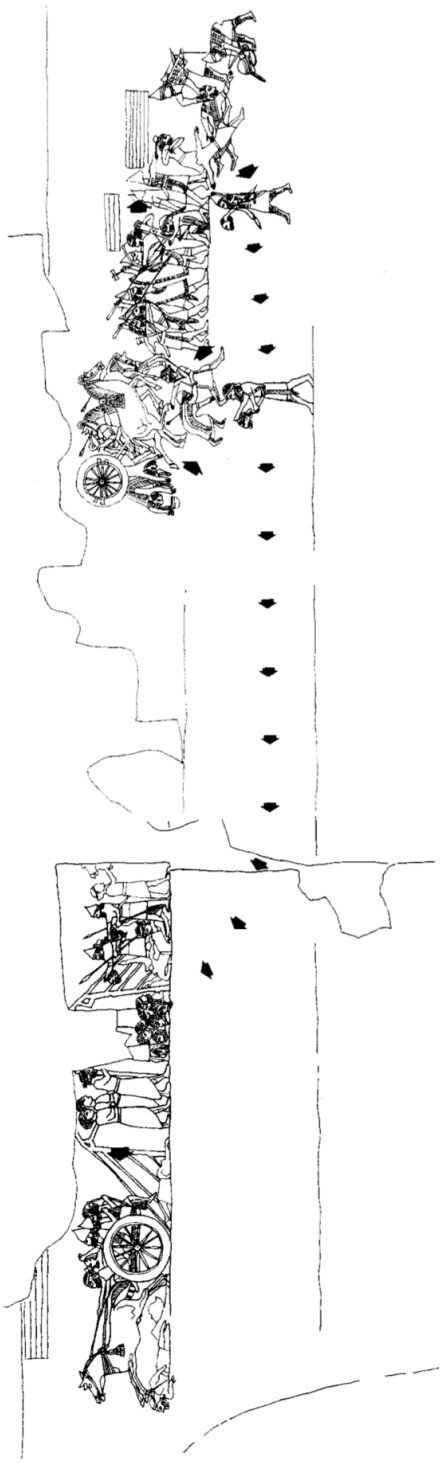

Fig. 4.15: Sequence of narrative scenes. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7^{th} cent. B.C.E.). After Watanabe, "The Continuous Style," 108, fig. 8.

Fig. 4.16. Teumman and Tammaritu fall from their chariot. Scene 1 of the narrative sequence. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 291.

Fig. 4.17. Teumman and Tammaritu flee. Scene 2 of the narrative sequence. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 291.

Fig. 4.18. Teumman and Tammaritu are captured. Scene 3 of the narrative sequence. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 291.

Fig. 4.19: Teumman and Tammaritu are beheaded. Scene 4 of the narrative sequence. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Watanabe, "The Continuous Style," 111, fig. 12.

Fig. 4.20a: An Assyrian soldier carries Teumman's head. Scene 5 of the narrative sequence (slab 3). Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 297.

Fig. 4.20b. An Assyrian soldier carries Tammaritu's head and approaches Urtak, who surrenders before a standing Assyrian soldier. Scene 5 of the narrative sequence (slab 2). Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 293.

Fig. 4.20c: An Elamite official (Ituni) surrenders before a smiting soldier. Detail of scene 5. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 295.

Fig. 4.20d: Urtak surrenders before an Assyrian soldier. Detail of scene 5. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Reade, "The Battle of Til-Tuba," 77.

Fig. 4.21: Two soldiers present Teumman's and Tammaritu's heads for review. Scene 6 of the narrative sequence. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 291.

Fig. 4.22: An Assyrian soldier stands on a chariot holding Teumman's head. Scene 7 of the narrative sequence. Room 33. Southwest Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Bleibtreu et al., *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*, pl. 290.

Fig. 5.1: An example of the Neo-Assyrian state seal featuring the king's encounter with a lion. Clay bulla. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Nadali, "Neo-Assyrian State Seals," fig. 1.

Fig. 5.2: Ashurbanipal, wearing the *kulūlu* turban, pierces a lion on foot. Room S. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Magen, *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen-Aspekte*, pl. 1.2.

Fig. 5.3: Spectators of the royal hunt climb a hillock crowned with an archway featuring an image and inscriptional account of the hunt. Northeastern wall (slabs 9-10). Room C (scene 2). North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. VI.

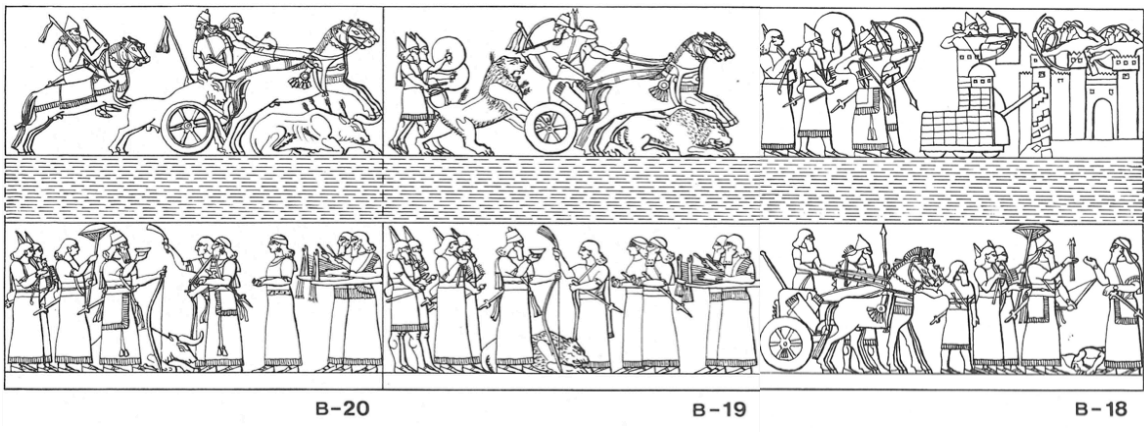

Fig. 5.4: Ashurnasirpal II hunts lions and bulls (slabs 19-20), besieges an enemy fortress (slab 18, upper register), and stands before a defeated king, who bows before him (slab 18, lower register). Room B (Throneroom). Northwest Palace. Nimrud (9th cent. B.C.E.). After Meuzyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, pl. 1.

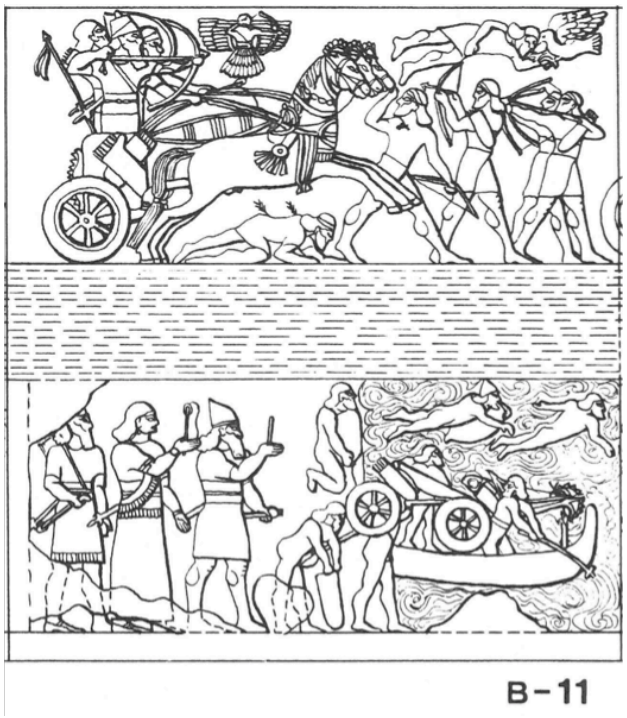

Fig. 5.5: Ashurnasirpal II fights enemies from his chariot with Ashur flying above. Room B (Throneroom). Northwest Palace. Nimrud (9th cent. B.C.E.). After Meuzyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, pl. 2.

Fig. 5.6: The citadel of Kujunjik (Nineveh) with both the Southwest and North Palaces (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, fig. 16A.

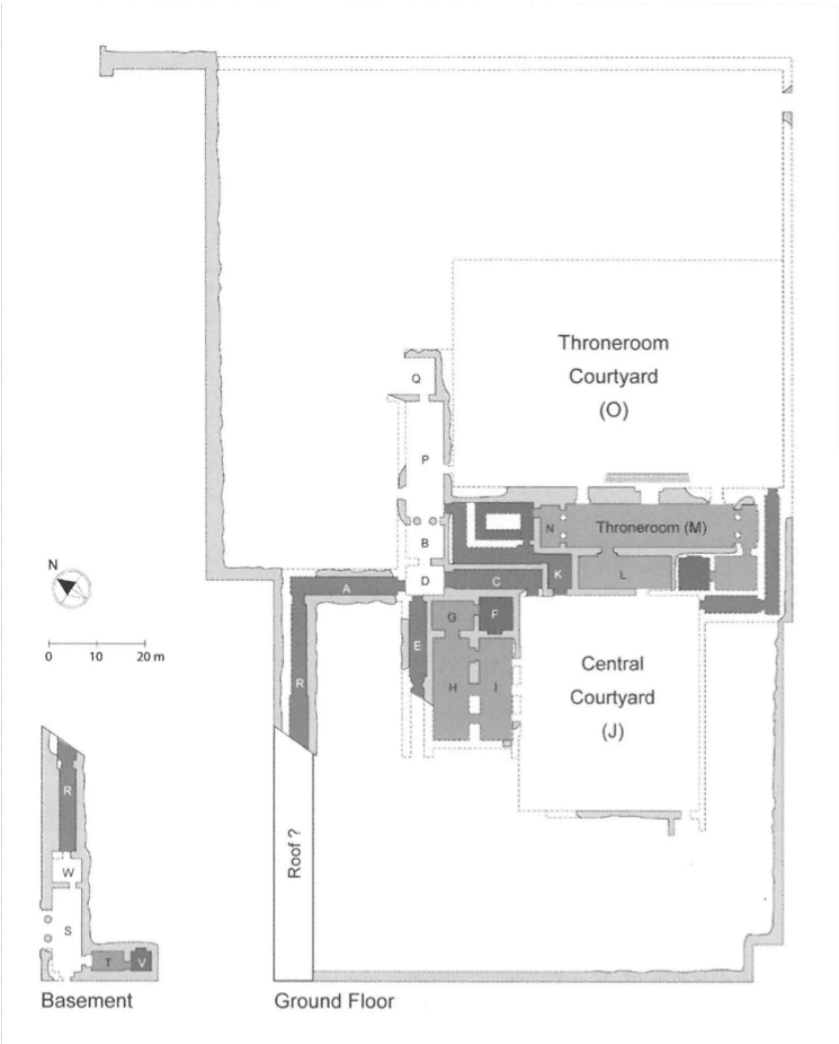

Fig. 5.7: The layout of Ashurbanipal's North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Kertai, *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*, fig. 19.

Fig. 5.8: Procession of archers marching out to the royal hunt. Room A (southwest wall). North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. III.

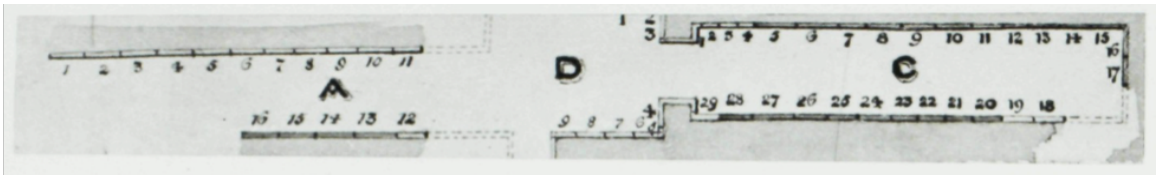

Fig. 5.9: Arrangement of slabs in Rooms A, D, and C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. II.

Fig. 5.10: Procession of attendants marching out to the royal hunt. Southeastern wall (slabs 5-7, 9). Room R. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XL.

Fig. 5.11: Procession of attendants marching out to the royal hunt. Southeastern wall (slabs 1-4). Room R. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XLI.

Fig. 5.12: Procession of attendants returning from the royal hunt. Northwestern wall (slabs 27-28). Room R. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XLII.

Fig. 5.13: Procession of attendants returning from the royal hunt. Northwestern wall (slabs 23, 25-26). Room R. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XLIII.

Fig. 5.14: Musicians and a lion in the *ambassu*. Southern wall (slab 5). Room E. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XIV.

Fig. 5.15: Attendants escorting leashed mastiffs in the *ambassu*. Northern wall (slab 13?). Room E. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XIV.

Fig. 5.16: A lion and lioness reclining in the *ambassu*. Southern wall (slabs 7-8). Room E. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XV.

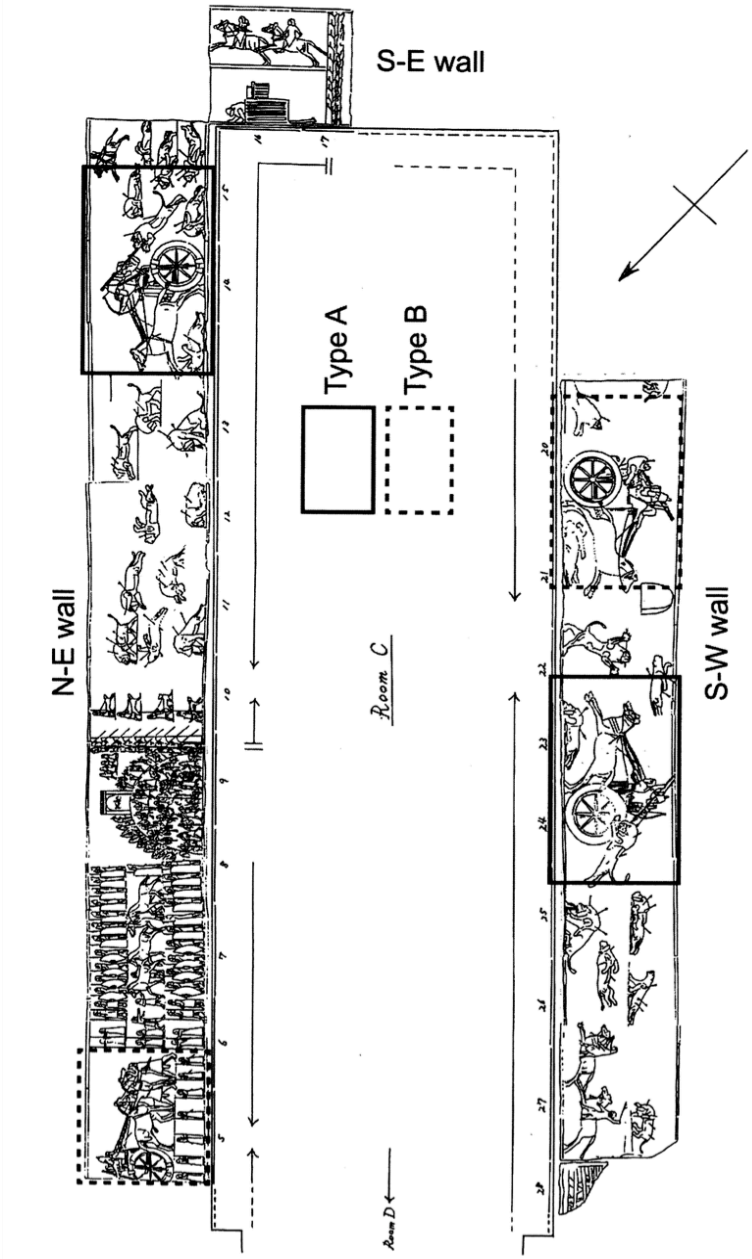

Fig. 5.17: Arrangement of reliefs in Room C with indication of the placement of the two royal image types. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E. After Watanabe, "Styles of Pictorial Narratives," 354, fig. 4.

Fig. 5.18 (left): Ashurbanipal prepares for the hunt. First half of scene 1. Northeastern wall (slabs 4-6). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. V.

Fig. 5.19 (below): Attendants bring horses to Ashurbanipal in preparation for the hunt. Second half of scene 1. Northeastern wall (slabs 7-8). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. VI.

Fig. 5.20: Lions suffer in the arena. Part 1 of Scene 3. Northeastern wall (slabs 10-12). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace,* pl. VII.

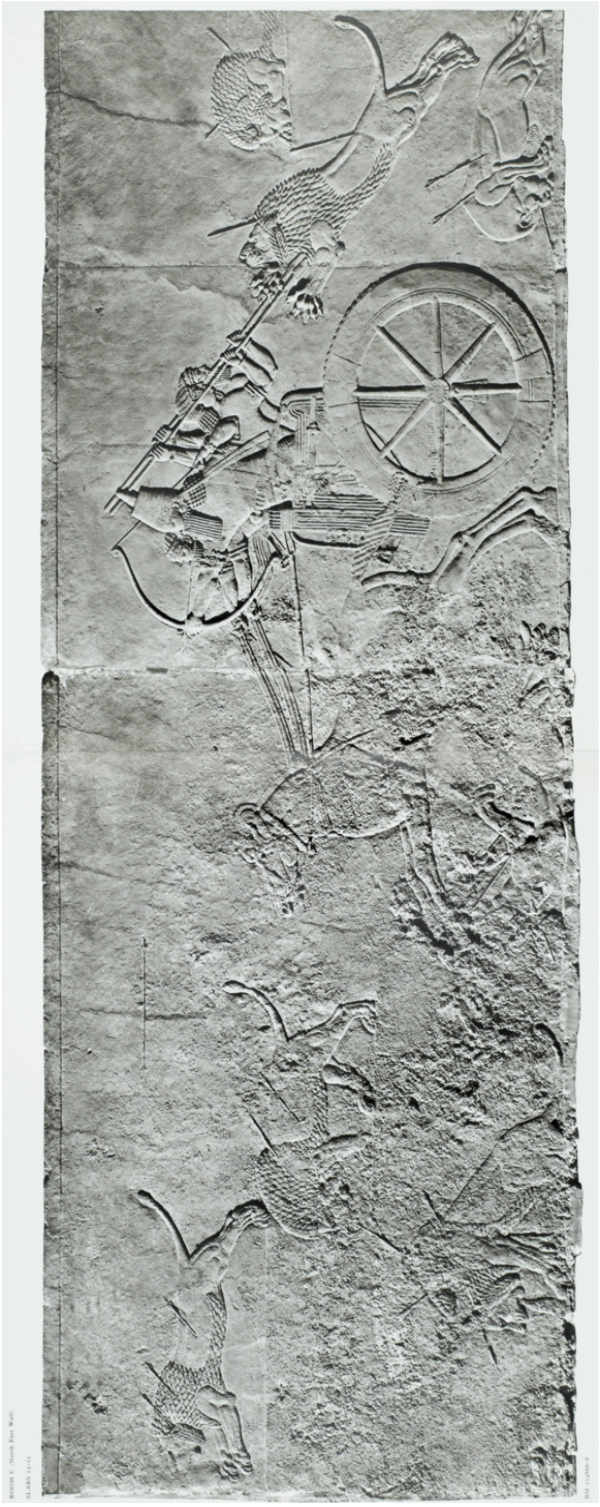

Fig. 5.21: King Ashurbanipal hunts lions from his chariot. Part 2 of Scene 3. Northeastern wall (slabs 13-15). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace,* pl. VIII.

Fig. 5.22: Lions suffer in the arena. Part 3 of Scene 3. Southeastern corner (slabs 15-16). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace,* pl. IX.

Fig. 5.23: A lion is released into the arena. Part 3 of Scene 3. Southeastern corner (slab 16). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace,* pl. IX.

Fig. 5.24: King Ashurbanipal pierces a lion from his chariot facing left. Southeastern wall (slabs 20-21). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XI.

Fig. 5.25: King Ashurbanipal spears a lion from his chariot facing right. Southeastern wall (slabs 22-25). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XII.

Fig. 5.26: Lions suffer and are driven by attendants on horseback. Southeastern wall (slabs 25-28). Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E.). After Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. XIII.

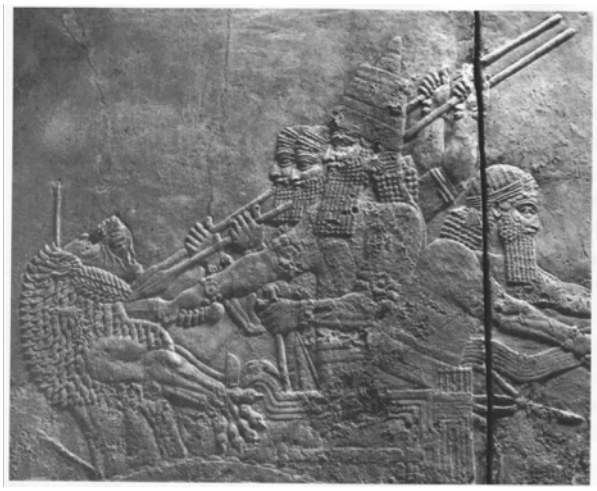

Fig. 5.27: Close-up of Ashurbanipal with sword and three bearded attendants. Southwestern wall. Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E. After Watanabe, "Styles of Pictorial Narratives," 356, fig. 5.

Fig. 5.28: Close-up of Ashurbanipal with lance, two bearded attendants, and one beardless attendant. Southwestern wall. Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E. After Watanabe, "Styles of Pictorial Narratives," 356, fig. 6.

Fig. 5.29: Close-up of Ashurbanipal with three bearded attendants. Northeastern wall. Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E. After Watanabe, "Styles of Pictorial Narratives," 359, fig. 8.

Fig. 5.30: Close-up of Ashurbanipal with two bearded attendants and one beardless attendant. Northeastern wall. Room C. North Palace. Nineveh (7th cent. B.C.E. After Watanabe, "Styles of Pictorial Narratives," 357, fig. 7.

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