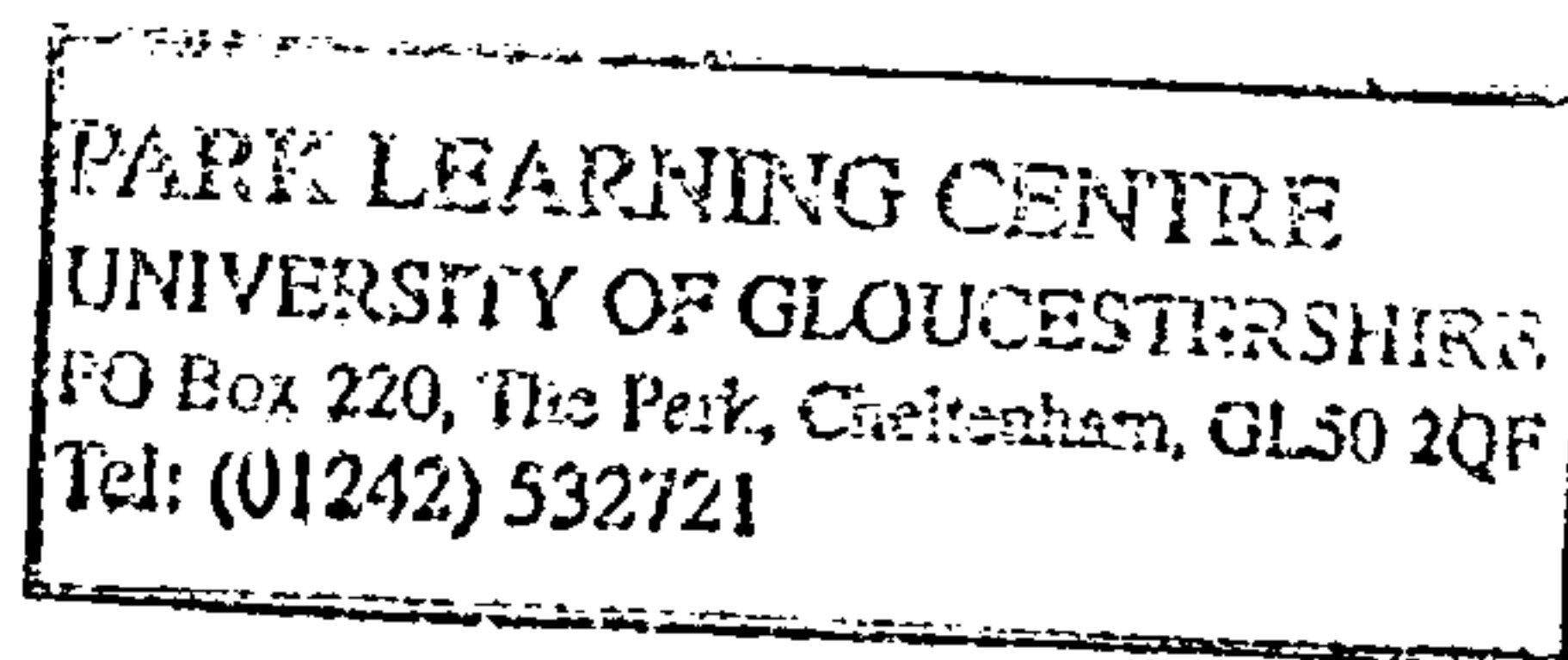


# **Presenting a Prophet in Debate**

**An Investigation of the Literary Structure  
and the Rhetoric of Persuasion of the Book of Amos**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the literary structure and the rhetoric of persuasion of the book of Amos arguing that it was not compiled simply to preserve the prophet's words. Moreover, the present work challenges the common redaction-critical view that regards the book as the result of a lengthy redactional process involving several generations of redactors who continually adapted it to guarantee its relevance for changing times and circumstances. Against this view, it is argued that the book was compiled shortly after the time of Amos, and that it was intended to capture or present the debate between Amos and his original eighth-century Israelite audience.

Interpreting the book within a communication-theoretical framework, and employing the methodological tools provided by rhetorical criticism, it is claimed that it has been compiled for a specific persuasive purpose. That is to say, those responsible for the book in its present form presented the debate between Amos and the Israelites in order for it to function as a warning for a pre-exilic Judean audience. To be more specific, when read in the light of the catastrophic events of 722 BCE, the presentation of Amos struggling – and failing – to convince his contemporaries of the imminent divine punishment is a powerful warning admonishing Judean readers/hearers not to repeat the stubborn attitude of their northern brothers and sisters lest they too be severely punished by Yahweh.

In the introductory chapter, we outline our definition of rhetorical criticism, its interpretive potential and the interpretive tasks it engenders. This is done partly by contrasting the approach with the tenets, aims and interests that characterise redaction criticism, which then leads to a discussion of the issues of synchrony and diachrony. In addition, the involvement of the reader in the interpretive process is looked at followed by an outline of the methodological steps of the rhetorical-critical enquiry. Chapter two, in turn, discusses the macro structure of the book beginning with a review of recent proposals. An approach is then advocated that takes into account the 'oral world' of the original hearers of the book, and seeks to establish what kind of structural markers would have been recognisable in such an oral setting.

In chapter three, the rhetorical situation and the rhetorical problem that caused the production of the book are considered. This is followed by a discussion of its overall rhetorical strategy, which, as we noted earlier, is best described in terms of a presentation of the debating prophet intended to function as a warning to pre-exilic Judean readers. Chapters four to six then look at Amos 1-4 applying the rhetorical-critical notions mentioned above. Finally, our concluding chapter briefly considers the issue of rhetorical effectiveness, i.e. whether the book effectively addressed the rhetorical problem that caused its production.

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work. It is not being submitted for a comparable academic award. The views expressed in this dissertation are my own and not those of the College.

Karl Möller

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
AnBib	Analecta biblica: Investigationes scientificae in res biblicas
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament: Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte des Alten Orients und des Alten Testaments
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BDB	F. BROWN, S. R. DRIVER, and C. A. BRIGGS, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>BHH</i>	<i>Biblisch-historisches Handwörterbuch: Landeskunde, Geschichte, Religion, Kultur, Literatur</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibSem	The Biblical Seminar
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BRT</i>	<i>The Baptist Review of Theology</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZ (NF)</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift (Neue Folge)</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
COT	<i>Commentary on the Old Testament</i>
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DCH	<i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
dtv	Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag
<i>EuroJT</i>	<i>European Journal of Theology</i>

<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FCB	The Feminist Companion to the Bible
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GB	W. GESENIUS and F. BUHL, <i>Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament</i>
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GesRMD	W. GESENIUS, U. RÜTERSWORDEN, R. MEYER, and H. DONNER, <i>Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament</i>
GK	W. GESENIUS and E. KAUTZSCH, <i>Hebräische Grammatik</i>
HALAT	<i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament</i>
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HAW	<i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
HSAT	Die heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology</i>
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JM	P. JOÜON and T. MURAOKA, <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JOTT</i>	<i>Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KB	L. KÖHLER and W. BAUMGARTNER, <i>Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros</i>
<i>KD</i>	<i>Kerygma und Dogma</i>
KST	Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie
<i>LB</i>	<i>Linguistica Biblica</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OBS	The Oxford Bible Series
<i>OrAnt</i>	<i>Oriens antiquus</i>
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides

OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
OTWSA	Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika
OUP	Oxford University Press
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RGG</i>	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft</i>
RhétBib	Rhétorique biblique
SAP	Sheffield Academic Press
SAT	Die Schriften des Alten Testaments
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>SBLASP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts and Seminar Papers</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
<i>Semeia</i>	<i>Semeia: An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism</i>
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
StSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
SubBib	Subsidia Biblica
TB	Theologische Bücherei
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TW	Theologische Wissenschaft
<i>TWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
<i>TWNT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WBG	Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft
WdF	Wege der Forschung
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>WO</i>	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WO'C	B. K. WALTKE and M. O'CONNOR, <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i>
WSPL	Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature

<i>WuD</i>	<i>Wort und Dienst</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAH</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebraistik</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>



## PREFACE

The writing of this thesis could not have been done without the support of a number of people, some of who were more or less directly involved in the project. Others were important to me precisely because they had no part in it and, due to their limited interest in Old Testament prophecy and issues of hermeneutics and interpretation, helped me not to lose sight of the 'real world'. By singling out only a few people here, I certainly do not intend to depreciate the contribution and support of all those who must remain unnamed.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Gordon J. Wenham and Prof. John Barton who supervised the work. Their generous help and support, together with their great expertise, were of immeasurable value to me. I am also grateful to Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education and the School of Theology & Religious Studies for having given me the opportunity to pursue my interest in Amos and for having provided some of the funding. My friends and colleagues in the Biblical Studies Seminar deserve special mention because, in numerous talks and discussions, they helped me disentangle my often confused thoughts as well as develop what at first were merely vague hunches and unlikely ideas.

Most of all, however, I would like to thank my wife Maja who has been a constant source of help, support and encouragement. Her contribution as עֵזֶר has been vital, especially on those days when I myself, like some of my friends mentioned earlier, had a rather limited interest in Old Testament prophecy and issues of hermeneutics and interpretation. Finally, I must mention our son Tobias, who, although not exactly speeding up my work, has made life so much more enjoyable.

Karl Möller  
Cheltenham, August 1999

**PART ONE:**  
**READING AMOS – A COMMUNICATION-THEORETICAL APPROACH**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The title of the present study, 'Presenting a Prophet in Debate', takes up the subtitle of a paper by Ackroyd, given at the 1977 I.O.S.O.T. conference in Göttingen.<sup>1</sup> It has been chosen to reflect what I believe to be the overall rhetorical strategy found in the book of Amos. The addition, 'in debate', is an essential modification of Ackroyd's title reflecting the observation that the focus of the book is not on the prophet himself but on his words of accusation and judgement. These words and especially their arrangement, it is argued, are best understood not as a random collection of oracles but as a structured 'communication'.

In what follows, I seek to demonstrate that the presentation of the debating prophet is the primary rhetorical means employed by the author(s) or final redactor(s) of the book in order to achieve their communicative aims. Recent years have witnessed an increasing number of structural investigations demonstrating the orderliness of the book (or at least of parts thereof). Building upon and developing the insights advanced in these studies,<sup>2</sup> I intend to examine the communicative function of the *book* of Amos. The present study therefore applies a functional approach that proceeds within a communication-theoretical paradigm and works primarily along rhetorical-critical lines. Our understanding of rhetorical criticism, its interpretive potential and the interpretive tasks it engenders will be outlined below. However, before we embark on these issues, it would be wise to utter a word of caution lest its potential be overestimated, as is so often the case when a new interpretive route is advocated.

In his brief introduction to rhetorical criticism, Walton rightly stresses that the approach 'provides *an* interpretative key to texts, but not *the* interpretative key.'<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Stone maintains that 'interpretations sometimes fail to convince not because they make use of a "bad" method, and not because of their "bad" use of an otherwise helpful method, but rather because their reliance upon a single method, to the exclusion of questions highlighted by other methods, results in a focus that is too narrow'.<sup>4</sup> The same point has been made also by Barton who asserts that

much harm has been done in biblical studies by insisting that there is, somewhere, a 'correct' method which, if only we could find it, would unlock the mysteries of the text. From the quest for this method flow many evils: for example, the tendency of each newly-discovered method to excommunicate its predecessors ..., and the tendency to denigrate the 'ordinary' reader as 'non-critical'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The full title of Ackroyd's paper is 'Isaiah I-XII: Presentation of a Prophet'.

<sup>2</sup> A review of the major proposals concerning the structure of Amos follows in ch. 2.

<sup>3</sup> WALTON, 'Rhetorical Criticism': 6 (his italics).

<sup>4</sup> STONE, 'Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19': 88.

<sup>5</sup> BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 5.

Barton goes on to point out that ‘the quest for a correct method is ... incapable of succeeding’. This is because ‘the pursuit of method assimilates reading a text to the procedures of technology: it tries to process the text, rather than to read it.’<sup>6</sup> I whole-heartedly agree with these sentiments and would like to point out therefore that my promotion of rhetorical criticism should not be understood as suggesting that this is *the* correct method for the interpretation of Amos. However, I do believe it to be a useful tool that allows us to focus on some aspects that hitherto have often been neglected.

The second part of this introductory chapter presents my interpretation of rhetorical criticism and outlines the methodological steps applied in the present study. Before we move on to these issues, however, it is important to contextualise our reading by comparing it to other interpretive models. By doing so, it is hoped, some of the distinctive features of the interpretive route taken here will come into focus. At the same time, the comparison is intended to point out some aspects that a rhetorical-critical approach has the potential to deal with and that other approaches failed to, or were insufficiently equipped to, address. The subsequent contextualisation includes a brief discussion of issues brought up by the current wave of reader-centred approaches, such as the value of the author for the process of interpretation, the issue of intentionality, etc.

Yet the focus of the following discussion is on redaction criticism and the reading(s) it has occasioned. This is because redaction criticism, despite the enormous variety of interpretive models prevalent today, still seems to me to be the leading approach, and be it only in quantitative terms, to the study of the Old Testament prophetic books. Another reason for focusing on the differences between (and similarities of) redaction criticism and rhetorical criticism is my sympathy for the former, which is occasioned by the fact that it takes the historicity of the biblical texts seriously. On the other hand, however, much redaction criticism is hampered by what I consider an unwarranted urge to produce ever more complicated (and often highly speculative) accounts of the genesis of the biblical books.

### 1.1 Contextualising Rhetorical Criticism

The development of redaction criticism clearly advanced the study of the Old Testament by providing a more ‘positive’ outlook on the compositional and editorial work of the ‘redactors’.<sup>7</sup> Thus, both Steck and Fohrer, for instance, insist that the negative classification of redactional editing as ‘secondary’ or ‘inauthentic’ should be abandoned.<sup>8</sup> Positively, the task of redaction criticism has been defined by Steck as follows:

Sie [the ‘Redaktionsgeschichte’ in Steck’s terminology] zeichnet dabei die Geschichte eines Textes von seiner schriftlichen Erstgestalt über die Ergänzung bzw. Kommentierung durch Zusätze und

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Introductions to the approach can be found in PERRIN, *What is Redaction Criticism?*; KOCH, *Was ist Formgeschichte?*, § 5; STECK, *Exegese des Alten Testaments*, § 6 (cf. the literature listed on p. 95); FOHRER, ‘Überlieferungskritik, Kompositions- und Redaktionskritik, Zeit- und Verfasserfrage’ (he differentiates between redaction criticism and composition criticism); and BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, ch. 4.

<sup>8</sup> STECK, *Exegese des Alten Testaments*, 81; FOHRER, ‘Überlieferungskritik, Kompositions- und Redaktionskritik, Zeit- und Verfasserfrage’: 141.



über die Aufnahme in größere Komplexe bis zu seiner Letztfassung im vorliegenden literarischen Kontext nach und *bestimmt die hierin wirksamen geschichtlichen Faktoren und Aussageintentionen.*<sup>9</sup>

Of particular concern to us at this point is the redaction critics' interest in the historical factors that played a part in the genesis of the text and, most of all, their interest in the intentions of the redactors. According to Barton, redaction critics are interested in 'analysing how the author/editor achieves his effects, *why* he arranges his material as he does, and above all what devices he uses to give unity and coherence to his work.'<sup>10</sup> Because of these concerns, some have pointed to a similarity between redaction criticism and rhetorical criticism. Kennedy, for instance, claims that 'redaction criticism might be viewed as a special form of rhetorical criticism which deals with texts where the hand of a redactor, or editor, can be detected'<sup>11</sup> and Barton notes that

in a sense, rhetorical criticism is just redaction criticism by another name. But if so it is a distinctive way of looking at the possibilities of redaction criticism, which concentrates on the way the reader is pulled along through the text rather than on the text in its own right. Rhetorical criticism is interested in how writers or redactors do things to readers.<sup>12</sup>

Two observations are crucial at this point. First, Barton rightly observes that rhetorical criticism goes further than redaction criticism in its interest in 'how the reader is pulled along' and, even more importantly, how 'books have persuasive ... force with their readers.'<sup>13</sup> Secondly, and this is an interesting point, Barton notes that rhetorical criticism 'is a kind of redaction criticism in which the disappearance of the redactor is welcomed'.<sup>14</sup>

Barton's notion of the disappearing redactor is a lucid way of pointing out the dilemma that redaction criticism faces. As Steck emphasised, the necessity of redaction-critical work lies in the texts' contradictory statements that are in need of a (diachronic) explanation.<sup>15</sup> The critic needs to explain how and why these inconsistencies and awkwardnesses came into the text. However, the better the critic succeeds 'in showing that the redactor has, by subtle and delicate artistry, produced a simple and coherent text out of the diverse materials before him; the more also he reduces the evidence on which the existence of those sources was established in the first place.'<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, although Barton thinks that redaction criticism is, in principle, 'a perfectly reasonable approach' that can be illuminating in some instances, he adds that

<sup>9</sup> STECK, *Exegese des Alten Testaments*, 80 (my italics).

<sup>10</sup> BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 52 (my italics).

<sup>11</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 200.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 199. Cf. also WARNER, 'Introduction': 4, who rightly points out concerning the redaction-critical undertaking that 'in practice attention is paid less to the editors' persuasive concerns than to their theological preoccupations and the circumstances of the communities in which they lived.' It should be noted furthermore that Barton's portrayal of rhetorical criticism, despite his allusion to the suasive dimension, more or less equates the approach with an interest in aesthetics or stylistics. This is most obvious in his reference to inclusios and chiasms as features that, in his perception, are of prime interest to the rhetorical critic. To be sure, this is an adequate portrayal of rhetorical criticism as it has been practised by most Old Testament rhetorical critics. In the present study, however, the suasive aspect and its implications for the interpretation of the text will be given a much more prominent role.

<sup>14</sup> BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 203.

<sup>15</sup> STECK, *Exegese des Alten Testaments*, 79.

<sup>16</sup> BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 57. Cf. BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 7 n. 12, who, in similar vein, points out that 'the more sophisticated these authors/redactors were, and the more they tended to communicate or express more than one perspective on a single issue, or the more that they tended to present a vision that

*more often than not* it is either unnecessary, because the text is a unity anyway, and we are competent to read it, or unsuccessful, because the inconsistencies that remain, the very inconsistencies that enable us to know the text is a redacted one, are such that we remain in doubt as to how it should be read in its finished form.<sup>17</sup>

Sternberg consequently rightly cautions that 'the task of decomposition calls for the most sensitive response to the arts of composition. How else will one be able to tell deliberate from accidental roughness and identify the marks of disunity in unity throughout a text whose *poesis* covers the tracks of its *genesis*?'<sup>18</sup> Even a cursory glance at the reception history of the book of Amos illustrates how problematic this 'task of decomposition' is. Difficulties already abound when it comes to establishing whether or not a specific text is a unity in the first place. Is the book of Amos a 'rolling corpus' that 'rolled' over a long period of time thereby acquiring, like a snowball rolling downhill, new material on the way?<sup>19</sup> Or, to cite the other extreme, has it been penned by a single author, possibly even Amos himself?<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the crucial question arises as to how, on the basis of which (or whose) criteria that is, a text's condition can be assessed most adequately. Whose impressions are correct? Are those scholars in the right who claim to have stumbled over inconsistencies that call for a diachronic solution? Or are those correct who come up with textual unities that render diachronic explanations unnecessary? The difficulty of deciding this issue is illustrated by Barton's remark who, while stressing the potential rhetorical criticism has for enabling fresh and illuminating interpretations,<sup>21</sup> nevertheless criticises its practitioners

because they can nearly always 'demonstrate' a rhetorical structure in any given text and so invalidate historical-critical arguments based on its apparent (or evident) formlessness. Thus when rhetorical criticism comes in at the door, critical probing into the text's unity or disunity tends to go out of the window, the demonstration of its unity being taken as an absolute imperative. [...] The job of the exegete, for most rhetorical critics, is not to ask whether the text hangs together rhetorically, but to show that it does.<sup>22</sup>

Barton concludes that 'the drive behind rhetorical criticism is often an apologetic one: to show that the text makes better sense than historical critics think.'<sup>23</sup> There is obviously a great deal of truth in this contention; but Barton's charge that the rhetorical critic's interest is an apologetic one illustrates the dilemma we are facing. The underlying assumption of Barton's criticism is that the 'traditional' historical-critical findings are correct, after all, i.e. that the text in question is *not* a unity.<sup>24</sup> This, however, is precisely the disputed issue. It is perhaps preferable, therefore, to note simply that the recent surge of alternative modes of interpretation (of which rhetorical criticism is only one example) testifies to the fact that an increasing number of schol-

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results out of a set of contrasting perspectives, and the more ambiguous they were, then the more hopeless, from a critical point of view, this work of reconstruction becomes.'

<sup>17</sup> BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 58 (my italics).

<sup>18</sup> STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> The idea of a 'rolling corpus' has been suggested by McKane as a model for the genesis of the book of Jeremiah (cf. MCKANE, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, Vol. 1*, xlix-lxxxiii). ROSENBAUM, *Amos of Israel*, 72, on the other hand, questions the idea that 'the "prophetic canon" grew like a snowball rolling downhill, with each successive prophet falling heir to the work and the thought of all the former.'

<sup>20</sup> For this view cf., for instance, PAUL, 6; and HAYES, 39.

<sup>21</sup> BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 204.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. MÖLLER, 'Review of BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*': 174.



ars now question historical-critical readings. The unease of these scholars with the 'traditional' assumptions (or results)<sup>25</sup> concerning the disunity of the OT books is the result of their own, rather different, readings of the same texts,<sup>26</sup> the aptitude (or inaptitude) of which can be decided only on the basis of the textual evidence itself. The text, as Eco points out, thus needs to serve as the parameter of its interpretations.<sup>27</sup>

At the heart of the matter lies the relationship between synchrony and diachrony and the question as to which of the two is to be given priority. While in recent years there has been a tendency for scholars to subscribe to either a diachronic or a synchronic approach,<sup>28</sup> there is now an increasing concern to hold these two together. Thus, Rendtorff, for instance, notes that 'an appropriate understanding of ... larger compositions often demands an insight into diachronic developments';<sup>29</sup> but at the same time he affirms that it is our task always to interpret the given text.<sup>30</sup> He furthermore observes that, whereas it often was considered a primary task

<sup>25</sup> When what KUHN, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, has called a 'paradigm' is firmly in place, it is sometimes difficult to make a clear distinction between assumptions and results. Often the assumptions of one generation become the results the next takes as its starting point. Thus, the text's disunity and inconsistency were frequently simply taken for granted. Indeed, the advance of the discipline of biblical studies was evidently often thought to depend upon producing ever more sophisticated theories concerning the genesis of the biblical books. SMEND, *Deutsche Alttestamentler*, for instance, in an otherwise splendid book, tends to regard historical criticism that lacks in radicalness as regressive. LOHFINK, 'Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?': 316, on the other hand, criticises the tendency towards what he calls 'pandeteronomism'. He mockingly remarks, 'ein anständiger Doktorand [muß] heute irgendwo in the Bibel eine deuteronomistische Hand entdecken. Dann erst gehört er zur Zunft.' Yet again, there is also the danger of becoming oblivious to marks of disunity as BARR, 'The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical': 9, stresses. He parodies the claim that 'the apparent difficulties and inconsistencies, the presence of which has led to the identification of previous versions, are in fact not difficulties or inconsistencies but are highly subtle evidences of the writer's skill and literary talent, qualities which the plodding minds of critical scholars were too lacking in insight to detect.' However, to revert to Kuhn's model of scientific paradigms, it should be noted that in OT scholarship there is currently none that can be said to be firmly in place. The discipline is in what Kuhn would call a period of 'crisis'. This is the case, even though, as RENDTORFF, 'Isaiah 6 in the Framework of the Composition of the Book': 180, points out, 'some ... will not recognize the symptoms of crisis at all, or will not be prepared to recognize them. Instead they will expect that solutions to the problems can be found through an even more rigorous and even more precise application of the old methods.'

<sup>26</sup> STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 7, rightly speaks of 'a reaction against the excesses of historical scholarship.' He also perceptively discerns the danger that this reaction 'overreaches itself and falls short of an adequate countertheory' (ibid., 8).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. ECO, *Grenzen der Interpretation*, ch. 1.7.

<sup>28</sup> House's claim that 'recently commentators have turned to a more text-oriented approach that accepts that Amos composed most, if not all, of the book that bears his name' (HOUSE, 'Amos and Literary Criticism': 175), though not without justification, overlooks that much European scholarship, German in particular, resists this trend. As advocates of a text-oriented approach House mentions STUART; HAYES; G. V. SMITH; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN; ROSENBAUM, *Amos of Israel*; and PAUL, a list that can be extended to include the recent commentaries by NIEHAUS; BOVATI/MEYNET; ACHTEMEIER; GOWAN; and BIRCH. However, recent redaction-critical studies by German scholars have come to rather different conclusions about the textual history of Amos. This is evidenced, for instance, in the extensive work of Jeremias (cf. bibliography for details) as well as the studies by FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehrern*; REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*; ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs*; and SCHAT, *Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs*, all of who reckon with a long process of redactional activities.

<sup>29</sup> RENDTORFF, 'Between Historical Criticism and Holistic Interpretation': 29.

<sup>30</sup> In a recent article, 'The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical', Barr criticised the anti-historical trend in modern biblical studies, one that is often defended by attributing priority to the final form, i.e. the synchronic rather than the diachronic dimension, of a text. The distinction between synchrony and diachrony goes back to DE SAUSSURE'S *Cours de linguistique générale*, whose concepts Barr was one of the first to appropriate to the discipline of biblical studies (cf. BARR, *Semantics of Biblical Language*). However, as Barr rightly stresses, 'synchrony in the Saussurean sense ... must support a historical approach' since 'historically [a text] meant what it meant synchronically in the relevant biblical time' ('The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical': 2). 'As soon as one looks at the synchronic state of language in a past time [or a text from a past time, we might add], then one is entering into a historical investigation' (ibid.: 3). On synchrony and diachrony cf. also the collection of papers in DE MOOR, ed., *Synchronic or Diachronic?* (Barr's article appeared in the same volume).

to look for tensions and inconsistencies, now the integrity of the text is the main interest.<sup>31</sup> And even if there are inconsistencies, 'interpreters must face up to the tensions in the text in their interpretation, instead of getting rid of them through analysis, and then expounding their own smoother version.'<sup>32</sup>

A suggestive assessment of the relationship between synchrony and diachrony has been offered by Sternberg in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*.<sup>33</sup> Preferring the terms 'source' and 'discourse' to diachrony and synchrony, Sternberg affirms their interpretive value and offers a suggestion as to how interpreters might do justice to both.<sup>34</sup> He stresses that if we are to make sense of a *discourse* in terms of communication, the *sources* are of fundamental importance. This is because they 'operate as parameters of context: the world they compose becomes a determinant and an indicator of meaning, a guide to the making of sense.'<sup>35</sup> Turning to the practical exegetical consequences, Sternberg underlines the interdependence of the two orientations ('discourse-oriented' and 'source-oriented') and notes that neither can claim priority, not even in a temporal sense, over the other.<sup>36</sup> 'Both the interpreter and the historian must perforce combine the two viewpoints throughout, incessantly moving between given discourse and inferred source in an endeavor to work out the best fit, until they reach some firm conclusion.'<sup>37</sup>



Before we continue with the discussion of this issue, it is important to take note of the subjectivity invariably brought to the interpretive process by both, the interpreter and the historian. If the recent surge of interpretive models in biblical studies<sup>38</sup> has had one effect, then it is to have alerted us to the 'presence of the reader' so to speak.<sup>39</sup> This is a most welcome development in that, for instance, reader-response theory has challenged 'our naive assumption that our reading is dictated by the text we read' to use Barton's words.<sup>40</sup> In similar vein, Wuellner, promoting a

<sup>31</sup> RENDTORFF, 'Between Historical Criticism and Holistic Interpretation': 28.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, 'Forty Years On': 218.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. also the probing remarks by BRUEGGEMANN, 'Response to James L. Mays, "The Question of Context"': 32f.

<sup>34</sup> STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 7-23. His terminology is perhaps preferable to the expressions 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' because, as BARR, 'The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical': 3, has emphasised, an absolute differentiation between the two would require us to 'to take synchronic time as a sort of photographic instant.' This, however, does not make much sense because 'normal use of language allows the language user to command a variety of language states through time' (ibid.: 4). A recent approach that takes this into account, as Barr points out, is the one by Labov and Bailey, who speak of a 'time-incorporating developmental linguistics' (Barr at this point references the articles by MÜHLHAÜSLER, 'Linguistics: Synchronic': 355; and 'Language: Variation Theories': 332). Since the notion of a 'time-incorporating developmental linguistics' diminishes the opposition between diachronic and synchronic, Barr prefers to use the terms 'history' and 'literature' ('The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical': 9), which correspond to Sternberg's 'source' and 'discourse'.

<sup>35</sup> STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 17f.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>38</sup> These include theories of interpretation such as reader-response theory (or reception aesthetics as some prefer to call it), structuralist and narratological criticism, rhetorical criticism, speech act theory, psychoanalytic criticism, semiotics, and deconstruction as well as 'ideological criticisms' such as feminist criticism, marxist criticism, and liberation hermeneutics. The amount of literature on these is vast but see esp. EAGLETON, *Literary Theory*; SELDEN/WIDDOWSON, *Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*; THISELTON, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*; and BIBLE AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE, *Postmodern Bible*.

<sup>39</sup> How aware scholars have become of the reader's contribution to the act of interpretation is illustrated by a recent *Semeia* issue devoted to 'autobiographical biblical criticism' (ANDERSON/STALEY, eds., *Taking it Personally*).

<sup>40</sup> BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 219. On reader-response theories cf. MCKNIGHT, *Postmodern Use of the Bible*.



rhetorical criticism that embraces reader-response notions, remarks that it 'changes the long-established perception of authors as active and readers as passive or receptive by showing the rationale for readers as active, creative, productive.'<sup>41</sup>

Important though this notion is, there is now a strong tendency to overemphasise the creativity of the reader at the expense of other factors pertaining to the interpretive process, i.e. author<sup>42</sup> and text. It is often claimed, for instance, that texts are indeterminate and that the reader consequently has the freedom to deal with them as he or she pleases. Todorov and Frye illustrate this referring to a derisory remark by the German writer and physicist Lichtenberg (1742-1799) on the work of Jakob Boehme. Lichtenberg had maliciously suggested that Boehme's work is like a picnic to which the author brings the words and the reader the meaning. Both Todorov and Frye, however, appropriate what appears to have been a sneer at Boehme suggesting that it is, in the words of Frye, 'an exact description of all works of literary art without exception.'<sup>43</sup> However, this Eco rejects. Despite his advocacy of a reader-response approach working with the hypothesis that textual interpretation is potentially unlimited, Eco thinks that 'in the course of the last decades, the rights of the interpreters have been overstressed.'<sup>44</sup> In 1962, Eco published a study, entitled *Opera aperta*,<sup>45</sup> in which he advocated the 'active role of the interpreter in the reading of texts endowed with aesthetic value'.<sup>46</sup> Thirty years later, however, he complains that his readers all too readily appropriated the concept of 'openness' 'underestimating the fact that the open-ended reading I was supporting was an activity elicited by (and aiming at interpreting) a work.'<sup>47</sup> The primary regulatory means of the interpretive process, in Eco's view, is the text which, as we have already noted above, serves as the parameter of its own interpretations. 'The words brought by the author', Eco notes, 'are a rather embarrassing bunch of material evidences that the reader cannot pass over in silence, or in noise.'<sup>48</sup> Eco's view receives support from Ricoeur noting that the rights of readers are limited in that 'the right of the reader and the right of the text converge in an important struggle that generates the whole dynamic of interpretation.'<sup>49</sup>

I am only too aware that a defence of the claim that the current 'reader centrism' is overdone would require a detailed critique of postmodern (and in particular poststructuralist) theories of interpretation. Unfortunately, this is impossible within the confines of the study in hand. Fortunately, however, such a critique is already at our disposal in the form of Thiselton's

<sup>41</sup> WUELLNER, 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?': 461. His conception of the approach is a reasonable reminder that rhetorical criticism is by no means a uniform concept but a 'highly fluid and ever-growing interdisciplinary movement whose frontiers have yet to be charted' (thus WATSON, 'Rhetorical Criticism': 182). LENTRICCHIA, *Criticism and Social Change*, 145-163, for instance, understands it as 'rhetoricopolitical activity'; EAGLETON, *Literary Theory*, 179f., discusses it under the heading 'Political Criticism'; whereas ROBBINS, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, favours a sociorhetorical perspective (cf. also idem, *Jesus the Teacher*; and *New Boundaries in Old Territory*).

<sup>42</sup> According to SEITZ, 'The Changing Face of Old Testament Studies': 80, 'it is the lack of a clear and persuasive understanding of the role of "the author" and of intentionality that most troubles Old Testament study at present.'

<sup>43</sup> As quoted in HIRSCH, *Validity in Interpretation*, 1 (cf. also BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 121). The statement is traced back to Lichtenberg by ECO, 'Interpretation and History': 24; who also refers to TODOROV, 'Viaggio nella critica americana': 12.

<sup>44</sup> ECO, 'Interpretation and History': 23.

<sup>45</sup> ET: *The Open Work*.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. ECO, 'Interpretation and History': 23.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.: 24.

<sup>49</sup> RICOEUR, *Interpretation Theory*, 32.

masterly *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. Again, due to space limitations it is not possible to reproduce or even sketch Thiselton's argument.<sup>50</sup> A few words must suffice therefore. Thiselton's main achievement, in my view, is to have provided a thorough assessment of the philosophical foundations upon which postmodern theories have been built. Thus, he was able to demonstrate that the conclusions drawn by postmodern theorists are not simply the invariable and thus nonnegotiable results of the study of language. This claim, though sometimes made, does not stand up to close scrutiny because, as Thiselton has shown, postmodern conceptions rest on a fair amount of philosophical presuppositions, which we may, or may not, embrace.<sup>51</sup> Thus, to cite just one example, Thiselton notes that 'the conclusions which deconstructionists draw *rest not simply on semiotic theory alone, but on an intermixture of semiotics and post-modernist, often neo-Nietzschean, world-view.*'<sup>52</sup>

Instead of following the anti-historical trend in biblical studies that devalues the author and disregards the historical embeddedness of the text, I favour a communication-theoretical approach that affirms the interpretive value of author, text *and* reader. The inclusion of the author, however, should not be understood in terms of a psychologising approach so strenuously rejected by Wimsatt and Beardsley in 'The Intentional Fallacy'.<sup>53</sup> It would be fallacious, as they have pointed out, to be pre-occupied with the author – his or her circumstances, state of mind, etc. – at the expense of the textual data. Important though this notion is, it does not follow – and Wimsatt and Beardsley did not suggest it would – that we can dispose of the author altogether.<sup>54</sup> This is, first, because the author functions as a regulatory means of textual interpretation by investing the act of interpretation with a historical perspective, one that follows from, and is required by, the author's rootedness in history. The necessity of such a perspective is most obvious on the language level as Eco has shown, referring to Wordsworth's poem 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'.<sup>55</sup> To 'understand' the poem, we need to be familiar with the cultural and linguistic background of Wordsworth's time and age.<sup>56</sup> This is most obvious in the line, 'a poet could not but be gay', which, considering the modern connotations for 'gay', is

<sup>50</sup> Cf. in particular his discussion of postmodernist theories of textuality (THISELTON, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, ch. III) as well as 'the hermeneutics of reading in reader-response theories of literary meaning' (ch. XIV).

<sup>51</sup> In similar vein, BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 235, notes that while 'some people are not at all attracted by postmodernist relativism and self-refutation, but are convinced by it', he himself does 'not believe in it for a moment. But as a game, a set of *jeux d'esprit*, a way of having fun with words,' he finds 'it diverting and entertaining'. Barton also refers to BARTHES' *Le plaisir du texte* (Engl.: *The Pleasure of the Text*), the title of which might be seen as symptomatic for the poststructuralist attitude towards texts. As Barton notes, it could perhaps be translated as *Fun with Texts* or *How to Enjoy Yourself with Texts* (*Reading the Old Testament*, 222).

<sup>52</sup> THISELTON, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 92 (Thiselton's italics).

<sup>53</sup> Their article caused a lively discussion of the issue of intentionality. Wimsatt and Beardsley developed, and to a certain extent reformulated, their original propositions in subsequent publications (cf. WIMSATT, 'Genesis: A Fallacy Revisited'; idem 'Genesis: An Argument Resumed'; BEARDSLEY, *Aesthetics*; idem, *Possibility of Criticism*). Cf. also in this context the earlier debate between Tillyard and Lewis in the 1930's. In his *Milton*, Tillyard claimed that the analysis of poetry was about uncovering the author's state of mind. Lewis, in response, dubbed this the 'personal heresy'. The ensuing debate can be found in TILLYARD/LEWIS, *Personal Heresy*.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. the discussion in BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 147-151.

<sup>55</sup> For the text of the poem cf. HUTCHINSON, ed., *Poems of William Wordsworth*, 187.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Lewis' inaugural lecture as the Professor for Medieval and Renaissance English Literature in the University of Cambridge, '*De descriptione temporum*', in which he wittily defends his conception of the study of literature as a historical one. He affirms, 'it is my settled conviction that in order to read Old Western literature [in Lewis' terms this is Western European literature from its Greek or pre-Greek beginnings down to, roughly, Victorian times] aright you must suspend most of the responses and unlearn most of the habits you have acquired in reading modern literature' (ibid.: 13).



wide open to misinterpretation.<sup>57</sup> In similar vein, Barr notes that ‘even fully contemporary synchronic description is dependent at many points on diachronic information. Part of the success of those who exclude diachronic information has come about because they already knew that same information.’<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, however, it is also true that, as Ben Zvi criticises, reader-centred approaches often do not ‘consider the world of biblical societies in their own terms’.<sup>59</sup>

Secondly, a communication-theoretical approach will want to affirm that texts are means of communication, i.e. that by penning a text someone intended to communicate something.<sup>60</sup> Even considering that we have no access to the author and that communication via texts is different from oral communication in which the speaker (‘author’) is physically present does not force us to abandon the concept of intentionality altogether. Eco in this context speaks of the intention of the text (*intentio operis*), i.e. an intention that is embedded in the text. This may be different from the actual intention(s) of the author – as would be the case if he or she did not, or only partially, succeed in communicating his or her thoughts – but it is the only intention ‘available’ to us. In addition, modern literary critics are right to point out that there is not just one single intention. This, however, is rather obvious once we consider our own intentions in saying or doing something. These may, and often do, consist of many, perhaps sometimes even conflicting, intentions to which need to be added the subconscious ones. It is not at all surprising then that a reader should uncover intentions that are embedded in the text but that the author is unaware of, and may even claim not to have intended.

Eco therefore correctly underlines, and welcomes, the fact that the number of possible interpretations is unlimited. However, he also points out that not all of them are equally successful (it is for the text to judge as we said earlier).<sup>61</sup> This, together with what we said in the previous paragraph, has important repercussions for textual interpretation. First, *the* perfect interpretation is unattainable.<sup>62</sup> Secondly, however, this is not to say that we are therefore free to do with texts whatever our whimsy prompts us to. Or, in a way we are of course free to do just that, but then, to use Eco’s distinction, we *use* the text rather than interpret it.<sup>63</sup> Thus, to conclude this line of thought, the ‘presence of the author’, albeit a theoretical and remote one,<sup>64</sup> functions as a regulatory means of textual interpretation also by requiring us to take into account the notion of ‘intention’. Both, the text’s rootedness in history as well as the intention

<sup>57</sup> Cf. ECO, ‘Between Author and Text’: 68.

<sup>58</sup> BARR, ‘The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical’: 7. He speaks of a ‘fully contemporary [i.e. ahistorical] synchronic description’ in order to distinguish between the understanding of ‘synchronic’ as evidenced in many recent writings and that of de Saussure, which is not an ahistorical one.

<sup>59</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah*, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. ECO, *Grenzen der Interpretation*, 21, for a refutation of the idea that an intersubjective communicable meaning does not exist.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, ch. 1.7. On p. 51 Eco refers to MILLER, *Thomas Hardy*, ix, who rejects the idea that ‘all readings are equally valid or of equal value. Some readings are certainly wrong. Of the valid interpretations all have limitations. ... Some approaches reach more deeply into the structure of the text than others.’

<sup>62</sup> A detailed explication of this statement would lead us deeply into metaphysical territory, which is one that in this context I do not want to, and do not have the space to, enter. Readers are referred instead to Eco’s delightful *Search for the Perfect Language* in which he narrates the story of how people throughout the centuries attempted to rediscover the perfect (unambiguous) language spoken in the Garden of Eden.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. ECO, *Lector in fabula*, ch. 3.4 (pp. 72-74); *idem*, *Grenzen der Interpretation*, ch. 1.5 (pp. 47-48).

<sup>64</sup> The paradoxical notion of a ‘remote presence’ seems to describe the involvement of the author rather well.

embedded in the text, have consequences for the act of interpretation in that they restrict the freedom of the reader.

Let me end this excursus on ‘reader centrism’ by pointing out that in putting the reader at centre-stage, we have indeed much to lose. Reader-centred approaches, as Ben Zvi notes, tend to ‘negate the relevancy of any human culture that differs from the culture of the reader.’<sup>65</sup> Thus, they replace the perspective an ancient text has the potential to offer – indeed does offer if we let it – by a contemporary one. This ‘reader centrism’ fits in rather well with the general anti-historical and individualistic trend of modern culture.<sup>66</sup> Whether this is an improvement is, however, debatable, to say the least. I tend to think that Lewis is right when he stresses that ‘to study the past does ... liberate us from the present, from the idols of our own market-place.’<sup>67</sup> Or perhaps it would be better to say that it has the potential to do so, a potential that we, however, as readers, have the power to suppress. Yet, if texts are part of a process of communication, which I believe they are, then Thiselton is right to call for ‘attentive respect’. A text, he notes, deserves ‘*respect for the otherness of the Other as Other*.’<sup>68</sup> This respect Thiselton characterises in terms of the New Testament concept of ἀγάπη and notes, with Schleiermacher, that ‘all understanding, including the interpretation of texts, involves stepping “out of one’s own frame of mind”.’<sup>69</sup> What is thus called for is ‘*creative regard for the Other; ... a love prompted by will, not by prior “like-mindedness”*.’<sup>70</sup>



This then brings us back to our starting point, namely, the crucial role the interpreter’s assumptions about the text’s condition play for his or her reading of that text. A look at the practice and development of biblical criticism over the centuries clearly confirms this. The assumptions an exegete starts off with not only determine his or her working hypothesis but also condition which methodological approach will be applied and what interpretive goals will be pursued. They even influence the outcome of the reading in that diachronic approaches *tend to* yield composite texts while synchronic ones *tend to* produce textual unities.

Since any interpretation is bound to be subjective, it is all the more important to ‘say what reading we are guilty of’, to use Althusser’s phraseology.<sup>71</sup> I should point out therefore that the starting point of the present study is the assumption, or as I would prefer to call it, ‘initial impression’ that the book of Amos is a unity featuring a coherent ‘argument’. It is not, I believe and intend to demonstrate, simply an anthology of Amosian ‘aphorisms’ gathered and assembled for archival purposes. Nor do I believe it likely for the book to have evolved over a lengthy period of time, i.e. a period spanning several centuries.<sup>72</sup> Having said that, however, it needs to be pointed out that it is not in my intention to deny redactional activity in general or to

<sup>65</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> The anti-historical trend of modern culture has been stressed by BARR, ‘The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical’: 2.

<sup>67</sup> LEWIS, ‘*De descriptione temporum*’: 12.

<sup>68</sup> THISELTON, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, 51 (italicised in the original).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., quoting SCHLEIERMACHER, *Hermeneutics*, 42, 109.

<sup>70</sup> THISELTON, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self*, 51 (Thiselton’s italics).

<sup>71</sup> ALTHUSSER, ‘From *Capital* to Marx’s Philosophy’: 14.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. ch. 3.1.2 for further discussion.



reject redaction criticism *per se*.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, considering not only the obvious redactional traces in Amos 1:1; 7:10-17 but also the compository character of the larger sections of the book, its unity is best seen as the result of some sort of redactional operation.

However that may be, the focus of the present study is on the text as a means of rhetorical persuasion rather than on its history. To repeat, the book is a collection of prophetic oracles (and perhaps one or two longer speeches) but – and in this I differ from many redaction critics – this collection, I believe, was compiled comparatively shortly after the time of Amos. It was compiled, I should add, in order to address what in the terminology of rhetorical criticism is called a specific ‘rhetorical problem’. In addition, I shall also argue that those who compiled the book arranged the prophetic oracles in a way that resulted in a coherent ‘argument/presentation’, one in which Amos appears as leading a debate with his eighth-century audience. This presentation of the debating prophet thus serves as the rhetorical means by which the redactors, compilers, or authors of the book – whichever one prefers – addressed the rhetorical problem they were facing. Thus, what is rejected here as unconvincing, at least as far as the book of Amos is concerned, is the ‘snowball approach’ mentioned earlier.<sup>74</sup> My belief that the book in its final form originated relatively shortly after the end of Amos’ ministry I have already stated. It should be added that I also think that the oracles (incl. 9:7-15) and visions collected in the book make perfect sense when read against the historical context of eighth-century Israel. How, I shall outline in chapter three.<sup>75</sup>

Some, I am sure, will want to criticise my approach for ignoring widely accepted redaction-critical results such as the conclusion that the book underwent a deuteronomic redaction, that the hymnic sections are late additions, etc. These issues, too, will be discussed in chapter three but I should point out at this point that such a criticism would not, in fact, be altogether mistaken. That is to say, because of my impressions concerning the unity of Amos and my dissatisfaction with redaction-critical proposals, I suggest setting them aside for the time being and starting again from scratch. A similar route has been taken by Wright in *Jesus and the Victory of God* in which he rejects the claim that the judgement oracles found in the Gospels do not originate with Jesus. Wright urges his readers to ‘wait and see’, as it were, to suspend their preconceived ideas about Jesus until his case has been fully presented. Only then will it be possible to judge whether all the pieces of the mosaic fall into place or whether we are left with some that do not fit.<sup>76</sup> Mason, too, argues along similar lines in his attempt to re-affirm, against van Seters,<sup>77</sup> that the Pentateuchal J source should be dated early, i.e. in the period of the united Davidic monarchy. Mason stresses that ‘it is the material which forms its content which must

<sup>73</sup> As CLEMENTS, ‘The Prophet and His Editors’: 205, has rightly stressed, the collection, preservation and editing of originally oral prophetic oracles or speeches in literary works is in itself secondary and thus ‘redactional’ (cf. also idem, ‘Prophecy as Literature’).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. in this context CONRAD, ‘The End of Prophecy and the Appearance of Angels/Messengers in the Book of the Twelve’: 66, who points out that even where a complex redaction history is likely, we do not ‘have the necessary data to trace the diachronic development of [a prophetic] book through time as many redaction critics attempt to do’ (cf. idem, ‘Prophet, Redactor and Audience’).

<sup>75</sup> In fact, all the aspects brought up in this paragraph will be discussed in detail in that chapter.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. WRIGHT, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 184.

<sup>77</sup> VAN SETERS, *Abraham in History and Tradition*.

speak for themselves, and in the light of that we must each form our opinion of what interests it may best be seen to be serving.<sup>78</sup>

To conclude, I, too, would like to ask readers to suspend all judgements about the genesis of the book of Amos until the rhetorical reading I am about to propose has been completely set out. As Sternberg rightly emphasises, 'hypotheses about source stand or fall on the cogency of the analysis of discourse.'<sup>79</sup> I have to leave it to the reader therefore to judge the success, or lack of success, of the interpretation presented in the study in hand. For deciding this issue, the following questions are, I believe, crucial: (1.) Is the reading suggested here a cogent one? (2.) Does it render the proposal of a complex redactional process spanning several centuries unnecessary?<sup>80</sup> Does it perhaps even make it unlikely? (3.) Is our 'initial impression' that the material of the book makes sense when read against an eighth-century background confirmed by our reading? That is to say, did we successfully demonstrate that the presentation of Amos' debate with his audience fits the proposed rhetorical situation? (4.) What (and whose) interests is the material in its entirety best seen to be serving, to revert to Mason's terminology?

This then brings us to the second part of this introductory chapter, which is devoted to an outline of rhetorical criticism as it is understood and practised in the study in hand.

## 1.2 *Definition and Procedural Outline of Rhetorical Criticism*

The 20th century has seen a remarkable amount of studies on the book of Amos. As is to be expected, the primary emphasis of most of them is on historical questions such as the 'historical Amos', the genesis of the book, the socio-historical background of the prophet's time, etc. In recent decades, however, interest has shifted to literary issues so that by this time we are well equipped also with literary studies. It is interesting to note, however, that most of these literary studies focus primarily on structural issues. This is not necessarily inappropriate but it is striking that for many the investigation of structure seems to have become an end in itself,<sup>81</sup> which, in our view, *is* inappropriate. In contrast, the methodological approach advocated here is a functional one, i.e. one that investigates the text with the aim to uncover the role its various literary/structural devices play in the communicative process.

After what we said about the lack of attention towards the functional aspect of textual features, it comes as no surprise that rhetorical investigations of the book of Amos are extremely rare, indeed, almost non-existent. The third edition of van der Wal's extensive bibliography (1986) lists approximately 1,600 titles, twenty-one of which are subsumed under the heading 'Compositie'.<sup>82</sup> A section comprising rhetorical studies does not even feature. Thompson's recent annotated bibliography (1997), enumerating some 1,800 titles, presents a similar picture.

<sup>78</sup> MASON, *Propaganda and Subversion in the Old Testament*, 26; cf. also p. 38: 'all we can do is observe what is there and try as far as we can to see "who is saying what to whom".'

<sup>79</sup> STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 17.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Barton's remarkable comment mentioned earlier that redaction-critical operations are more often than not either unnecessary or unsuccessful (BARTON, *Reading the Old Testament*, 58). In the case of Amos, we believe them to be largely unnecessary.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. the following chapter for a discussion of recent structural investigations of the book of Amos.

<sup>82</sup> VAN DER WAL, *Amos: A Classified Bibliography*, 45-47.



His subject index includes the term 'rhetoric' but lists no more than four works under that label.<sup>83</sup> Of these, only the 1959 dissertation by Lewis comes in some respects close to the aims pursued in the present analysis. Ironically, Thompson's compilation includes a small number of works that should have been identified as rhetorical investigations but are not.<sup>84</sup> Even so, the fact remains that the text's suasive dimension is still very much neglected, as many exegetes are preoccupied with structural and stylistic issues.<sup>85</sup>

The discipline of rhetorical criticism is on the agenda of Old Testament studies largely because of Muilenburg's often referred to 1968 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature. It was published a year later in *JBL*, under the title 'Form Criticism and Beyond'. As the title indicates, Muilenburg and his followers developed rhetorical criticism primarily as a means to overcome the shortcomings of form criticism. Muilenburg complained, for instance, that 'there has been a proclivity among scholars ... to lay such stress upon the typical and representative that the individual, personal, and unique features of the particular pericope are all but lost to view'.<sup>86</sup> He consequently urged his colleagues to pay more attention to authorial accomplishment and personal creativity as expressed in the unique stylistic or aesthetic qualities of a particular text. The perception of literature that found expression in Muilenburg's conceptions thus led to an increased interest in structural patterns and literary devices such as inclusios, chiasms, parallelism, refrains, repetition, rhetorical questions, etc.<sup>87</sup>

The year that saw the publication of Muilenburg's programmatic article (1969) witnessed also the publication of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*.<sup>88</sup> Whereas the Muilenburg School, as it came to be known, focused on stylistics,<sup>89</sup>

<sup>83</sup> THOMPSON, *The Book of Amos: An Annotated Bibliography*, 431. The studies listed are CHAMBERS, 'Literary Character of Amos' (an 1883 essay arguing that Amos displays a polished rhetorical style); LEWIS, *Persuasive Style and Appeals of the Minor Prophets Amos, Hosea, and Micah*; CRENSHAW, 'Influence of the Wise upon Amos' (which seems to be listed under that rubric only because Crenshaw happens to mention *rhetorical* questions); and BARTON, 'History and Rhetoric in the Prophets' (who argues that the prophets used rhetorical tricks to justify God's judgemental dealings with Israel and Judah).

<sup>84</sup> These include GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech'; PAUL, 'Amos 3:3-8'; and TROMP, 'Amos V 1-17'.

<sup>85</sup> A striking example is the recent commentary by BOVATI/MEYNET, 19, who contrast 'l'analyse rhétorique' (i.e. rhetorical-critical analysis in the terms of WUELLNER'S 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?') with 'la recherche d'une logique hébraïque', the latter being understood as an attempt to 'chercher à découvrir la logique qui a présidé à l'organisation des textes ...' This 'logique hébraïque', according to their analysis, apparently expresses itself first and foremost in 'compositions concentriques'. Cf. also MEYNET, *Rhetorical Analysis*, for a detailed account of their methodological approach. In that work, Meynet employs the term 'rhetorical analysis' to refer to his approach but interestingly remarks that it is also called in French 'analyse structurale' (*Rhetorical Analysis*, 19).

<sup>86</sup> MUILENBURG, 'Form Criticism and Beyond': 5. Cf. also in this context MELUGIN, 'The Typical Versus the Unique Among the Hebrew Prophets'.

<sup>87</sup> MUILENBURG, 'Form Criticism and Beyond': 8ff. Many scholars responded to Muilenburg's call and produced a substantial amount of rhetorical-critical investigations along the lines proposed by him. Cf., for instance, the articles in JACKSON/KESSLER, eds., *Rhetorical Criticism*; and CLINES/GUNN/HAUSER, eds., *Art and Meaning*. For assessments of Muilenburg's achievements and programmatic interactions with his proposal cf. MELUGIN, 'The Typical Versus the Unique Among the Hebrew Prophets'; ANDERSON, 'New Frontier of Rhetorical Criticism'; KESSLER, 'Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Criticism'; idem, 'Introduction to Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible'; CLIFFORD, 'Rhetorical Criticism in the Exegesis of Hebrew Poetry'; and MELUGIN, 'Muilenburg, Form Criticism, and Theological Exegesis'.

<sup>88</sup> The original French edition appeared 1958 under the title *La nouvelle rhétorique: traité de l'argumentation*.

<sup>89</sup> DOZEMAN, 'OT Rhetorical Criticism': 714, stresses that, despite all the similarities, there are important differences that distinguish the Muilenburg School from their mentor. Thus, whereas Muilenburg understood his approach as a supplement to form criticism, many of his followers were influenced more by the literary movement known as 'New Criticism'. HOWARD, 'Rhetorical Criticism in Old Testament Studies': 90, on the other hand, finds close parallels to Prague School structuralism. However that may be, it is clear that many abandoned interest in authorial intention and focused on a text's synchronic dimension thus giving up the traditional historical interest of form criticism. Cf. in this context GREENWOOD, 'Rhetorical Criticism and Formgeschichte'; ANDERSON, 'New Frontier of Rhetorical Criticism';

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca were interested primarily in rhetoric as argumentation thus reverting to its classical Aristotelian conception. Their work soon became one of the most influential textbooks of rhetorical criticism, but in Old Testament studies the approach of the Muilenburg School dominated the scene for some time to come.<sup>90</sup> In 1987, in another article that has become a classic, Wuellner criticised Muilenburg's definition of rhetorical criticism, which he considered indistinguishable from literary criticism, as 'rhetoric restrained'.<sup>91</sup> Wuellner even speaks of 'the Babylonian captivity of rhetoric reduced to stylistics'<sup>92</sup> and 'the ghetto of an estheticizing preoccupation with biblical stylistics'.<sup>93</sup> In similar vein, Kennedy rejected the approach, calling it 'letteraturizzazione'.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, Wuellner embraced the alternative conception advanced by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca as 'rhetoric revaluated'<sup>95</sup> or 'rhetoric reinvented'<sup>96</sup>. Similarly, Bakhtin welcomes the renaissance of rhetorical criticism because it promotes 'rhetoric to all its ancient rights'.<sup>97</sup> It has become customary to label the two orientations devised by Muilenburg, on the one hand, and Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca, on the other, respectively as the 'art of composition' and the 'art of persuasion',<sup>98</sup> terms that identify the different foci aptly.<sup>99</sup>

### 1.2.1 Rhetoric – the 'Art of Persuasion'

Earlier on, we referred to the approach applied in the present study as a communication-theoretical one, i.e. one in which literature is understood as communication. Wuellner stresses that this is characteristic for the new rhetoric which 'approaches all literature ... as *social discourse*'.<sup>100</sup> This definition, as we have already pointed out, recaptures the classical Aristotelian understanding concerning which Eagleton notes that it

saw speaking and writing not merely as textual objects, to be aesthetically contemplated or endlessly deconstructed, but as forms of *activity* inseparable from the wider social relations between

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KESSLER, 'Methodological Setting for Rhetorical Criticism'; KIKAWADA, 'Some Proposals for the Definition of Rhetorical Criticism'; MELUGIN, 'Muilenburg, Form Criticism, and Theological Exegesis'; TRIBLE, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*; idem, *Rhetorical Criticism*; who share Muilenburg's concerns to varying degrees.

<sup>90</sup> In the New Testament, Kennedy's influence effected a different development, which led scholars to take the text's suasive dimension into account much earlier than their Old Testament colleagues.

<sup>91</sup> WUELLNER, 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?': 453; the term is Genette's; cf. his essay 'Rhetoric Restrained'.

<sup>92</sup> WUELLNER, 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?': 457.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.: 462.

<sup>94</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 3; cf. also GITAY, 'Rhetorical Criticism': 136; and ESLINGER, *House of God or House of David*, 4f.; who follow the lead of rhetorical critics such as Kennedy and Wuellner.

<sup>95</sup> WUELLNER, 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?': 453; the term being taken from VICKERS, ed., *Rhetoric Revalued*.

<sup>96</sup> WUELLNER, 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?': 453; cf. EAGLETON, *Literary Theory*, 183, who proposed to 'reinvent rhetoric'.

<sup>97</sup> BAKHTIN, *Dialogic Imagination*, 267.

<sup>98</sup> Cf., for instance, TRIBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 32, 41.

<sup>99</sup> The development of these two foci has historical reasons, which cannot be dealt with in this context. However, useful accounts of the historical development of rhetoric can be found, for instance, in KENNEDY'S works (cf. *Art of Persuasion in Greece*; *Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World 300 B.C.–A.D. 300*; *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*; *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*; and *New History of Classical Rhetoric*). See also CORBETT, *Classical Rhetoric*, part V; FUHRMANN, *Die antike Rhetorik*, part I; UEDING, *Klassische Rhetorik*; and the works listed in CORBETT, *Classical Rhetoric*, 582-585.

<sup>100</sup> WUELLNER, 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?': 462-463 (his italics).



writers and readers, orators and audiences, and as largely unintelligible outside the social purposes and conditions in which they were embedded.<sup>101</sup>

However, neither the notion of communication, which is a rather general conception comprising all kinds of communicative action, nor that of persuasion, which, although narrower, still is too imprecise, provide sufficiently nuanced concepts for what specifically is in view here. For that, we have to turn to Bitzer who introduced the concept of 'rhetorical situation' as distinct from 'persuasive situation'. A 'persuasive situation ... exists', according to Bitzer, '*whenever an audience can be changed in belief or action by means of speech.*'<sup>102</sup> A 'rhetorical situation', on the other hand, is a *specific situation that determines and controls the rhetorical utterance it occasions.*<sup>103</sup> It is characterised, moreover, by an 'exigency which amount[s] to *an imperative stimulus*'<sup>104</sup> and which the rhetorical discourse is designed to address with the aim of modifying it. Rhetoric, thus defined, therefore 'is a mode of altering reality ... by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action.'<sup>105</sup>

Such an understanding of rhetoric fits the prophetic mode well. It is a commonplace that the prophets were public speakers who, as Brenner puts it, 'appeal[ed] to addressees in order to gain influence over them.'<sup>106</sup> However, in addition to the modification of this rather general view made in the previous paragraph, it needs to be stressed that we are not concerned here with the prophets' original speeches. We are interested rather in the written legacy of these figures as found in the Old Testament prophetic books, which, like the New Testament epistolary literature, suggest themselves as promising objects for a rhetorical-critical approach that focuses on persuasive intent.<sup>107</sup> Having said that, however, the question arises as to whether our interest in rhetoric as reaction to a specific historical exigency can be applied to books, which, after all, are rather different in nature from public speeches. This question can be answered in the affirmative because, as Eagleton emphasises,

rhetoric, which was the received form of critical analysis all the way from ancient society to the eighteenth century, examined the way discourses are constructed in order to achieve certain effects. It was not worried about whether its objects of enquiry were speaking or writing, poetry or philosophy, fiction or historiography: its horizon was nothing less than the field of discursive practices in society as a whole, and its particular interest lay in grasping such practices as forms of power and performance.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>101</sup> EAGLETON, *Literary Theory*, 179 (his italics).

<sup>102</sup> BITZER, 'Rhetorical Situation': 249 (my italics).

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. also pp. 250-252. We shall continue to use the terms 'persuasion' and 'art of persuasion', however, despite their lack of precision. Both are well-established expressions in the field of rhetorical criticism and have the advantage of conveying to the biblical scholar more precise and thus more meaningful connotations than the rather elementary designations 'rhetoric' and 'rhetorical'. Readers should bear in mind, however, that in the present study the 'art of persuasion' is understood as being occasioned by and directed at a specific rhetorical situation.

<sup>104</sup> BITZER, 'Rhetorical Situation': 251 (my italics).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*: 250.

<sup>106</sup> BRENNER, 'Preface': 18. See KUENEN, *De Profeten en de Profetie onder Israël*, 2:81, who refuted the earlier concept that saw the prophets as fortune-tellers by stressing that 'es war ihnen nicht darum zu tun, mitzuteilen, was geschehen wird, sondern um sich zu bemühen, was geschehen muß' (cited in MULDER, 'Kuenen und der "ethische Monotheismus" der Propheten des 8. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.': 77).

<sup>107</sup> Rhetorical-critical studies of prophetic books that move beyond a mere stylistic interest include GITAY, *Prophecy and Persuasion*; *idem*, 'Reflections on the Study of the Prophetic Discourse'; *idem*, *Isaiah and His Audience*; CLIFFORD, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*; WIKLANDER, *Prophecy as Literature*; SHAW, *Speeches of Micah*; and recently RENZ, *Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*.

<sup>108</sup> EAGLETON, *Literary Theory*, 179.

It should also be noted in this context that in the case of ancient texts the difference between oral and written communications anyway was rather slight compared to our modern culture. 'Written communications', as Walton notes, 'had a quality of orality because reading aloud was the norm in antiquity'.<sup>109</sup> Aristotle, for instance, discusses written discourse (τὸ γεγραμμένον) in *Rhet.* 3.5.6, which, according to Walton, 'suggests that the boundary between written and oral communication was seen as porous.'<sup>110</sup> It is not surprising therefore that the same analytical tools were used for examining both, speeches and literary works.

However, the practice of subjecting literature to rhetorical-critical investigation continued, even when, in much later times, the reading habits had changed. Indeed, as Abrams points out, the 'pragmatic orientation'<sup>111</sup> has been the major player in literary criticism 'from the time of Horace through the eighteenth century.'<sup>112</sup> It was then replaced as the dominant model by expressive theories connected with and occasioned by the movement of romanticism. Currently, notwithstanding the strong appeal of post-structuralist theories of interpretation, there is renewed interest among literary critics in pragmatic theory, which is sometimes redefined along postmodern lines. A name associated with the reintroduction of rhetoric to literary studies is Booth<sup>113</sup> who is interested in 'the technique of fiction, "viewed as the art of communication with readers," the art of "imposing fictional worlds" on readers'.<sup>114</sup> He regards the rhetorical-critical enterprise as a 'study of *use*, of purposes pursued, targets hit or missed, practices illuminated for the sake not of pure knowledge but of further (and improved) practice.'<sup>115</sup> In Old Testament studies, critics like Alter and Sternberg built persuasive rhetoric into their approach called biblical poetics.<sup>116</sup> Alter, for instance, notes

that it is the exception in any culture for literary invention to be a purely aesthetic activity. Writers put together words in a certain pleasing order partly because the order pleases but also, very often, because the order helps them refine meanings, make meanings more memorable, more satisfyingly complex, so that what is well wrought in language can more powerfully engage the world of events, values, human and divine ends.<sup>117</sup>

These are, however, rather general remarks so that Wuellner is right to point out that Alter's approach is practically indistinguishable from literary criticism.<sup>118</sup> Sternberg, on the other hand, in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, advances a great deal further along the path towards more

<sup>109</sup> WALTON, 'Rhetorical Criticism': 6.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. We shall return to the issue of orality and its effects upon the production of literature in the next chapter.

<sup>111</sup> Rhetorical criticism is 'pragmatic' because of its interest in the use of utterances (spoken or written) as means to an end.

<sup>112</sup> See ABRAMS, 'Orientation of Critical Theories': 11-16. For an appropriation of Abrams' model to the field of biblical criticism cf. BARTON, 'Classifying Biblical Criticism'.

<sup>113</sup> See esp. BOOTH, *Rhetoric of Fiction* but also, by the same writer, *Rhetoric of Irony*; 'The Rhetoric of Fiction and the Poetics of Fiction'; and 'Rhetorical Critics Old and New'. Cf. further CORBETT, *Rhetorical Analyses of Literary Works*; FRYE, 'Rhetorical Criticism'; and idem, *The Great Code*, 27-29. Frye, however, is not so much interested in a communication perspective reckoning with authorial intention as in the literary/rhetorical effect of devices such as myth, metaphor, typology, etc.

<sup>114</sup> BOOTH, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 419.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 441 (italics his).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. ALTER, *Art of Biblical Narrative*; (see also his *Art of Biblical Poetry*; and *World of Biblical Literature*); and STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*.

<sup>117</sup> ALTER, 'Introduction to the Old Testament': 15.

<sup>118</sup> WUELLNER, 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?': 452. He also for the same reasons criticises the approach of Alonso Schökel in *The Inspired Word*. For the latter writer's latest formulation of his approach cf. ALONSO SCHÖKEL (with BRAVO), *Manual of Hermeneutics*.



comprehensive consideration of rhetorical-critical concerns.<sup>119</sup> Even more expressly rhetorical approaches to Hebrew narrative are Eslinger's *House of God or House of David*<sup>120</sup> and *The Persuasive Appeal of the Chronicler* by Duke.<sup>121</sup>

In the light of the stress placed on the historical, as reflected in the importance attributed to the rhetorical situation that occasioned the discourse under investigation, one final comment is necessary. It needs to be pointed out that this conception does not necessarily degrade the texts in question to 'mere' historical documents, sources, that is to say, with little or no use for us today. In fact, Alter, in his discussion of 'prophecy and poetry', notes that the prophetic books display what he calls 'the archetypifying force of vocative poetry'.<sup>122</sup> He points out that the poetic language of most biblical prophecies 'tends to lift the utterances to a second power of signification, aligning statements that are addressed to a concrete historical situation with an archetypal horizon.'<sup>123</sup> With regard to Isa 1:2-10, Alter thus remarks that 'a set of messages framed for a particular audience of the eighth century B.C.E. is not just the transcription of a historical document but continues to speak age after age, inviting members of otherwise very different societies to read themselves into the text.'<sup>124</sup> Even Bitzer, who, as we have seen, is interested primarily in the specific historical situation that occasions a rhetorical utterance, is aware of such phenomena. However, whereas Alter regards the 'archetypifying force' as an effect of poetic language, Bitzer notes that some rhetorical situations persist thus allowing the existence of 'a body of truly *rhetorical* literature.'<sup>125</sup> Some texts, he explains, 'exist as rhetorical responses *for us* precisely because they speak to situations which persist – which are in some measure universal.'<sup>126</sup>

Having noted some essential concerns of rhetorical criticism, we are now in a position to consider the practical side of the subject, which we shall do presently by outlining five steps of rhetorical-critical analysis. However, before we turn to that task, a few comments on what I would regard as in many ways closely related interpretive models seem pertinent at this point. The approaches in question are discourse analysis, on the one hand, and speech act theory, on the other. Both have provided me with important stimuli that are crucial for my analysis of the book of Amos at various points.

*Discourse analysis.* Brown and Yule describe their approach of discourse analysis as being concerned with 'what people using language are doing'.<sup>127</sup> This interest is shared by Green who speaks of a focus on 'language in use' and emphasises the need for a definition that is wide

<sup>119</sup> This tendency is reflected, for instance, in the chapter headings of chs. 12 and 13 of *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, which are entitled respectively 'The Art of Persuasion' and 'Ideology, Rhetoric, Poetics'.

<sup>120</sup> ESLINGER, *House of God or House of David*, 7-9, however, studies rhetoric within the context of the story world as opposed to the social context provided by the interaction between authors and their audience.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. also LENCHAK, 'Choose Life!', for a detailed rhetorical-critical analysis of Deut 28:69-30:20 that makes extensive use of ancient and modern textbooks of rhetoric; and see WATTS, *Reading Law*, who argues that conventions of oral rhetoric were adapted to shape the literary form and contents of the Pentateuch. As regards Old Testament wisdom, BARTHOLOMEW, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 212-226, recently called for a 'communication model' to be applied to the study of Ecclesiastes.

<sup>122</sup> ALTER, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 146.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> BITZER, 'Rhetorical Situation': 259 (his italics).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. (his italics).

<sup>127</sup> BROWN/YULE, *Discourse Analysis*, 26.

enough to accommodate linguistic as well as paralinguistic features.<sup>128</sup> With such a wide definition being applied, the approach is ‘a potentially fruitful way for navigating between apparently competing modes of interpretation that focus on either the history behind the text, the world of the text, or the reading community in front of the text’.<sup>129</sup> Noting that discourse analysis has often been confined to the practice of text-linguistics, Green argues for a multi-level analysis that regards texts as ‘*cultural products* providing witness to a (past) discourse’ and as ‘*partners* in a new discourse situation’.<sup>130</sup> ‘Every engaged reading’, he notes, ‘is ... participation in a communicative event whereby we join in the generation of meaning and are shaped in the give and take of active discourse.’<sup>131</sup> Discourse analysis, therefore, ‘is interested in *how* language-in-use invites such participation and formation.’<sup>132</sup> I have quoted Green at some length in order to demonstrate the similarities of his interpretive perspective with several of our concerns expressed earlier.

Especially the focus on communication with its ‘give and take of active discourse’ is of importance as it emphasises both the author’s interest in getting a message across *and* the active participation of readers in the communicative process. The former has been placed at the centre of rhetorical-critical interest by Bitzer as we have seen above. However, it is given much attention also by advocates of discourse analysis such as Green or Callow who promotes what he calls a ‘semantically or cognitively oriented theory’. This ‘stresses the communicative situation:<sup>133</sup> the author is passing a message on to his or her readers and the meaning that the author desires to communicate determines the form in which the message is cast.’<sup>134</sup> It is important therefore to ask with Wendland, ‘what was the author seeking to *do* ... – how did he intend the message to *affect* his receptors – what *impact* did he want his carefully selected “modes of discourse” to have upon them, e.g. narration, reflection, invocation, interrogation, rebuke, warning ...?’<sup>135</sup> Wendland calls this an interest in ‘the cognitive-emotive principle of *relevance*’.<sup>136</sup>

These are only a few randomly picked examples of statements by discourse analysts emphasising the need to take into account the author’s communicative intent.<sup>137</sup> They clearly demonstrate a close affinity with rhetorical-critical concerns. This is particularly evident in Wendland’s stated interest in ‘how the biblical poet *sought to move his audience* through the verbal artistry of his text to experience either a conversion or a confirmation with regard to their thinking and behavior concerning Yahweh’.<sup>138</sup> In speaking of the poet’s desire to ‘move’

<sup>128</sup> GREEN, ‘Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation’: 175.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.: 176f. (italics his).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.: 177.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> The term ‘communicative situation’ is interesting. It in some ways resembles the ‘rhetorical situation’ rhetorical criticism is interested in. Green at other points speaks of a ‘discourse situation’, the relationship of a text to its ‘co-text, intertext, and context’, and an ongoing social interaction in which (textual) utterances are embedded (cf. ‘Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation’: 180, 183f.).

<sup>134</sup> CALLOW, ‘Units and Flow in the Song of Songs 1:2-2:6’: 462.

<sup>135</sup> WENDLAND, ‘Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry’: 18.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. also TALSTRA, ‘Text Grammar and Biblical Hebrew’: 269, who remarks that ‘language should not be studied as a means of purely personal expression but as a means of communication.’

<sup>138</sup> WENDLAND, ‘Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry’: 20 (my italics).



his audience, Wendland even takes up what we shall see to be one of the technical terms of rhetorical-critical analysis. It comes as no surprise therefore that, as Wuellner notes, there is also, on the other hand, a great variety of rhetorical criticisms that are based on models of modern linguistics or semiotics.<sup>139</sup>

Having illustrated how discourse analysis and rhetorical criticism converge in their interest in the author's communicative intent, we should point out that both are marked also by their attention to the active participation of readers in the process of communication. Again, this has been stressed by Green referring approvingly to Eco's views on the multiplicity of possible readings.<sup>140</sup> Green understands the process of communication engendered by a text as 'discourse event, the temporal moment when a text is realized or actualized.'<sup>141</sup> However, Green, too, notes that meaning is textually constrained.<sup>142</sup> Discourse analysis, like the version of rhetorical criticism advocated in the study in hand, seeks 'to account both for textual constraints on meaning and for the ongoing interplay of text and readers.'<sup>143</sup>

*Speech act theory.* Our study is influenced also at points by what has come to be known as speech act theory, developed by Austin, Grice, Searle and others.<sup>144</sup> As Selden and Widdowson put it, 'Austin's theory of "speech acts" was developed to supersede the old logical-positivist view of language which assumed that the only meaningful statements are those which describe a state of affairs in the world.'<sup>145</sup> Austin, on the other hand, distinguished between 'constatives' (descriptive statements) and 'performatives' (statements that 'get something done').<sup>146</sup> Based on this general distinction, Austin in a second step differentiated between three kinds of performative statements, i.e. the 'locutionary' act, the 'illocutionary' act and the 'perlocutionary' act.<sup>147</sup> Whereas the first is defined as 'the performance of an act *of* saying something', an illocution is 'the performance of an act *in* saying something' and a perlocution is 'the performance of an act *by* saying something'. This differentiation becomes meaningful when we look at one of Austin's many instructive examples in which he notes that we can, for instance, 'distinguish the locutionary act "he *said* that ..." from the illocutionary act "he *argued* that ..." and the perlocutionary act "he *convinced* me that ..."<sup>148</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Cf. the works listed by WUELLNER, 'Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?': 454. Major studies on prophetic books that combine linguistic/semiotic and rhetorical interests include HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese*; and WIKLANDER, *Prophecy as Literature*. For a useful bibliography on semantics, discourse analysis, historical/comparative linguistics, etc. see BODINE, ed., *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 279-305. It includes also a few references to works that apply discourse analysis to the study of prophetic literature (cf. pp. 296-298).

<sup>140</sup> GREEN, 'Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation': 178.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*: 179 (his italics).

<sup>142</sup> Cf. our discussion of this aspect above.

<sup>143</sup> GREEN, 'Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation': 179.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. AUSTIN, *How to Do Things With Words*; SEARLE, *Speech Acts*; *idem*, *Expression and Meaning*; GRICE, 'Logic and Conversation'; and *idem*, 'Utterance-Meaning, Sentence-Meaning, and Word-Meaning'.

<sup>145</sup> SELDEN/WIDDOWSON, *Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 148; cf. ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 277.

<sup>146</sup> The general distinction between constatives and performatives is made in the first lecture (cf. AUSTIN, *How to Do Things With Words*, 1-11). Lectures 2-4 deal with what Austin called 'infelicities' reflecting his basic distinction between constatives, which can be true or false, and performatives, which are either 'happy' or 'unhappy' (cf. pp. 12-52). In lectures 5-7, Austin then discusses criteria for distinguishing performatives from constatives (pp. 53-93).

<sup>147</sup> For the basic distinction cf. lecture 8 (pp. 94-107). The subsequent lectures (9-10, pp. 108-131) follow this up by providing criteria for distinguishing 'illocutions' from 'perlocutions'.

<sup>148</sup> AUSTIN, *How to Do Things With Words*, 102 (my italics).



Especially the distinction between different kinds of speech acts, i.e. 'locution', 'illocution' and 'perlocution',<sup>149</sup> is a useful conception in that it provides us with well-defined concepts that allow further refinement of our functional approach. To mention just one example, the above distinction helps us differentiate between what a prophet said (e.g. בָּא הַקֶּזֶז אֶל-לֹא אֹסִיף עוֹד עֲבוֹר לֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא-אֹסִיף עוֹד עֲבוֹר לֹא; Amos 8:2), what he was doing in making that statement (i.e. issuing a threat) and what the effects of that speech act were (or might have been). We will return to this issue at a later stage but it should be noted at this point that the application of speech act theory helps us overcome one weakness sometimes encountered in traditional historical-critical exegesis.<sup>150</sup> As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>151</sup> traditional interpretation of Amos is often characterised by a striking literalism. That is to say, exegetes frequently look only at the 'surface grammar' of the texts in question failing to consider the *function* of the statements they contain. Sometimes diachronic answers are then sought for questions that would never have arisen in the first place if exegetes would abandon what Selden and Widdowson call the 'old logical-positivist view of language' in favour of a functional approach.

This then takes us to the next step, which is to provide an outline of the methodological procedures applied in our reading of the book of Amos.

### 1.2.2 Five Steps of Rhetorical-Critical Analysis

Surveying various types of rhetorical criticism, Black argued that Kennedy's definition is the most useful one for practical criticism because it is a very comprehensive understanding of rhetoric. It is capable therefore of incorporating even the concerns of scholars who pursue aims very different from those at the fore in Kennedy's approach. More importantly, it comprises an articulated procedure, a methodology, and thus moves beyond being a mere interpretive perspective.<sup>152</sup> For these reasons, his model has been very influential, especially in New Testament

<sup>149</sup> It should be noted furthermore that Austin ends his study by suggesting a list of various illocutionary forces an utterance might have. His list includes 'verdictives' (statements that give a verdict), 'exercitives' (statements that exercise powers, rights, or influence), 'commissives' (statements that commit one to doing something), 'behabitives' (statements that have to do with attitudes and social behaviour), and 'expositives' (statements that are expository) (cf. *How to Do Things With Words*, 147-163).

<sup>150</sup> For programmatic statements on the use of speech act theory in biblical studies cf. the articles in WHITE, ed., *Speech Act Theory and Biblical Criticism*, esp. WHITE, 'Introduction: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism'; HANCHER, 'Performative Utterances, the Word of God, and the Death of the Author'; WHITE, 'The Value of Speech Act Theory for Old Testament Hermeneutics'; PATTE, 'Speech Act Theory and Biblical Exegesis'; and BUSS, 'Potential and Actual Interactions Between Speech Act Theory and Biblical Studies'. See also DU PLESSIS, 'Speech Act Theory and New Testament Interpretation'; and WAGNER, *Sprechakte und Sprechaktanalyse im Alten Testament*. The theory has been applied to a number of effects. WOLTERSTORFF, *Divine Discourse*, for instance, used it to develop a hermeneutic in which Scripture is defined as divine speech (cf. THISELTON, 'Speech-Act Theory and the Claim that God Speaks'; SWINBURNE, 'Review of Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse*'; WESTPHAL, 'Theology as Talking About a God Who Talks'; and LEVINE, 'Review of Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse*'; for reviews of that work). However, more directly relevant to Old Testament studies are WHITE, *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis*; LOHFINK, 'Bund als Vertrag im Deuteronomium'; BERRY, *The Psalms and Their Readers*, 119ff.; REID, 'Psalm 50'; HOUSTON, 'What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing?'; and EAGLETON, 'J. L. Austin and the Book of Jonah'. Cf. also the following works in the area of New Testament studies: AURELIO, *Disclosures in den Gleichnissen Jesu*; THISELTON, 'The Parables as Language-Event'; idem, 'The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings'; idem, 'Christology in Luke'; BOTHA, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman*; NEUFELD, *Reconceiving Texts as Speech Acts*; and BAKER, *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James*.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. MÖLLER, 'Rehabilitation eines Propheten'.

<sup>152</sup> BLACK, 'Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation': 256f.

studies, but it begins to exert an increasing influence also on the study of the Old Testament. Based on ancient textbooks of rhetoric, Kennedy proposed a rhetorical-critical analysis that proceeds in five steps. These have been followed by many, although sometimes slight modifications have been made. In what follows, we present our own version of these five steps, which takes into account some of the suggested modifications.<sup>153</sup>

(1.) To start with, the critic needs to identify the *rhetorical unit(s)* in the text. These have been defined by Wuellner as ‘argumentative units affecting the reader’s reasoning or ... imagination.’<sup>154</sup> Characteristic for the concept of rhetorical units is that it can be applied to sections of varying length and complexity. Thus, starting with the smallest ones, in the book of Amos these would include metaphors, hymns, short oracles, etc. On the next level, we find combinations of smaller units as, for instance, in the series of oracles against the nations (1:3-2:16). The combination of small rhetorical or argumentative units results in discourses featuring arguments that are different from, indeed, exceed those of the individual units. These larger discourses, of which the book of Amos according to our analysis contains ten,<sup>155</sup> therefore need to be investigated in their own right. Finally, the largest rhetorical unit we are concerned with at this point is the book as a whole.<sup>156</sup>

(2.) The next tasks then consist in identifying the *rhetorical situation* that occasioned the utterance (i.e. the book of Amos in our case) and in determining the *rhetorical problem* the author felt compelled to address. We already referred to Bitzer’s definition of the rhetorical situation as the specific condition or situation that prompts a specific oral or textual utterance. This utterance would not exist if it were not for the exigency that caused it, which is why Bitzer stresses that ‘it is the situation which calls the discourse into existence.’<sup>157</sup> More precisely, he defines this situation ‘as a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigency which strongly invites utterance’.<sup>158</sup> The exigency, however, Bitzer continues, ‘can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigency.’<sup>159</sup> This is necessary because ‘any *exigency* is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be.’<sup>160</sup> An understanding of communication such as this differs fundamentally from the redaction-critical concept of *Fort-schreibung* so popular in some circles. It is to highlight that difference that we quoted Bitzer at some length.

<sup>153</sup> The steps of rhetorical-critical analysis are outlined in KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 33-38; WUELLNER, ‘Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?’: 455-460; BIBLE AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE, *Postmodern Bible*, 150-156; BLACK, ‘Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation’: 254f.; WALTON, ‘Rhetorical Criticism’: 5.

<sup>154</sup> WUELLNER, ‘Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?’: 455; cf. BIBLE AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE, *Postmodern Bible*, 150.

<sup>155</sup> These are 1:1-2; 1:3-2:16; 3:1-15; 4:1-13; 5:1-17; 5:18-27; 6:1-14; 7:1-8:3; 8:4-14; and 9:1-15.

<sup>156</sup> The investigation could be extended, of course, to consider the Book of the Twelve or even the canon of the Old or both Testaments.

<sup>157</sup> BITZER, ‘Rhetorical Situation’: 248; on the concept of ‘rhetorical situation’ see also BRINTON, ‘Situation in the Theory of Rhetoric’.

<sup>158</sup> BITZER, ‘Rhetorical Situation’: 251.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*: 252.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* (italics his).



Lausberg points out that the rhetorical situation determines the rhetorical choices made by the rhetor/author as, for instance, which rhetorical genre(s) and what strategy to use.<sup>161</sup> But how then can we establish the rhetorical situation? Wuellner notes that traditionally there are three possible procedures:<sup>162</sup> (a) by looking at the *status* of the utterance, i.e. its basic issue,<sup>163</sup> (b) by investigating its underlying *topoi*,<sup>164</sup> or (c) by considering its *rhetorical genre*. These issues are interconnected, however, as becomes clear in the following statement by the authors of the Bible and Culture Collective:

The preeminent concern for rhetorical critics is the relation of the choice of a rhetorical genre to the specific rhetorical situation, to the basic issue (*status* or *stasis*) of the argument. The chosen genre, in its specificity rather than its typicality, becomes part of the rhetorical situation and must be a major factor in the delineation of that situation.<sup>165</sup>

(3.) This then brings us to the next step, namely, the investigation of the *rhetorical genre*. Rhetorical critics traditionally distinguish a triad of possible genres, which are specified using the different reactions that are demanded of the audience as criteria.<sup>166</sup> *Judicial* rhetoric (*genus iudiciale*) asks hearers/readers to judge past events. In *deliberative* rhetoric (*genus deliberativum*), the audience is invited to make ‘a *deliberative* assessment of actions that would be expedient or beneficial for future performance’.<sup>167</sup> *Epideictic* rhetoric (*genus demonstrativum*), finally, treats the audience as spectators pursuing the aim of reinforcing certain beliefs and values.<sup>168</sup> Epideictic rhetoric is often regarded as being either laudatory or polemical but Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca made a strong case for viewing it as primarily educational in nature.<sup>169</sup> Kennedy charts the positive and negative forms for each of these categories: for judicial rhetoric, these would be prosecution and defence, for deliberative rhetoric exhortation and dissuasion, and in the case of epideictic rhetoric encomium and invective.<sup>170</sup>

It needs to be stressed, however, that because of our interest in how the author(s) or editor(s) of the book addressed the particular rhetorical problem they were facing, we are concerned primarily with the specific manifestation and application of rhetorical genres rather than their typical features. We need to reckon, furthermore, with the possibility that a rhetor might have utilised a hybrid, i.e. a mixture of various genres.<sup>171</sup> This is particularly likely in the

<sup>161</sup> LAUSBERG, *Elemente der literarischen Rhetorik*, 21-23.

<sup>162</sup> WUELLNER, ‘Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?’: 456.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. also LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, §§ 79-138; KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 18f.

<sup>164</sup> Concerning this issue, which we are not going to pursue in the study in hand, Wuellner refers to his article, ‘Toposforschung und Torainterpretation bei Paulus und Jesus’ as well as to BRUNT, ‘More on the Topos as a New Testament Form’; and SIEGERT, *Argumentation bei Paulus*, 35-38, 199-206.

<sup>165</sup> BIBLE AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE, *Postmodern Bible*, 152.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 19, 36f.; BLACK, ‘Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation’: 254; WALTON, ‘Rhetorical Criticism’: 4; GITAY, *Isaiah and His Audience*, 7.

<sup>167</sup> BLACK, ‘Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation’: 254.

<sup>168</sup> UEDING, *Klassische Rhetorik*, 55, notes that under the influence of Christianity a fourth genre emerged, that of the spiritual speech or sermon (*genus praedicandi*).

<sup>169</sup> PERELMAN/OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, *New Rhetoric*, 47-54; cf. BIBLE AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE, *Postmodern Bible*, 156. LAUSBERG, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*; idem, *Elemente der literarischen Rhetorik*, has been criticised precisely for his restriction of epideictic rhetoric to laudatory purposes (cf. WUELLNER, ‘Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?’: 452 n. 25 and the literature cited there).

<sup>170</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 20; cf. WALTON, ‘Rhetorical Criticism’: 4.

<sup>171</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 19; WALTON, ‘Rhetorical Criticism’: 7; cf. BIBLE AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE, *Postmodern Bible*, 152ff.; and WUELLNER, ‘Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?’: 459, for Paul’s use of mixed genres in 1 Corinthians.



case of a larger rhetorical unit such as the book of Amos. Thus, although in Amos the judicial genre predominates,<sup>172</sup> there also are examples where the rhetoric is deliberative and, in a few cases, perhaps, epideictic. However, applying concepts developed by speech act theorists, we will argue that despite the predominant use of judicial rhetoric, the overall *strategy* is best described as deliberative, not judicial. Contra Kennedy, according to whom the dominant genre 'reflects the author's major purpose',<sup>173</sup> I would contend that, at least in the case of Amos, it reflects his *rhetorical strategy* rather than his main purpose.<sup>174</sup> Thus, although most of Amos' oracles are judicial in force, the aim in uttering them and, more important for our purposes, in presenting them in the book that bears his name is a deliberative one. This distinction between the employment of a certain genre and the resultant effects reflects the classic speech-act-theoretical differentiation between *illocution* and *perlocution* mentioned above.

(4.) In the last paragraph, we already trespassed upon the territory of the next step of rhetorical-critical enquiry, namely, the analysis of the *rhetorical strategy and style* employed by the rhetor. In classical rhetorical terms, the critic needs to pay attention to the aspects of invention (*inventio*, εὑρεσις), structure (*dispositio*, τάξις) and style (*elocutio*, λέξις).<sup>175</sup> The guiding concern of the investigation is to establish 'how the rhetorical choices made (the *invention*) create a particular organization (*disposition*) of the argument, and how this organization generates specific stylistic techniques.'<sup>176</sup>

First, *inventio*, in this conception, includes 'the discovery of material suitable to the occasion'<sup>177</sup> (*materia*), the determination of the issue at stake (*status*) and the selection of techniques suitable to support the position of the rhetor. The latter was helped by a list of categories containing a host of argumentative techniques, the so-called *topoi*.<sup>178</sup> Integral to Aristotle's system of rhetoric are the 'proofs' concerning which he distinguished between inartificial and artificial ones. In the present study, we are interested primarily in the latter, which comprise *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*.<sup>179</sup> These correspond respectively to the moral character of the rhetor (τὸ ἦθος τοῦ λέγοντος), his ability of 'putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind' (τὸ τὸν ἀκροατὴν διαθεῖναι πῶς) and the speech itself (αὐτός ὁ λόγος).<sup>180</sup> Commenting on these concepts, Wuellner notes: 'Rhetorical criticism makes us more fully aware of the *whole* range of appeals embraced and provoked by rhetoric: not only the rational and cognitive

<sup>172</sup> Cf. KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 19, who notes that 'a discourse usually has one dominant species'.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> It would be interesting to follow this up because I suspect that this could be true in general, i.e. that the dominant genre of a text is indicative of its principal rhetorical strategy rather than its major purpose. However that may be, this issue certainly demonstrates the value of speech act theory, the application of which at this point usefully complements rhetorical-critical notions.

<sup>175</sup> These reflect the first three of the five aspects of the practice of rhetoric, the final two being concerned with memorisation (*memoria*, μνήμη) and delivery (*pronunciatio*, ὑπόκρισις); FUHRMANN, *Die antike Rhetorik*, 78ff.

<sup>176</sup> BIBLE AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE, *Postmodern Bible*, 154.

<sup>177</sup> TRIBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 8.

<sup>178</sup> See UEDING, *Klassische Rhetorik*, 55f.; MACK, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 32.

<sup>179</sup> On the basis of these concepts, Cicero distinguished three *officia oratoris*: to teach (*docere*), to please (*delectare*), and to move (*movere*). Each of these has its appropriate style; i.e. the 'plain' style is best for instruction, the 'intermediate' style for giving pleasure and the 'grand' style for rousing the audience's emotions (cf. *Orator* 69).

<sup>180</sup> These concepts are outlined in *Rhet.* 1.2.3-6. Aristotle thought *ethos* to be the most effective means of persuasion (*Rhet.* 1.2.4). See MÖLLER, 'Rehabilitation eines Propheten': 49f., for an appropriation of the concept of *ethos* for the reading of Amos.

dimensions, but also the emotive and imaginative ones.<sup>181</sup> However, rhetors do not necessarily employ the whole range but usually favour one of these appeals. Depending on whether a rhetor is predisposed to using *ethos* and *logos* or prefers *pathos*, scholars distinguish between ‘convincing’ and ‘persuasive’ strategies.<sup>182</sup>

Secondly, interest in the *dispositio* of a text, its structure or the organisation of its argument, goes beyond the mere delineation of its rhetorical units referred to as the first step of rhetorical-critical enquiry. The focus at this point is on the persuasive effect of the textual units. To uncover this effect, the critic asks whether and how these units work together to achieve some unified purpose, or indeed fail to do so.<sup>183</sup> Thirdly, yet another important factor of suasive discourse is what rhetorical critics call *elocutio*, the style of a text. Rhetorical criticism regards stylistic features not as mere embellishments of an oral or written utterance but recognises that a rhetor utilises them in order to amplify certain parts of his or her discourse. Stylistic features are a potent means for achieving the desired effect(s);<sup>184</sup> and the critic – being interested in the rhetorical nature of the utterance, not its poetic nature – seeks to elucidate their role for the argumentative development of the rhetorical discourse.

(5.) Finally, in a last step, the critic needs to evaluate the *rhetorical effectiveness* of the discourse in question. At this point, the leading question is whether, or to what degree, the utterance is a fitting response to the exigency that occasioned it. This question can be addressed by asking whether the rhetorical utterance successfully modified the exigency or whether it at least had the potential of doing so. This distinction is necessary since the rhetorical effectiveness of an utterance evidently does not depend on internal factors (such as its genre, disposition, etc.) alone.

Before we end this introductory chapter by addressing some criticisms put forward against the rhetorical-critical approach, let me underline that the steps of rhetorical-critical analysis outlined above should be seen as a circular process.<sup>185</sup> Thus, to start from the end, insight into the disposition of the text may lead to a better grasp of its genre, which will then influence the critic’s understanding of the rhetorical situation etc.

### 1.3 *Is Rhetorical Criticism an Appropriate Tool for the Study of Amos?*

Rhetorical criticism has been criticised on various grounds. We have already discussed Barton’s reservations concerning its potential apologetic thrust. We have also already dealt with the question of whether the rhetorical-critical system is applicable to written discourse, which we answered positively. At this point then, we need to ask whether the method is applicable, more specifically, to a prophetic book that does not belong to the realm of ‘Old Western

<sup>181</sup> WUELLNER, ‘Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?’: 461 (italics his). This has been stressed also by EHNINGER, ‘Synoptic View of Systems of Western Rhetoric’.

<sup>182</sup> WUELLNER, ‘Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?’: 457; PERELMAN/OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, *New Rhetoric*, 26-31; and PERELMAN, *Realm of Rhetoric*, 15.

<sup>183</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 37.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. *ibid.* Detailed lists of figures of speech and illustrations of how they work can be found in BÜHLMANN/SCHERER, *Stilfiguren der Bibel*; and BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 33.



literature', to use Lewis' words.<sup>186</sup> Is it not anachronistic to subject a prophetic book such as Amos to the system of classical Greco-Roman rhetoric? After all, neither Amos nor the editor(s) of the book were familiar with Aristotle's system of rhetoric, let alone those of his successors. Thus, in their crafting of spoken or written discourse, they, obviously, were not guided by the conventions of classical rhetoricians.

However, for our approach to be valid, these are not absolute preconditions. Aristotle and his precursors, after all, did not *invent* rhetorical discourse. As noted earlier, whoever is prompted by the 'imperative stimulus' of a 'rhetorical situation' to address the exigency of that situation is making a rhetorical utterance regardless of whether or not he or she is familiar with ancient rhetoric. Aristotle and others '*merely*' investigated rhetorical utterances and then developed a concept of rhetoric that was based partly on their observations and partly on philosophical ideas and concepts. To be sure, the emerging system of rhetoric did influence later generations of rhetors that would attempt to construct their rhetorical discourses according to the guidelines provided by the classical theorists of rhetoric. However, even before the time of Aristotle there existed what Kennedy befittingly called 'natural' or 'pre-conceptual' rhetoric.<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, Classen, considering the possible sources of Paul's rhetorical abilities, stresses that, in addition to rhetorical theory, there are other factors that come into play. These, according to Classen, are conscious imitation of written or spoken practice,<sup>188</sup> unconscious borrowing from the practice of others, and a natural gift for effective speaking or writing.<sup>189</sup> Classen's observations have been noted here because they help to explain the existence of what we would regard as unmistakable 'rhetorical qualities' in Amos. These can be investigated and assessed using classical rhetorical theory, which, as Kennedy maintains, is a helpful tool because of its highly developed conceptualisation.<sup>190</sup> In fact, the use of 'anachronistic' conceptual tools is the norm in the study of any ancient literature. For instance, recourse to modern linguistics is generally thought appropriate for the study of biblical Hebrew despite the possibility that the authors of the texts under consideration may not have been aware of the insights associated with that discipline.

However, when investigating a book that was not composed according to the system of classical rhetoric, it is important to resist what Black has called the 'disquieting tendency to press oracles or letters into elaborate rhetorical schemes of organization.'<sup>191</sup> To avoid that fallacy, we applied the rhetorical-critical methodology outlined above somewhat loosely.<sup>192</sup> More important than the precise rhetorical classification of every single speech form is the general awareness that the book of Amos *is* a rhetorical utterance that addresses a specific rhetorical

<sup>186</sup> Cf. LEWIS, '*De descriptione temporum*': 12. As already noted, Lewis uses this term to refer to Western European literature from its Greek or pre-Greek beginnings down to, roughly, Victorian times.

<sup>187</sup> KENNEDY, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 9-15.

<sup>188</sup> For this aspect see also KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 11.

<sup>189</sup> CLASSEN, 'St Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric': 269.

<sup>190</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 10f. Cf. CLASSEN, 'St Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric': 268, who maintains that 'rhetoric provides a system for the interpretation of all texts (as well as of oral utterances and even of other forms of communication)'.  
<sup>191</sup> BLACK, 'Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation': 255.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. ESLINGER, *House of God or House of David*, 6, who too urges reticence in this respect.



problem. Such awareness is, we believe, urgently needed as it provides a corrective to the pitfalls of redaction criticism alluded to earlier.

Moreover, Kennedy rightly stressed that 'if rhetorical criticism is to be valid, it must be practised with some awareness of the traditions of Jewish speech'.<sup>193</sup> This, too, needs to be taken into account if ever the approach is to make a serviceable contribution to the study of the Old Testament in general and the prophetic books in particular. In this context, form-critical findings about prophetic speech forms make an important contribution in helping us understand prophetic rhetoric in the context of ancient Israelite speech and culture.<sup>194</sup> After what has been said so far, it will be apparent, however, that caution is needed in the application of form criticism. Most of all, we must resist what has been called the tyranny of the analytical category of genre, with its reductionistic and simplistic tendencies.<sup>195</sup> As we have already seen, this can be achieved only by taking into account both the typical *and* the unique. More importantly, however, in our view, form criticism is best employed alongside rhetorical criticism providing, as it does, the kind of information the latter requires. In an article, entitled 'Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered', in which he re-conceptualises the form-critical approach, Knierim stresses that

interpreting Old Testament literature and language ought to be within a context in which both appear as manifestations of communication, born by a will to communicate and functioning within such communication; that is, they include the horizon of understanding and expectation of readers and listeners and, having a historical dimension, are subject to the changing horizons of communication.<sup>196</sup>

Interestingly, Knierim reformulates the approach in a way that renders it quite similar to rhetorical criticism as understood in the present study (i.e. as different from the Muilenburg approach). Note especially his demand that form criticism 'would have to ask what, in a given text, constituted the communication event between writer and readers, between speaker and listener in a typical way.'<sup>197</sup> He is aware also of the possibility that 'a text is governed by factors beyond those asked for by the form-critical method, for example, by a thematic concern or a motif.'<sup>198</sup> This, I believe, is not only occasionally the case as Knierim expects but seems to be the norm. I do agree, however, with his further expectation that 'by being subservient to those factors that dominate texts rather than by dominating texts through its own methodological system, form criticism will, probably with some kind of new face, continue to have its unique role in the concert of the exegetical disciplines.'<sup>199</sup>

<sup>193</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 12. MAJERCIK, 'Rhetoric and Oratory in the Greco-Roman World': 711, sees as one characteristic of Jewish traditions of speech that 'the object is to persuade through divine authority rather than modes of rational proof.'

<sup>194</sup> Useful succinct definitions of prophetic forms or genres can be found in SWEENEY, *Isaiah 1-39*, 512-547.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. BRUEGGEMANN, 'Response to James L. Mays, "The Question of Context"': 34f.

<sup>196</sup> KNIERIM, 'Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered': 467.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*: 468. As regards the notion of 'a typical way', it should be noted that Knierim continues by pointing out that 'the communication event in a text *may* be constituted by the typicality of a genre understood in a certain way or it may function through some other typicality *or it may be governed by none whatsoever*' (italics added).

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

Having thus specified 'what reading we are guilty of', we now proceed to apply the approach outlined above to the book of Amos starting with the first step of rhetorical-critical enquiry, i.e. the investigation of its rhetorical structure.

## 2. RHETORICAL STRUCTURE

'The prophetic books ... clearly represent the work of craftsmen and rhetoricians who sought to influence not only by the content of the message but also by the literary form into which they molded it.' Thus recently Gordon<sup>1</sup> who also notes that whereas in the past scholars have been interested primarily in the anatomy of texts, 'attention is gradually expanding to include the *rhetorical intent* behind the structures' as well.<sup>2</sup> This development marks a significant advance over against earlier scholarly views on the arrangement of prophetic books. Von Rad, for instance, thought that 'die prophetische Überlieferung liegt in zum Teil sehr unförmigen Traditionsballungen vor, die – fast ohne inhaltliche Disposition oder zeitliche Gliederung – all der Gesetze zu ermangeln scheinen, die uns aus dem Wachstum abendländischer Literatur bekannt sind.'<sup>3</sup>

As von Rad notes, Luther reacted similarly when he complained that the prophets 'haben eine seltsame Weise zu reden, als die keine Ordnung halten, sondern das Hundert ins Tausend werfen, daß man sie nicht fassen noch sich drein schicken mag'.<sup>4</sup> Even Dorsey, who contributed to the study of the final form of Amos, notices a 'mild disorder' in some sections. At the same time, however, he affirms that 'the reader cannot help noticing an orderliness in [other] parts of the book, particularly in such highly structured sections as 1,3-2,16; 3,3-8; 4,6-12; and 7,1-9.'<sup>5</sup>

What are we to make of these views? Especially Dorsey's observations deserve further scrutiny. Is it true that there is a mixture of 'mild disorder' and 'highly structured sections', and if it is, what are the implications? Like most prophetic books, Amos features a complex array of structural devices and literary forms. But how are these used? Is it possible to discern any underlying pattern? Is there a structure that can legitimately be called 'rhetorical', and if so, what does it look like? These questions are important because if Gordon is right in stressing that the prophetic books seek to influence readers also by their literary form or structure, we need to understand that structure in order to trace their persuasive purposes.<sup>6</sup> According to Callow,

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<sup>1</sup> GORDON, ed., *The Place Is Too Small for Us*, 107.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 108 (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup> VON RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2:41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 305. According to WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 1, Amos is one of the most clearly constructed prophetic books.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. BOVATI/MEYNET, 10: 'Parmi les nombreuses opérations nécessaires au travail exégétique, l'étude de la structuration littéraire non seulement des petites unités, mais davantage encore des ensembles, depuis la "séquence" qui regroupe plusieurs péripécies, jusqu'au livre dans sa totalité, est essentielle pour comprendre et interpréter le message.'



the progression of the author's thought is best seen in the light of his own grouping of his material. As the author moves towards his *communicative goal*, he does not do so in an undifferentiated string of clauses. The clauses will be grouped and that grouping will be controlled by the author's purpose in writing ...<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Childs affirms that '*the final form of the text performs a crucial hermeneutical function* in establishing the peculiar profile of a passage. Its shaping establishes an order in highlighting certain features and subordinating others, in drawing elements to the foreground, and in pushing others to the background.'<sup>8</sup>

## 2.1 Parameters for Structural Investigation

Recent years have witnessed an increased interest in the structure of prophetic books. However, our survey of recent works on Amos, which forms the second part of this chapter, has left us with the impression that many structural investigations lack theoretical and methodological sophistication. In particular, the current fascination with chiasms raises a number of questions. However, before we look at individual proposals, it is necessary to consider whether (and how) the structure of a prophetic book can be charted with any measure of certainty. In line with our functional approach as advocated in the introduction, we would suggest that any structural investigation must consider not only a text's structure *per se*, but also what purpose it is meant to serve. Furthermore, it needs to be taken into account that if a structure (or indeed a text) is intended to serve a particular purpose, it is vital for the audience to be able to grasp its structure without too much difficulty.

Thus, in this section dealing with parameters for structural investigation, we will attempt to determine the structural markers that are intended to guide readers or hearers in their perception of the book of Amos. Moreover, for any structure to be rhetorically effective, it needs to accentuate rather than run counter to the content of the text it governs. Secondly, therefore, we need to consider the interrelation of form and content, of structure and message.

### 2.1.1 Structural Markers Must Be Recognisable

As already pointed out, structural markers simply will not work if they are not easily perceivable by the hearer/reader. If a text is to function as a means of persuasion, i.e. if it is to have rhetorical impact, and if its structure is to guide the audience's understanding, it follows that its structural markers must be readily discernible. This leaves us with the question as to which structural markers are easy for an audience to discern. In order to find an answer to that ques-

<sup>7</sup> CALLOW, 'Units and Flow in the Song of Songs 1:2-2:6': 464 (my italics); cf. SWEENEY, 'Formation and Form in the Prophetic Literature': 116: 'the structure or arrangement of the book reveals the final redactor's overall perspectives and conceptualization of the prophet's message in that the sequence of texts within the final form of the book points to those aspects of the prophetic message that the redactor wishes to emphasize.' According to PARUNAK, 'Some Axioms for Literary Architecture': 5-6, the biblical writers wrote in paragraphs or thought units. More than seventy years ago, BOEHMER, 'Amos nach Gedankengang und Grundgedanken', attempted a thematic outline of Amos that worked with thought units, but his proposal is not very convincing.

<sup>8</sup> CHILDS, 'Canonical Shape of the Prophetic Literature': 48 (my italics).

tion, it is necessary, first of all, to consider reading practices in antiquity in particular as well as the act of reading<sup>9</sup> in general.

### 2.1.1.1 Reading Practices Ancient and Modern

(1.) *Reading, literacy and orality in antiquity.* The importance of investigating ancient reading practices has been stressed by Ben Zvi noting that ‘since it is *only* through reading that the communicative message of the text may emerge, it is absolutely imperative to address the process of reading itself, and to critically advance the most likely reconstruction of how the “original” communities of readers could have read and understood the text.’<sup>10</sup> Müller, investigating the reading practices of Graeco-Roman antiquity and ancient Judaism, highlights two major differences between the reading act in ancient times and our own reading practices. While we read silently and to ourselves, in antiquity reading most often was a social event, and it was at almost all times done aloud (this even applied when someone was reading to herself).<sup>11</sup>

Although, unfortunately, our knowledge of reading practices in Old Testament times is rather limited, what we do know confirms Müller’s conclusions. In the first place, the Hebrew verb used to refer to the process of reading is קרא, the most common meaning of which is ‘to call’. Although Müller correctly notes that it does not occur very often in the sense of ‘reading’<sup>12</sup> there are, nevertheless, some important passages where it refers to the reading of written sources to an audience.<sup>13</sup> In the LXX the term is translated as ἀναγινώσκω (cf. Jer 2:2; 3:12; 7:2, 27; 19:2), which is used also in the New Testament with the meaning ‘to read’ or ‘to read to someone’.<sup>14</sup> Müller concludes,

<sup>9</sup> This phrase mirrors the title of one of Iser’s works; cf. ISER, *Der Akt des Lesens*.

<sup>10</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> MÜLLER, ‘*Verstehst du auch, was du liest?*’, esp. ch. 3. In the NT, Acts 8:30 says that Philip *hears* the Ethiopian eunuch reading from the prophet Isaiah. Also some of Müller’s examples from the Graeco-Roman world are illuminating:

(a) Public reading: In *Phaidon*, Plato has Socrates saying ἀκούσας μὲν ποτε ἐκ βιβλίου τινός (*Phaid.* 97b), and in Plato’s *Theaitetos*, Eukleides and Terpsion speak of a slave-boy who is commanded to read to them (ὁ παῖς ἀναγνώσεται) which is expressed in the words λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον καὶ λέγε (*Theait.* 143b, c). The slave is thus called ἀναγνώστης, *lector*. Poets were at times even pursuing others in order to obtrude their readings upon them as Martial’s ironic rebuke of an unknown poet shows: ‘Du liest mir vor im Stehen und im Sitzen; ich laufe – du liest vor; ich sitz am Lokus – auch dort liest du mir vor, ich flieh ins Schwitzbad – dort bist du auch und dröhnst mir in die Ohren ... Soll ich dir sagen, was du angerichtet? Du bist ein braver Kerl, bist hochanständig – und man hat Angst vor dir!’ (*Epigr.* III.44).

(b) Private reading: Pliny (*Epist.* I.9) affirms that he talks to himself and to his books: *mecum tantum et cum libellis loquor*, and Augustine speaks in his *Confessions* about a most unusual observation, namely, that he often met Ambrose reading silently to himself. That this is very unusual is to be seen in that Augustine goes to great lengths to assure the reader that Ambrose must surely have had good reasons for this practice (*Conf.* VI.3). According to PARUNAK, ‘Some Axioms for Literary Architecture’: 2-3, this is the earliest clear reference to silent reading.

<sup>12</sup> MÜLLER, ‘*Verstehst du auch, was du liest?*’, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Exod 24:3-7; Deut 31:9-11; Josh 8:30-35; 2 Kgs 23:2-3 || 2 Chr 34:30-31; Jer 36:6-10; Neh 8-9. For a brief discussion of texts that refer to public readings of the Torah see WATTS, ‘Public Readings and Pentateuchal Law’: 540-542. Of particular importance is his observation that these readings could be quite extensive. Cf. idem, ‘Rhetorical Strategy in the Composition of the Pentateuch’: 3: ‘The Hebrew Bible rarely depicts the reading of books or documents, but when it does, it usually portrays public readings of entire law codes.’

<sup>14</sup> BULTMANN, ‘ἀναγινώσκω, ἀνάγνωσις’: 347, points out that in the New Testament the words ἀναγινώσκω and ἀνάγνωσις are most often used to indicate a public reading from the Old Testament (Mark 2:25 par; 12:10 par; Matt 12:5; Acts 8:28; 13:15; 2 Cor 3:14; Gal 4:21; 1 Tim 4:13; cf. JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* IV.209; X.267; PHILO, *Rer. Div. Her.* 253). Cf. also BAUER/ALAND, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, sub. ἀναγι(γ)νώσκω.



so sind es zwar nicht sehr viele Stellen, an denen *qārā* 'im Sinne von Lesen und Vorlesen begegnet. Aber es sind wichtige Stellen. Ausgehend von der Grundbedeutung des Rufens stellen sie *das Lesen im Rahmen von Verkündigung und Anrede* dar. Es gehört in einen Kommunikationsprozeß hinein, der von Gott ausgeht und über seine in den Schriften niedergelegten Worte die Menschen anspricht.<sup>15</sup>

Another term used to express the idea of reading is *הנה* (cf. Josh 1:8 and Ps 1:2). Sarna, commenting on Ps 1:2, is adamant that *הנה* 'carries a decidedly oral nuance' and that in Ps 1 it should not be translated as 'to meditate'.<sup>16</sup> Thus, whereas *קרא* speaks of the public reading in front of an audience, *הנה* can denote the audible murmuring of the law.<sup>17</sup> According to Sarna, the individual of Ps 1:2 'studies a sacred text which is the object of intense focus and concentration; and the method of study is reading aloud, rote learning, and constant oral repetition.'<sup>18</sup> These, Sarna claims, 'formed the standard pattern of teaching and learning in the ancient world, neareastern and classical'.<sup>19</sup> He supports his claim by referring to the practices of ancient Egyptian schools. Thus, he mentions an instruction from the ninth/tenth Dynasty (i.e. 22nd-21st centuries BCE), which is addressed to King Merikare and speaks of a schoolmate as someone 'with whom one "chanted the writings" in class.'<sup>20</sup> Another Egyptian text, this time from the twentieth Dynasty (ca. 1185-1069 BCE), advises a schoolboy to 'write with your hand, read with your mouth.'<sup>21</sup>

Given this evidence, it seems reasonable to conclude that people in Old Testament times would have been likely to read aloud.<sup>22</sup> If they read at all that is. Most would not have been able to read or, even if they were, would not have had easy access to books.<sup>23</sup> Thus, public reading was the only means by which to teach the 'common' people 'the law and the prophets'.<sup>24</sup> However, as the example of the individual in Ps 1:2 illustrates, in Israel as well as in

<sup>15</sup> MÜLLER, 'Verstehst du auch, was du liest?', 35-36 (italics added).

<sup>16</sup> SARNA, *On the Book of Psalms*, 38. He notes that the verb features in the Balaam inscription from Deir 'Alla where it has the meaning 'say, speak' (cf. HOFTIJZER, ED., *Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Alla*, 173). Sarna also directs our attention to CD 10:6; 13:2; 14:6-7 where we find the phrase *sefer hgw*, 'the book of the *hgw* (study)'. This phrase Sarna takes as pointing to the fact that the Torah 'was invariably recited aloud' (*On the Book of Psalms*, 222 n. 82). In rabbinical Judaism, the learning of Scripture by heart, which was achieved by repeatedly reciting texts aloud, was an important part of Jewish education (cf. SAFRAI, 'Education and the Study of the Torah': 945-970; RIESNER, *Jesus als Lehrer*, passim; and MÜLLER, 'Verstehst du auch, was du liest?', 38-39; see also Erubin 53b-54a).

<sup>17</sup> NEGOITA/RINGGREN, 'הנה, הנה, הנה, הנה': 323. Although the term is not a common word for speaking (ibid.), it does occur in the Psalms to indicate the giving of praise (cf. Ps 35:28; 71:24) as HERRMANN, 'Gebet im AT': 784, remarks.

<sup>18</sup> SARNA, *On the Book of Psalms*, 38.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 39 (cf. PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 145).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. (cf. LICHTHEIM, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2:168).

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, as again Sarna emphasises, 'Eli's reaction to Hannah's silent praying, in 1 Sam. 1:12-14, shows that audible prayer was the rule' (*On the Book of Psalms*, 222 n. 84).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. GITAY, 'Deutero-Isaiah': 191: 'copies of written material in the pre-printing period were limited in number for physical reasons.' He adds that 'the appearance of the elements of speech in written material has to be understood in light of the limited knowledge of reading which was restricted to professionals' (p. 194). See also BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 5, who notes that 'the reading of the ["popular" public] would proceed through the intermediary function of the [educated elite]'. In 'Dialogue between Abraham and YHWH in Gen. 18.23-32': 44, Ben Zvi claims that Gen 18:23-32 'was composed within a social group of trained sages and teachers who had in mind two different audiences', i.e. themselves and 'common' people.

<sup>24</sup> For OT references to such readings cf. p. 31 n. 13. In later times, readings from Old Testament passages were an important part of the worship in the synagogue as can be seen from Luke 4:16ff; Acts 13:15; 15:21. See Josephus (*Ag. Ap.* II.17; *Ant.* XVI.43) and Philo (*Hypoth.* 7.12f) who also mention public hearings of the law. MÜLLER, 'Verstehst du auch, was du liest?', 53-54, highlights the importance that was attributed to the reading of Scripture. 'Während sich der intensive Umgang mit Literatur bei Griechen und Römern überwiegend als Privileg der gesellschaftlich führenden Schicht erweist, bekommt das Lesen der biblischen Schriften in Schule und Gottesdienst einen anderen Stellenwert.'



ancient Graeco-Roman culture, to read aloud was the norm even when people read for themselves. A possible reason for this has been pointed out by Müller noting that

die antiken Buchrollen nicht viele Lesehilfen zur Verfügung stellten, sondern das Lesen durch die scriptio continua, die bisweilen schlechte Schrift und das häufige Fehlen der Korrektur eher erschwerten. Auf diesem Hintergrund führte das laute Lesen zur besseren Erfassung des Geschriebenen, Sinnabschnitte konnten auf diese Weise leichter verstanden werden, *die Verlautlichung diente als Lesehilfe*.<sup>25</sup>

A similar point has been made by Parunak who pointed out that the ancient Hebrew writers had no such things at their disposal as italics, underlining, parentheses, footnotes, chapter headings, and so on.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, even a cursory glance at old manuscripts makes us aware of the difficulties involved in reading a text that lacks all the visual signs that facilitate the reading of modern books. However, Parunak rightly stresses that ‘where we use signals specially tailored to the printed page, [ancient authors/rhetors] employ *a system of indicators that can function in either oral or written presentations*.’<sup>27</sup> It is to be expected therefore that ancient writers (who knew that their writings were going to be read aloud) would use indicators that could be detected in *hearing* that presentation.

This is confirmed by the data as we have it, not only in the Pentateuch but in the prophetic literature as well. Concerning the former Watts remarks that ‘Israel’s tradition of reading law in public ... gave shape to literary conventions and genres ... which governed the combination of law and narrative in the Pentateuch.’<sup>28</sup> This resulted in the ‘rhetoric of a literary genre shaped by oral conventions.’<sup>29</sup> The same applies also to the prophetic books. In fact, early form critics, in investigating the oral backgrounds of the prophetic speech forms, were interested as much in oral conventions as in the literary genres of these forms, thereby testifying to the shaping of the prophetic books by these oral conventions. However, as the book of Amos is more than just a collection of originally oral traditions, it seems reasonable to conclude that ‘die mündlichen Stilmittel ... bei der Abfassung der Prophetenschriften bewußt beibehalten [wurden], da diese zur Verlesung bestimmt waren.’<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Gitay notes that

whether the prophecies were originally written, or were delivered orally and written down a short time after they were delivered, or even were written a long period after their oral delivery, in each of

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Angefangen von der öffentlichen Lesung des Gesetzes durch Esra hat das Lesen der Schriften eine Bedeutung für das ganze Volk. Es wird nicht als Privileg weniger verstanden, sondern als Aufgabe für alle.’

Interestingly JEREMIAS, ‘Zwei Jahre vor dem Erdbeben’: 197, notes that the editors of Amos ‘nicht mit Lesern rechneten, die nur den Atem und die Geduld für eine einzelne Perikope des Amosbuches aufbringen würden, sondern mit solchen, die das Amosbuch insgesamt lesen und die einzelnen Teile aufeinander beziehen konnten.’

<sup>25</sup> MÜLLER, ‘*Verstehst du auch, was du liest?*’, 22 (emphasis added); cf. also p. 52 and see MANGUEL, *History of Reading*, 48; and BRUCE, *Acts of the Apostles*, 226. Aristotle, for instance, complains that Heraclitus is difficult to punctuate and that there are a number of problems concerning the accents and the division of words (*Rhet.* 3.5.6; cf. MÜLLER, ‘*Verstehst du auch, was du liest?*’, 18).

<sup>26</sup> PARUNAK, ‘Oral Typesetting’.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*: 154 (my italics); cf. GITAY, ‘Deutero-Isaiah’: 191; and DORSEY, ‘Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos’: 329, who speaks of ‘aurally-oriented structuring techniques’.

<sup>28</sup> WATTS, ‘Rhetorical Strategy in the Composition of the Pentateuch’: 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*: 21; cf. *idem*, ‘Public Readings and Pentateuchal Law’: 557, where he remarks that the forms established in the originally oral context ‘remained unchanged long after public reading had become a rarity and perhaps an anachronism.’ This sounds sensible but it might well be asked whether in Old Testament times public readings became an anachronism at all.

<sup>30</sup> Thus RIESNER, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 285. See also in this context Gitay’s observations on Deutero-Isaiah (GITAY, ‘Deutero-Isaiah’: 185-197) and those by WATTS, ‘Public Readings and Pentateuchal Law’: 543, on the Pentateuch. Watts claims ‘that much of Pentateuchal law was written or at least edited with such public readings in mind.’

these potential cases, the speaker or writer designed his material to be heard; he tried to appeal through the ear.<sup>31</sup>

He goes on to conclude that 'written and oral media functioned similarly.'<sup>32</sup> This has a number of implications for the structural analysis of a book such as Amos, as we shall see presently. Let me just say at this point that Alonso Schökel, in my view, has struck the right note in voicing his regret that 'scholars of the OT generally have a habit of "seeing" the biblical text, without listening to it.'<sup>33</sup> However, before we move on to investigate recent structural investigations of Amos in the light of these observations, we need to broaden our perspective and look at the act of reading in general.

(2.) *The reading act.* Although I am not concerned with a general theory of reception, it is necessary to consider briefly one particular aspect of the reading act. Reader response critics have alerted us to the 'temporary' character of reading. Fish comments on this issue with great clarity in *Is There a Text in This Class?* He notes that

literature is a kinetic art, but the physical form it assumes prevents us from seeing its essential nature, even though we so experience it. The availability of a book to the hand, its presence on a shelf, its listing in a library catalogue – all of these encourage us to think of it as a stationary object. Somehow when we put a book down, we forget that while we were reading, *it* was moving (pages turning, lines receding into the past) and forget too that *we* were moving with it ...<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, Fish speaks 'of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time ...'<sup>35</sup> and 'of the *temporal* flow of the reading experience'<sup>36</sup> and comments that 'it is assumed that the reader responds in terms of that flow and not to the whole utterance.'<sup>37</sup> In similar vein, Green stresses that

a text's *immediate (or local) co-text*, that is, the immediately preceding material, is often of paramount importance in shaping how a text is received. This is because of memory limitations: As reading or listening progresses, comprehension of past utterances becomes more and more summary.<sup>38</sup>

If this is true of the reading of books, how much more then does it apply to the act of hearing literature that is being read out aloud. Whereas in the former instance, the reader can turn back to previous pages to make sure he or she understood them properly, the hearer lacks the possibility of 're-hearing'. Spoken language is 'one dimensional', as Parunak has pointed out,

<sup>31</sup> GITAY, 'Deutero-Isaiah': 194. For similar conclusions (especially on the issue of biblical poetry) cf. WENDLAND, 'Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry': 2; and ALONSO SCHÖKEL, *Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 20: 'whether it was written or not, it was meant for oral recitation, in public'. In this context it is interesting to note Preuss' claim that the "'Aufmerksamkeitsruf" [אַחַת הַדְּבָרָה] oft weniger der mündlichen Rede als der schriftlichen Redaktion der Prophetenbücher zu entstammen scheint' (PREUSS, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2:83; cf. NEUMANN, *Hört das Wort Jahwäs*). If this was correct (I am not quite convinced), it would confirm our contention that the prophetic books have been written for oral recitation. It is certainly easy to see how the 'Aufmerksamkeitsruf' would have functioned in that setting.

<sup>32</sup> GITAY, 'Deutero-Isaiah': 194.

<sup>33</sup> ALONSO SCHÖKEL, *Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> FISH, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, 43 (Fish's italics); cf. FOWLER, 'Who Is "The Reader" in Reader Response Criticism?': 391.

<sup>35</sup> FISH, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, 26.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 (italics by Fish).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 4: 'Competent readers ... begin to read a text by first developing a scheme about what the text is about, by deciding on the grounds of the text along with the inferences made on the basis of their general knowledge what is the genre of the text and its main characteristics, and then by constantly developing and testing their hypotheses.'

<sup>38</sup> GREEN, 'Discourse Analysis and New Testament Interpretation': 184.



because it follows a linear order.<sup>39</sup> Similarly Kennedy speaks of a speech being 'linear and cumulative' and notes that 'any context in it can only be perceived in contrast to what has gone before, especially what has immediately gone before'.<sup>40</sup>

To summarise, our consideration of reading practices has resulted in two findings that have to be taken into account in our subsequent examination of the structure of Amos. First, in Old Testament times an author or editor was likely to write or edit literature for being read aloud publicly to an audience. This will have influenced the way in which he employed structural devices. In fact, it will even have determined the choice of these devices in the first place. Secondly, the temporal character of reading (and especially hearing) implies that rhetorical signals can only function properly if they can be detected in passing. They were, as Kennedy rightly notes, 'intended to have an impact on first hearing'.<sup>41</sup>

### 2.1.1.2 Which Signals Are Recognisable?

In what follows, we shall look at a number of proposals concerning the structure of Amos. These work, with varying degrees of success, with different kinds of structural signals, thus leaving us with the question as to which of these structural devices are reliable guides to the structure of the book. Applying the criteria advanced in the preceding discussion, we are going to ask two questions. First, which signals was an 'original' hearer<sup>42</sup> most likely to pick up? And secondly, which signals will an 'ordinary' reader<sup>43</sup> of our times recognise?

Despite the danger of oversimplifying matters, it seems helpful in this context to distinguish between two types of markers or structural devices. On the one hand, there are what may be called *rhetorico-literary markers*. These can function in an oral context as well as a literary one because they are easily recognisable. They include introductory and closing formulas,<sup>44</sup> series consisting of similar components (sometimes including a refrain), rhetorically highlighted features such as hymnic doxologies, and so on. *Inclusios* and *chiasms* may also function in such a way<sup>45</sup> provided they do not extend over too large a section in which case it might be difficult for an audience to recognise them. On the other hand, scholars have often turned their attention to what I would consider *complex literary designs*. These include extensive palistro-

<sup>39</sup> PARUNAK, 'Some Axioms for Literary Architecture': 4.

<sup>40</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*: 6.

<sup>42</sup> In this context, an 'original' hearer would be someone who heard a reading of the book (or parts of it), and not a member of Amos' original audience.

<sup>43</sup> An 'ordinary' reader is defined in contrast to a 'critic'. He is supposed to simply read the text and thereby, as Fish puts it, experience its temporal character. This distinction between the 'reader' and the 'critic' has been made, for instance, by FOWLER, 'Who Is "The Reader" in Reader Response Criticism?': 379-381, 383. Although it is desirable to become a 'discerning reader' or a 'critical reader' (RICOEUR, *Symbolism of Evil*, 351, prefers a 'post-critical reader'), the effectiveness of a text as a means of persuasion is dependent on it being comprehensible by a 'reader' who, as Fowler (p. 383) remarks, 'will tend to take the reading experience to be an encounter with the discourse of a real author directed to him/herself as a real reader.'

<sup>44</sup> NOBLE, 'Literary Structure of Amos': 209, oddly claims that such formal criteria 'have been given much greater prominence than they merit', a view for which he gives no reasons.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. RIESNER, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 285; and LUNDBLOM, *Jeremiah*, 16-19 and *passim*, according to whom these two devices are the controlling structures for the whole book of Jeremiah. See also PARUNAK, 'Some Axioms for Literary Architecture': 6-10.



phic structures, *inclusios* encompassing large sections of a text, and other similar devices.<sup>46</sup> It needs to be stressed that I certainly do not intend to deny their existence, nor do I doubt the value of investigating them. However, from a rhetorical point of view, rhetorico-literary markers clearly deserve our primary attention. This is because they are more easily perceived by an audience and thus they are more likely to function as guides for their understanding of a text than are complex literary designs.

### 2.1.2 *The Structure Must Serve the Message of the Text*

Finally, effective communication requires *the interrelation of form and content*, of structure and message.<sup>47</sup> This has been emphasised by Wendland who directs our attention to the dangers that inhere in any structural investigation. Wendland complains that 'the pursuit of form, or structure, seems almost to become an end in itself, and the results bear little or no relation to the content of the biblical text as it is overtly presented to the reader.'<sup>48</sup> Moreover, he rightly demands that '*the structures ... revealed by a linguistic/literary investigation must be related in some significant way to the communication of the prophet's message, especially his major themes and emphases.*'<sup>49</sup> Wendland shares our concern to establish a structural outline of Amos that does not bend the data in order to fit a preconceived theory but is flexible enough to describe the given data as we have it. In fact, he even supplies us with a very helpful criterion that should help us achieve this aim. He notes that 'the greater the number of formal and semantic elements of recursion that happen to coincide in the formation of a supposed pattern of discourse, the more reliable, or established, that particular structure would consequently be from an organizational standpoint.'<sup>50</sup> Thus, it might be supposed that an ideal case would involve the coincidence of a number of structural devices and a correspondence of form and content.

However, this is not always the case. In fact, there are cases where either form and content seem to contradict each other, or where there are structural ambiguities in that different structural markers seem to point in different directions. Thus, we may find that indicators marking a structural division coincide with features performing the role of what Finley and Payton have called 'markers of connectivity'.<sup>51</sup> The effect of this is that a textual break is signalled and, at

<sup>46</sup> Cf., for instance, O'CONNELL, *Concentricity and Continuity*, 23-29, who detects what he calls 'complex frameworking in Isaiah'; and SMALLEY, 'Recursion Patterns and the Sectioning of Amos': 118-127, who refers to 'larger recursion patterns' in Amos.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Aristotle's concept of the four causes that are operative in any teleological process (the writing of a book for communicative purposes surely is a teleological process). These include the *causa efficiens* (in the case of a literary work this is the author who pens the book), the *causa finalis* (the reason for writing a book), the *causa formalis* (a specific plan, i.e. the structure of a book), and the *causa materialis* (the words that make up a literary work, the material). Of these, the latter two are of particular importance in the present context. For a brief recapitulation of Aristotle's four causes cf. KUNZMANN/BURKARD, *dtv-Atlas zur Philosophie*, 49.

<sup>48</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 2. This has also been emphasised by GESE, 'Komposition bei Amos': 74, who pointedly speaks of the 'Gefahr, daß bloß formale Beobachtungen gesammelt werden, ohne den unmittelbaren Zusammenhang mit der inhaltlichen Bedeutung herauszustellen'.

<sup>49</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 5 (emphasis added). For this principle cf. also FOX, 'Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones': 178f., who applies it in his study of Ezek 37:1-14.

<sup>50</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 5.

<sup>51</sup> FINLEY/PAYTON, 'Discourse Analysis of Isaiah 7-12': 331. Structural markers either divide or unify a text, or they emphasise certain parts of it. The dividing or unifying functions have also been termed 'disjunction' or 'conjunction' (cf. WENDLAND, 'Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry': 13-14, who lists a number of examples for both categories). In this context see Parunak's comments on 'similarity' in 'Some Axioms for Literary Architecture': 4-10, and the dis-

the same time, levelled down in some ways. An example of this technique, which structures a discourse without being too disruptive, can be found in Amos 4:1-3. Whereas the introductory phrase *הִזָּה הַדְּבָר הַשְּׁמָעִי* introduces a new prophetic discourse, the content of these three verses exhibits unmistakable links with the previous material in Amos 3.<sup>52</sup>

## 2.2 *Evaluating Previous Proposals Concerning the Structure of Amos*

Having established some general criteria for structural investigations, we will now look at the main proposals concerning the structure of Amos that have been suggested so far. It needs to be stressed that we do not intend to offer a comprehensive review, but we are going to focus on the most influential and/or recent proposals. In what follows, the importance of applying reliable and appropriate criteria will become evident as many structural investigations suffer from the lack of sound theoretical and methodological principles. However, the review is also intended to uncover the more valuable insights of previous scholarship, which we shall then take as the starting point for our own investigation of the structure of Amos.

### 2.2.1 *Reconsidering 'Words' and 'Visions'*

The most popular – and most general – structural approach is to divide the book of Amos into three (sometimes four) parts, namely Amos 1-2 (the introduction), chs. 3-6 (often called the ‘words’) and chs. 7-9 (the ‘visions’). Sometimes the final verses of the book, the ‘appendix’, are considered a separate part.<sup>53</sup> This is a very helpful starting point, but it is apparent that it is no more than a very general outline, and as such it is not sufficient for a detailed analysis of the book. Even more importantly, however, the classification into ‘words’ and ‘visions’ is not too meaningful and also not entirely appropriate as Amos 7-9 contain some ‘non-visionary’ material as well (cf. 8:4-14). Faced with this problem, some scholars have tended to rearrange the text so that it fits the theory rather than to revise their ideas.

A good example of this is to be found in the Old Testament Introduction by Sellin who classifies Amos 7-9 as follows: ‘7-9<sub>5</sub> Visionen mit eingeschobener historischer Episode 7<sub>10-17</sub>, Fragmenten von Bußreden 8<sub>4-14</sub> und angehängter Verheißung 9<sub>8b-15</sub>.’<sup>54</sup> Sellin is thus well aware that the third part of Amos, in addition to visions, contains also a narrative, some prophetic judgement oracles and the salvation oracle that ends the book. This observation clearly does not fit his theory according to which chs. 7-9 are ‘the visions’ but this does not cause Sellin any problems as he is quick to claim that the judgement oracles in 8:4-14 must have been mis-

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cussion of ‘repetition’ and ‘variation’ in the Pentateuch by WATTS, ‘Public Readings and Pentateuchal Law’: 545-557. Concerning the former Watts remarks: ‘Regardless of its origins, repetition must be acceptable to the text’s first audience or else it would not be preserved. The function of repetition thus requires literary description, but this does not preclude finding the origins of repetition in the diachronic development of the text’ (p. 546 n. 18). As regards ‘variation’, he notes that ‘developmental hypotheses ... leave half the question unanswered: though they account for the origins of the contradictions, they do not explain why such differences were acceptable to the earliest hearers and readers of the Pentateuch’ (p. 549).

<sup>52</sup> To be sure, there are also links with the subsequent material in Amos 4.

<sup>53</sup> This outline has been offered by virtually all modern commentaries on Amos.

<sup>54</sup> SELLIN, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 104.



placed. Originally, they must have belonged to chs. 3-6.<sup>55</sup> Concerning the also supposedly 'misplaced' narrative in 7:10-17, a great number of divergent solutions have been suggested all of which seek to determine its original place in the book.<sup>56</sup> Finally, those who regard the salvation oracle Amos 9 as an appendix avoid at least the difficulty of having to subsume these verses under the heading 'the visions'.

To summarise, the delineation of a three-fold structure is a helpful starting point in that it rightly distinguishes between the book's introduction, middle part and concluding section, all of which have particular rhetorical functions, as we shall see presently. However, the labelling of the second and third sections as 'words' and 'visions' is not too helpful, and the tendency to transfer certain parts of the material to their supposedly original place is to be treated with caution. Not only is it highly speculative, it even distorts the text (again, the reasons for this judgement we shall look at in due course) in order to match it to a questionable theory.

### 2.2.2 *The Function of the Hymn Fragments*

In the past, many who investigated the hymn fragments (4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6) focused on their origin. Because of their distinctive language, they were often seen as three strophes of a single hymn.<sup>57</sup> In recent years, however, interest has shifted to the question of how these hymns function in their present contexts. Whether one considers them as parts of an ancient doxology or as (post-) exilic additions, the question that needs to be addressed is, why have they been placed at the places where they are now to be found? What is their function within the book? Do they perform a structural role? Or do we have to define their purpose in other terms?

A structural function has been proposed by Koch who, in his discussion, includes 1:2 as a fourth hymn fragment. According to Koch, the hymnic piece in 1:2 introduces the first part of the book (chs. 1-2) while those in 4:13 and 9:5-6, both of which are more extensive than the one in 5:8, close major sections (i.e. chs. 3-4 and 5:1-9:6). Finally, the shorter fragment in 5:8 concludes a sub-section.<sup>58</sup> I believe, Koch is right to stress that the hymns need to be understood in the context of the whole book. However, his understanding of the structural role of 5:8 is unsatisfactory as it distorts the unity of 5:1-17, which he has to divide into vv. 1-8 and vv. (7) 9-17. Moreover, Koch's analysis does not account for the major break at 7:1 the existence of which has been acknowledged by almost all commentators. In fact, I am not even convinced about the functional role of 4:13 and 9:5-6 as envisaged by Koch. The reasons for this will become clear later in this chapter when we look at the macro structure of Amos in detail.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. According to CHILDS, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 404, the actual placement of Amos 8:4ff. 'would indicate that the editorial shaping established no theological significance between Amos' words and his visions'.

<sup>56</sup> For a brief overview of these proposals cf. GORDIS, 'Composition and Structure of Amos': 217-218.

<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, each fragment contains the refrain *שָׁמוּ ... יְהוָה*.

<sup>58</sup> KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 535 and passim. MATHYS, *Dichter und Beter*, 112, agrees with Koch concerning the first and third hymns but rules out a structural function for the second one in ch. 5 (he does not discuss 1:2). For a critique of Koch's view cf. VANDER WAL, 'Structure of Amos': 108; and MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 376.



Thus, if the hymn fragments do not function as structural markers, as seems to be the case,<sup>59</sup> the question of how their role is best described is still unanswered. As some studies have shown, an answer to that question can be found by paying close attention to the contexts in which they are found. This may seem rather obvious but it needs to be stressed because earlier scholarship tended to view them as extraneous elements. Horst, for instance, was adamant that the fragments are not tied up with their contexts but are ‘in ihrer Umgebung nach vorn und rückwärts isoliert.’<sup>60</sup> However, by considering the surrounding material, Marks perceptively noticed that they are ‘introduced into the collection at moments of exceptional severity, as though to solemnize the words of divine judgment’.<sup>61</sup> If this is correct, and we shall attempt to demonstrate in the course of this study that it is, it seems best to regard the hymn fragments as indicators of climax or local highlighting.

If we extend our discussion to include Amos 1:2 (for which there are good reasons),<sup>62</sup> the first ‘solemnisation’ of the divine judgement, to use Marks’ concept, occurs right at the outset of the book. This extraordinary opening statement inaugurates its gloomy mood using image-laden and highly emotive language. The second hymn fragment (4:13) actually does function as a marker of closure, but not in the way envisaged by Koch. According to our analysis, its structural significance is of a more local nature in that it closes the discourse of Amos 4. However, its real significance seems to lie in its climactic propensity as it causes that discourse to end on a rather ominous note. This capacity clearly applies to the fragments in 5:8-9 and 9:5-6 both of which appear in the centre of their respective discourses and thus have no structural significance whatever. Like the one in 4:13, they underline who it is that Israel will have to face when the divine judgement is finally unleashed. As Marks rightly observed, all the hymnic pieces highlight this judgement by stressing the awesome power and might of the judge.<sup>63</sup>

McComiskey points to yet another function of the hymn fragments in regarding them as a kind of ‘refrain’, a device that according to him is ‘integral to Amos’ literary style’.<sup>64</sup> Occurring, as they do, at the outset of the book (1:2), in its middle part (4:13; 5:8-9) and towards its end (9:5-6), they add to the coherence of the entire work. However, against Koch it needs to be stressed that they do not govern the macro-structural arrangement of Amos, i.e. they do not mark the beginning or closure of its major sections.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. MAYS, 84, who notes that ‘the hymns do not mark or conclude any discernible collections.’ According to AULD, *Amos*, 58, the hymnic pieces in 4:13 and 9:5-6 ‘are simply pious conclusions’.

<sup>60</sup> HORST, ‘Doxologien im Amosbuch’: 45.

<sup>61</sup> MARKS, ‘Twelve Prophets’: 218; cf. STUART, 286-287.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. the discussion in KOCH, ‘Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte’: 530-534; and see WENDLAND, ‘The “Word of the Lord” and the Organization of Amos’: 38; and JEREMIAS, ‘Amos 3-6: From the Oral Word to the Text’: 219, who also count Amos 1:2 among the hymn fragments.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. pp. 72f. for further discussion of the rhetorical function of these fragments.

<sup>64</sup> MCCOMISKEY, ‘The Hymnic Elements of the Prophecy of Amos’: 156.

### 2.2.3 *Inclusios and Chiasms*

Another area that has attracted considerable attention is the investigation of 'inclusios' or 'chiasms'.<sup>65</sup> Research has shown the Old Testament to contain a remarkable number of these devices, which caused Alter to speak of a 'general fondness of ancient Hebrew writers of all genres for so-called envelope structures'.<sup>66</sup> This may be so, but it seems to me that not infrequently this is matched by an even more pronounced fondness for these devices on the side of the investigating scholar.<sup>67</sup> Thus, some of the chiasmic structures that have been proposed appear to be rather forced. Because of this, we urgently need to consider controls for the discernment of inclusios and chiasms. This, in turn, will only be possible once we have at least some general ideas about the function of these devices.

We have already seen that ancient writers were bound to use rhetorical signals to mark breaks or peaks since these had to be recognisable in an oral context. It is in this context that Parunak views the function of concentric arrangements. In a study that is concerned with what he calls 'oral typesetting',<sup>68</sup> Parunak remarks that a chiasm 'signals its own conclusion'.<sup>69</sup> This view is confirmed by Berlin who notes that inclusios 'provide cohesion and unity for the text' they frame.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, a concentric arrangement, which is a figure of repetition, is capable of emphasising certain utterances by simply repeating them.<sup>71</sup> In addition, it is often assumed that in the case of an 'odd' chiasm, the stress falls on the unique centre item.<sup>72</sup> According to Wendland 'an important topical element ... is frequently located in the center of two or more pairs of corresponding enclosing units, thus highlighting the thematic peak, emotive

<sup>65</sup> For extensive lists of chiasmic structures in the Old Testament cf. DI MARCO, 'Chiasmus in der Bibel'; and WELCH, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity*. Di Marco (LB 36 pp. 22f.) lists a number of other terms that have been used to describe the phenomenon. He traces the interest in chiasms back to the discipline of classical rhetoric where again a different terminology has been employed, and notes that it was Bengel who in 1742 introduced the term 'chiasm' to the field of biblical exegesis.

It would, in fact, be more precise to speak of a 'chiasm' (or 'chiasmus') only when referring to an A-B=B'-A' structure (cf. ABRAMS, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 183-184). Thus WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 7, distinguishes a *chiasm* from a 'tripartite A-B-A' ring construction', on the one hand, and an 'introversion' which may be expanded to any length, on the other hand (cf. idem, 'Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry': 12). In the present investigation, however, the term 'chiasm' is used to define any concentric structure (which is a very common practice). WANKE, 'Sprachliche Analyse': 72, for instance, defines 'chiasm' as a 'Kreuzstellung von wenigstens vier Wörtern, Wortgruppen oder Sätzen' (my italics). On the whole issue cf. also WEISS, 'Wege der neuen Dichtungswissenschaft in ihrer Anwendung auf die Psalmenforschung': 400-451, esp. 425ff.; ANDERSEN, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, ch. 9, 'Chiastic Sentences'; LUNDBLÖM, *Jeremiah*, ch. III: 'Chiasmus'; CERESKO, 'A:B::B:A Word Pattern in Hebrew and Northwest Semitic': 73-88; idem, 'Chiastic Word Pattern in Hebrew': 303-311; and idem, 'Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry': 1-10.

<sup>66</sup> ALTER, 'Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry': 621.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. EMERTON, 'Examination of Some Attempts to Defend the Unity of the Flood Narrative in Genesis': 20-21, who notes that 'the search for examples of chiasmus has become fashionable'.

<sup>68</sup> The term has also been adopted by WENDLAND, 'Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry': 12, who speaks of an 'oral-aural "typesetting" process'.

<sup>69</sup> PARUNAK, 'Oral Typesetting': 156.

<sup>70</sup> BERLIN, *Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 132.

<sup>71</sup> According to some, yet another function of inclusios is to mark secondary material, such as editorial additions (cf. WIENER, *Composition of Judges II 11 to 1 Kings II 46*; and KUHL, "'Die Wiederaufnahme" – ein literarkritisches Prinzip?': 1-11). Moreover, PARUNAK, 'Oral Typesetting': 160, notes that 'an inclusio ... is often used (whether by the author or by a later editor) to set off material that is peripheral to the course of the argument.' Examples of this technique can be found in 2 Chr 2:1-17 (compare this with the parallel account in 1 Kgs 5:16-25); and 2 Chr 6:12-13 (which Parunak describes as a kind of 'footnote'; cf. p. 161).

<sup>72</sup> PARUNAK, 'Oral Typesetting': 165 (n. 24).



climax, and/or structural turning point of the entire discourse.’<sup>73</sup> A good example for this is the hymn fragment in Amos 5:8-9, which is at the centre of the chiasmic unit 5:1-17. However, some scholars have rightly urged us to be cautious not to generalise this idea. Clines, for instance, warns that ‘it would be unwise in our present state of knowledge about Hebrew poetry to conclude that the centre of the strophic structure is also the centre of the thought of the poem’.<sup>74</sup> With this issue being still disputed, we can at least conclude that concentric structures are markers of unity and cohesion, and that, by being figures of repetition, they also serve as focusing or highlighting devices.

Having considered the function of inclusios and chiasms in brief, we now turn to the question of how to detect them. While in the case of a chiasm it is essential that all its related parts (A and A’, B and B’, etc.) share enough similarities to be considered parallel, the recognition of an inclusio is often rather problematic. According to Berlin, an inclusio is a device ‘in which the first and last lines of a text contain the same words or phrases’. This she regards as a specific form of parallelism.<sup>75</sup> Although this definition sounds perfectly reasonable, I very much doubt that it is of much practical value. It means in effect that for two verses to function as an inclusio, all that may be required is that they share the same word. If this were true, how could we then distinguish between a genuine inclusio and a ‘simple’ repetition? This problem is best illustrated by citing a concrete example. Some scholars argue that Amos 1:2-3:8 is a self-contained unit because of the inclusio provided by the use of אָנֹכִי in 1:2 and 3:8.<sup>76</sup> However, there are more compelling reasons for regarding 1:3-2:16 as the first major unit and Amos 3 as a discourse on its own.<sup>77</sup> If this were correct, it would follow that the recurrence of אָנֹכִי would not signal an inclusio but would simply be an instance of repetition, albeit possibly a significant one.

However that may be, the example clearly demonstrates that we need to establish criteria as to how inclusios can be distinguished from repetitions. Although I do not intend to offer an extensive discussion of this issue, I would like to suggest two principles that can aid our investigation. The first of these concerns the agreement of a (supposed) inclusio with other formal

<sup>73</sup> WENDLAND, ‘Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry’: 12; cf. also the following articles in WELCH, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity*: RADDAY, ‘Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative’: 51; WATSON, ‘Chiastic Patterns in Biblical Hebrew Poetry’: 146; and WELCH, ‘Introduction’: 10.

<sup>74</sup> CLINES, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, 193; cf. also BODA, ‘Chiasmus in Ubiquity’: 58.

<sup>75</sup> BERLIN, *Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 3. She adds that inclusios are the parallelism in which ‘the greatest distance between parallel parts is found’ (p. 132).

<sup>76</sup> Thus VAN DER WAL, ‘Structure of Amos’: 108; cf. DI MARCO, ‘Chiasmus in der Bibel’, *LB* 36: 93; JEREMIAS, ‘Amos 3-6: Beobachtungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte eines Prophetenbuches’: 132; NOBLE, ‘Literary Structure of Amos’: 218; and CONDAMIN, *Poèmes de la Bible*, 59-71. Van der Wal shows quite a remarkable predilection for inclusios, and suggests that Amos 3:9-4:3 should be regarded as one unit framed by the word אָנֹכִי. However, he wryly remarks that ‘in order for this inclusio to become apparant [sic!], a change of the text is necessary in Am. 4.3 (‘Structure of Amos’: 109).’ This means that to come up with the desired inclusio he has to ‘emend’ אָנֹכִי מִן הַיְהוָה to אָנֹכִי מִן הַיְהוָה. This he attempts to justify by pointing out that אָנֹכִי, which frequently occurs in Amos 1-2, is missing in the Israel strophe. In his opinion, ‘the whole passage Am. 3.9-4.3 replaces the use of this formulation regarding Israel’ (p. 110). However, there is no need for an occurrence of אָנֹכִי in 4:3 (cf. the criticisms by FINLEY, 117 n. 28; and WENDLAND, ‘The “Word of the Lord” and the Organization of Amos’: 43) as the term occurs not only in Amos 1-2 but also in 3:9-11. Its appearance in the latter verses links the entire discourse (Amos 3:1-15) with the preceding oracles in chs. 1-2.

<sup>77</sup> KRAFT, ‘Some Further Observations Concerning the Strophic Structure of Hebrew Poetry’: 67, therefore rightly speaks of an ‘arbitrary conclusion of the poem at 3:8’. In particular, the introductory phrase אָנֹכִי מִן הַיְהוָה in 3:1 indicates that a major break occurs at 3:1 and not, as van der Wal has suggested, after 3:8. Cf. WENDLAND, ‘The “Word of the Lord” and the Organization of Amos’: 42, who notes that van der Wal’s ‘suggestion obscures the importance of what would seem to be an even more pronounced break in the discourse, namely, the one occurring at 3:1.’



markers. For an illustration of this, let us consider Amos 3, a discourse that is framed, I believe, by the term פִּקֹּד, which occurs in vv. 2, 14 and which thus functions as an inclusio. This analysis receives support by the fact that the boundaries of that discourse are marked also by the introductory formulas in 3:1 and 4:1. Secondly, this analysis is confirmed also by the observation that Amos 3 functions as a rhetorically self-contained unit. It opens with an initial declaration (vv. 1-2), which is followed by an argumentation (vv. 3-8), a provocative confirmation (vv. 9-11), an ironic intensification (v. 12) and a concluding reaffirmation of the initial declaration (vv. 13-15). Thus, our observation of the inclusio in 3:2, 14 is confirmed by the coincidence of a variety of (structural and rhetorical) signals.<sup>78</sup>

This then brings us to the related issue of chiasms. Because of a recent tendency in Amos studies to regard large parts of the book as being arranged chiastically, this too needs to be discussed in some detail. Although in theory a chiasm should be more or less unequivocally identifiable, in practice this is clearly not the case. Problems arise once, as is increasingly the case, large-scale chiasms are identified in which not only certain lines but entire paragraphs are regarded as parallel.<sup>79</sup> This need not be a problem, but a review of the relevant literature on Amos indicates that the larger the chiasms get the lesser the requirements for what can count as parallel sections in a palistrophic structure seem to become. The quest for chiasms in Amos takes its lead from the work of de Waard and Tromp, who argued convincingly that Amos 5:1-17 displays a concentric arrangement.<sup>80</sup> The importance of their studies can hardly be overestimated since they inaugurated a shift in attitude towards this central passage that has long puzzled scholars because of its supposed disorderliness. However, in this context it needs to be stressed that the chiasm in 5:1-17 coincides with one of the major units of the book. This is opened by the introductory phrase אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה in 5:1 and it ends in v. 17 with the subsequent section 5:18-6:14 containing two woe oracles. Thus, the boundaries of the chiasm are confirmed by further textual signals marking the outer limits of the section.

Building on the work of de Waard and Tromp, others have attempted to extend the limits of the chiasm in 5:1-17. Thus Lust proposed to expand it to cover the whole of 4:1-6:7.<sup>81</sup> Wendland and Noble even take a further step in extending it to comprise almost the entire middle section of Amos, i.e. 3:9-6:14,<sup>82</sup> and Bovati and Meynet regard the whole of chs. 3-6 as 'organisées de manière concentrique'.<sup>83</sup> They, in turn, were outdone by the recent suggestions

<sup>78</sup> Our analysis is confirmed also by the rhetorical thrust of the passages in question. According to van der Wal's analysis, the stress falls on the portrayal of Yahweh as a roaring lion. Amos' point, however, is that Yahweh is going to judge his people (the discourse in Amos 3 begins and ends on a note of judgement). The lion metaphor 'merely' serves to underline this.

<sup>79</sup> BERLIN, *Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, passim, in contrast, examines morphologic, syntactic, lexical, semantic, and phonological parallelisms on a smaller scale, i.e. within subsequent lines in poetry. She notes that 'attempts to define parallelism by limiting it to one form or another have failed' (p. 129) and defines the phenomenon as 'a matter of intertwining a number of linguistic equivalences and contrasts' (p. 130).

<sup>80</sup> DE WAARD, 'Chiastic Structure of Amos v 1-17': 170-177; TROMP, 'Amos V 1-17': 56-84. See also WICKE, 'Two Perspectives (Amos 5:1-17)': 89-96; DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 312-314; and WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 14-16.

<sup>81</sup> LUST, 'Remarks on the Redaction of Amos V 4-6,14-15': 129-154 (cf. esp. his diagram on p. 154).

<sup>82</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 19; NOBLE, 'Literary Structure of Amos': 211.

<sup>83</sup> BOVATI/MEYNET, 102, cf. p. 249. They show a remarkable predilection for concentric structures which they discover in almost every section of the book (cf. passim). A chiastic arrangement for all of Amos 3-6 had already been proposed in 1978 by BERGLER, *Die hymnischen Passagen und die Mitte des Amosbuches*, 228f.

by Smalley, Dorsey and Rottzoll according to which the entire book is arranged chiastically.<sup>84</sup> It is, of course, impossible in this context to discuss all the above proposals in detail, but some general comments are clearly required. Apart from the works by de Waard and Tromp on Amos 5, with which I largely agree (at least as far as their analysis of the chiasm is concerned), there are a number of recurring problems in most of them. First, there is a tendency to suggest, at points, rather obscure breaks between sections. Secondly, in other cases, superficial relations between supposedly parallel parts are exaggerated by endowing them with quite ingenious descriptions or headings. Thirdly, some of the above mentioned exegetes are guilty of offering rather selective readings of (some of) the passages in question.<sup>85</sup>

First, while de Waard and Tromp delimited their analyses to a self-contained rhetorical unit (5:1-17), Lust, Wendland, and Noble, in order to arrive at parallel sections, need to propound rather unconvincing section breaks. Lust's analysis, for instance, requires us to regard the unit 6:8-14, which would then be introduced by a divine oath, as self-contained, a solution that seems not very plausible.<sup>86</sup> Wendland and Noble, on the other hand, want us to believe Amos 3:9 to be the opening verse of the extensive section 3:9-6:14. Again, this is not very likely since the verse shows no signs of functioning as a major structural marker. In fact, the general contention that Amos 3-6 is one of the major parts of the book is much more accurate and helpful than these recent proposals. This has been recognised by Bovati and Meynet who, therefore, aim at extending the chiasm at the centre of Amos to cover the whole of these chapters. However, this again is not compelling as it requires them to regard 3:1-8 and 6:8-14 as parallel units,<sup>87</sup> a view that is hardly defensible since these two passages differ greatly in content. This observation leads us to the second problem, namely, the fact that the proposed parallels between supposedly corresponding parts are often based on what amounts to nothing more than superficial resemblances.

To illustrate this, let us look briefly at Amos 3 and the various parallels that have been suggested by different exegetes.<sup>88</sup> Thus, Bovati and Meynet consider 3:1-8 and 6:8-14 to be

<sup>84</sup> SMALLEY, 'Recursion Patterns and the Sectioning of Amos': 122-127 (cf. also DE WAARD/SMALLEY, 192ff., a rigorous critique of which can be found in WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 44-48); DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 325-329; and ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs*, 1ff. (cf. esp. the diagram on p. 3). However, their proposals differ considerably. Rottzoll, for instance, in good redaction-critical fashion, is quick to identify material that does not fit into the supposed chiastic structure (i.e. Amos 7:[9]10-17; 8:[3]4-14; 9:7-15) as later additions (p. 5).

<sup>85</sup> A detailed list of 'errors in the rhetorical analysis of chiasmus' has recently been compiled by BODA, 'Chiasmus in Ubiquity': 56-58. He distinguishes between 'errors in symmetry', 'errors in subjectivity', 'errors in probability', and 'errors in purpose'.

<sup>86</sup> It is more appropriate to regard all the oaths (i.e. 4:2; 6:8; 8:7) as linked not only to what follows but also to the preceding material.

<sup>87</sup> BOVATI/MEYNET, 255-257.

<sup>88</sup> It needs to be pointed out that this is only one example chosen at random. Thus, we might as well ask whether 1:1-2a can in fact be seen as corresponding to 9:7-15 (as suggested by SMALLEY, 'Recursion Patterns and the Sectioning of Amos': 122); or whether 4:6-12 parallels 5:18-20 (thus NOBLE, 'Literary Structure of Amos': 212-213). In Noble's view, these two sections complement each other. According to him, 'recognizing the correspondence between D [i.e. 4:6-12] and D' [5:18-20] ... enables us both to identify this encounter [i.e. the one in 4:12] as the Day of Yahweh and to understand that Day more fully in the context of the first five strophes of D.' One wonders, however, whether this criterion of 'complementation' justifies Noble's decision of seeing the two units as parallel parts in a chiastic arrangement. In fact, the notion of the Day of the Lord in 5:18-20 follows directly on the statement that the Lord will pass through the midst of Israel (cf. v. 17), an announcement, which it develops. Similarly, Noble compares 4:4-5 (C) with 5:21-27 (C') and notes that 'viewed in the light of C', then, C depicts a religious busyness that is vigorously pursued for its own sake, without reference to the ethical requirements that Yahweh himself regards as primary' (p. 212). This



parallel, which they classify as 'un piège pour les Fils d'Israël' (3:1-8) and 'le poison de la Maison d'Israël' (6:8-14).<sup>89</sup> However, as already noted above, even a cursory glance at the passages reveals their thematic and structural differences. Wendland, on the other hand, compares 6:8-11 to 3:13-15 and 6:12-14 to 3:9-12. The first pair he designates as 'testimony against the "house(s) of Jacob"' (3:13-15 || 6:8-11). The second he transcribes respectively as 'an enemy will oppress oppressive Israel' (3:9-12) and 'a nation will oppress unrighteous Israel' (6:12-14).<sup>90</sup> This too is unsatisfactory. While 3:13-15 do indeed speak about a testimony against the people, this is not the case in 6:8-11. Moreover, the headings given to 3:9-12 and 6:12-14 are rather general thus suggesting a higher degree of parallelism than is actually present. Yet another correlation has been suggested by Dorsey who relates the whole of Amos 3 to 7:1-8:3. He classifies ch. 3 as 'Coming destruction of Israel, Including Bethel's Cult Center: Prophet's Responsibility to Prophecy Because of Yahweh's Revelation'. Amos 7:1-8:3, on the other hand, is summarised as 'Visions of Coming Judgment, Amos at the Cult Center of Bethel and His Responsibility to Prophecy Because of Yahweh's Call'.<sup>91</sup> A somewhat similar analysis has been propounded by Smalley who compares 3:3-4:3 ('the prophet's role and commission') with 7:1-8:3 ('the prophet's experiences: visions' and 'the prophet's role and commission').<sup>92</sup> Again, in both these cases, the ingenious headings suggest closer parallels than are present in the text.

All the proposals mentioned in the previous paragraph tend to over-emphasise the actual correspondences between respective parts. In addition, often the problems that are encountered are glossed over by devising rather general and sometimes plainly misleading section headings. Noble avoids some of these difficulties by proposing the following scheme for the outer sections of Amos 3:9-6:14:

- A: Introductory oracles (3:9-14)
  - x: Israel vis-à-vis the foreign nations (3:9-11)
  - y: An image of ruin (3:12)
  - z: The devastation of Israel (3:13-15)
- A': Concluding oracles (6:2, 8-14)
  - x': Israel vis-à-vis the foreign nations (6:2, 8)
  - y': An image of ruin (6:9-10)
  - z': The devastation of Israel (6:11-14)<sup>93</sup>

The remaining inner part (4:1-6:7) Noble regards as an ordinary chiasm. However, as we have already pointed out,<sup>94</sup> his analysis is no more convincing than those mentioned above. In addition, to arrive at the above outline for the outer parts of Amos 3:9-6:14, Noble has to re-arrange

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is an apt summary of 4:4-5. However, it is by no means necessary to read these two verses in the light of 5:21-27 to arrive at that understanding. In fact, the contrasting arrangement of 4:4-5 and 4:1-3, which in contrast to the correspondence suggested by Noble is more readily grasped in an oral context, leads to the same insight. To conclude, Noble's contention that 'literary criteria, such as palistrophic structuring and inclusios, have often been employed too loosely and impressionistically' (p. 209) summarises his own methodological procedure rather well.

<sup>89</sup> BOVATI/MEYNET, 102.

<sup>90</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 19.

<sup>91</sup> DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 327-328.

<sup>92</sup> SMALLEY, 'Recursion Patterns and the Sectioning of Amos': 122; cf. the criticisms by WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 46.

<sup>93</sup> NOBLE, 'Literary Structure of Amos': 211.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. n. 88 above.



the text. That is to say, 6:2 needs to be transferred after vv. 3-7 and combined with v. 8 in order to have the motif 'Israel vis-à-vis the foreign nations' at the desired place.<sup>95</sup>

Our final reservation with the current preoccupation with chiasms is related to the previous one. Often the parallelism of certain parts can only be sustained by a selective focus on certain themes, images, words, etc. This is most obvious in the article by Dorsey who, having outlined a chiastic pattern for all of Amos, provides a list of correspondences for the sections in question. He tracks nine concurrences for chs. 1-2 and 8:4-9:15, three for ch. 3 and 7:1-8:3, and seven for ch. 4 and 5:18-6:14. To give only one example, according to Dorsey, Amos 1-2 and 8:4-9:15 share the following similarities:

- ♦ condemnation of the wealthy: sevenfold listing of sins;
- ♦ וְאֶבְיוֹן בְּעִבּוֹר נְעָלִים (2:6; cf. 8:6);
- ♦ הַשָּׂאֲפִים (2:7; cf. 8:4);
- ♦ inescapability of judgement, with sevenfold presentation (2:14-16; 9:1-4);
- ♦ לֹא-יִמְלֹט and נוֹס (2:15, 16; cf. 9:1);
- ♦ Israel's delivery *out of Egypt* (2:10; cf. 9:7);
- ♦ the Philistines;
- ♦ Edom;
- ♦ Yahweh will exile Aram to Kir (1:5; 9:7);
- ♦ רֵאשׁ הַפְּרָמֶל (1:2; cf. 9:3);
- ♦ figures of drinking wine, planting and uprooting, the sword, etc.<sup>96</sup>

Though this list looks quite impressive, I am not convinced that it leads to the conclusion that Amos 1-2 and 8:4-9:15 form a concentric outer frame for the book. To be sure, the listed concurrences should not be ignored. Indeed, they show that the final part of Amos brings to a close many of the themes that have been raised at the outset of the book. This is a most important observation and confirms my contention that we are dealing with a literary work that is more than a mere anthology. However, although Dorsey's list suggests a close correspondence of the two sections in question, it needs to be pointed out that there are also significant thematic and structural differences. It is rather telling that the oracles against foreign nations are hardly represented in the above list (most of the examples are from the Israel strophe), as it is difficult to find corresponding emphases in Amos 8:4-9:15.

To summarise, Smalley is quite right in saying that it 'doesn't all fit neatly; some people may not find it convincing.'<sup>97</sup> Moreover, he hits the nail on its head when he concedes that his own analysis 'would not help the less sophisticated readers.'<sup>98</sup> Although Smalley's suggestions are by far the most complex ones of all the studies referred to above; his judgement applies to the other analyses as well. Let me therefore reiterate an advice given by Emerton in 1988. He notes that 'it would help the progress of Old Testament study if those who believe that they

<sup>95</sup> Cf. NOBLE, 'Literary Structure of Amos': 211, 217.

<sup>96</sup> DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 327-329.

<sup>97</sup> SMALLEY, 'Recursion Patterns and the Sectioning of Amos': 122.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.: 125.

have found instances [of chiasmus] were to be self-critical and strict in their methods and to subject their theories to vigorous testing before seeking to publish them.<sup>99</sup>

We would suggest that the credibility of any proposed chiastic arrangement depends on its perceptibility. In an oral setting (which it will be recalled is what we are concerned with), there is a realistic prospect for a chiasm to be perceptible when its boundaries coincide with other formal or rhetorical markers. Secondly, the perceptibility of a chiasm is also facilitated when its corresponding parts share a high degree of similarity. This, it should be noted, is a particular requirement for its outer parts. Wendland is therefore right to affirm that any (portion of a) text that is regarded a self-contained unit ‘must have recognizable borders that can be precisely defined and defended – at whatever level in the compositional hierarchy it happens to lie.’<sup>100</sup> Amos 5:1-17 is a very good example for a text that meets these requirements. Its outer boundaries coincide with additional rhetorical markers, i.e. the introductory phrase in v. 1 and the words ... הַמְתַּאֲוִים הוֹי in v. 18, which open the subsequent woe oracle. In addition, both outer segments (vv. 1-3, 16-17) are easily identifiable as laments. Similarly, the second and penultimate sections (vv. 4-6, 14-15) are readily recognised as being similar insofar as they are the only exhortations in Amos. Finally, it needs to be stressed that the more extensive the chiasm becomes the less recognisable it will be. This is true, in particular, in an oral context as we have noted earlier.

#### 2.2.4 *Indicators of Aperture and Closure*

The use of introductory markers (equivalent to the employment of headings in modern publications) or of signals that demarcate the ending of a section are also possible means for indicating breaks in the text. In the case of the prophetic books it is, first of all (but not exclusively), the speech formulas that suggest themselves as possible structural markers. To be sure, we do not intend to limit their role to a structural one.<sup>101</sup> However, if our assumptions that Amos is shaped by oral conventions and that it has been composed for public readings are correct, we need to ask whether the retention of the speech formulas is in any way significant. That is to say, have they simply been preserved as part of the oral traditions, or have they been consciously employed by the author/editor? And if the latter is the case, to what effect have they been used?

##### 2.2.4.1 *The Speech- or Quotation-Formulas and Other Structural Markers*

Studies of the structural function of prophetic speech formulas and other structurally relevant words or phrases have been undertaken mainly from a discourse-linguistic perspective. Although there is as yet no detailed study available that investigates the use of these devices in Amos, Wendland in particular considers them important for any attempt to understand the or-

<sup>99</sup> EMERTON, ‘Examination of Some Attempts to Defend the Unity of the Flood Narrative in Genesis’: 20-21.

<sup>100</sup> WENDLAND, ‘Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry’: 7.

<sup>101</sup> For instance, they also stress the divine origin of the prophetic message (cf. WENDLAND, ‘The “Word of the Lord” and the Organization of Amos’: 26ff.).



ganisation of the book.<sup>102</sup> A detailed analysis of the function of every relevant word or phrase is, of course, impossible within the confines of this study. However, we intend to give a tentative list of words and phrases that may be of structural relevance. Particular attention will then be paid to the formulas *יְהוָה אָמַר יְהוָה* and *נְאֻם יְהוָה* both of which feature repeatedly in the book of Amos, and both of which have often been understood as assuming structural roles.

An attempt to determine the distinctive function of various speech formulas in Jeremiah has been made by Parunak who notes that they serve the following purposes:

- ♦ they make it possible for us to identify the individual oracles and sometimes provide information about their original settings;
- ♦ they enable us to analyse the *internal structure of individual oracles*;
- ♦ they provide a means of *connecting different oracles* with one another thereby helping us to identify the message of the prophetic book.<sup>103</sup>

Having examined the use of these speech formulas, Parunak proposes a 'disjunctive cline', i.e. a hierarchy in which each formula has its specific place in that it introduces a paragraph, a section, a division, or the book as a whole.<sup>104</sup> While this is not the place to evaluate Parunak's proposal, other studies have shown that it is difficult to establish a cline that can be applied to the prophetic books in general. Thus, it may well be that each book has its own distinctive cline, or, in some cases, it may be difficult (or even impossible) to establish any cline at all.<sup>105</sup>

Because of the difficulties involved, we are not going to propose a 'disjunctive cline' for Amos. However, we intend to show that it is possible, on a very general level at least, to distinguish between markers that function on the macro-structural level (i.e. that introduce major sections) and those that appear within larger discourses. In general, the following words and phrases deserve special attention in this context: *כֹּה הָרְאִינִי ... הוּי, שְׁמָעוּ ... כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*, *כֹּה הָרְאִינִי אֶת-אֲדֹנָי*, *וְגַם-אֲנִי/אֲנֹכִי*, *כִּי, לָכֵן, הִנֵּה*, the temporal markers *בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא*, and *יָמִים בָּאִים*, rhetorical questions, imperatives, extended divine names or titles, etc. Their specific function and their place in the structural hierarchy will be discussed in the context of our subsequent structural analysis of the book. At this point, however, we will focus on the phrases *יְהוָה אָמַר יְהוָה* and *נְאֻם יְהוָה* asking whether they have any significant structural role to play.

Parunak, in his analysis of Jeremiah, interestingly reaches the conclusion that the formula *יְהוָה אָמַר יְהוָה* 'is disjunctively the weakest' and serves mainly as a focusing device.<sup>106</sup> He therefore defines it as 'a highly local highlighting of a clause or phrase that merits the recipient's special

<sup>102</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 2.

<sup>103</sup> PARUNAK, 'Some Discourse Functions of Prophetic Quotation Formulas in Jeremiah': 492.

<sup>104</sup> For Jeremiah this cline includes (in ranking order): *אָל/עַל/בְּיַד יְרֻמְיָהוּ (...)*, *הִזְכֵּר אֶת-יְהוָה (...)*, *נְאֻם יְהוָה (...)*, *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*, *שְׁמָע דְּבַר-יְהוָה*, *נְאֻם יְהוָה*, *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*, *נְאֻם יְהוָה* (ibid.: 513). The formula *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* is not included in this scheme because it appears only three times.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. FINLEY/PAYTON, 'Discourse Analysis of Isaiah 7-12': 317-335, who list eighteen words or phrases many of which function on more than one level (thus, a particular marker may introduce an episode, a paragraph, or a sub-paragraph). In the end, they have to acknowledge that 'the relative ranks are not conclusive but only suggestive' (p. 329).

<sup>106</sup> PARUNAK, 'Some Discourse Functions of Prophetic Quotation Formulas in Jeremiah': 514. For a detailed discussion of the formula cf. pp. 508-512 where he interacts with NORTH, 'The Expression "the Oracle of Yahweh" as an Aid to Critical Analysis'; RENDTORFF, 'Zum Gebrauch der Formel *ne'um jahwe* im Jeremiabuch'; and BAUMGÄRTEL, 'Die Formel *ne'um jahwe*'.



attention.<sup>107</sup> As such, it can occur at various points in a paragraph (i.e. at the end but often also towards its beginning or indeed in the middle).<sup>108</sup>

In Amos, the phrase **יְהוָה נְאֻם** occurs towards the closure of a major section only in 2:16; 3:15; 6:14 and 8:3; and only in the first two instances does it literally close the sections in question. We will come back to these cases in a moment. At this point, however, it needs to be stressed that, as far as its use in Amos is concerned, the phrase often complements (or is complemented by) other rhetorical markers. These include rhetorical questions (2:11; 9:7), a divine oath (6:8)<sup>109</sup> and the temporal markers **בְּיָוֵם הַהוּא** (8:3, 9) and **בְּיָמֵי הַיָּהוּה** (8:11; 9:13). Clear signals of emphasis are also to be found in 3:13 (cf. the attenuated divine name **אֲדֹנָי הַצְּבָאוֹת** (יהוה אלהי הצבאות) where the phrase addresses imaginary witnesses, in 6:14 which concludes the second woe oracle and is introduced by **כִּי הִנְנִי**, and in 9:12 where the announcement that Israel will possess the remnant of Edom is underlined by the words **נְאֻם־יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה זֹאת**.

A similar use can be demonstrated for 3:10 and 9:8 where the phrase is not accompanied by other rhetorical markers. However, in these instances, it accompanies crucial statements. Thus, in 3:8 it stresses that the Israelites do not know how to do right, and in 9:8 it underlines the declaration that the destruction of the house of Jacob will not be all-inclusive. Especially the four occurrences of **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** in Amos 9 (vv. 7, 8, 12, 13) are a good illustration of its use as a local highlighting device. Andersen and Freedman oddly claim that in 9:7-15 ‘the placement of the oracle formula *n'm yhw'h* (*‘sh z’t*) as a marker at the end of units or between units is the key to the organization of the material’.<sup>110</sup> However, this is clearly not the case as the uneven distribution of the phrase indicates.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, the major break of the section at the beginning of v. 11 is not marked by a **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** formula. Again, the best explanation for the repeated use of the formula in this section is that it provides rhetorical emphasis, which is particularly appropriate at this point.

However, there are a few cases where (at least at first sight) the phrase appears to be of structural significance. Its use is particularly prominent in Amos 4 where it closes the initial judgement oracle (vv. 1-3) and the mock exhortation to perform cultic activities (vv. 4-5). It also concludes each of the five strophes that accuse Israel for not having returned to their God despite of all his previous judgements (vv. 6-11). However, in the light of its use in other parts of the book, it may be preferable to regard the phrase as a focusing device even in these cases. As such, it would stress the drastic punishment notion in vv. 2-3 and highlight the words **כִּי כֵן** in v. 5. Meier rejects a structural significance also for vv. 6-11 where **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** appears together with the refrain **וְלֹא־שִׁבַּתֶּם עָרְי** thus stressing the Israelites’ unwillingness to return to their God. As Meier notes, ‘the uniformity of form and content in Am 4:6-11, with explicit syntactic bonds (e.g. **וְגַם** in v. 7), underscore that each unit closed by **נְאֻם יְהוָה**

<sup>107</sup> PARUNAK, ‘Some Discourse Functions of Prophetic Quotation Formulas in Jeremiah’: 511.

<sup>108</sup> For this cf. also MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 226.

<sup>109</sup> In 6:8, the formula **נְאֻם יְהוָה** is absent from the LXX so that some prefer to delete it (cf. MAYS, 117; MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 228 n. 3). According to WOLFF, 324; and RUDOLPH, 218, it may have belonged – in its shorter form, i.e. without **צְבָאוֹת** אֱלֹהֵי – after v. 7 (both assume the phrase to be a closing formula). However, in the text as we have it, the phrase clearly functions as a marker of emphasis, which in this particular instance reinforces the highly emotive words **מִתְחַבֵּב אֲנֹכִי אֶת־גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב וְאֶרְמֶנְתִּי שְׁנֵאתִי**.

<sup>110</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 906.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 310 (n. 1).

cannot meaningfully stand alone. If נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה were absent entirely from 4:6-11, there would be no justification for identifying five distinct oracles in these six verses.<sup>112</sup> Accordingly, he concludes that 'one cannot use it as a means of structuring a text without other formal controls'.<sup>113</sup> This is confirmed by the fact that in those four cases where the phrase does occur at the end of a major section (2:16; 3:15; 6:14 and 8:3), the section breaks are reinforced by introductory phrases in subsequent verses.

Thus, Parunak's conclusions about the use of נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה in Jeremiah are valid also as far as Amos is concerned. This has been confirmed also by Meier who regards the formula as an 'oratorical device' with no macro-structural function.<sup>114</sup> As an 'oratorical device', it will obviously have alerted Amos' original audience to key points in his 'preaching'. However, we would like to stress that it would have functioned similarly in the context of a public reading of the book.

This then brings us to the phrase אָמַר יְהוָה,<sup>115</sup> which differs from the former formula in that it always occurs in ultimate position. Three times it closes a major section, and in the remaining six cases, it occurs at the end of a smaller paragraph. Yet, it too appears to be mainly a focusing device. As such, it highlights the Lord's passing through Israel's midst (5:17), the people's exile beyond Damascus (5:27), and God's planting of the people upon their land (9:15). In the latter two cases, the stress provided by the words אָמַר יְהוָה is reinforced by the use of attenuated divine names. The function of אָמַר יְהוָה as a means of local highlighting is also evident at the end of the first two visions where the formula accentuates the words לֹא תִהְיֶה (7:3, 6). The picture is similar in the oracles against the nations where אָמַר יְהוָה occurs only in the strophes dealing with Aram, Philistia, Ammon and Moab (1:5, 8, 15; 2:3). This is interesting because these strophes differ from the others in that they feature an extended punishment section.<sup>116</sup> It is precisely this notion of punishment on which the strophes end that is highlighted by means of the אָמַר יְהוָה formula. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the divine speech formula אָמַר יְהוָה serves to emphasise what immediately precedes it.<sup>117</sup>

Let me end this section by pointing out that any investigation of formulas and other recurring phrases needs to pay close attention to the context in which they occur. Only then will it be possible to establish whether they assume a structural role or whether they function as local indicators of emphasis. In the case of the divine speech formulas נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה and אָמַר יְהוָה, our examination has led us to conclude that both function as local markers of emphasis.<sup>118</sup> They are not that is to say reliable guides to the structural arrangement of the book of Amos.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 309-310.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 297 (note his talk of an 'oratorical device').

<sup>115</sup> It has to be pointed out that at this point we are not going to discuss the introductory formula כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה, which will be dealt with later, in our investigation of the macro structure of Amos.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. ch. 4.2.1 for further comments.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 226-227.

<sup>118</sup> Already RUDOLPH, 119, noted that a qualitative difference between the two can hardly be demonstrated. WOLFF, 174, on the other hand, thought of נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה as a 'besonders feierliche Betonung'.



### 2.2.4.2 *The Distribution and Function of the Divine Names*

Scholars have long been puzzled by the extraordinary divine names in Amos. Often these are seen to be later additions<sup>119</sup> but the redaction-critical question is not our concern at this point. Again, our interest centres on their function in the book instead. A similar question has been asked by Koch who devotes special attention to the use of the epithet *צְבָאוֹת*. This is illustrated by his comments on the phrase *נְאֻם־אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת* in 3:13. Koch notes that

ihre Länge kann nur den Zweck haben, den nachfolgenden Spruch, der hier 3<sup>14f</sup> allgemeiner gehalten ist als die vorangehenden Sprüche, als Zusammenfassung sämtlicher gegen Samaria gerichteten Unheilsankündigungen des Kapitels auszuweisen. Die gleiche Gottesprädikation (ohne *אֲדֹנָי*) markiert einen abschließenden Spruch auch 6<sup>14</sup>. Damit spielen die mit *נְאֻם* gebildeten *צְבָאוֹת*-Prädikationen die gleiche Rolle wie 'Jahwä, der (des?) Gott(es) der Heerscharen, ist sein Name' hinter den Hymnen 4<sup>13</sup> 5<sup>8</sup> (LXX) 9<sup>6</sup> (LXX) oder hinter einer Spruchsammlung wie 5<sup>27</sup>.<sup>120</sup>

Although at first sight this appears to be a promising route for further investigations, Koch's proposal has been rightly criticised by Dempster in his article 'The Lord is His Name'.<sup>121</sup> He demonstrates that both the occurrences of '*צְבָאוֹת*-predications', to use Koch's term, and the doxologies do not always mark the closure of a section of the text. Nevertheless, Dempster maintains that the divine names and titles are 'carefully arranged throughout the text'<sup>122</sup> and, what is more, that 'the book is essentially structured around the various names and designations of God.'<sup>123</sup>

According to Dempster, the book can be divided into the following sections: 1:3-2:16; 3:1-15; 4:1-13; 5:1-17; 5:18-27; 6:1-14; 7:1-9:6 and 9:7-15.<sup>124</sup> He then notes that in the first section (1:[2]3-2:16), with the sole exception of 1:8 (where we find *אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה*), the simple *יְהוִה* is used and claims, 'the fact that there is a fourteen-fold repetition of the name [*יְהוִה*] alone after its introduction in the title is probably not accidental in a text where the number of completion and totality is stressed'.<sup>125</sup> In the next unit (ch. 3) the two forms *יְהוִה* and *אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה* alternate.<sup>126</sup> What is striking here is the lengthened form *אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת* in 3:13, which 'occurs before the climactic announcement of judgement.'<sup>127</sup> The picture is similar in ch. 4 where, again, we have *יְהוִה* and *אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה* forms. In addition, here too the elongated form of the divine name, i.e. *יְהוִה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת*, is used to mark a climax (v. 13).<sup>128</sup> In 5:1-17, the most remarkable characteristic is the accumulation of *יְהוִה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת* (אֲדֹנָי) forms in vv. 14-16, i.e. towards the closure (and climax?) of the discourse. Dempster comments, 'as if to sustain the drama, the name is repeated (15). Finally, the drama reaches its peak in 5:16 when the lengthened form is elongated further in "staircase-like" fashion.' Dempster regards this as an

<sup>119</sup> Cf. e.g. WOLFF, *passim*.

<sup>120</sup> KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 529, cf. p. 535.

<sup>121</sup> DEMPSTER, 'The Lord is His Name': 172 (cf. n. 11).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*: 170. A similar point has been made by TROMP, 'Amos V 1-17': 56-85, concerning the use of the divine names in Amos 5:1-17. Also ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 617ff., 718, have devoted some attention to patterns in the distribution of the divine names.

<sup>123</sup> DEMPSTER, 'The Lord is His Name': 174.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*: 175-176.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*: 177.

<sup>126</sup> The alternating pattern is as follows: *יְהוִה* (twice, in vv. 1, 6), *אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה* (twice, in vv. 7, 8), *יְהוִה* (v. 10), *אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה* (v. 11), *יְהוִה* (v. 12), *אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְבָּאוֹת* (v. 13), *יְהוִה* (v. 15).

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*: 178.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*: 179.



'appellative overkill'.<sup>129</sup> In 5:18-27, we find the simple יהוה (three times) followed by the long form יהוה אלהי צבאות at the end of the discourse (cf. v. 27).<sup>130</sup> In 6:1-14, the usage of the names differs from that in the preceding parts in that the longer form יהוה אלהי (ה) צבאות occurs twice. Thus, while it again closes the section (v. 14), it also features in v. 8 where it accompanies a divine oath.<sup>131</sup> The following, according to Dempster's analysis rather long, section (7:1-9:6) contains the short יהוה as well as the compound יהוה אדני. However, it also includes the only three occurrences of an unaccompanied אדני form (cf. 7:7, 8; 9:1)<sup>132</sup> as well as the elongated יהוה הצבאות אדני in 9:5, i.e. towards the climactic closure of the whole piece. Finally, the epilogue in 9:7-15 ends with the unique and more intimate יהוה אלהיך. This, as Dempster points out, is 'highly appropriate to its context, the only one in the text in which there is no longer any alienation and distance between God and His people.'<sup>133</sup>

Dempster concludes his analysis by pointing out that 'the major units of the core of the book, with their focus at the end of each on the announcement of a name of God, *together build to a climax throughout the book* in which there is the *seventh* announcement: יהוה שמו. This declaration is thus the theme of the book.'<sup>134</sup> His results concerning what he calls the 'core of the book' (i.e. Amos 3:1-9:6) are summarised in the following table:<sup>135</sup>

Phrase	No.	Passage
אדני יהוה אלהי הצבאות	1	3:13
יהוה אלהי צבאות <sup>136</sup> (שמו)	2	4:13
יהוה אלהי צבאות אדני	3	5:16
יהוה אלהי צבאות <sup>136</sup> (שמו)	4	5:27
יהוה אלהי הצבאות	5	6:14
אדני יהוה הצבאות	6	9:5
יהוה שמו	7	9:6

Table 1: Section-Ending Divine Name Formulas in 1:2-9:6 according to Dempster

Dempster's analysis offers many valuable insights and rightly underlines that the various divine names and titles are not accidental.<sup>137</sup> Thus, he is right, I believe, in stressing that 'the usage of the names and titles of God in Amos is not the haphazard work of a redactor or glossator with a pleonastic style.'<sup>138</sup> However, Dempster's investigation is not altogether convincing. First, it should be pointed out that the occurrence of a prolonged divine title in itself is not a reliable structural guide. This can be seen in that Amos 1:3-2:16 does not contain any such phrase,

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.: 180.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.: 181.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> These occur in the third and fifth visions, both of which have a prominent role to play. The third vision marks the turning point of the whole series in precluding any further relenting on the Lord's part. In the fifth vision, which ends the series, the final judgement is brought under way (cf. DEMPSTER, 'The Lord is His Name': 182).

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.: 184 (italics by Dempster).

<sup>135</sup> Dempster presents a somewhat similar table (cf. p. 184).

<sup>136</sup> I have included שמו for reasons that will become clear in our subsequent evaluation of Dempster's analysis.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. in this context THOMPSON, 'How Yahweh Became God': 68. He notes that the 'play on the divine names', i.e. the alternation of יהוה and אלהים (as well as the use of שדי), in the Pentateuch 'is part of the narrative's signification.'

<sup>138</sup> DEMPSTER, 'The Lord is His Name': 184.

which indicates that the closure of major sections need not be marked by an elaborate divine name formula. In addition, the occurrence of יהוה אלהי צבאות in 6:8 indicates that these formulas may occur also in the middle of a prophetic discourse.<sup>139</sup> Thus, rather than to view them as structural markers, it seems preferable, in my view, to regard them as another example of rhetorical highlighting.

In addition, Dempster's conclusions concerning the phrase יהוה שמו are unsatisfactory for similar reasons. In particular, it needs to be asked why it is that he attributes so much weight to its occurrence in 9:5-6. After all, the phrase is to be found also in 4:13; 5:8, 27; 6:10 where, according to Dempster's analysis, it does not seem to be of major importance.<sup>140</sup> Secondly, it is not at all clear to me why the expression יהוה שמו should be considered the theme of the book. Again, it needs to be said that its actual function and significance can be ascertained only by taking a close look at all the contexts in which the words are used. Altogether, they occur five times. Thus, they feature in each of the book's hymn fragments (4:13; 5:8; 9:6). In one case, they accompany an announcement of exile (5:27), and once they go with a divine oath (6:10). This use suggests that, like the יהוה אמר and נאם יהוה formulas, and like the elongated divine names, the words יהוה שמו are employed for rhetorical reasons. They draw attention to the identity of the one Israel will have to face in the coming judgement.

### 2.2.5 Patterns of Numerical Sequence

Limburg and O'Connell in their attempts to discover criteria for outlining the structure of Amos rely mainly on so-called 'patterns of numerical sequence'. These are defined by Roth as 'x' and 'x+1' sequences.<sup>141</sup> Noting that they play an important part in the book of Amos, Limburg and O'Connell reason that they may have been employed for structural purposes.

#### 2.2.5.1 Heptads and Seven-plus-one Series

Limburg in his 1987 article 'Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos' concentrates on so-called 'heptads' (i.e. series consisting of seven components) and seven-plus-one series.<sup>142</sup> He starts his inquiry by investigating the divine speech formulas, which, according to his analysis, occur in clusters of seven constituents. Having identified 1:1-2 as the book's introduction followed by the OAN in 1:3-2:16, the next three units are then delineated on the basis of the introductory formula 'hear this word' (3:1; 4:1; 5:1). As Limburg points out, in each of the first three major sections (i.e. 1:3-2:16; 3:1-15; 4:1-13), there are either seven divine speech formulas or two times seven as is the case in the first unit. Thus, in 1:3-2:16, we have eight introductory אמר formulas (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6), four concluding אמר formulas (1:5, 8,

<sup>139</sup> Cf. *ibid.*: 181.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*: 184 n. 36.

<sup>141</sup> ROTH, 'The Numerical Sequence x/x+1 in the Old Testament': 300-311; cf. also *idem*, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament*. For an extensive 'chronological bibliography of the ascending numerical pair' cf. O'CONNELL, 'Telescoping N+1 Patterns in the Book of Amos': 71-73.

<sup>142</sup> LIMBURG, 'Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos': 217-222.

15; 2:3),<sup>143</sup> and two  $\square$ נא formulas (2:11, 16) amounting to a total of fourteen.<sup>144</sup> In Amos 3, there are two introductory אמר formulas (vv. 11, 12), three  $\square$ נא formulas (vv. 10, 13, 15), and the doubly introduced divine saying in v. 1 where we find a דבר formula followed by לאמר. In this case, the total amounts to seven.<sup>145</sup> The same number is found in Amos 4 where all the occurrences are  $\square$ נא formulas (vv. 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11).

Now, in order to detect the end of the next unit beginning in 5:1, Limburg counts another seven divine speech formulas and thus arrives at 6:14. 'This division', he remarks, 'fits well with the content, since the series of vision reports begins with 7:1.'<sup>146</sup> In this case, the unit incorporates three initial אמר formulas (5:3, 4, 16), two concluding אמר formulas (5:17, 27), and two  $\square$ נא formulas (6:8, 14). In using the same method of counting speech formulas, Limburg finds the end of the vision report series in 8:3. It in turn contains six אמר formulas (7:3, 6, 8, 15, 17, 8:2) and one  $\square$ נא formula (8:3). And, as Limburg notes, the delineation again 'fits well with the contents, since 7:1-8:3 contains four vision reports and the narrative section in 7:10-17.'<sup>147</sup> The phrase 'hear this' (8:4), which resembles the introductory formulas 'hear this word' in 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1, introduces the final part of the book.<sup>148</sup> This concluding section incorporates six  $\square$ נא formulas (8:9, 11; 9:7, 8, 12, 13) and one אמר formula (9:15).<sup>149</sup> Summarising his findings, Limburg concludes that all the divine speech formulas amount to 'a grand-total of forty-nine, or seven times seven'. Moreover, 'if we count the introduction in 1:1-2 as the first section, then the book falls into seven parts'.<sup>150</sup>

At first sight, Limburg's results look very impressive indeed. However, it needs to be observed that the data does not fit quite as neatly as he would make us believe. First, one wonders why Limburg does not count נִיאָמַר in 9:1, the subject of which is אֲדַבְרֶנִּי. It may be that he disregards it because it is not immediately followed or preceded by a divine name or title. But this is also the case as far as לֵאמֹר in 3:1 is concerned. Or maybe נִיאָמַר is left out because the following divine words are addressed to Amos whereas in the other instances they introduce oracles addressed at the people of Israel? However, if that were the case, we would have difficulties accounting for all the divine speech formulas in the vision report series as they all address the prophet. This, in turn, leads us to another problem. In 7:8 as well as in 8:2, we have two divine speech formulas each. Limburg, however, in both instances, counts only one. Does he not include the ones that introduce questions directed at the prophet, or are only those taken into account that include the divine name יְהוָה (i.e. the first in 7:8 but the second in 8:2)?

<sup>143</sup> Not three as Limburg erringly remarks.

<sup>144</sup> According to Limburg, the lack of a concluding divine speech formula in the Tyre, Edom, and Judah strophes may be due to the fact that 'the editor was striving for seven or a multiple of seven divine speech formulas in each section of the book' (p. 222).

<sup>145</sup> Limburg does not count the words אֲדַבְרֶנִּי יְהוָה דְּבַר because they do not belong to the framework of direct speech (ibid.: 217 n. 2).

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.: 218.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.



In the second part of his article, Limburg discusses further groupings of seven or seven-plus-one items and comes up with an impressive number.<sup>151</sup> Dorsey adds even further examples<sup>152</sup> so that by adding them all up we arrive at the following list:

- ♦ seven oracles against foreign nations (1:3-2:5) followed by a climactic oracle against Israel (2:6-16),
- ♦ seven transgressions (2:6-8),
- ♦ seven consequences of the divine punishment and seven classes of military that will not escape (2:14-16),
- ♦ seven rhetorical questions followed by a climactic statement (3:3-8),
- ♦ seven verbal clauses describing Yahweh's punishment (3:14-15),
- ♦ seven imperatives followed by a punch line (4:4-5),
- ♦ seven first person verbs with *-kem* suffix forms followed by a climax (4:6-12),
- ♦ seven verbs of exhortation (5:4-6a),
- ♦ seven verbs in the hymn fragment 5:8-9,
- ♦ seven bi-cola depicting Israel's condemnation (5:10-13),
- ♦ seven verbs of exhortation or promise (5:14-15),
- ♦ seven things that the Lord abhors followed by an indication of what he desires (5:21-24),
- ♦ seven participles/woes (6:1-6),
- ♦ seven things that the people do followed by what they ought to do instead (6:4-6),
- ♦ seven accusations against the merchants (8:4-8),
- ♦ seven punishing acts superseded by a climactic statement (9:1-4),
- ♦ seven lines with  $\square\psi\eta\eta \dots \square\aleph$  (9:2a-4a),
- ♦ seven good things that Yahweh will do for Israel in the future (9:11-15), and
- ♦ seven third person plural verbs depicting Israel's future life (9:14-15).

At this point, the question of the function of these series, which, it should be noted, occur on all levels of the structural hierarchy of Amos, arises. Though some of the examples listed above may well be accidental, the consistent use of heptads throughout the book suggests that they have been employed consciously. In my view, they are best seen as a rhetorical device that stresses a particular point, such as the scandalous behaviour of the merchants, for instance (cf. 8:4-8). In the case of the seven-plus-one series, on the other hand, the initial focus placed on the issue under discussion in the first seven components finally gives way to an eighth climactic statement. This is the case, for instance, in the OAN where seven oracles dealing with foreign nations are followed by a climactic one that addresses Israel, the prophet's real target.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.: 219-221.

<sup>152</sup> DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 324. The device plays an important part also in other books of the Old Testament as well as in some ancient Near Eastern Texts. Cf., for instance, HEHN, *Siebenzahl und Sabbat bei den Babyloniern und im Alten Testament*; idem, 'Zur Bedeutung der Siebenzahl'; POPE, 'Seven, Seventh, Seventy'; KAPELRUD, 'The Number Seven in Ugaritic Texts'; GORDIS, 'Heptads as an Element of Biblical and Rabbinic Style'; SASSON, 'A Genealogical "Convention" in Biblical Chronography?'; LABUSCHAGNE, 'The Pattern of the Divine Speech Formulas in the Pentateuch'; BRAULIK, 'Zur Funktion von Siebenergruppierungen im Endtext des Deuteronomiums'; WENHAM, *Numbers*, 24f.; and idem, *Genesis 1-15*, 6f., 96.

In some cases, the eighth element forms a contrast with the preceding ones, as in 6:4-6 where an account of what the people do is followed by an appeal to change their behaviour.

### 2.2.5.2 *Telescoping N+1 Patterns*

O'Connell, in his article 'Telescoping N+1 Patterns in the Book of Amos', pursues an interest similar to that of Limburg. However, he focuses more broadly on seven-plus-one series and occurrences of three-plus-one items.<sup>153</sup> His main theses are that the arrangement of Amos is based on such N+1 groupings and that the final (+1) component deviates from the pattern established in the preceding parts and thus presents an element of surprise. Even more importantly, according to O'Connell, the final component serves as a transition to the following N+1 groupings, which is why he speaks of 'telescoping N+1 patterns'.<sup>154</sup>

The first series is to be found in 1:3-2:16, a passage that contains eight instances of the ascending numerical parallelism (עַל-שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּשָׁעֵי ... וְעַל-אַרְבָּעָה).<sup>155</sup> The transitional element (2:6-16) focuses on Israel, which from now on becomes the prophet's exclusive target.<sup>156</sup> The next part, Amos 3-6, according to O'Connell contains three judgement oracles (3:1-5:17) followed by a double woe oracle (5:18-6:14).<sup>157</sup> O'Connell goes to great lengths to argue that the two woe oracles in 5:18-27 and 6:1-14 ought to be seen as the +1 element, which in this case would complete a three-plus-one series. However, at this point he runs into problems. First, this is the only instance where the final component is not introduced by the same formulaic introduction that opens the preceding constituents (in 5:18, הוֹי is used rather than the expected ... שְׂמָעוּ). Secondly, as already noted, in 5:18-6:14 we have two woe oracles so that the series might just as well be seen as a 3+2 pattern. Concerning the divergent introduction, O'Connell reasons that this is part of the surprise, which, as noted earlier, is one of the characteristics of the final part. Moreover, he goes on to assert that 'the change from judgement oracle to woe oracle does not represent a change of disposition'.<sup>158</sup> As far as the second problem is concerned, O'Connell argues that woe oracles are often arranged as doublets or quadruplets and that the two in Amos may therefore form a single rhetorical entity.<sup>159</sup> This double woe oracle would then function as the telescoping device by focusing on the disastrous outcome of the הוֹי יְהוָה, a negative connotation that is sustained in the subsequent sections.<sup>160</sup>

According to O'Connell, the next major section is 7:1-8:2. In this case, which is another 3+1 example, the final component is set off from the preceding ones not by being constructed differently but by the inclusion of the 'tension-building' narrative inset in 7:10-17.<sup>161</sup> On the supposed transitional element (8:1-2) O'Connell remarks, 'it is the very brevity of this threat,

<sup>153</sup> In theory, N could, of course, signify any number but as far as the book of Amos is concerned, O'Connell detects only 3+1 and 7+1 series.

<sup>154</sup> O'CONNELL, 'Telescoping N+1 Patterns in the Book of Amos': 56.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.: 57-60.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.: 68.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.: 63.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.: 64.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.: 65-66.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.: 69.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.: 60-61.

anticipating that judgement is about to fall immediately upon Israel, that issues in the succeeding series of eschatological oracles (in viii 3-ix 15).<sup>162</sup> The final part in 8:3-9:15 contains four eschatological oracles, the first three of which are 'juxtaposed and separated from the last by the formal interruption of the prophetic vision of ix 1-10'<sup>163</sup> thus creating another 3+1 series. In this series, each component is introduced by a temporal formula (either בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא or הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים). The element of surprise consists in the fact that the ultimate section (9:11-15) promises restoration as against the negative message of the rest of the book.<sup>164</sup>

I share O'Connell's belief that there is a progression of thought in the book of Amos but I remain unconvinced by his proposal of a telescoping N+1 pattern. O'Connell's theory works well enough for the first major section, the final component of which clearly functions as a transition that brings the sin and judgement of Israel, the prophet's actual target, into focus. Difficulties arise in the case of the other sections, however. To begin with, the suggestion to regard Amos 3-6 and 7:1-8:2 as two 3+1 series seems somewhat forced. Even more importantly, however, O'Connell's analysis of the final section (8:3-9:15) seems to me rather problematic. Thus, even though some redaction critics regard the whole of 8:3-14 as a later addition,<sup>165</sup> in the text as it now stands, the structural break clearly occurs after 8:3 (cf. the introductory phrase שְׂמַעוּ-זֹאת).<sup>166</sup> O'Connell, by contrast, sees 8:3 as an opening statement because it contains the temporal marker בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, a device that, in his view, introduces each part of this last section of the book. However, in 8:3 the words בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא occur in non-initial position and are closely linked to the preceding statements. They are part of what de Vries has called 'a dramatically epitomizing conclusion'.<sup>167</sup>

This criticism alone is sufficient to invalidate O'Connell's proposal, which stands and falls with the temporal formulas. That is to say, if the final section were to begin in 8:4, there would be no three-plus-one series introduced by temporal formulas as envisaged by O'Connell. However, there are yet further problems. Why does the phrase בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא introduce a section in 8:3, where it occurs in non-initial position, and in 8:9, where it is preceded by וְהָיָה, but not in 8:13, where it is initial? Similarly, why are the words הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים considered introductory in 8:11 but not in 9:13?<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, it is also unsatisfactory to think of 9:1-10 as a mere inset, as it is a relatively lengthy section that includes a vision, a hymn fragment, and so on. In addition, the passage is of great importance in that it draws to a close some of the most important themes of the book.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.: 69.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.: 61-62.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.: 62.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. e.g. WILLIAMSON, 'The Prophet and the Plumb-Line': 118.

<sup>166</sup> Almost all modern commentators treat 8:4-14 as a separate section.

<sup>167</sup> DE VRIES, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, 319.

<sup>168</sup> O'CONNELL'S observation ('Telescoping N+1 Patterns in the Book of Amos': 62) that the temporal formulas in 8:11, 13; 9:11, 13 are arranged chiasmatically, although correct, does not answer this question.



### 2.2.6 Conclusions

In the light of the above discussion of previous proposals concerning the structural arrangement of Amos, it appears that an 'integrative approach' is needed. That is to say, our approach has to be flexible enough to account for the data in all its complexity. Thus, it needs to be examined how *all* the structural devices, of which there may be a great variety, *and* the content of the passages in question contribute to the rhetorical structure of the text. Weiss rightly notes that it is important, 'die *Struktur* des dichterischen Gebildes, und zwar "alle an der Gestaltung beteiligten Formelemente in ihrer *Wirksamkeit* und in ihrem *Zusammenwirken* zu begreifen".<sup>169</sup> In addition, we must attempt to resist any urge of subjecting the text to a particular theory, especially if that means that the text needs to be tailored to make it fit the theory.<sup>170</sup>

Before we then proceed to investigate the macro structure of Amos, let me briefly summarise the findings of our review. First, the general proposal of a three- or four-part structure consisting of an introduction, 'the words', 'the visions' (and an appendix) has proved to be a helpful starting point. Secondly, the hymn fragments, according to our analysis, do not function as structural markers. They have been employed to accentuate the announcements of judgement, which they accompany. Thirdly, concentric structures, such as inclusios and chiasms, on the other hand, do have structural significance. However, special care needs to be taken in their detection. In addition, as means of repetition, inclusios and chiasms are also used to signal rhetorical emphasis. Fourthly, the same applies to recurring phrases and formulas, which, however, can also function as structural markers. Fifthly, and finally, yet another means of highlighting is provided by heptads and seven-plus-one series. These either stress a particular point by elaborating on it or, in some way or other, transcend the thrust of the heptad by adding an eighth element that deviates from the preceding ones.

### 2.3 The Macro Structure of Amos

Earlier on, we saw that the recognition of the threefold arrangement of Amos is no more than a helpful starting point and that, even on the macro-structural level, it is desirable to attempt a more detailed analysis. In what follows, I am going to argue that, in addition to a historical superscription in 1:1 and a motto in 1:2, the book consists of nine major units. The first of these is the introductory series of oracles against foreign nations in 1:3-2:16, which is followed by three sections in 3:1-15; 4:1-13 and 5:1-17, all of which are introduced by שְׁמַעוּ. Two elaborate woe oracles ensue in 5:18-27 and 6:1-14, which in turn lead to the vision-cum-narrative series in 7:1-8:3, another 'שְׁמַעוּ' section' in 8:4-14 and the book's dramatic conclusion in 9:1-15.

<sup>169</sup> WEISS, 'Die Methode der "Total-Interpretation": 93 (italics by Weiss) who cites KAYSER, 'Literarische Wertung und Interpretation': 46. However, against WEISS, 'Die Methode der "Total-Interpretation": 102, it needs to be stressed that even by paying careful attention to all the relevant signals we will not be able to uncover the 'wahren Sinn' (real meaning) of a text (cf. our discussion in ch. 1.1).

<sup>170</sup> Cf. DAWSON, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 16, who notes that '... too many people engaged in analysis of this language [i.e. Classical Hebrew] come to it with inflexible theories and/or ideologies, which they are unwilling to re-examine in the light of the data. Radical restructuring of the text is, for some, only a starting point in their protection of theory or ideology: difficulties in the text lead to rewriting the text.'

Concerning the introductory section there is widespread agreement that it extends to 2:16.<sup>171</sup> The strophic arrangement of the eight oracles that make up this initial part is a clear pointer to the structural unity of the passage. Although the final Israel strophe deviates from the established pattern in some respects, it is clearly connected to the previous strophes, which it brings to a climactic close. The occurrence of a major break after 2:16 is confirmed also by the introductory words in 3:1, *שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*.<sup>172</sup> As noted above, Amos 3-6, termed 'the words', has often been regarded as one of the main parts of the book. However, a close look at these chapters shows that they feature two distinct types of discourses, which are introduced in different ways. Whereas 3:1-15; 4:1-13; and 5:1-17 are opened by *שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה*, the following parts, 5:18-27 and 6:1-14, are introduced by the prophetic exclamation *הוֹי*. Thus, according to our analysis, Amos 3-6 comprises five prophetic discourses.

While Amos 5:1-17 is today regarded as a self-contained unit by most scholars;<sup>173</sup> the delineation of the preceding parts is disputed. Thus, whereas, according to our view, structural breaks occur after 2:16 and 3:15,<sup>174</sup> others have detected major divisions after 3:8 and 4:3.<sup>175</sup> However, the division of this part of the book into 3:1-15 and 4:1-13 is to be preferred for a number of reasons. First, the introductory *שָׁמְעוּ* phrase in 4:1, which parallels the ones in 3:1 and 5:1, indicates the beginning of a major unit. Secondly, as we shall argue in the context of our discussion of Amos 3, vv. 1-2 and 13-15 function as an *inclusio* that, together with the introductory phrases in 3:1 and 4:1, marks the boundaries of the passage. Thirdly, vv. 14-15 are correctly described by Andersen and Freedman as depicting 'a summation of the national disaster'.<sup>176</sup> As such, they end the prophetic discourse in Amos 3. Fourthly, Amos 3:9 and 4:4 contain no signals that mark them as introductions to large prophetic discourses. That is to say,

<sup>171</sup> This view is challenged by some who suggest that the break occurs after 3:2 (cf. BUDDE, 75-76; and SMALLEY, 'Recursion Patterns and the Sectioning of Amos': 122-123). However, WOLFF, 212, rightly rejects this because 'als Abschluß von 2 6-9.13-16 wäre 3 2 vor allem in der Strafankündigung eine blasse Verallgemeinerung' (cf. also HAYES, 122; and ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 378).

<sup>172</sup> Cf. DEMPSTER, 'The Lord is His Name': 175; FINLEY, 180; WOLFF, 212.

<sup>173</sup> This conclusion has been reached because of its chiasmic arrangement. However, some have suggested to insert either *הוֹי* or *הוּ* at the beginning of 5:7 (see GORDIS, 'Composition and Structure of Amos': 225 n. 3; VAN DER WAL, 'Structure of Amos': 110-111; RUDOLPH, 194-195; and cf. Elliger's 'fortasse lege 'ה(ה) 'ה(ר)' in BHS sub loc.). Thus, according to Gordis, the passage falls into four parts (5:1-6, 7-17, 18-27; 6:1-14), each of which opens with the exclamation 'woe'. However, the proposed emendation has rightly been criticised as an 'arbitrary conjecture' by JEREMIAS, 'Amos 3-6: From the Oral Word to the Text': 228 ns. 4, 9. Jeremias is also right in regarding this surgical measure as an attempt 'to respond to a text erroneously viewed as disordered.'

<sup>174</sup> This view is shared by many. Thus, Amos 3:1-15 is regarded as one prophetic discourse by GORDIS, 'Composition and Structure of Amos': 217; GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 294; LIMBURG, 'Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos': 217; DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 308-311; MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 376-377; WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 11-12; KOCH, 2:107-108; FINLEY, 177; HUBBARD, 121; and NIEHAUS, 328. Those who view Amos 4:1-13 as one of the major sections of the book include GORDIS, 'Composition and Structure of Amos': 217; DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 311-312; WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 13; FINLEY, 198; HUBBARD, 121; and NIEHAUS, 328.

SWEENEY, 'Formation and Form in the Prophetic Literature': 119, on the other hand, regards the whole of Amos 3-4 as one unit; and JEREMIAS, *passim*, distinguishes between Amos 3-4, 'the divine speech', and Amos 5-6, 'the prophetic speech' (cf. *idem*, 'Amos 3-6: Beobachtungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte eines Prophetenbuches': 131ff; and 'Amos 3-6: From the Oral Word to the Text': 221ff).

<sup>175</sup> Thus G. V. SMITH; REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*; and CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*. Cf. also the studies referred to in the subsequent discussion of this issue.

<sup>176</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 370.



there is nothing in these verses that would prompt the reader to pause or expect the commencement of a major discourse.

To give away the result of our analysis, it appears that all major discourses in the book are introduced or controlled by specific structural markers. Thus, the first unit is governed by the recurring phrase *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*, which opens each of the eight strophes. The call to listen, *שָׁמְעוּ*, opens a discourse in 3:1; 4:1; 5:1 and 8:4, while *הוּי* performs a similar role in 5:18 and 6:1. In 7:1-8:3, the words *כֹּה הִרְאֵנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה* function in a similar way to the *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* phrase in 1:3-2:16, i.e. they open each of the four visions,<sup>177</sup> and the final section is introduced by *רְאִיתִי אֶת-אֲדֹנָי* (9:1), an expression that resembles *כֹּה הִרְאֵנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה*. Against this analysis, it is sometimes argued that the *שָׁמְעוּ* phrase in 4:1 differs from the ones in 3:1 and 5:1, and that it does not mark the beginning of a major discourse.<sup>178</sup> The first of these claims is not altogether mistaken, as can be seen from Figure 1. However, some further comments are required on this point. As regards the second claim, despite the structural differences there are strong reasons for regarding all three cases as functionally equivalent.<sup>179</sup> Again, we shall elaborate on this in what follows.

Let me begin with the structure of the *שָׁמְעוּ* phrases. They all begin with the imperative (2nd masc. pl.) ‘hear’, which is followed by references to the object that is to be heard and the hearing subject.<sup>180</sup> However, whereas the expressions in 3:1 and 5:1 resemble each other in that in both cases further information concerning the object is given in an *אֲשֶׁר* phrase, only 3:1 and 4:1 contain a detailed subject description (SD). In 3:1 this description consists of the phrase *עַל כָּל-הַמְשֻׁפָּחָה אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלִיתִי מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם* which is linked to the preceding words by means of the repetition of *עַל* (cf. *עֲלֵיכֶם*), while in 4:1 the subject is described in more detail in the subsequent lines using three feminine participles (*הָאִמְרָת*, *הָרִצְצוֹת*, *הָעֲשֻׁקוֹת*). Thus, in one sense, the expressions in 3:1 and 5:1 share certain similarities that distinguish them from 4:1. At the same time, however, there are also features that 4:1 and 3:1 have in common but that are not found in 5:1.

+ SD		בני ישראל	דבר יהוה עליכם	שמעו את-הדבר הזה	3:1
+ SD	פרות הבשן	אשר בהר שמרון		הדבר הזה	4:1
		קינה בית ישראל	אשר אנכי נשא עליכם	שמעו את-הדבר הזה	5:1

Figure 1: The Introductory Addresses in Amos 3, 4, and 5

In order to support our claim that all three phrases function in a similar way, i.e. as introductory markers that open major prophetic discourses, it is necessary to examine the use of *שָׁמַע* in the book of Amos. Of its ten occurrences, six are of major interest in the present context because

<sup>177</sup> However, it needs to be stressed that the narrative in 7:10-17 is, for obvious reasons, not opened by the words *כֹּה הִרְאֵנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה*.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. e.g. SWEENEY, ‘Formation and Form in the Prophetic Literature’: 119; JEREMIAS, 39 n. 11; idem, ‘Amos 3-6: Beobachtungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte eines Prophetenbuches’: 131; G. V. SMITH, 127 (cf. n. 93) and ZENGER, ‘Zwölfprophetenbuch’: 388.

<sup>179</sup> Thus also ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 414.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. PARUNAK, ‘Some Discourse Functions of Prophetic Quotation Formulas in Jeremiah’: 499, who notes concerning the use of ‘hear the word of the LORD’ in Jeremiah: ‘When the addressee of the oracle is to be marked explicitly in the text of the oracle ..., the paragraph begins with “Hear the word of the LORD”’ (cf. also p. 507). According to his analysis, the formula is a stronger disjunction than *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*.



they occur in initial position thus being capable of functioning as structural markers.<sup>181</sup> In five instances, the *qal* imperative שְׁמַעוּ is used (3:1, 13; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4) while the remaining case features the *hiphil* הִשְׁמִיעוּ (3:9). The repeated occurrence of שְׁמַעוּ in Amos 3-4 has led some scholars to regard 3:9-4:3 as a self-contained unit in which every sub-section is introduced by a שְׁמַעוּ formula.<sup>182</sup> This, however, is not the case because v. 12, which is introduced by כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה and thus one of the sub-units of the passage, lacks a שְׁמַעוּ formula.

However, for our purposes it is more important to investigate the rhetorical function of the respective formulas. Thus, whereas those in 3:1; 4:1; 5:1 and 8:4 are directed at the prophet's audience, i.e. the Israelites, this is not the case in 3:9, 13.<sup>183</sup> In 3:9 (where the *hiphil* form is used) the prophet commands an unknown messenger to proclaim a message to the strongholds of Ashdod and Egypt. From a rhetorical point of view, the *qal* formula in 3:13 is even more striking. At first glance it appears as if its use were comparable to the other occurrences of שְׁמַעוּ. However, the immediate context rules this out as it becomes clear that it too is not directed at Israel but at the witnesses summoned earlier. To conclude, only the formulas in 3:1; 4:1; 5:1 and 8:4, which are directed at Amos' audience, serve as introductory markers in that they now also address the audience of the book who are thereby called upon to 'hear'.<sup>184</sup>

Those who deny that the שְׁמַעוּ phrase in 4:1 functions as an introductory marker stress that 4:1-3 is the conclusion of the so-called 'Samaria-complex' in 3:9-4:3. Jeremias, in support of this theory, gives the following reasons:<sup>185</sup> First, the root עִשָּׂק, which occurs in 3:9 and 4:1, functions as an *inclusio* tying the whole unit together.<sup>186</sup> Secondly, the threatened deportation in 4:3 surpasses the announcements of judgement in 3:11, 15 thus providing closure to the entire passage. Thirdly, the cult-critical statement in 4:4-5, which is closely linked to the subsequent 'liturgy of disasters' in vv. 6-13, is not resumed until ch. 5. Fourthly, all the words in 3:9-4:3 are directed against the inhabitants of Samaria, a fact that again, according to Jeremias, points to the unity of the section.<sup>187</sup> However, none of these points is decisive, as I shall attempt to demonstrate presently.

First, although the root עִשָּׂק does indeed appear in 3:9-11 and 4:1-3, it does not automatically follow that it functions as an *inclusio*. The question of whether it does can only be

<sup>181</sup> The remaining four cases are: הִשְׁמִיעוּ in 4:5, אֶשְׁמָע in 5:23, שְׁמַעוּ in 7:16, and לְשָׁמַע in 8:11.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. e.g. G. V. SMITH, 8, 117.

<sup>183</sup> These differences have been overlooked by PAUL, 128.

<sup>184</sup> Jeremias' objection that the vocative in 4:1 aims at a limited group within the nation (p. 39 n. 11) does not preclude the possibility that the initial verses of Amos 4 serve as an introduction to the entire discourse. Singling out a particular group at the beginning of a speech can be a very effective rhetorical means. In fact, the jumbled gender forms in 4:1-3 may even indicate that the address פְּרוֹת הַבָּצֵן should be understood as a figure of speech, in which case it would refer to the male upper-class members as well. Cf. ch. 6.1 for further discussion.

<sup>185</sup> JEREMIAS, 39.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. also RUDOLPH, 166, who argues that in 4:1-3 the reproofs of the exploitation of the poor (3:9-10) and of the excessive luxury (3:12b, 15) are combined.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. also JEREMIAS, 'Amos 3-6: Beobachtungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte eines Prophetenbuches': 130; idem, 'Amos 3-6: From the Oral Word to the Text': 224; WOLFF, 243; CRIPPS, 165; and REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 93.

Further reasons for regarding 3:9-4:3 as a unity have been proposed by STUART, 329, who claims that each of the four oracles describes a related aspect of Samaria's degenerate wealthy style, concludes with a Pentateuchal covenant curse, quotes Yahweh and refers overtly to his being quoted, assumes the coming defeat of the capital by a foreign enemy, speaks about Samaria's complacent life-style in an ironic or mocking tone, and is composed in parallelistic prose. However, most of these points apply to many other oracles as well and are, therefore, not characteristic for the ones in 3:9-4:3. Thus, many oracles conclude with a Pentateuchal covenant curse (at least in Stuart's view), quote Yahweh, or display an ironic or mocking tone. In the end, Stuart's main argument is that they are all levelled against Samaria.

answered once we have decided on the boundaries of the section, as we have seen earlier. Thus, if there are no other reasons for regarding Amos 3:9-4:3 as a self-contained unit, the recurrence of עשׂה should be seen not as an *inclusio* but as an example of repetition. Secondly, it is also true that the punishment theme reaches a new peak with Amos talking about exile. However, this is again surpassed by the ominous reference to the meeting with God Israel is to prepare herself for (4:12-13). Thus, all one can say at this point is that throughout Amos 2-4 there is an intensification of the punishment notion. Thirdly, again Jeremias' observation that the critique of the cult, which surfaces in 4:4-5, is not pursued until ch. 5 is correct. However, I am not entirely sure what Jeremias is implying, especially as he surely does not want us to connect Amos 4:4-13 with 5:1-17, the chiasmic structure of which he affirms. In fact, Jeremias' reference to Amos 5 is very interesting and supports my own conclusions. It shows, after all, that in Amos 5 we find a combination of cult-critical and socio-critical remarks (for the latter cf. vv. 4-6, 7, 10-15), which is precisely what we have in Amos 4 as well. That is to say, the fact that we have cult-critical notions in 4:4-5 and 5:4-5 does not mean that these belong, automatically, to the same discourse.

Finally, as regards Jeremias' fourth point, in this case it needs to be said that he does not do full justice to the text in that he ignores part of the data. True, Samaria does figure prominently in Amos 3:9-4:3. In 3:9 foreign witnesses are commanded to assemble on Mount Samaria, in 3:12 a total devouring of the people of Samaria is announced, and in 4:1 the 'cows of Bashan' are said to be located on Mount Samaria. However, it should not be overlooked that 3:14 speaks also of the destruction of the altars at Bethel thus reflecting an interest in 'the king's sanctuary', as it is called in 7:13, an interest that re-surfaces in 4:4-5. Thus, both discourses, Amos 3:1-15 and 4:1-13, are concerned with Samaria and Bethel, just as we find that the two themes of cultic and social offences are interwoven throughout the book of Amos.<sup>188</sup>

At this point, I would like to come back to and elaborate on the intensification of the punishment notion in Amos 2-4, as this is very interesting from a rhetorical point of view. The initial threat of punishment (2:6-8) is picked up and developed in 3:2, i.e. at the outset of the second prophetic discourse, where it is stressed that Israel will be punished precisely because (עַל-פֶּן) God has known only them. The theme of judgement also closes the section spelling out the implications of God's intervention in more detail (3:11-12, 14-15). In the following discourse in Amos 4, we have a similar picture: it too is opened and closed by judgement talk. As has been rightly observed by Jeremias, the declaration that the judgement will include exile (4:2-3) adds further austerity, but it, in turn, is surpassed by the ominous notion of an upcoming meeting with the deity in 4:12-13. This intensifying punishment theme, it should be noted in passing, is an excellent example of what we would regard as a 'developing argument' throughout the book.

<sup>188</sup> JEREMIAS, 39, does in fact admit that 'der spätere Zusatz eines Mahnwortes in 3,13f. mit seiner zweimaligen Hervorhebung des Verbs "ahnden" in V. 14 eine rahmende Inklusion zu 3,2 geschaffen [hat], die nun 4,1 als Neuanfang erscheinen läßt ...' Although he may be right that 'von Haus aus hat ... der Aufruf "Hört dies Wort ..." in 4,1 nicht wie 3,1 und 5,1 größere Sammlungen, sondern nur die Untereinheit 4,1-3 eingeleitet', in the book of Amos as we now have it 4:1 does introduce a new section.



To summarise, we can thus conclude that the *שְׁמַעוּ* phrases in 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1 open the first three discourses of Amos 3-6, a section often labelled ‘the words’ as we saw earlier. However, as far as the sub-units in 3:1-2 and 4:1-3 are concerned; it is fair to say that they contain ‘evidence of structural links in both directions’.<sup>189</sup> These ‘structural ambiguities’, which have led some scholars to connect 3:1-2 to the OAN in 1:3-2:16 and 4:1-3 to the ‘Samaria discourse’ in Amos 3:9-15, allow the sections to function as transitional elements in the overall structure of Amos.

This then brings us to 5:18-27 and 6:1-14 where we find two units that are introduced by the exclamation *הִנֵּה*, which in the book of Amos occurs only in 5:18 and 6:1. The boundaries of the entire section, i.e. 5:18-6:14, are marked also by external signs. Thus, the function of *הִנֵּה* as an opening marker in 5:18 is confirmed by the fact that the chiasm of the preceding pericope extends to 5:17.<sup>190</sup> The end of the section, on the other hand, is signalled by the commencement of the vision report series in 7:1. Moreover, since *הִנֵּה* recurs in 6:1, it seems reasonable to expect that it mark the beginning of a discourse in that instance as well.<sup>191</sup> It should also be noted that the occurrence of these two extended woe oracles<sup>192</sup> is very appropriate at this stage. Following the divine announcement that there will be wailing and lamentation (cf. *הִנֵּה-הוּא* 5:16-17) because of God’s passing through Israel’s midst, the woe oracles are what could be called ‘variations on a theme’, i.e. that of mourning.

If there is a section in Amos that can legitimately be called the ‘visions’ then it is probably best to confine it to 7:1-8:3,<sup>193</sup> although even this part, in the Amaziah narrative in 7:10-17, contains ‘non-visionary’ material. Both, from a structural as well as from a thematic point of view, the narrative, at first glance, seems to interrupt the series of visions. Although, as far as its theme and especially its rhetorical function are concerned, we shall attempt to demonstrate in the following chapter that this is actually a mistaken apprehension. On the other hand, however, because of its different structural make-up the narrative clearly does interrupt the pattern of the visions. Yet, it needs to be stressed that it is well integrated, linked as it is to the third vision by the repetition of the remark that Jeroboam shall die by the sword (cf. 7:9, 11). Moreover, there is an overall consistency in the section 7:1-8:3, which is the result of the patterning of the visions, a scheme that resembles the strophic arrangement of 1:3-2:16. In both cases, a specific introductory formula is used to introduce the sub-sections. In 1:3-2:16 this is the phrase *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*, while in 7:1-8:3 the words *כֹּה הָרָאֵנִי (אֲרָנִי יְהוָה) וְהִנֵּה*<sup>194</sup> have been employed to mark the beginning of each vision. Thus, unlike the discourses in Amos 3-6 but like the OAN, the present unit is not opened by a single introductory marker. Instead, it consists of a series of similar components, each of which is introduced by what could be called a ‘chain marker’.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. WENDLAND, ‘The “Word of the Lord” and the Organization of Amos’: 12.

<sup>190</sup> SWEENEY, ‘Formation and Form in the Prophetic Literature’: 120, however, prefers to see Amos 5-6 as one unit rather than braking it up into three.

<sup>191</sup> DORSEY, ‘Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos’: 314-317, however, regards the whole section 5:18-6:14 as one large chiasm.

<sup>192</sup> For an extensive discussion of *הִנֵּה* and the prophetic woe oracle in general cf. HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese*.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. DORSEY, ‘Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos’: 317-320.

<sup>194</sup> The words *כֹּה הָרָאֵנִי יְהוָה* do not occur in 7:7.



The following section (8:4-14) is often considered to be a conglomerate of a variety of judgement oracles and, as we have already seen above, is sometimes regarded as being out of place in its present context. From a rhetorical point of view, however, the latter verdict is not acceptable even though the observation that the text includes various short judgement oracles is correct. I have already pointed out that the introductory words *שְׁמַעוּ-זֹאת* resemble the *שְׁמַעוּ* phrases in 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1 and that they therefore appear to mark the beginning of a new major discourse.<sup>195</sup> A comparison of 8:4-7 and 4:1-2 will lend further support to this conclusion. In both cases, *שְׁמַעוּ* is followed by participles that provide additional information concerning the addressees of the judgement speeches.<sup>196</sup> Both pericopes, furthermore, speak of the oppression of the weak and powerless in society (compare *הַלְיָם* and *אֲבִיוֹנִים* in 4:1 with *אֲבִיוֹן* and *עֲנִיִּי-אֲרִי*<sup>197</sup> in 8:4). Interestingly, in both cases a quote follows that exposes the unacceptable behaviour of those who are responsible for the social injustice. In 4:1 it is but a brief utterance introduced by another participle (*הָאֲמַרְתָּ*) while in 8:5 *לֵאמֹר* is employed and the quote is much more extensive (cf. vv. 5-6). This, however, does not yet exhaust the similarities since the quotes are immediately followed by divine oaths, both of which are introduced by the phrase ... *נִשְׁבַּע (אֲרִי) יְהוָה בְּ*. All these thematic, grammatical and linguistic correspondences strengthen the assumption that both pericopes may also be comparable in terms of their function, i.e. as introducing larger prophetic discourses.

However, if the words *שְׁמַעוּ-זֹאת* in 8:4 introduce a major section, where does it end? Several possibilities suggest themselves in that the phrases *וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא* in 8:9, *הֲנִיָּה יָמִים בָּאִים* in 8:11 and *בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא* in 8:13 could all conceivably introduce a new discourse. In the first two cases, the addition of the oracle formula *אֲרִי יְהוָה נֹאֵם* makes this even more likely. However, a close look reveals that actually none of them functions in such a way. Thus, the words *וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא* in 8:9 connect the declarations in vv. 9-10 with the divine oath in vv. 7-8 and the charges made in vv. 4-6. Similarly, *בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא* in 8:13 refers back to the statements in vv. 11-12 making it clear that all the announcements of judgement concern the same time. In order to establish the function of *הֲנִיָּה יָמִים בָּאִים* in 8:11, however, it is necessary to consider briefly the use of *הֲנִיָּה* in Amos.

This investigation can be limited to the unmodified cases in which *הֲנִיָּה* occurs in initial position, as for instance in 8:11, because only these can serve as introductory markers.<sup>198</sup> Thus we have to deal with four examples (2:13; 8:11; 9:8, 13) the first of which, we have already implicitly decided, is not a major introductory marker. To be sure, *הֲנִיָּה* in 2:13 does introduce a section, i.e. 2:13-16, but this is only a sub-paragraph of the Israel strophe in 2:6-16, which in turn is part of the OAN in 1:3-2:16. Similarly, in 9:8 *הֲנִיָּה* does not indicate a break. It follows the rhetorical questions in v. 7, which stress that Israel no longer enjoys a special status. The exodus, that is to say, should not be understood as being indicative of Yahweh's special favour

<sup>195</sup> For this view cf. also DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 320.

<sup>196</sup> However, 4:1 differs from 8:4 in that the epithet *הַבָּשָׂן* and the relative clause *עֲמִרְוֹן* have no equivalents in the latter passage.

<sup>197</sup> This reading adopts the Qere.

<sup>198</sup> In Amos the term *הֲנִיָּה* occurs thirteen times. In addition to the unmodified *הֲנִיָּה* we find *כִּי-הֲנִיָּה* (4:2, 13; 6:11; 9:9) and *וְהֲנִיָּה* (7:1 [twice], 4, 7; 8:1). Whereas the former clearly performs a connective function, the latter occurs solely in the vision reports to specify what it is that Amos saw.

as even the Philistines and Arameans could boast about similar experiences. הִנֵּה in this context directs the attention of the hearers/readers to the implications of this astonishing claim, namely that Yahweh will indeed judge his people and wipe the sinful kingdom of Israel off the face of the earth. The remaining two examples in 8:11 and 9:13 resemble one another in that in both cases הִנֵּה is followed by the words יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם (אֲדַנִּי) יְהוָה. Again, in 9:13 הִנֵּה does not mark a major break although it does introduce a sub-section of the salvation oracle in 9:11-15. Thus, in the light of our findings, according to which הִנֵּה in three of the four cases we considered introduces a sub-section, it is reasonable to assume that it performs a similar function also in 8:11.

To be sure, 8:4-14 is normally treated as a single, if not necessarily consistent, unit by commentators.<sup>199</sup> However, as there is no closing marker at the end of v. 14, we would have to infer that the words רָאִיתִי אֶת-אֲדֹנָי in 9:1 indicate the beginning of the final discourse.<sup>200</sup> This is confirmed by two observations. On the one hand, the resulting two discourses in 8:4-14 and 9:1-15 exhibit a similar composition. In both cases, the final parts are introduced by a הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים יְהוָה (אֲדַנִּי) phrase (cf. 8:11; 9:13). Similarly, the penultimate parts correspond to one another in that each is opened by the words בְּיוֹם הַהוּא (וְהָיָה) (cf. 8:9; 9:11). Secondly, it should be noted that the words רָאִיתִי אֶת-אֲדֹנָי in 9:1 resemble the phrase כֹּה הָרְאִנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה, which introduces each of the visions in Amos 7-8.

Those who prefer to connect the vision in Amos 9 with the previous ones argue that it constitutes the climax to the whole series. However, Hayes points out that there are a number of structural differences between 9:1(-4) and the visions in Amos 7-8. That is to say, Amos 'sees' rather than 'being shown', there is 'no symbolic component [that] serves as an interpretive key', and 'no verbal exchange takes place between God and the prophet'. Hayes therefore concludes that 'even should the prophet's reference to seeing Yahweh and the altar be considered a vision report, it hardly constitutes the climactic vision in a series of five.'<sup>201</sup> This is a sensible assessment although it should not be taken in a derogatory sense, i.e. as denying the climactic character of 9:1 *per se*. Thus, Sweeney, for instance, regards the vision in 9:1 as the climax not specifically of the vision report series but of the book as a whole.<sup>202</sup> This is closer to the mark, but it may be even better to say that it is the pinnacle of the judgement message in particular. In any case, for our purposes it is important to note that the vision in 9:1 is not that closely linked to the preceding ones. That is to say, there are no reasons why it should not introduce a new discourse.

Wendland, on the other hand, like many others, takes the whole of Amos 7:1-9:10 as one major unit, entitled 'Five visions of Israel's ruin',<sup>203</sup> which is followed by the concluding sal-

<sup>199</sup> DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 320-323, however, regards the whole of 8:4-9:15 as one unit, which according to his view possibly forms a sevenfold chiasm.

<sup>200</sup> For the use of רָאִיתִי to introduce a vision in Zech 1:8; 4:2 cf. CLARK, 'Vision and Oracle in Zechariah 1-6': 552. The phrase is even more clearly marked in Amos 9:1 where it occurs in initial position.

<sup>201</sup> HAYES, 216; cf. also DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 319 n. 28.

<sup>202</sup> SWEENEY, 'Formation and Form in the Prophetic Literature': 121.

<sup>203</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 19-25. He outlines it as follows:



vation oracle (9:11-15). This analysis, however, does not accord well with his professed intention to focus on the 'speech formulas as a means of introducing the process of demarcating the prophet's message and its organization'.<sup>204</sup> For instance, Wendland's analysis does not account for the discourse opening markers in 8:4 and 9:1. Even more crucially, however, Wendland fails to explain why, according to his outline, the phrase *בְּיוֹם הַהוּא* opens a new section in 9:11 but not in 8:13. It appears, therefore, that his conclusions are based on thematic considerations rather than the distribution of speech formulas. Though this in itself is not necessarily inadequate, in this particular case, the transitional character of 9:8-10 rather seems to support our conclusion that vv. 11-15 do not form a major section on their own.<sup>205</sup>

The macro structure of Amos can thus be outlined as follows: The heading and motto in 1:1-2 lead up to the introductory series of oracles against foreign nations (and Israel) in 1:3-2:16. This, in turn, is followed by three 'שְׁמָעוּ sections' (3:1-15; 4:1-13; 5:1-17), two extended woe oracles (5:18-27; 6:1-14), and the vision report series in 7:1-8:3, which includes the Amaziah narrative in 7:10-17. The ensuing penultimate part (8:4-14) then resumes the 'שְׁמָעוּ sections', whereas the introduction to the final discourse (9:1-15), *רְאֵיתִי אֶת-אֲדֹנָי*, alludes to the visions in Amos 7-8. Together, they draw the message of the book to a close, as is indicated e.g. by the prominent use of the 'futuristic transitions'<sup>206</sup> *בְּיוֹם הַהוּא* and *הַיָּמִים בָּאִים* (cf. 8:9, 11, 13; 9:11, 13). These formulas are aptly employed in the concluding sections of the book because, as has been pointed out, they provide a sense of finality.

Let me also summarise, at this point, our findings concerning the use of structural markers in Amos. To begin with, it appears that the structural arrangement of the book is governed mainly by introductory markers, which fall into two categories. On the one hand, there are those that occur only once at the outset of the discourse they introduce. These include the *שְׁמָעוּ* formulas in 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1, the exclamation *הוֹי* in 5:18 and 6:1, and the words *רְאֵיתִי אֶת-אֲדֹנָי* in 9:1. On the other hand, there are two major sections, i.e. the OAN in Amos 1-2 and the vision reports in 7:1-8:3, where no such major introductory markers occur. However, these passages are composed as series of similar components, each of which is introduced by what we have called 'chain markers'. Thus, in 1:3-2:16, the words *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* are used to introduce each of the eight strophes. In 7:1-8:3, on the other hand, it is the phrase *כֹּה הִרְאֵנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה* that performs this role even though it does not, for obvious reasons, introduce the Amaziah narrative in 7:10-17.

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Vision one: locusts (7:1-3)

Vision two: fire (7:4-6)

Vision three: plumb line (7:7-9)

Comment one: a dramatization of the vision's message (7:10-17)

Vision four: basket of ripe fruit (8:1-3)

Comment two: an oracle of judgment on the day of the Lord (8:4-14)

Vision five: the Lord by the altar (9:1-4)

Comment three: a word in praise of Yahweh's power and a final word of judgment upon Israel (9:5-10)

1. Doxology (9:5-6)

2. Judgment oracle (9:7-10)

<sup>204</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 2.

<sup>205</sup> They may, of course, be regarded as an appendix for historical reasons but in the final form of the text, they are closely connected to the preceding material by means of the transition in vv. 8-10.

<sup>206</sup> For this term cf. DE VRIES, *From Old Revelation to New*, passim.



<i>Passage</i>	<i>Introductory Markers</i>
1:1-2	
1:3-2:16	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה as 'chain marker'
3:1-15	שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה
4:1-13	שָׁמְעוּ הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה
5:1-17	שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה
5:18-27	הוּי
6:1-14	הוּי
7:1-8:3	כֹּה הִרְאֵנִי אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה וְהִנֵּה as 'chain marker'
8:4-14	שָׁמְעוּ־זאת
9:1-15	רְאִיתִי אֶת־אֲדָנִי

Table 2: Major Introductory Markers in Amos<sup>207</sup>

Closing markers, on the other hand, are not employed with the same consistency. Nor are those that do occur unequivocal macro-structural signals. Thus, for instance, the discourses in 1:3-2:16 and 3:1-15 are closed by *נְאֻם־יְהוָה*, a phrase that, as we noted earlier, does not function as a reliable structural guide. The same applies to the formula *אָמַר יְהוָה* which concludes the discourses in 5:1-17; 5:18-27 and 9:1-15. Amos 4, on the other hand, is the only example that is closed by a hymn fragment, which indicates that these fragments too do not perform a structural role. In Amos 6 and 7:1-8:3 there are no closing markers, i.e. none that occur in ultimate position, although in both cases, the phrase *נְאֻם־יְהוָה* appears towards the end of the sections. However, as already pointed out, this so-called oracle formula in itself does not indicate closure but functions as a local marker of emphasis. Finally, the end of the discourse in 8:4-14 does not appear to be marked at all.

<sup>207</sup> BOVATI/MEYNET, 16, referring to ALONSO SCHÖKEL/SICRE DIAZ, 957, present a similar list. However, they do not share our conclusions concerning the structural significance of these phrases.

### 3. RHETORICAL SITUATION AND STRATEGY

Having analysed the book of Amos in terms of its structure, we now turn to the next steps of the rhetorical-critical inquiry. In the present chapter, we maintain a 'landscape perspective' that looks at the book in its entirety and seeks to elucidate its rhetorical situation, the rhetorical problem addressed as well as its rhetorical strategy. These general observations are then followed in chs. 4-6 by more detailed investigations of the rhetoric of Amos 1-4. There we seek to demonstrate in particular how a rhetorical approach, as advanced in this study, can deal with prophetic discourses that, in some cases, fall into a number of short oracles often thought to be unconnected. Throughout, our primary concern will be to uncover how the rhetoric of persuasion (the argument) unfolds.

#### 3.1 *Rhetorical Situation and Problem*

The first issue to be examined is the *rhetorical situation* of the book, i.e. the particular situation that occasioned its compilation. We will also in this context comment on the specific problem that it is designed to address. Before we turn to this, however, it is necessary to consider briefly the nature of the book. This will be followed by some remarks on its date, which obviously is a determinative factor for the reconstruction of the rhetorical situation. Finally, the rhetorical situation itself and the rhetorical problem associated with it will be sketched.

##### 3.1.1 *The Nature of the Book*

In *The Speeches of Micah*, a work that pursues interests similar to ours, Shaw emphasises the importance of establishing the rhetorical situation that gave rise to the prophetic discourse. He notes that that discourse 'presupposes a complex matrix of factors to which it is responding and which must, to some extent, be reflected in the discourse itself.'<sup>1</sup> He furthermore advances the view that 'the prophets did not speak in short, self-contained sayings, but delivered discourses which attempted to persuade the hearers of a particular conviction or to take a specific course of action.'<sup>2</sup> Shaw then sets out to 'attempt to gain insight into the historical setting presupposed by each discourse in the book of Micah'.<sup>3</sup> This interest in uncovering the historical setting for

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<sup>1</sup> SHAW, *Speeches of Micah*, 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

each discourse illustrates Shaw's belief that the book in fact contains the larger discourses (*speeches*) Micah delivered.

I do not intend to challenge Shaw's approach to Micah. What I want to stress rather is that the nature of the book of Amos seems to be different in that it does not preserve the prophet's 'original' speeches. It *may* do so in some sections, but there are also clear examples where it does not. The oracles against the nations in Amos 1:3-2:15 could potentially be an example of an 'original' prophetic speech preserved in the book. It is at least likely that Amos would have delivered oracles such as these serially since they do not make much sense when taken individually.<sup>4</sup> The visions-cum-narrative series Amos 7:1-8:3, on the other hand, clearly presents a different case. Again, it *might* just be possible that 7:1-9; 8:1-3 preserve one of Amos' 'original' speeches. However, even if that were the case, the insertion of the narrative in 7:10-17 now interrupts that 'original sequence'<sup>5</sup> and, more importantly, adds an element that is not a prophetic speech. Thus, even if the position of the narrative were to reflect the actual course of events as some have suggested,<sup>6</sup> the resultant text is more than just a reproduction of Amos' speeches. The insertion of the narrative clearly shows that the compilers of the book were interested in more than simply preserving the prophet's utterances for later generations of readers. Their concern rather was to 'present' them in a certain way, to 'capture' as it were Amos' debate with his audience. Mostly throughout the book, the audience's contribution to this debate is implied, as we shall see in our discussion of the rhetorical strategy below. In 7:10-17, however, we have a case where the reaction by one (important) member of the audience is reported, the effect of which we shall also discuss below.

Consideration of the dispute between Gitay and Dempster about the nature of Amos 3 will provide further illustration of why I believe an approach such as Shaw's to be impracticable in the case of Amos. In 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech', Gitay argued that Amos 3 should be seen as one rhetorical unit. He insisted that 'if we isolate the separate units of the pericope, it is clear that these units in themselves do not constitute complete statements.'<sup>7</sup> However, Dempster rightly contended that 'although Gitay presents a strong case, the text bears the signs of being carefully edited collections of different oracles.'<sup>8</sup> To combine their insights, it would appear that Amos is more likely to have made 'speeches' rather than to have uttered merely small poetic oracles as Gunkel and his followers believed. However, it would also seem that the book does not preserve these 'speeches'<sup>9</sup> but that it contains a mixture of edited collections of oracles (taken perhaps from different speeches) as well as abstracts or summaries of pro-

<sup>4</sup> Cf. ch. 4 for a discussion of these oracles. In that context we will also touch upon the question of whether they include secondary material.

<sup>5</sup> For particularly illuminating analyses of its function in the present literary context cf. ESLINGER, 'Education of Amos'; and FREEDMAN, 'Confrontations in the Book of Amos'.

<sup>6</sup> This seems rather unlikely to me, however, as we have here a number of shifts in scene. In 7:1-9 we witness Amos relating his visions before being informed in vv. 10-11 about Amaziah's dispatch to the king. When the priest finally commands the prophet to leave the country (vv. 12f.), it is apparently presupposed that the king had agreed with his official that 'the land cannot bear Amos' words'. It is difficult to imagine that all this happened between the reciting of the third and fourth vision.

<sup>7</sup> GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 294; cf. LUBSCZYK, *Auszug Israels aus Ägypten*, 42-48, who speaks of a 'kerygmatische Einheit'.

<sup>8</sup> DEMPSTER, 'The Lord is His Name': 179.

<sup>9</sup> *Contra* Gitay.



phetic discourses.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, we focus on the rhetorical situation of the book as a whole rather than the elusive rhetorical situations of the individual discourses.

It should also be noted in this context that some scholars have thought the book of Amos to comprise a single speech delivered by the prophet on a single occasion. Thus, according to Rosenbaum the book comprises one 'twenty-minute harangue' after which the prophet had to leave the country.<sup>11</sup> Noting that the whole book 'could be spoken, aloud, in less than twenty minutes', Rosenbaum thinks of it as 'a piece that was delivered in a fit of passion',<sup>12</sup> as 'the brief outpouring of one man's soul'.<sup>13</sup> A similar proposal had been made earlier by Morgenstern who even attempted to date Amos' prophecy to a specific day, i.e. New Year's Day 751 BCE.<sup>14</sup> Such an approach is unconvincing, however, because many of the literary features of the book are unlikely to have their origin in 'a fit of passion'. The frequent heptads, for instance, the existence of which Rosenbaum acknowledges,<sup>15</sup> reflect a more sophisticated process of formation. Furthermore, what we have said on the Amaziah-narrative also precludes an interpretation along the lines suggested by Rosenbaum and Morgenstern.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.1.2 *The Date of the Book of Amos*

Before we move on to outline the rhetorical situation of the book, some remarks on its date of compilation are required as this has major repercussions for our delineation of the rhetorical situation. Many redaction critics believe the book in its final form to be a product of (late) post-exilic times. According to this view, the book comprises a number of redactional layers attesting to successive adaptations and updates of the prophetic message. These adaptations, it is suggested, relate Amos' prophecies to the times of the respective redactors and reflect their specific theological concerns.

In recent years, however, an increasing number of scholars have begun to express their dissatisfaction with the genetic theories propounded by redaction critics. Although these scholars do not necessarily doubt the legitimacy of redaction criticism as such, many feel that its adherents have played their hand far too confidently and have come up with questionable results. Questions were raised, therefore, as to whether it is at all possible to engage in such minute reconstruction of the formation of the book as is often attempted.<sup>17</sup> Doubting this, many

<sup>10</sup> Thus already LEWIS, *Persuasive Style and Appeals of the Minor Prophets Amos, Hosea, and Micah*.

<sup>11</sup> ROSENBAUM, *Amos of Israel*, 100.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>14</sup> MORGENSTERN, 'Amos Studies II'. Unlike Rosenbaum, however, Morgenstern arrived at this single sermon only by means of extensive deletions and rearrangements (cf. his *Amos Studies*).

<sup>15</sup> ROSENBAUM, *Amos of Israel*, 76f.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. n. 6 above.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 375; and BRIGHT, 'New View of Amos': 357, who rightly asks whether 'in so small a book as Amos ... we have a broad enough field of evidence to entitle us to say that this stylistic trait, this line of thought, this formal characteristic, could not have been employed by the prophet, but must be assigned to some later stratum of the tradition'. Bright's remark, it should be remembered, was made as early as 1971 in a review of Wolff's commentary, which was to become so influential in later years. WOLFF, 129-138 (followed to a large extent by MAYS, 12-14; SOGGIN, 17f.; and VERMEYLEN, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique*, 519-569) distinguished six textual layers, COOTE, *Amos among the Prophets* (followed by DOORLY, *Prophet of Justice*) three, and JOZAKI, 'The Secondary Passages of the Book of Amos', eight. He was outdone recently by ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs*, 285-290, who discovered twelve strata thus providing a striking example of what Sternberg has called

would now regard the theories that have been advanced as too speculative to be of immediate interpretive value.<sup>18</sup> Hence, some have abandoned the diachronic pursuit altogether favouring synchronic approaches instead. Others have subjected the redaction-critical arguments to a penetrating examination and found them wanting. Thus, Paul, for instance, concludes that ‘almost all of the arguments for later interpolations and redactions, including a Deuteronomistic one, are shown to be based on fragile foundations and inconclusive evidence.’<sup>19</sup> According to him, therefore, ‘the book in its entirety (with one or two minor exceptions) can be reclaimed for its rightful author, the prophet Amos’.<sup>20</sup> While this to me seems to be an overstatement (the book anyway nowhere claims to be written by Amos), I follow those who believe that it was finished not too long after the end of Amos’ ministry.<sup>21</sup>

Referring to Sternberg’s thoughtful comments on the mutually corrective relationship of source and discourse, I argued for the need of a fresh analysis of the discourse, which can then serve as the starting point for renewed diachronic inquiry.<sup>22</sup> This claim receives further support if Paul and other recent commentators are right in their evaluation of the ‘traditional’ redaction-critical proposals. However, it needs to be pointed out that the stress placed on the synchronic dimension does not render our approach ahistorical. In fact, a rhetorical-critical approach as advocated in the present study cannot ignore the synchronic dimension because of its intrinsic interest in the rhetorical situation. The latter, as we have seen above, is determined by the historical setting of the discourse and therefore requires consideration of the synchronic dimension.<sup>23</sup> However, because of our expressed dissatisfaction with the redaction-critical explanations of the formation of the book prevalent today, we propose to reconsider the discourse, setting aside the redaction-critical results for the time being. It is important, we believe, to rethink what interests the book in its entirety may best be seen to be serving, to use once more Mason’s words.<sup>24</sup> This, after all, is what characterises a rhetorical-critical approach in the first place.

Readers are asked, therefore, to judge whether the reading suggested here is a cogent one. This involves, first of all, asking whether it is coherent, i.e. whether it deals adequately with the

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an ‘incredible abuse ... of frenzied digging into the Bible’s genesis, so senseless as to elicit either laughter or tears’ (STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 13).

<sup>18</sup> There is a clear tendency in recent works to concentrate on what Landy has called the ‘aesthetic wholeness of the text’ rather than its ‘hypothetical evolution’ (LANDY, ‘Vision and Poetic Speech in Amos’: 223). Cf. e.g. the commentaries by ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, G. V. SMITH, FINLEY, PAUL, BOVATI/MEYNET, GOWAN, ACHTEMEIER, and BIRCH as well as most of the structural investigations mentioned in ch. 2.

<sup>19</sup> PAUL, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Thus most of the commentaries listed in n. 18 above. Recently SWEENEY, ‘Formation and Form in the Prophetic Literature’, 124f., contended that the latest additions (with the possible exception of the Judah oracle in 2:4-5) had been added by the time of King Josiah of Judah (639-609 BCE). This period he regards as the most probable rhetorical setting; and he suggests that the object of the book of Amos is to support Josiah’s religious reforms. On the question of whether there was a cultic reform initiated by Josiah cf. recently NIEHR, ‘Reform des Joschija’ (‘no, there wasn’t’) and UEHLINGER, ‘Gab es eine joschijanische Kultreform?’ (‘yes, there was’). Sweeney’s proposal is interesting because it regards the entire book as pre-exilic.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. ch. 1.1.

<sup>23</sup> Thus, hypothetical historical reconstruction cannot be avoided. Responding to the increased interest in the function of the Psalter as a whole and the role of individual Psalms in their present literary setting, Murphy stressed that this shift in interest does not result in a more ‘objective’ approach. According to him, ‘hypothetical historical reconstruction is as inescapable in contextual interpretation as it is in the usual historical criticism that is applied to the Psalter’ (‘Reflections on Contextual Interpretation of the Psalms’: 21).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. MASON, *Propaganda and Subversion in the Old Testament*, 26 (see our discussion on p. 12 above).



textual data in its entirety. Secondly, for our reading to be persuasive it also needs to fit the suggested rhetorical situation, i.e. it needs to be historically credible. Provided it fulfils these two requirements, the question can then be asked whether the often rather complicated evolutionary theories of the formation of the book are still necessary or indeed likely.<sup>25</sup>

However, before we proceed to sketch the rhetorical situation, a few comments on some key passages that are often considered late additions seem pertinent. Recently, Jeremias, arguably the major German Amos scholar of our time, reaffirmed the view that the book underwent a number of redactional adaptations and revisions spanning several centuries.<sup>26</sup> He asserted, 'die einschneidende Veränderung erfuhr das ältere Amosbuch nach dem Fall Jerusalems im 6. Jh. v. Chr.'<sup>27</sup> Three factors are crucial for Jeremias' reconstruction of this later period of the text's history. Following standard redaction-critical practice, Jeremias detects deuteronomistic additions,<sup>28</sup> augmentations characterised by a 'hymnic diction',<sup>29</sup> and a post-exilic discussion of how Amos' uncompromising message can be related to the old traditions of salvation (Amos 9:7-10). The latter is followed by the even later salvation oracle promising a new Davidic kingdom (9:11-15).<sup>30</sup> Thus, the book of Amos, according to this view, received its present shape in the late post-exilic era. This period is often 'understood as being the formative epoch to which the Old Testament owes its present configuration, not merely formally but in its theological shaping too.'<sup>31</sup>

Fundamental for the proposal of a deuteronomistic redaction in Amos was Schmidt's influential article, 'Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches'. Schmidt's arguments met with wide-ranging acceptance; most of his findings were incorporated into Wolff's important commentary, for instance.<sup>32</sup> This, more than anything else, almost institutionalised them. Now their days seem to be numbered though. Recently, they were attacked, for instance, by Lohfink who passionately disapproves of what he calls 'pan-deuteronomistic tendencies' in Old Testament circles.<sup>33</sup> Investigating Schmidt's arguments concerning the 'Herausführungsformel' in Amos 2:10, the 'Überleitungsformel' in 3:1 and the Judah oracle in 2:4-5, Lohfink found none of them convincing.<sup>34</sup> Especially Lohfink's refutation of the deuteronomistic redaction of Amos 2:4-5 is of crucial importance<sup>35</sup> because, as he correctly notes,

der Stein, der aus dem Beweisgebäude für die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuchs auf keinen Fall herausgezogen werden dürfte, ohne daß alles zusammenstürzt, ist das Juda-Orakel. [...]

<sup>25</sup> Cf. JEREMIAS, XIX: 'Allerdings läßt sich die ... Botschaft des Amos nur auf dem Wege komplizierter und vielfach nur hypothetischer Rekonstruktion gewinnen.'

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., XIX-XXII.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., XXI.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. These are 1:9-12; 2:4-5, 7b, 9, 10-12; 3:1b, 7, 13-14; 5:6, 25, 26; 8:11-14. For the dtr. redaction of Amos cf. esp. SCHMIDT, 'Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches'.

<sup>29</sup> These hymnic pieces are 1:2; 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6. According to Jeremias, they originated in the exilic 'Bußgottesdienste' (JEREMIAS, XXI-XXII).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., XXII.

<sup>31</sup> RENDTORFF, 'The Importance of the Canon for a Theology of the Old Testament': 52-53.

<sup>32</sup> WOLFF, 137f. and passim.

<sup>33</sup> LOHFINK, 'Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?': 316f.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.: 325-333.

<sup>35</sup> For further details cf. my discussion of the passage in ch. 4.2.2 (see esp. n. 183 on p. 120). Lohfink's discussion of Amos 2:4-5 was taken up by Bons who confirmed his teacher's findings (cf. BONS, 'Denotat von כזב־יהוה').



Nur wenn in Amos 1-2 wirklich deuteronomistische Texteschübe vorliegen, kann man ... überhaupt an eine deuteronomistische Gesamtedaktion des Amosbuches denken.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, Rottzoll noted that the language of Amos 2:4-5 does not support the claim for it being of deuteronomistic origin.<sup>37</sup> However, this, according to Rottzoll, does not mean that the book of Amos did not undergo a deuteronomistic redaction. In fact, in his view there were two. First, an initial deuteronomistic revision took place during the exile, which was followed by a 'priestly-deuteronomistic redaction' in the middle of the 5th century.<sup>38</sup> Recognition of the problems pertaining to the 'traditional' position advanced by Schmidt thus leads Rottzoll to introduce conjectures that are ever more complicated. This, in our view is highly unsatisfactory. In addition, even if we were inclined to adopt this kind of approach, it is doubtful whether Rottzoll's model is sophisticated enough to account for all the data. In Amos 2:4-5, for instance, Rottzoll traces elements that, instead of being deuteronomistic, are found regularly in the prophetic and poetic literature. Furthermore, others, according to his analysis, are characteristic for the Chronicler's history, are 'post-deuteronomistic' or '(proto-) chronistic', or indeed feature in the Code of Holiness and the book of Ezekiel.<sup>39</sup>

These recent studies occasion us to conclude that, as far as the book of Amos is concerned, the evidence for a deuteronomistic redaction is rather meagre to say the least.<sup>40</sup> However, instead of reverting to increasingly complex evolutionary theories, we would suggest reconsidering what interests the passages previously considered deuteronomistic are in fact serving. Readers are invited, therefore, to judge for themselves how well (or how badly) we succeed in explaining the respective passages against their literary context *and* suggested historical context (rhetorical situation).

This then takes us to the hymnic material in Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6, passages that are characterised by their distinct vocabulary and theology.<sup>41</sup> Two principal views have been put forward concerning their date. They are regarded either as (post-) exilic editorial additions<sup>42</sup> or as early hymnic material that has been reworked and incorporated into the book by Amos or the earliest tradents of the book.<sup>43</sup> Jeremias, an advocate of the former view, thinks of the hymn fragments as major adaptations of Amos' message. In an article, entitled 'Das Proprium der alttestamentlichen Prophetie', he comments on the function of such adaptations as follows:

<sup>36</sup> LOHFINK, 'Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?': 329.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuches*, 23ff.

<sup>38</sup> For a summary of his findings see *ibid.*, 287-289. The first deuteronomistic redaction (responsible for 1:1b $\beta$  $\gamma$ ; 2:10f., 12b; 3:1b [except לֵאמֹר]; 5:25f.) is the fifth in Rottzoll's twelve layer scheme whereas the priestly-deuteronomistic redaction (2:4f., 7b $\beta$ , 8a $\beta$ , b $\beta$ ; 3:7; 7:9[16f.]) represents the seventh layer. The latter, according to Rottzoll, is characterised by a 'gewisse Nähe zur Sprache des Deuteronomisten' but features also 'für Deuteronomisten untypisches, dafür aber im priesterlichen Bereich ... beheimatetes Vokabular.'

<sup>39</sup> ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuches*, 23-27. His analysis of the similarities between the deuteronomistic history, the Code of Holiness, the book of Ezekiel and their significance for the redaction of Amos (cf. *ibid.*, 27-30) therefore does not, in our view, successfully deal with all the linguistic data in Amos 2:4-5.

<sup>40</sup> For further discussion cf. our exegesis of Amos 2:4-5, 9-12; 3:7 in chs. 4 and 5 and the literature cited there.

<sup>41</sup> Sometimes Amos 1:2 is included among these as, for instance, by KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte'; and JEREMIAS, XXII.

<sup>42</sup> Thus HORST, 'Doxologien im Amosbuch'; VON RAD, 'Gerichtsdoxologie'; CRENSHAW, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*; BERG, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente im Amosbuch*, 319; WOLFF, *passim*; JEREMIAS, XXIf.; *idem*, 'Amos 3-6: Beobachtungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte eines Prophetenbuches', to name but a few.

<sup>43</sup> Thus, for instance, WATTS, 'An Old Hymn Preserved in the Book of Amos'; *idem*, *Vision and Prophecy in Amos*, 9-27; MAYS, 84; HAMMERSHAIMB, 133; RUDOLPH, 181-183; STUART, 286; HAYES, 150; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, *passim*. MCCOMISKEY, 'The Hymnic Elements of the Prophecy of Amos', thinks they were penned by Amos himself.

Die Ursprungssituation des mündlichen Wortes erhält durch die Schriftlichkeit Modellcharakter und vermittelt grundsätzliche Erkenntnisse über Gottes Handeln an Israel, die auf neue geschichtliche Stunden übertragbar sind. Dazu muß das Prophetenwort allerdings in eine neue Zeit hinein 'übersetzt' werden; es muß für neue Umstände aktualisiert werden, muß an neue geschichtliche Lagen adaptiert werden.<sup>44</sup>

As regards the hymnic material in Amos, Jeremias and others argued that these passages are best understood as what has been called 'doxologies of judgement'.<sup>45</sup> According to this conception, their *Sitz im Leben* is the liturgical setting of the exilic 'Bußgottesdienste' in which they served as doxologies acknowledging that Yahweh's judgement of his people was justified. Horst comments:

Das Volk hatte aus dem Munde des Propheten seine in der Vergangenheit liegenden Sünden vernommen ... [D]as ... Strafurteil Gottes ... galt es nun anzuerkennen. Dazu hatte es seine Doxologie auf die Macht der Gottheit zu sprechen. Gleichzeitig wurde damit zum Ausdruck gebracht, daß dies Prozeßverfahren der Gottheit als erledigt zu betrachten ist: *die rückschauende Gemeinde bejahte damit die Gültigkeit der Exilkatastrophe als Erweis der strafenden Richtermacht Gottes.* [...] Die Doxologien im Amosbuch geben also den düsteren Drohungen des Propheten einen lichtvollen Ausgang.<sup>46</sup>

This interpretation I find rather unconvincing. Although it is certainly possible to imagine a setting like the one proposed by Horst and others, I find no indications in the book that would prompt us to do so. What evidence is there to suggest that certain parts of the book should be read as liturgical responses to the prophetic message of judgement? If this is how the redactors intended these passages to be read, then it has to be said that they did not do a very good job. First, as they now stand, the hymn fragments are clearly presented as Amos' own words. Secondly, Jeremias' claim, 'sie preisen Gottes Schöpfermacht, um mit Hilfe der Amosworte zur neuen Hinwendung zu ihm ... zu locken',<sup>47</sup> is not supported by the textual evidence. It might perhaps just be possible to read 4:13 in this way;<sup>48</sup> in the case of 5:8-9 and 9:5-6, however, that is simply not a viable option.

Jeremias' comments on 5:8-9 are particularly instructive in this context. Noting the verbal similarities in vv. 7-8 (Israel turns [הפך] justice to wormwood; Yahweh turns [הפך] darkness into the morning), he rightly stresses that these similarities carry an ominous connotation in the judgemental context in which they are found. 'Jahwe, der so souverän über Tag und Nacht verfügt, kann Israels Geschick im Nu "umstürzen".'<sup>49</sup> However, since the positive statement *וַיִּזְכֹּר לְיָהוָה לְבַקֵּר צְלָמוֹת* precedes the words *וַיִּזְכֹּר לְיָהוָה לְבַקֵּר צְלָמוֹת*, Jeremias claims, 'der Text will ... primär Verzweifelte ... ermuntern zu neuem "Suchen Jahwes" ... und erst in zweiter Linie mit dem Untergang drohen'.<sup>50</sup> This interpretation is unlikely given the subsequent lines; it is preferable to understand v. 8aß as simply describing the power of Yahweh, which manifests itself

<sup>44</sup> JEREMIAS, 'Das Proprium der alttestamentlichen Prophetie': 31.

<sup>45</sup> The first to advance this view was HORST, 'Doxologien im Amosbuch'.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.: 53f. (my italics).

<sup>47</sup> JEREMIAS, XXII.

<sup>48</sup> Cf., however, our interpretation of Amos 4:13 in ch. 6.4.

<sup>49</sup> JEREMIAS, 68. Of all the hymns, this one apparently disrupts most. However, Amos 5:1-17 is now recognised by many to be arranged chiasmically (cf. the works listed in n. 80 on p. 42 above), with the hymn being at the centre of the chiasm. Its placement therefore is not accidental, and, as Jeremias rightly notes, it effectively contrasts Israel's acts with those of Yahweh.

<sup>50</sup> JEREMIAS, 68.



in his authority over day and night. Likewise, the preceding line, 'the one who made the Pleiades and Orion' (8α), highlights the deity's cosmic might. The rest of the hymn then stresses the destructive potential of Yahweh's power (vv. 8b-9), which therefore is its predominant theme.

In an attempt to defend his doxological interpretation, Jeremias suggests that a later redactor added v. 9 in order to stress Yahweh's destructive power.<sup>51</sup> That is to say, at first, the text did not contain any part of the hymn, but only Amos' message of judgement. Then somebody inserted the 'nice bit', i.e. the praise of the creator (8α), in order to encourage the desperate exiles and to help them come to terms with their past. This, in turn, occasioned another redactor, apparently thinking the text was now too reassuring, to tighten things up again, which he did by inserting another gloomy bit (v. 9). Thus, inventive though Jeremias' interpretation is, it is not really convincing.<sup>52</sup> Not only does it envisage a rather complex and highly conjectural redactional scenario; it also generates more difficulties than it solves.

*Contra* those who advocate a doxological interpretation, I want to emphasise that Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; and 9:5-6 are best understood as lending special force to Amos' message of judgement stressing, as they do, the destructive power of Yahweh.<sup>53</sup> The first hymn fragment, following the ominous announcement that Israel is to meet her God, is the most ambiguous one in that in 4:13 the judgemental notion is not yet as clear as in the subsequent passages. Yet, even here, the second line, עֲשֵׂה שְׁחַר עֵיפָה וְדַרְךְ עַל-בְּמֹתַי אָרֶץ, does not sound too comforting. The implications of judgement are much more obvious, however, in 5:8-9 and 9:5-6, with their allusions to the Flood and their explicit talk of destruction and mourning. The tone of the hymn fragments thus gets ever more threatening as we move from one to the other. A comparison of Amos 5:8-9 and 9:5-6 confirms this. Both contain allusions to the Flood, the expression יְהוָה שָׁמַיָּם, and phrases depicting Yahweh's power as creator and majestic ruler in the heavens (5:8a; 9:6a). At the same time, however, Amos 9:5-6 goes well beyond the second hymn as far as the scope of the divine judgement is concerned. Whereas Amos 5:8-9 speaks of Yahweh's destruction coming upon the עַז and the מִבְּצָר, apparently denoting 'the military machine',<sup>54</sup> Amos 9:5-6 envisages a divine intervention on a more cosmic scale causing כָּל-יְשׁוּבֵי הָאָרֶץ to mourn. This observation fits in well with our conception of the book as presenting a debate between the prophet Amos and his audience. In his struggle to convince the people that divine judgement will befall them, Amos is presented as having employed increasingly drastic images of the deity and his actions.

To sum up, Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; and 9:5-6 do stand out when compared to the rest of the book because of their hymnic diction. However, these passages do not function as doxologies praising the creator. On the contrary, they affirm and indeed exacerbate Amos' message of

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Jeremias' proposal is not helped by v. 8b (obviously an allusion to the Flood), which indicates, as he freely admits, that already the older hymn stressed Yahweh's destructive power (cf. JEREMIAS, 68).

<sup>53</sup> THOMPSON, 'The "Response" in Biblical and Non-Biblical Literature', comparing these hymns to the chorus in Greek tragedy and the chorus responses in Händel's *Messiah*, understands them as antiphonal responses. That is to say, the prophet, having perceived Yahweh's words, reacts to them by contributing a hymnic response or credal affirmation. This is not entirely wrong but as Amos is talking to the Israelites and not to Yahweh, it would perhaps be better to say that he simply backs up God's words by stressing the deity's mighty power.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 231.



judgement. It is therefore preferable, in our opinion, to view them as fragments of an ancient hymn employed by the prophet as a means of driving home his point.<sup>55</sup> This, it should be noted, is completely in line with Amos' general practice of quoting religious traditions and beliefs only to subvert them.

Finally, before moving on to outline the rhetorical situation of the book, we need to consider briefly the epilogue in Amos 9. Ever since Wellhausen's famous comment describing the passage as 'Rosen und Lavendel statt Blut und Eisen',<sup>56</sup> Amos 9:11-15 has been regarded by many not only as a later addition to but as a distortion of Amos' message. Smend, for instance, even speaks of a 'Verrat an Amos'.<sup>57</sup> Kraus is therefore correct to say that the suggested deletion of the salvation oracle is primarily an 'ideenkritische Maßnahme'.<sup>58</sup> Both, Wellhausen's and Smend's, comments on the passage illustrate this quite clearly. The former thinks Amos 'kann ... nicht auf einmal sagen, es sei nicht so schlimm gemeint, es werde noch alles wunderschön werden',<sup>59</sup> and the latter, as we have already seen, speaks of treason. Thus, according to Nägele, the decisive question is 'ob aus dem Munde des Amos Heilsworte überhaupt denkbar sind.'<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Hayes urges us to ask 'whether or not the optimistic material is consistent with the remainder of the prophet's preaching and reflects the rhetorical and historical horizons of the total proclamation'<sup>61</sup> thus directing our attention towards the key issues.

In an article entitled, 'Rehabilitation eines Propheten', I have already argued that there is no contradiction between the epilogue and the rest of the book. Nor does the salvation oracle in 9:11-15 soften or even jeopardise the prophet's message of judgement. Indeed, as I pointed out, the claim for the epilogue to be inconsistent with the rest of the book reflects a strikingly literalistic (and thus inappropriate) approach to the prophetic text.<sup>62</sup> That is to say, before we can

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of the linguistic evidence countering the claim that the language requires a late date cf. the works listed in n. 43 above.

<sup>56</sup> WELLHAUSEN, 96.

<sup>57</sup> SMEND, 'Das Nein des Amos': 423, who refers not only to Amos 9:11-15 but to all the passages that attempt to build bridges where Amos could see only a cleft ('Brücken zu schlagen da, wo Amos ... nur die Kluft sah'; Smend here quotes WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 324).

<sup>58</sup> KRAUS, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 282. To be sure, the passage has been assigned a late date also because of historical and linguistic reasons. These cannot be discussed in the present context, but for an extensive review of the linguistic evidence cf. PAUL, 282-295; on the historical data see HAYES, 218-228. Some claim that there is a scholarly consensus that regards Amos 9:11-15 as secondary (cf. ZENGER, 'Zwölfprophetenbuch': 392; COLLINS, *Mantle of Elijah*, 70). This, however, obscures the fact that there has always been a great number of dissidents including, for instance, VON ORELLI, 60; MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 246ff.; ROHLAND, *Bedeutung der Erwählungstraditionen Israels*, 230ff.; BOTTERWECK, 'Zur Authentizität des Buches Amos': 188f.; WATTS, *Vision and Prophecy in Amos*, 6f., 83; HAMMERSHAIMB, ad loc.; VON RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2:144f.; REVENTLOW, *Amt des Propheten bei Amos*, 92; FEY, *Amos und Jesaja*, 54-56; MAUCLINE, 'Implicit Signs of Persistent Belief'; WAGNER, 'Überlegungen zur Frage nach den Beziehungen des Propheten Amos zum Südreich': 661-663 (who claims [cf. 661, 669 n. 18] that Alt advocated the same view in his lectures given 1950/1951 in Leipzig); RICHARDSON, 'skt (Amos 9:11)'; RUDOLPH, 278ff. (esp. 285f.); HASEL, *Remnant*, 209-215; DAVIES, 'Amos'; POLLEY, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 70-74, 173-175; STUART, 397; HAYES, 220ff.; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, ad loc.; G. V. SMITH, 277-280; PAUL, 288ff.; ROSENBAUM, *Amos of Israel*, 73-75. In addition to these, HASEL, 'The Alleged "No" of Amos': 15f., lists many more (cf. also idem, *Remnant*, 207-208 n. 300). RUDOLPH, 285, provides a fair assessment of the debate when he notes, 'der Streit um die Echtheit des Amoschlusses wogt schon ein gutes Jahrhundert hin und her. In der Wellhausenschen Ära war die Unechtklärung Trumpf, und die Andersdenkenden wurden vielfach als rückständig bemitleidet. [...] Das hat sich seither geändert, man wird sagen können, daß sich das Für und Wider heute annähernd die Waage hält.' Cf. p. 93 for further comments on the passage.

<sup>59</sup> WELLHAUSEN, 96.

<sup>60</sup> NÄGELE, *Laubhütte Davids und Wolkensohn*, 172.

<sup>61</sup> HAYES, 220.

<sup>62</sup> MÖLLER, 'Rehabilitation eines Propheten'. Readers are referred to that article for a full discussion of what Hayes called the 'rhetorical horizon'. On the 'historical horizon' see esp. the commentaries by Rudolph and Hayes ad loc.

decide whether certain statements are at odds with others, it is important to consider their *function*. Employing insights advanced by speech act theorists as well as concepts provided by rhetorical criticism, I re-examined Amos' message and then reviewed the rhetorical function of Amos 9:7-15 in the light of my findings.<sup>63</sup> This, as already said, led me to conclude that the epilogue not only is a suitable ending to the book but that it also 'reflects the rhetorical horizon of Amos' total proclamation', to use Hayes' terminology. It is not possible, in this context, to repeat the entire argument, but a brief recapitulation of the main results can be found in ch. 3.2.3 below.

I want to end this section by restating my conviction that the book of Amos in its final form is not a product of the post-exilic era. To repeat, I am not attempting to establish Amosian authorship, nor is it for apologetic reasons that I advocate an early date. With many recent exegetes, I simply believe that not only can the book be read against an eighth-century background but that doing so actually minimises the problems of interpretation. This, I believe, is most certainly the case as far as the hymnic sections are concerned. However, the primary concern of the present study is to review the 'discourse', in the light of which the questions pertaining to the 'source' can then be re-addressed. The latter is not possible within the confines of this study, whereas to the former we now turn in the subsequent outline of the rhetorical situation and rhetorical strategy of the book.

### 3.1.3 *The Rhetorical Situation and the Problem Addressed*

According to 7:12-13, Amos was told by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, to leave the country and prophesy in Judah instead. Shortly after his ministry, the judgement message he preached found its grim fulfilment in the catastrophe of 722 BCE, which caused the northern kingdom of Israel to cease to exist. The words of Amos, however, lived on as they were preserved by tradents living south of the border. The first parameter that defines the rhetorical situation of the book therefore is its Judean (and possibly Jerusalemite)<sup>64</sup> setting. The second parameter, as we have just argued, is its relatively early date sometime after the end of Amos' ministry but certainly before 587 BCE. Although I tend towards an early rather than a late date within that period, I simply want to stress the pre-exilic setting of the book.

The entire period 722-587 BCE was one characterised by prophetic ministry.<sup>65</sup> Hosea, Isaiah and Micah all warned the people of Judah of the impending divine judgement. This period, I would suggest, is the perfect rhetorical setting for the book of Amos in its final form. Ben Zvi, in his investigation of Obadiah, devised the term 'past-fulfilment perspective',<sup>66</sup> which is a useful concept to apply here as it helps us see precisely how the book of Amos functioned within that setting. In a time when prophets were struggling to convince the Judeans that Yahweh will judge them if they do not alter their conduct, the book of Amos fits in well as

<sup>63</sup> MÖLLER, 'Rehabilitation eines Propheten': 46-52.

<sup>64</sup> Thus according to SWEENEY, 'Formation and Form in the Prophetic Literature': 122-123, who reaches this conclusion because of Amos 1:2 with its emphasis that Yahweh roars from Zion. Cf. STUART, 288, who states that 'it was in Judah that the book was probably preserved as well as read most, after the fall of Samaria in 722.'

<sup>65</sup> On this period cf. esp. KOCH, *Prophets*, Vol. 1; and BLENKINSOPP, *History of Prophecy in Israel*, ch. III.

<sup>66</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 39.



it addresses that 'rhetorical problem' by presenting a precedent.<sup>67</sup> The book shows Amos struggling and failing in his struggle to convince the Israelites that judgement will befall them. The presentation of that struggle is a powerful rhetorical device especially when we take into account the past-fulfilment perspective. That is to say, the people of Judah knew that Amos had been proved right by history; the Israelites had indeed been taken into exile as he had threatened, and the northern kingdom had come to an end. It should be noted, finally, that the rhetorical impact must have been all the more powerful given Amos' allusions to Judah. Knowing that the prophet had been right in what he said concerning the fate of their former northern neighbours must have made the Judeans feel rather uneasy when confronted with an oracle like 2:4-5.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.2 *The Rhetorical Strategy*

Having looked at the rhetorical units of the book, its rhetorical situation and the specific problem addressed, we now move on to examine its overall rhetorical strategy. That is to say, we are interested in the means by which the audience is induced to agree with the speaker or writer or, as in our case, those responsible for the final edition of the book of Amos. As noted in the introduction, an investigation of the rhetorical strategy needs to deal with the aspects of invention (*inventio*), structure (*dispositio*) and style (*elocutio*). At this point, however, we are going to focus on the general suasive means and are going to concentrate therefore on *inventio* and *dispositio*. The discussion of stylistic features we reserve for the examination of the rhetoric of Amos 1-4 presented in subsequent chapters.

#### 3.2.1 *Introductory Observations*

As expressed earlier, we are concerned primarily with the rhetorical strategy of the *book*, not the one employed by the prophet Amos in his public appearances. Thus, we seek to explain to what effects and purposes Amos' oracles have been collected and arranged in the way we now have them. It should be noted, however, that in presenting the prophet's oracles, the book to a certain extent also reveals Amos' own rhetorical strategy. This is, of course, to be expected in a book that 'captures' the debate between the prophet and his audience. That is to say, by reproducing Amos' words – his sharp and often ironic indictments, his unsettling rhetorical questions, etc. –, the book offers us a glimpse into the prophet's ministry. Even more important for our concerns, however, is the fact that the presentation of Amos' rhetorical strategy is actually part of that of the book. More than that, this presentation is, as we shall seek to demonstrate, the primary suasive means by which the compilers of the book attempted to affect their readership.

In recent years, the subjectivity of the interpreter has come into sharper focus as being an integral part of the interpretive process. If this is true in general, it needs to be taken into ac-

<sup>67</sup> In this sense Amos was a 'Vorläufer' (precursor) of the Deuteronomists as KRAUSE, 'Der Gerichtsprphet Amos, ein Vorläufer des Deuteronomisten': 239, suggested a long time ago. See also 2 Kgs 17:7-41 (esp. vv. 13-14).

<sup>68</sup> On the authorship of the Judah oracle cf. pp. 71f. and n. 183 on p. 120.



count in this context in particular since the sketching of the overall rhetorical strategy clearly involves subjective impressions. Already Kennedy emphasised that ‘criticism ... *can be* a creative act’.<sup>69</sup> He was criticised, however, precisely for this ‘can be’ by the Bible and Culture Collective whose members objected to his ‘missing ... awareness that the power of the text includes the reader as part of the text.’<sup>70</sup> Still, it is important to stress that although the power of the text *includes* the contribution of the reader, the latter is only *one* factor in the interpretive process. Thus, as Eco emphasised, a distinction can and should be made between a reader’s *use* of a text, on the one hand, and his or her *interpretation*, on the other.<sup>71</sup> In addition, although even then the number of possible interpretations is infinite, it does not follow that all of them are equally convincing or appropriate. Eco is therefore right to point out that the text itself functions as the parameter of its own interpretations. He elaborates,

die Initiative des Lesers besteht im Aufstellen einer Vermutung über die *intentio operis*. Diese Vermutung muß vom Komplex des Textes als einem organischen Ganzen bestätigt werden. Das heißt nicht, daß man zu einem Text nur eine einzige Vermutung aufstellen kann. Im Prinzip gibt es unendlich viele. Zuletzt aber müssen diese Vermutungen sich an der Kongruenz des Textes bewähren, und die Textkongruenz wird zwangsläufig bestimmte voreilige Vermutungen als falsch erweisen.<sup>72</sup>

In the above discussion of the rhetorical situation, I argued that many redaction-critical interpretations of the text’s function are unconvincing. In particular, I criticised the view that the hymnic sections in Amos function as ‘doxologies of judgement’. This, I would contend, is not supported by ‘the complex of the text as an organic whole’, to use Eco’s words. In what follows, I therefore propose a different reading for these and other sections, one that gives predominance to the *textual cotext* rather than a reconstructed *historical context*.<sup>73</sup> I shall first outline what I believe to be the principal rhetorical strategy before developing my proposal by offering a concise interpretation of the book of Amos in the light of that strategy.

### 3.2.2 Presenting a Prophet in Debate

In choosing the title ‘Presenting a Prophet in Debate’, I have already indicated what I believe to be the book’s primary rhetorical strategy. In reproducing the prophet’s oracles and arranging them in a certain way, the text presents Amos as leading a debate with his eighth-century audience. Reading the book consecutively, one gets the impression of a prophet struggling, and indeed failing, to persuade his addressees that they stand condemned in the eyes of Yahweh. Because of the people’s horrible social wrongdoings together with a misplaced complacency, Amos argues, the deity is no longer willing to tolerate their behaviour but is about to punish them severely. *This portrayal of the debating prophet is the primary suasive means employed by the redactors to achieve their own persuasive aims.* The book is thus best understood as an

<sup>69</sup> KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 38 (my italics).

<sup>70</sup> BIBLE AND CULTURE COLLECTIVE, *Postmodern Bible*, 163.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. ECO, *Lector in fabula*, 72ff.; idem, *Grenzen der Interpretation*, 47ff.; and see our discussion of this issue in the introduction.

<sup>72</sup> ECO, *Grenzen der Interpretation*, 49.

<sup>73</sup> In saying that, I do not intend to play off one against the other. Cf. ch. 1.1, pp. 3ff., for a discussion of their relationship.

attempt to persuade its hearers/readers to learn from the failure of the prophet's audience to respond appropriately to his message. The recipients are induced therefore not to repeat the stubborn attitude and self-assured behaviour of Amos' original addressees. To achieve this rhetorical aim, those responsible for the book use the debate they present in the context of their own debate with their audience. This construal of the function of the book is similar to du Plessis' understanding of the parables, advanced on the basis of concepts drawn from speech act theory, according to which

the primary function of the parables in the narrative world of the gospels is to establish Jesus, as the narrator of the parables, in an authoritative position towards his addressees. ... *The gospels report the relationship between Jesus and his addressees in order that the recipients of the gospels may enter into the same dependent relationship with Jesus ...*<sup>74</sup>

The notion of a debating prophet is, of course, not a novelty. Form critics, for instance, have long recognised the existence of a prophetic speech form called 'disputation speech'. Graffy in his investigation of this speech form remarks that already 'Gunkel maintains that differences of opinion between the prophets and others are the key to understanding many ideas of the prophets, even when a dispute is not presented explicitly.'<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Wolff in his extensive article 'Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch' notes, '*es geht ... bei der prophetischen Zitation um Verkündigung im kontradiktorischen Sinne ...*';<sup>76</sup> and Begrich, investigating the disputation speeches in Deutero-Isaiah, interestingly regarded them 'as a *literary imitation* of the controversies experienced by the prophet.'<sup>77</sup> Even more interesting, however, is Begrich's observation that in the context of a discussion between a prophet and his hearers one often finds rhetorical questions and hymnic material. This was emphasised also by von Waldow as again Graffy notes. 'Like Begrich, von Waldow points out the frequent use of rhetorical questions to gain the people's assent ... Like Begrich, he notes the use of well-known hymnic material to ensure agreement.'<sup>78</sup> Like Begrich and von Waldow, I too believe that the hymnic sections are best understood in a confrontational rather than a doxological setting.

As already mentioned, the notion of a debating prophet is not a new one. Our claim, however, that the book of Amos captures, represents or imitates the debate between Amos and his original audience and utilises it as a rhetorical means of persuasion is different from traditional readings. What is more, it offers a new way ahead concerning the question as to how the various sections of the book of Amos work together. This is an area where there is still considerable disagreement among scholars as Sweeney notes.<sup>79</sup> Some are unable to detect any underlying principles for the arrangement of the book. According to Mays, 'there is no demonstrable scheme to the arrangement, historical, geographical, or thematic.'<sup>80</sup> In similar vein,

<sup>74</sup> DU PLESSIS, *Clarity and Obscurity*, 5 (my italics); the quote is from THISELTON, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 289.

<sup>75</sup> GRAFFY, *A Prophet Confronts His People*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> WOLFF, 'Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch': 94-95 (Wolff's italics); cf. also WOLFF, 119, 'auch die sicher von Amos selbst stammenden Disputationen wollen ausschließlich die Zustimmung der Hörer zur prophetischen Unheilsbotschaft bewirken'.

<sup>77</sup> This was noted by GRAFFY, *A Prophet Confronts His People*, 6, who refers to BEGRICH, *Studien zu Deuterjesaja*, 42-47 (the italics are mine).

<sup>78</sup> GRAFFY, *A Prophet Confronts His People*, 8; cf. VON WALDOW, *Anlaß und Hintergrund der Verkündigung des Deuterjesaja*, 28-36.

<sup>79</sup> SWEENEY, 'Formation and Form in the Prophetic Literature': 118.

<sup>80</sup> MAYS, 14.



Stuart maintains that ‘it is not possible to infer either a strictly chronological or a strictly thematic ordering for most of the oracles’.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, however, many recent redaction-critical studies have stressed that the prophetic books in general are to be understood as what Zenger calls ‘planvolle Kompositionen’.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Koch speaks of a ‘Redaktion, die weniger eine glossierende Überarbeitung darstellt als vielmehr eine bewußte Gliederung und Gestaltung des profetischen Erbes.’<sup>83</sup> This view has led to an increased interest in structural features, with chiasms and inclusios being especially popular.<sup>84</sup> Often, however, the investigation of structure becomes an end in itself, with the question of the function of the detected structures being neglected.

In fact, Mays and Stuart are right to maintain that the arrangement of Amos is not historical, geographical, thematic, or chronological. A better way ahead is Hayes’ conclusion that ‘the material in the book is best understood in terms of large rhetorical units rather than in terms of a multiplicity of small isolated units’.<sup>85</sup> This confirms our own observations made in the previous chapter. At this point, however, we suggest taking it one step further by proposing that these large rhetorical units are arranged in a way that results in what we have called a ‘presentation of a prophet in debate’.<sup>86</sup> The arrangement of the book is thus best described as being a rhetorical one, i.e. as being motivated by rhetorical interests.<sup>87</sup> It is important to note that the introductory phrases, which we found to be major structural markers, play a crucial role in this context. Not only do speech formulas like *שָׁמַעוּ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הַזֶּה* ‘present’ Amos as attempting to gain the attention of his eighth-century audience. They also directly address the hearers/readers of the book and thus perform an important rhetorical function on the book level as well.

Having emphasised the importance of the arrangement of the book and stressed that it results in the much referred-to debate, we now proceed to offer a succinct outline of the presentation of that debate as found in the book. Particular attention will be paid, in this context, to the seams of the book, i.e. to the way different oracles or collections of oracles have been joined together.

### 3.2.3 *The Debate as it Unfolds Throughout the Book*

The book opens with a superscription providing the historical framework in which the subsequent material is to be understood (1:1) followed by a motto that introduces the ominous tone of Amos’ stern message (1:2). The prophet is then portrayed as initiating what at first does not

<sup>81</sup> STUART, 287.

<sup>82</sup> ZENGER, ‘Eigenart und Bedeutung der Prophetie Israels’: 297.

<sup>83</sup> KOCH, ‘Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte’: 535.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. ch. 2.2.3 for a review of this trend.

<sup>85</sup> HAYES, 39.

<sup>86</sup> This comes close to Darr’s view that a ‘sophisticated, sequential reading ... promises to shed new light on elements of narrativity present in the final arrangement of originally discrete poetic units’ (DARR, ‘Literary Perspectives on Prophetic Literature’: 142).

<sup>87</sup> It is strange that not even Gibson in his recent book, *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament*, considers this to be an option. Despite his interest in rhetoric, when it comes to the arrangement of Amos, he simply echoes the familiar ‘we don’t know’ (after having considered subject matter, date or a mixture of both as the possible alternatives).



appear to be a debate. In denouncing the dreadful practices of Israel's neighbours and threatening them with divine judgement (1:3-2:5), Amos seems to be firmly on the side of his audience who, regarding these matters, would not have found it difficult to agree with him. This, however, soon changes in that Amos suddenly starts to accuse the Israelites themselves. He even goes on to threaten them with a divine judgement similar to that of the other nations (2:6-16). With this, the debate begins. Thus, having related the divine accusations, Amos quotes Yahweh as justifying the impending judgement by reporting his past salvific deeds on behalf of Israel (vv. 9-11). However, these met with unacceptable reactions on the part of the people (v. 12) so that because of these reactions and the wrongdoings condemned earlier, Yahweh is indeed going to punish them (vv. 13-16).

When Amos then moves on to bring up the issue of Israel's election (3:2), he gives it an entirely new twist (cf. *עַל־כֵּן אֶפְקֹד עַלְיְכֶם אֵת כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם*). It appears that Amos at this point reacts to an objection by the people, namely, that Yahweh will not punish them because they are his elected people. This Amos rejects; using rhetorical questions (vv. 3-8), he goes on to stress that he has no choice but to proclaim this terrible message because 'the Sovereign LORD has spoken'. In terms of the Aristotelian category of 'ethos', this passage seeks to establish the prophet's moral character as acceptable to his audience by pointing out that Yahweh forced him to perform his unpleasant ministry.<sup>88</sup> Amos, it becomes clear, is not someone who enjoys all this judgement talk; he simply has no other choice but to do what he must do. Vv. 9-10 then serve as confirmatory witness evidence, ironically provided by Ashdod and Egypt, two nations that themselves must have been regarded by Amos' audience as well versed in the practices they accuse Israel of. Finally, the judgement section proper (vv. 11-15) makes it clear that Yahweh will indeed punish his people and that the punishment will be a severe one.

Having ended the previous discourse on a note of judgement stressing the chastisement of the well-to-do, Amos is presented as singling out a certain group of upper-class women as an illustration of the life-style Yahweh denounces (4:1-3). The deity now even swears that these people will be punished for their outrageous behaviour (v. 2). All their sacrifices and tithes, numerous and fastidious though they may be, will not prevent the judgement (vv. 4-5). In fact, all the sacrifices only add to the sins of those who are ruthless in their dealings with the poor and needy. The debate then continues with Yahweh enumerating previous judgements inflicted upon the people with the intention of bringing about their return (*שׁוּב*) and thus to restore their relationship with him (vv. 6-11). Yahweh has given them every opportunity, but the people failed to take them. Consequently, they now need to prepare themselves for a meeting with their God (v. 12), the prospective terror of which is underlined by the hymn fragment stressing the awesome power of the one they are going to meet (v. 13).

The drama increases when Amos suddenly laments Israel's fall. This, it first appears, is the inevitable consequence of Israel's meeting with Yahweh (Amos 5:1-3). But is it inevitable? In

<sup>88</sup> Cf. KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 36, who notes that a rhetor might have to face the audience's prejudices against the speaker or its unwillingness to perceive of him/her as having the authority necessary for his claims.

contrasting the lamentation with an exhortation to seek God and live (vv. 4-6), the audience are given yet another opportunity to avoid this fate. As O'Rourke Boyle notes,

the paranetic passage in which Amos extends a slim, dramatic hope after the announcement of the death-sentence is not arbitrarily but deliberately situated. It provides rationale for the remainder of the prophetic sayings and within the dramatic unity of the book it creates a suspense which is only resolved by the final words (ix 8) and the editorial commentary upon them (ix 9-15).<sup>89</sup>

Vv. 7-13, which are at the centre of what is now generally believed to be a chiasmic arrangement (5:1-17), highlight the existing crisis between Yahweh and Israel. God's people who pervert justice (vv. 7, 10, 12), commit social crimes (v. 11) and live a self-complacent life (v. 11) are to face Yahweh, the creator whose awesome destructive powers are again highlighted in a hymn fragment (vv. 8-9). This contrast between Yahweh and the people provides a powerful prelude to a further exhortation (vv. 14-15), which takes up the negative portrayal of the people and admonishes them to seek good instead of evil. In actual terms this means that the people need to establish justice instead of turning it to wormwood (cf. v. 7). If they do, Yahweh may be merciful towards the *שְׁאֵרֵי יוֹסֵף* (v. 15). However, the concluding prediction, forecasting the wailing of the people as a response to the divine passing through their midst, anticipates a negative outcome (vv. 16-17).<sup>90</sup>

The subsequent sections Amos 5:18-27 and 6:1-14 are fitting sequels to the preceding lament in that both are extended woe-oracles. Again, the transition deserves special attention as it, once more, gives the impression of Amos reacting to an implied response by his addressees. Amos' references to a divine theophany (4:12; 5:17)<sup>91</sup> apparently caused the people to resort to the tradition of the *יְהוָה יוֹם*.<sup>92</sup> This they understood to refer to a time when the deity would intervene to deliver them. Yahweh was, after all, a God who was with them, or so they thought (5:14). Amos, however, after having relativised that idea by pointing out that Yahweh's beneficial presence with his people is dependent upon their life-style now also turns the *יְהוָה יוֹם* tradition against them (vv. 18-20). That day, he insists, would do Israel no good; indeed, it would bring only further terror. As some have rightly noted, vv. 21-27 complement vv. 18-20 in specifying the reasons for Amos' negative interpretation of the *יְהוָה יוֹם* as well as giving the consequences that that day will have.<sup>93</sup> Empty cultic rituals going hand in hand with a lack

<sup>89</sup> O'ROURKE BOYLE, 'The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos': 362.

<sup>90</sup> Yahweh's passing through the midst of Israel is referred to by *עָבַר* thus echoing Exod 11:4f; 12:12, 23. As the Lord passed through Egypt to strike down their firstborn, so he will now pass through the midst of his own people. Cf. PAUL, 180; VAN LEEUWEN, 'The Prophecy of the *Yōm YHWH*': 132; and SMITH, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in Amos' Use of Tradition': 38.

<sup>91</sup> CRENSHAW, 'Amos and the Theophanic Tradition': 211, rightly stresses that the so-called 'doxologies' in 4:13 and 5:8-9 'are saturated with theophanic language and theology' and are thus very appropriate in the present context. He also notes that 'the phrase "With us is God" is the people's misunderstanding of the real nature of the theophany ...' (ibid.: 208).

<sup>92</sup> The association of the *יְהוָה יוֹם* with the theophany alluded to in 5:17 has been emphasised, among others, by CRENSHAW, 'Amos and the Theophanic Tradition': 206; WEISS, 'The Origin of the "Day of the Lord"': 38-39; and G. V. SMITH, 180, 184.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. STUART, 353; BERQUIST, 'Dangerous Waters of Justice and Righteousness': 58; and GRAY, 'The Day of Yahweh in Cultic Experience and Eschatological Prospect': 24. HUBBARD, 180, points to a further connection when he notes that it 'was in public worship, probably at Bethel (5:5-6; 7:13), that the wrong conception of the Day of the Lord was perpetuated.' See also WEINFELD, 'Day of the Lord': 366, according to whom 'the belief in a future redeeming revelation lies at the heart of the Day of the Lord prophecies, and is expressed in the prayers of the people.' However, some dispute the connection of vv. 21-27 to the *יְהוָה יוֹם* passage (cf. VON RAD, 'The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh': 105; RUDOLPH, 201-202; and WOLFF, 299).



of concern for justice are said to result in the exile of the people. The prophet here picks up a threat, voiced earlier against the upper-class women (4:3), and applies it indiscriminately to all the people.

In the second extended woe-oracle (6:1-14), Amos again rebukes the complacency of the people as well as their delusive self-assurance and contemptuous life-style that slights 'the ruin of Joseph' (vv. 1-7). Somewhat surprisingly, at this point, he includes the Judean leadership in his accusation. This reference to the *שְׂאֵנַיִם בְּצִיּוֹן* (6:1) seems somewhat out of place in its present context, as most scholars have stressed. However, lacking a convincing solution,<sup>94</sup> we follow those who accept the text as it stands.<sup>95</sup> The problem is not so much that it would have been unlikely for the prophet to accuse Judah as well as Israel.<sup>96</sup> From a rhetorical or argumentative point of view, however, the reference to Judah appears to interrupt what up to this point has been an unswerving focus on Israel. Hayes and Finley have suggested interpreting 6:1 along the same lines as the Judah oracle in 2:4-5. Thus, Hayes notes that the reference to Zion 'illustrates the prophet's rhetorical skill. Beginning with reference to someone other than his immediate audience, it functions to engage and disarm the hearers.'<sup>97</sup> However, it seems preferable to understand the inclusion of Judah in 6:1 (and 6:2; cf. *הַמְּמַלְכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה*) in terms of Aristotle's concept of *ethos*.<sup>98</sup> It is another attempt by the prophet to establish his character and integrity. Amos, as his own words confirm, is not a Judean nationalist who simply pours scorn and contempt on the apostate northerners. Far from it, he makes it clear that he rejects the complacency of the Judean leaders just as readily as that of their Israelite counterparts. This, then, may explain the function of the Zion-reference in the debate between Amos and his audience as presented *in* the book. However, in addition to this, the reference to Judah has also a very important function in the debate that, by means of the book, transpires between its compilers and

<sup>94</sup> According to FOHRER, 'Zion-Jerusalem im Alten Testament': 294, *צִיּוֹן* in Amos 6:1 is a 'Fachausdruck für die Lage der Hauptstadt, die sich im Nordreich Israel auf dessen "Zion", dem Berg Samarias, befindet.' ROSENBAUM, *Amos of Israel*, 33f., 90f. (following PETERS, *The Psalms as Liturgies*, 210) understands the term to denote the place that 'tradition associates with God's primary dwelling.' VON SODEN, 'Zu einigen Ortsbenennungen bei Amos und Micha': 214-216, on the other hand, emends *צִיּוֹן* to *עִיּוֹן* (cf. 1 Kgs 15:20||2 Chr 16:4; 2 Kgs 15:29), which is graphically the best emendation that has been suggested (for others see BUDDE, 122f.; MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 37, 205; RUDOLPH, 215; GINSBERG, *The Israelian Heritage of Judaism*, 31; and those listed in ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs*, 153f.) as it is easy to see that a scribe could have confused *צ* and *ע*. However, why *עִיּוֹן* should have been singled out in this context is more difficult to explain, especially as *עִיּוֹן/צִיּוֹן* makes for a much better pair. WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 230, takes yet another route in reinterpreting *שְׂאֵנַיִם*, which he translates as 'stolz sein auf' and understands as referring to the Israelite's proud reference to an earlier victory over Judah. Similarly, the LXX attempts to solve the problem by rendering *שְׂאֵנַיִם* as 'to despise' (cf. *τοῖς ἐξουθενούσιν Σιων*). Others regard *צִיּוֹן* as a gloss inserted by a Judean redactor or as a deuteronomistic addition (thus FOSBROKE, 822f.; MAAG, 'Amos': 331; POLLEY, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 94f.; DEISSLER, 119). However, RUDOLPH, 215; FINLEY, 259; GOWAN, 399; and JEREMIAS, 83 n. 1, rightly note that its deletion would distort the balanced metrical arrangement. WOLFF, 315; followed by MARKERT, *Struktur und Bezeichnung des Scheltworts*, 164f.; HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese*, 238 n. 164; FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehren*, 226; and REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 137, by-passes the problem by deleting v. 1aα as well as the equally troublesome 1bα, a solution that does away with the difficulties rather too easily.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. OETTLI, *Amos und Hosea*, 72; WELLHAUSEN, 84f.; HARPER, 143; DUHM, 11; GRESSMANN, 350; CRIPPS, 202; GORDIS, 'Composition and Structure of Amos': 244; ROBINSON, 94; AMSLER, 217; MAYS, 114f.; STUART, 358; HAYES, 182f.; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 110f.; G. V. SMITH, 199f.; FINLEY, 259f.; PAUL, 200.

<sup>96</sup> Thus with ROBINSON, 94; HAYES, 182f.; and FINLEY, 259f.

<sup>97</sup> HAYES, 182; cf. FINLEY, 260.

<sup>98</sup> The interpretation of Hayes and Finley would require us to sever 6:1ff. from its context. Only when the oracle is read individually, it makes sense to understand the reference to Zion as an attempt at engaging the audience. On the book level, however, the debate is in full swing at this point and thus the function of the Judah reference needs to be defined differently.



their audience. For those who know that history has proved Amos right in his announcements of impending judgement upon Israel, the reference to the שְׂאֲנַנִּים בְּצִיּוֹן becomes all the more ominous.

Amos 6:1-7 is one of the passages concerning which scholars have frequently noted that the prophet here reacts to objections voiced by the audience against his message of doom. Thus, for instance, Weiser comments, 'Mit dem Hinweis auf die kriegerischen Erfolge Israels unter Jerobeam II. und auf das sich daraus ergebende Gefühl der Sicherheit des Siegers wird man mehr als einmal versucht haben, die Unheilsworte des Propheten zurückzuweisen.'<sup>99</sup> Amos, however, unmasks the hubris and pretension of those he sarcastically refers to as נְקֻבֵי נְקֻבֵי (v. 1).<sup>100</sup> Reverting once more to rhetorical questions, he makes it clear that Israel and Judah are no stronger than Calneh, Hamath and Gath, all of which had suffered military defeat despite their assumed strength.<sup>101</sup> The attempt of the ruling classes to thrust off and push away the יוֹם רָע (v. 3; cf. יוֹם יְהוָה in 5:18, 20 and יוֹם מָר in 8:10) therefore testifies only to their self-delusion. In the light of this, the extreme decadence and complacency pictured in vv. 4-6<sup>102</sup> appear all the more inappropriate and detestable. Indeed, all these feasts will one day end, Amos warns, when the Israelite leaders will lead their people into exile (cf. עֲתָה יִגְלוּ בְרֵאשִׁי גֹלִים, v. 7).

The following verses (8-14) demonstrate once more how Amos is struggling to get his message across. He simply does not seem to succeed in his endeavour to convince the Israelites that Yahweh is indeed going to punish his people and that his judgement is going to be a substantial one (vv. 8-11, 14). Neither can he make it clear to them that their pride and complacency are completely unfounded and, what is worse, actually abhorred by the deity (vv. 8, 13). Furthermore, his audience does not even perceive that the injustice they commit is not

<sup>99</sup> WEISER, 175.

<sup>100</sup> Amos 6:1 (esp. bβ) poses a number of difficulties. See the commentaries for attempts to solve them.

<sup>101</sup> Many commentators believe that v. 2 refers to the campaigns of Tiglatpileser III in 738 BCE (cf. recently JEREMIAS, 89). However, PAUL, 203, points out that at that time Tiglatpileser III intervened also in the politics of Israel. Hence, he asks, 'What effect ... would such a historical comparison have upon the people precisely at this time? For all intents and purposes, they were already no better off than these other defeated kingdoms. The threatened analogy simply would not be relevant or meaningful. Why should they fear that the same fate would overtake them as the others, if they were already experiencing the Assyrian onslaught?' Paul concludes therefore that the reference must precede the western campaigns of Tiglatpileser III but might perhaps be seen as alluding to the campaigns of Shalmaneser III some one hundred years before the time of Amos.

<sup>102</sup> Amos' portrayal of the people's luxurious and decadent life-style intensifies as one moves through the book, with 6:4-6 being the most extensive and graphic of the respective passages. Cf. SNYMAN, 'Amos 6:1-7 as an Intensification of Amos 3:9-11'.

BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 141, argued that 'the banquet is condemned for its connections with non-Yahwistic deities rather than for its immorality.' Recent archaeological and ANE research has shown that Amos 6:4-6 depicts a *marzeah* banquet (cf. מְרִזָּח סְרוּחִים in v. 7), a cultic institution testified for the cultures surrounding ancient Israel. Earlier on, Eissfeldt had denied this link and proposed a root מְרִזָּח, 'schreien', for Jer 16:5 and Amos 6:7 (the *marzeah* in the other West-Semitic languages is a derivation from מְרִזָּח, 'sich vereinen, versammeln'; cf. EISSFELDT, 'Etymologische und archäologische Erklärung alttestamentlicher Wörter'). Eissfeldt's distinction was embraced, for instance, by WOLFF, 322; and RUDOLPH, 218, but has since been abandoned as most scholars are now agreed that Amos 6:4-6 depicts a *marzeah* banquet. Having said that, however, it needs to be pointed out that Barstad's conclusion that Amos primarily renounces non-Yahwistic practices is not supported by the text. As CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 260; and JEREMIAS, 87, emphasise, the cultic character of these feasts, although obviously implied in the term מְרִזָּח, is not stressed in Amos 6. The meals are condemned rather because of the complacency they excite and the decadence by which they are characterised. The amount of literature on the *marzeah* banquet is immense, but cf. especially POPE, 'Divine Banquet at Ugarit'; BRYAN, *Texts Relating to the Marzeah*; GREENFIELD, 'Marzeah'; FABRY, 'מְרִזָּח'; LORETZ, 'Ugaritisch-biblisch *mrzh*'; KING, 'The *Marzeah* as a Social Institution'; idem, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, ch. 6; BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, ch. 5; and BOSMAN, 'מְרִזָּח'.

only blatantly wrong but also profoundly irrational and unnatural (v. 12). Often the fact that in these oracles the same issues are dealt with time and again is seen as an indication that the book is merely an anthology of the prophet's oracles. However, with all the signs of careful structuring discussed in the previous chapter, we conclude that this repetitiveness, coupled as it is with obvious intensification, is an integral part of the 'presentation'. Amos is thus portrayed as doing all he possibly can to convince his audience of their dangerous situation. In the present section, he relates Yahweh's second oath (v. 8; cf. 4:2)<sup>103</sup> followed by a short 'narrative' that zooms in on the consequences of the tragedy to come (vv. 9-10). He also reverts to further rhetorical questions that highlight the stupidity of the behaviour of the people (v. 12) and again quotes the words of his adversaries thereby demonstrating their foolish thinking (v. 13).

Moving on to the visions in 7:1-8:3, we note that they fit in admirably well at this point. In the past, investigations of the visions were devoted largely to the question of their place in the prophet's ministry. Thus, scholars were interested in whether they marked Amos' call to prophesy or whether they occurred at a later stage of his career. Recently, exegetes have moved away from this and begun to pay more attention to their place and function in the book. Although this new focus has already advanced our understanding, the employment of rhetorical categories and concepts can help to elucidate this passage even further. To illustrate this, let us consider Jeremias' recent treatment of the visions. He notes that

sie wollen den Lesern zeigen, wie Amos vom Boten der göttlichen Geduld zum Boten des unerbittlichen göttlichen Gerichts wurde, anders ausgedrückt: Sie dienen zur Legitimation der prophetischen Gerichtsbotschaft gegen Israel. Sie belegen, wie wenig sich Amos danach geseht hat, der Unheilsbote zu sein, der er nach Erhalt der Visionen sein muß, und wie er sich bis zum äußersten gegen diese neue Funktionsbestimmung gewehrt hat.<sup>104</sup>

Especially the second part of the quote deserves closer attention.<sup>105</sup> Without apparently being aware of it, Jeremias utilises the Aristotelian category of 'ethos' that, again, proves to be helpful in this context. By relating his attempts to avert the divine judgement (7:2, 5), Amos makes it clear that he by no means desires the punishment he is commissioned to proclaim. Not only that, he even tried to dissuade Yahweh from its execution. This portrayal of the prophet is best understood as another attempt to establish his moral character, *viz.*, to let him appear as someone who actually cares for the people he so vigorously condemns for their actions.<sup>106</sup> As regards the placement of the vision-cycle at this point in the book, Jeremias incisively notes that 'ihre Position am Ende des Buches erklärt sich am ehesten damit, daß nach der Logik des Buches zunächst (in Kap. 2-6) die ungeheure Schuld Israels genannt sein muß, bevor Jahwes

<sup>103</sup> Its introduction could hardly be more solemn; cf. נִשְׁבַּע אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּנִפְשׁוֹ נֹאֵם-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת.

<sup>104</sup> JEREMIAS, 97.

<sup>105</sup> The view that the visions serve to legitimise the message of judgement, although frequently stated, is less satisfactory. In the visions, the judgement is never actually legitimised (its legitimisation occurs in the multiple sections dealing with Israel's guilt); Yahweh's decision to bring it about is simply stated. However, as we shall see, a kind of legitimising, or perhaps better confirmative, function is exercised by the Amaziah-narrative in Amos 7:10-17.

<sup>106</sup> GOLDINGAY, 'The Logic of Intercession': 264, notes that 'Amos instinctively asks for the suspending of the very judgements he announces'. 'We meet with a prophet who simply takes for granted that his job is to confront God when given pictures of calamity, to query whether judgement really should be implemented'. Amos may, or may not, have taken this for granted. Following the debate between him and his audience, we certainly are surprised – and delighted – to learn about this aspect of his personality, for which the preceding litany of judgement speeches did not prepare us.



Unerreichbarkeit durch die prophetische Fürbitte und damit die neue Funktion des Amos verständlich werden.<sup>107</sup>

Far from being out of place in its present context, the Amaziah narrative in Amos 7:10-17 also has a crucial role to play in this presentation of the debating prophet. This was clearly seen by Eslinger who, in an article entitled 'The Education of Amos', offers an interesting interpretation of the passage. Eslinger notes that

proceeding through this balanced intricacy of interwoven visions that revolve around the pivotal intervention of Amaziah, the reader, like Amos himself, gains an education through the vehicle of this literary creation on the necessity of judgment. But only when Amaziah's intervention is left to stand where the author of the book put it is the reader able to see the education of Amos.<sup>108</sup>

Eslinger is right in noting the important role of the narrative. He also correctly affirms that vv. 10-17 are not intrusive in their present context but are very sensitively placed. I disagree, however, with Eslinger's analysis of their function. According to him, the intervention of Amaziah 'educates' Amos, i.e. convinces him that Yahweh's verdict in 7:9 is justified. 'Amaziah's interruption is the turning point in Amos' perception of the judgments foretold by the visions.'<sup>109</sup> Amos, therefore, finally sides with Yahweh and refrains from further intercession on Israel's behalf. In fact, as Eslinger believes, 'Amaziah's intrusion literally shoves aside Amos' intercession'.<sup>110</sup>

Against this interpretation, I would contend that it is Yahweh's assertion לֹא-אֶחְסֶיךָ עוֹד לוֹ, not the intervention of the priest, that forecloses further intercession by Amos. It should be noted that structurally the third and fourth vision deviate from visions one and two. In the first two, on seeing Yahweh's destructive actions, Amos bursts out with his pleas for forgiveness (סָלַח-נָא; 7:2) or simply restraint (חָדַל-לִנְא; 7:5). In the third vision, however, Yahweh asks the prophet to describe what he sees. So what does Amos see? He perceives Yahweh standing on a חוֹמַת אֲנָקָה with an אֲנָקָה in his hand (v. 7). Whatever the precise meaning of these phrases,<sup>111</sup> what to me seems most significant is that, contrary to the first two visions, Amos is not confronted with a picture of devastation. Thus, so far there is no reason for him to intervene. Furthermore, his eventual intercession is precluded in that Yahweh, before actually spelling out the punishment (v. 9), declares that he will not be prevailed upon to spare Israel again (לֹא-אֶחְסֶיךָ עוֹד עֲבוֹר לוֹ). Thus, Amos does get an education, but it is Yahweh who does the educating, not the priest.

Why then is the Amaziah-narrative included at this point? What is its function within the overall 'presentation'? In the above discussion of the rhetorical situation, I have already pointed out that I do not believe the text to imply that Amaziah interrupted Amos precisely at the time he related the visions.<sup>112</sup> In addition to what I said there, it is hard to imagine that, after what Amos said about the priest's fate (v. 17), Amaziah would have allowed the prophet to proceed with the account of his visionary experience (8:1-3). Just as we do not know at what

<sup>107</sup> JEREMIAS, 97.

<sup>108</sup> ESLINGER, 'Education of Amos': 55.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.: 45.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. WEIGL, 'Unendliche Geschichte', for a detailed discussion and review of the scholarly literature.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. n. 6 above.

time in his ministry Amos had the visions, so we also do not know precisely when the clash with Amaziah occurred. Just as the visions, with their emphasis on Amos' attempts to avert the divine judgement, serve the rhetorical purpose of establishing the moral character of the prophet, so also the inclusion of the Amaziah-incident is rhetorically motivated. Already before the priest intervenes, the reader learns that, however sympathetic Amos may be towards the Israelites, in the end he cannot succeed in his course because Yahweh is determined not to spare his people any longer (7:8-9). The Amaziah-narrative at this point serves a number of purposes. First, the priest's blatant refusal to take Amos' words as a divine message (compare עָמַר עִמּוֹס in 7:11 with וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה in v. 8) demonstrates the problem Amos is facing. The people simply are not prepared to accept his affirmation that Yahweh is going to punish them. Amaziah's reaction is the most flagrant example of this disbelief. Furthermore, with the priest's actions the debate between Amos and his audience intensifies. Whereas up to this point, the people either simply ignored the prophet's warnings or else contradicted them, Amaziah now takes measures to prevent Amos from continuing with his subversive ministry.<sup>113</sup> For a Judean readership that knows the fate of the northern kingdom, the narrative is a stern warning that, even if they attempted to prevent the prophetic voice from being heard, Yahweh will in the end prevail.

This brings us to Amos 8:4-14, another passage that is often regarded as being out of place in its present context because the oracles found here are so clearly reminiscent of the first half of the book. For this reason, some have suggested transposing them to another place.<sup>114</sup> Again, this is not necessary and reflects the desire for too neat and tidy a solution. However, in order to understand why the account of Amos' ministry at this point includes further prophetic indictments (cf. 8:4-6), it is important to see that the present passage opens the final part of the book. Its function at this point is perhaps more easily appreciated when seen in the context of the whole argument, which is why we prelude our discussion of Amos 8:4-14 with a succinct recapitulation of the debate up to this point.

Amos 1-2, as we have seen, started the debate off by accusing God's people of committing offences that were just as bad as, if not worse than, those their neighbours were guilty of. This initial accusation is developed and defended in chs. 3-6 with their constant alternation between prophetic accusations and announcements of punishment. Throughout this middle section, the tension of the debate intensifies as Amos' eventual employment of theophany and יוֹם יְהוָה motifs, dirges and woe oracles illustrates. The initial ominous hint of a meeting with Yahweh (4:12) develops into a manifest threat of the deity's passing through Israel's midst (obviously

<sup>113</sup> In addition, Amaziah's actions are quite obviously a reaction – even if not necessarily an immediate one – to the words of Yahweh reported in 7:9. Because it is never expressly said that Amos actually reported his visions, ESLINGER, 'Education of Amos': 44, thinks that 'Amaziah has unwittingly stumbled onto part of the explanation of the vision that Yhwh had just given to Amos.' He regards this as 'dramatic irony' and adds that 'the reader too shares Amos' appreciation of the dramatic irony because the narrator has privileged him with a covert audition of Amos' vision and Yhwh's explanation of it.' Against this view, I would like to point out that to understand Amaziah's intervention as a direct reaction to Yahweh's words in 7:9 is the more natural option. After all, the introductory phrase כֹּה הָרְאֵנִי (אֲרִנֵּי יְהוָה) (7:1, 4, 7; 8:1) suggests that Amos did relate his visionary experience.

<sup>114</sup> Especially many of those who believe the vision-series to include 9:1ff. find it difficult to make sense of the oracles of 8:4-14 in their present context. Cf., for instance, LÖHR, *Untersuchungen zum Buche Amos*, ad loc.; SELLIN, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 104; EISSFELDT, *The Old Testament*, 399; WEISER, 194; RUDOLPH, 101; SOGGIN, ad loc.



an allusion to Exod 12:12) resulting in dire consequences (5:17). Indeed, as Amos points out, *this* is the long-awaited יום יהונה, which will be quite different from what the people expected (5:18-20). Similarly, the lament taken up by Amos to mourn the fall of the בְּתוֹלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל (5:1-2) foreshadows the people's own future wailing and mourning (5:16-17). It is more than appropriate, therefore, that the subsequent oracles are (extended) woe oracles (5:18-27; 6:1-14). Still at this point, however, Amos is presented as arguing a case as the frequent accounts of Israel's guilt indicate (cf. 5:7, 10-12, 21ff.; 6:1-6, 12-13). This changes somewhat in the visions-cum-narrative series 7:1-8:3 where the readers/hearers are assured that this prophet is neither a maniac nor a Judean nationalist who simply wants to see the Israelites perish. However, since Yahweh no longer intends to spare his people, Amos' intercession is fated to be unsuccessful. The mention of this resolution is followed by the Amaziah-incident, which illustrates the stubbornness of the prophet's audience. Thus, although Eslinger is wrong to suggest that, in his encounter with the priest, Amos gains an education, he rightly notes that the narrative 'educates' the reader who thus learns more about the extent of the people's obstinacy. That is to say, the highlighting of the people's unwillingness to respond to the prophetic message is best understood as an attempt to persuade the reader that Yahweh's decision to punish his people is justified.

Amos 8:4-14 then resumes the discussion proper by bringing up, once more, the predominant issue of social injustice (vv. 4-6). For one last time Amos majors on the incredible behaviour of the well-to-do before moving on to a long liturgy of judgement, which clearly is the dominant topic in Amos 8:7-9:10. This extensive judgement section is introduced by a divine oath that deserves special comment. Whereas earlier in the book, Yahweh is said to have sworn by his holiness (cf. בְּקִדְשׁוֹ in 4:2) or by himself (cf. בְּנַפְשׁוֹ in 6:8), he now swears by the גֵּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב (8:7). This phrase aptly summarises the attitude of the people as it emerges throughout the book. More importantly, however, the fact that Yahweh swears by the pride of the people is highly ironic in suggesting that their pride is so 'reliable' that it can even be used to back up a divine oath. Once more, Yahweh's awful cosmic power (v. 9) is conjured up before Amos then zooms in on Israel's punishment (vv. 10ff.). Again, the theme of mourning appears just as the 'in that day' language (characteristic of Amos 8-9) connects to the יום יהונה motif in 5:18ff. Most significant, however, in this section is the announcement of a famine, *viz.*, one of hearing the דְּבַר־יְהוָה (8:11ff.). This is poetic judgement *par excellence*: those who now do not want to hear Yahweh's word mediated by Amos will one day hunger and thirst for it but will not be able to find it. Their search for the life-sustaining word of Yahweh is described in vivid colours, but it will be a vain attempt (cf. לֹא יִמְצְאוּ in 8:12).

In Amos 9, the divine judgement culminates in a crescendo. To top his previous images of disaster, Amos now pictures the deity as ordering the destruction of the temple (9:1). When it falls, it brings down the people with it. Some may be able to make an initial escape, but that will not save them. Whether they flee to שְׂאוֹל, הַשָּׁמַיִם, רֹאשׁ הַבְּרָמָל, or קִרְקַע הַיָּם, Yahweh will track them down eventually (vv. 2-3). Now he is not even content any more with the exile of his people; he is determined to extinguish them (v. 4). Once more, an announcement of judgement is followed by a hymn fragment that draws attention to the awesome power and might of the one that Israel will have to face (vv. 5-6). Following vv. 2-4, it stresses that no-

body can escape from the judgement of a God who has the power to let the whole earth melt and to pour the waters of the sea out upon the earth. This is particularly terrifying because now God makes it clear that he will not spare his people any longer. Indeed, at this point they even seem to have lost their special status (vv. 7-8). Whereas earlier on Amos apparently approved of the idea that a special relationship exists between Yahweh and Israel (3:2), he now flatly denies any uniqueness on Israel's part (9:7). Sometimes utterances like this are overinterpreted as indicating that Amos altogether rejected concepts such as the exodus tradition. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the book of Amos is what could be called a *Streitschrift* and that verses like 9:7 therefore are to be understood against a context that is highly polemical. The rhetorical questions in v. 7 thus continue the discussion; and again, it is implied that Amos' audience objected to his message of judgement by referring to their special status. This they derived from the exodus experience and the associated concept of election.

The prophet challenges this and concludes that the מַמְלָכָה הַחֲטָאָה will be wiped out (v. 8), which indicates that the *kingdom* of Israel will cease to exist. Statements such as בָּא הַקֶּץ בְּיַד יְשׁוּעָה in 8:2 are to be understood, I believe, within this framework. They do not signify the complete annihilation of all the people but indicate that the kingdom of Israel, i.e. the institution, is under threat. This is not to downplay the severity of the prophet's message because, as Amos goes on to explicate, כָּל חֲטָאֵי עַמִּי will be extinguished (9:9-10). Given the impression the book of Amos creates concerning the prophet's audience, this obviously includes a large share of the populace. Yet, it is significant that a distinction is made between חֲטָאֵי and 'non-חֲטָאֵי'.

There are, of course, scholars who maintain that Amos did not make such a distinction but that it has been introduced into the book long after his time.<sup>115</sup> Proponents of this view stress that the differentiation surfaces only here and that the book as a whole leaves one with rather different impressions about Amos' views and concerns.<sup>116</sup> However, although Amos does make a number of sweeping statements concerning the guilt and punishment of the people, his message clearly implies a distinction between culprits and victims. Indeed, Amos *identifies* culprits and victims. Moreover, as regards Amos' fierce attacks against his audience, it should be borne in mind that his words originated in a context of controversy and polemics. This makes it notoriously difficult for us to reconstruct his actual 'theological' beliefs and convictions. Amos'

<sup>115</sup> Cf., for instance, KELLERMANN, 'Der Amossschluß als Stimme deuteronomistischer Heilshoffnung'; WEIMAR, 'Der Schluß des Amos-Buches'; JEREMIAS, 129ff.; ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs*, 270ff.; KOENEN, *Heil den Gerechten – Unheil den Sündern!*, 9ff.

<sup>116</sup> It is also held that such a distinction is a typical post-exilic concept. This is, no doubt, true in the sense that the differentiation between the righteous and the wicked plays a central role in the later books of the Old Testament. However, I cannot see this as a decisive factor for the interpretation of Amos 9:8-10. First, the words 'I will not utterly destroy the house of *Jacob*' in v. 8 connect rather well with Amos' questions in 7:2, 5 (i.e. 'how can *Jacob* stand?'). Secondly, Amos 9:8-10 does not envisage or presuppose a paradigmatic contrast between the righteous and the wicked. The point of v. 10 is that all the sinners are going to perish (כָּל חֲטָאֵי עַמִּי; the stress is on כָּל). Interestingly, these sinners are those who are confident that nothing shall happen to them, which is a typical Amosian theme (cf. esp. 6:1, 3). I therefore agree with RUDOLPH, 277f., who notes that Amos' message as a whole, especially his distinction between culprits and victims, calls into question the idea that he would not have been able to move beyond the primitive concept of collective responsibility. Indeed, it is absurd to assume that someone with the intellectual capabilities of Amos (SAWYER, *Prophecy and the Prophets of the Old Testament*, 112, is quite right to stress that Amos 'was no country bumpkin') should condemn the abuse of the powerless only to go on to consign both the culprits *and* the victims to an indiscriminating divine judgement. For further discussion of this issue cf. pp. 124f.



talk about the end of Israel in 8:2 is a case in point. Is this indicative of his conviction that Yahweh will eliminate his people? Or does that remark call for a rhetorical interpretation? Could it be an exaggeration employed with the aim of stirring up the audience? Or, again, could it be a mixture of both? Whatever answer we give to these questions, the problem of how to assess the *interpretive significance* of 8:2 remains. Is it to be taken as the hermeneutical key that controls our interpretation (and compels us to discard those passages we cannot cater for)? Or could it be that the implications of 8:2 have to be ascertained in view of the book as a whole, including 9:8-10?

To deal with these questions, I propose an interpretation that perhaps is not as neat as some others but that, in my view, does more justice to the book of Amos in its entirety. First, the connotative value of *בָּא הַקֶּץ אֶל-עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל* needs to be established in the light of all the data. Thus, as we read on, Amos 9:8-10 makes it clear that it is the *כָּל מַמְלָכָה הַחֲטָאָה* and *עַמֵּי עֲפָרָיִם* that are doomed. This, in turn, seems to me in perfect agreement with the remainder of the book. All the passages that renounce the luxurious and indifferent life-style of the members of the upper classes do, as we have already pointed out, imply a distinction between culprits and victims (cf. esp. Amos 6:6). Secondly, the idea that the kingdom of Israel will end suggests that, in one sense at least, Amos' talk of the end of Israel needs to be taken literally. At the same time, however, the polemical context requires a rhetorical interpretation. That is to say, throughout the book we should reckon with the possibility that the prophet exaggerates in order to make a point or provoke his audience into reaction. The following remark by Weiser, voiced in the context of his perceptive rhetorical exposition of the oracles against the nations, deserves cognisance at this point. Weiser comments:

das Rednerische ist ... immer pointiert, einseitig, mit bestimmter Zwecksetzung gedacht und formuliert, während gewisse Seiten und Konsequenzen, die nicht in der Linie dieses Zweckes liegen, vom Autor gar nicht ins Auge gefaßt werden. Die Gedanken sind durchaus perspektivisch zu werten.<sup>117</sup>

It is also necessary in this context to consider 'the intention' of Amos' judgement speeches. The general issue of the intention of prophetic judgement speeches has caused an ongoing debate in which two principal positions have been advocated.<sup>118</sup> According to many, they serve to explain why Yahweh is going to judge or has judged his people. Those who believe them to be *vaticinia ex eventu*, understand them as attending to the problem of theodicy. In either case, they are regarded as attempts to justify the divine act of punishment.<sup>119</sup> Others, however, con-

<sup>117</sup> WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 110.

<sup>118</sup> For a detailed discussion and research review cf. esp. FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehrern*, ch. 6; see also SCHMIDT, 'Ausgangspunkt und Ziel prophetischer Verkündigung im 8. Jahrhundert'; HASEL, *Remnant*, 173-176; HUNTER, *Seek the Lord!*, 7-38; MARTIN-ACHARD, *Amos: L'homme, le message, l'influence*, 143-159; and MARKERT/WANKE, 'Propheteninterpretation'.

<sup>119</sup> Thus WELLHAUSEN, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 107; WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 310f.; WOLFF, 'Begründungen der prophetischen Heils- und Unheilssprüche'; idem, *Stunde des Amos*, 23-30; idem, 'Die eigentliche Botschaft der klassischen Propheten'; idem, 'Einführung in die klassische Prophetie'; idem, 'Endzeitvorstellungen und Orientierungskrise in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie'; SCHMIDT, 'Die prophetische "Grundgewißheit"'; idem, *Zukunftsgewißheit und Gegenwarts kritik*; idem, *Alttestamentlicher Glaube in seiner Geschichte*, 272-296; KRAUS, 'Die prophetische Botschaft gegen das soziale Unrecht Israels'; SMEND, 'Das Nein des Amos'; STECK, 'Die Gesellschaftskritik der Propheten'; KRAUSE, *Das Verhältnis von sozialer Kritik und kommender Katastrophe in den Unheilsprophezeiungen des Amos*; WARMUTH, *Liahnwort*; BJØRNDALLEN, 'Jahwe in den Zukunftsaussagen des Amos': 200-202; and ZOBEL, 'Prophet in Israel und Juda'.

tend that the judgement speeches were designed to cause repentance on the part of the audience.<sup>120</sup> In the light of the rhetorical interpretation advanced above, it is readily apparent that I sympathise with the latter view. However, as I have argued elsewhere, the polarisation of either understanding Amos as a preacher of unconditional doom or regarding him as being interested solely in effecting repentance seems to me too simplistic.<sup>121</sup> A more nuanced proposal is called for and has been suggested recently by Eagleton and Houston.<sup>122</sup> Applying insights advanced by speech act theorists, Eagleton and Houston considered the effect *unconditional* announcements of judgement had on their audience and noted that some passages demonstrate that these were in fact taken as warnings.<sup>123</sup> Thus, Eagleton notes that

in the terms of J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, prophetic utterances of Jonah's sort are 'constative' (descriptive of some real or possible state of affairs) only in what one might call their surface grammar; as far as their 'deep structure' goes they actually belong to Austin's class of 'performatives', linguistic acts which get something done. What they get done is to produce a state of affairs in which the state of affairs they describe won't be the case. Effective declarations of imminent catastrophe cancel themselves out, containing as they do a contradiction between what they say and what they do.<sup>124</sup>

As Houston observes, 'the question whether the intention of judgement prophecy is to condemn absolutely or to awaken repentance is transcended'.<sup>125</sup> This is because 'the possibilities of inexorable doom and of mercy evoked by repentance were always implicit in the use of the genre of the oracle of doom.'<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Steiner notes that the prophet's

enunciation of the future makes that future alterable. If man repents and changes his conduct, God can bend the arc of time out of foreseen shape. ... The force, the axiomatic certainty of the prophet's prediction lies precisely in the possibility that the prediction will go unfulfilled. From Amos to Isaiah, the true prophet 'does not announce an immutable decree. He speaks into the power of decision lying in the moment ...'<sup>127</sup>

In the latter part, Steiner quotes Buber<sup>128</sup> who was criticised by Smend objecting to Buber's view that prophets, even when uttering an unconditional announcement of judgement, (might have) aimed at repentance.<sup>129</sup> This view, Smend pointed out, 'lasse sich aus den Worten des Amos nicht belegen'.<sup>130</sup> However, speech act theory with its distinction between *locution* ('the performance of an act *of* saying something'), *illocution* ('the performance of an act *in* saying

<sup>120</sup> See FOHRER, 'Bemerkungen zum neueren Verständnis der Prophetie'; AMSLER, 321-327; PREUSS, *Jahweglaube und Zukunftserwartung*, 159 passim; WANKE, 'Grundlagen und Absicht prophetischer Sozialkritik'; KEEL, 'Recht tun oder Annahme des drohenden Gerichts?'; KORNFELD, 'Gesellschafts- und Kultkritik alttestamentlicher Prophetie'; HARDMEIER, 'Die judäische Unheilspredigt'; SCHENKER, 'Gerichtsverkündigung und Verblendung bei den vorexilischen Propheten'; DEISSLER, *Dann wirst du Gott erkennen*, 27 passim; BERRIDGE, 'Intention der Botschaft des Amos'; and HASEL, *Remnant*, 187 passim.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. MÖLLER, 'Rehabilitation eines Propheten': 46ff.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. EAGLETON, 'J. L. Austin and the Book of Jonah'; and HOUSTON, 'What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing?'

<sup>123</sup> Cf. 2 Sam 12:1-25 (esp. vv. 13-14, 22); and Jon 3:4-9. In this context, reference should be made also to LOHFINK, 'Bund als Vertrag im Deuteronomium': 221, who notes that 'der jeweilige Sprechakt [ist] nicht allein durch Wörter und Syntax bestimmt, sondern hängt genau so an gesellschaftlich, situativ und textlich vorgegebenen Umständen.'

<sup>124</sup> EAGLETON, 'J. L. Austin and the Book of Jonah': 233.

<sup>125</sup> HOUSTON, 'What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing?': 187.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*: 186.

<sup>127</sup> STEINER, *After Babel*, 154.

<sup>128</sup> The quote is from BUBER, *The Prophetic Faith*, 103.

<sup>129</sup> Buber contended further that 'behind every prediction of disaster there stands a concealed alternative' (*ibid.*, 134). This, too, is quoted approvingly by STEINER, *After Babel*, 154.

<sup>130</sup> SMEND, 'Das Nein des Amos': 416.



something') and *perlocution* ('the performance of an act *by* saying something')<sup>131</sup> invalidates Smend's criticism. Its application to prophetic speech suggests that when prophets utter unconditional announcements of judgement (*locution*), these can (indeed, may have been intended to) function as a warning (*illocution*), which can (may have been intended to) result in leading the audience to repent (*perlocution*).

However, even if we accept this, the question remains as to why Amos did not urge the people to repent if that is what he wanted them to do. The answer to this is, I believe, quite simple. Following the debate between Amos and his audience, one gets the strong impression that the people simply would not have seen any need for repentance. Huffmon notes that 'Amos addresses an audience that in its own sight is pious and faithful.'<sup>132</sup> All his rhetoric therefore aims (indeed, must aim) at convincing his hearers of the magnitude of their guilt and the fact that Yahweh is going to punish them. As long as the people do not grasp these facts, any talk of repentance is a futile exercise. Bitzer refers to problems, such as this, as rhetorical 'constraints'. He notes that these are

made up of persons, events, objects, and relations which are part of the [rhetorical] situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigency. Standard sources of constraint include beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives and the like ...<sup>133</sup>

Finally, our view that Amos did not announce the annihilation of all the people necessitates some comments on passages, such as 9:1-4, that seem to stress the totality of the divine punishment. First, these passages, as we have already seen, need to be understood in the light of the indictments found throughout the book. It is those charged with economic exploitation, pride and complacency, the חֲטָאֵי עַמִּי that is, that are the targets of the judgement to come. Secondly, Amos 9:1-4 in particular primarily emphasises the *ineluctability* of the divine judgement. When Yahweh fixes his eyes on his people (9:4), there will be no escape.

Before we then turn to the final section, it should be noted that v. 10 again discloses the delusive self-assurance that is so characteristic of Amos' audience. The words כָּל חֲטָאֵי עַמִּי כָּל הַחֲטָאֵי עַמִּי לֹא תִגָּשׁ וְתִקְדָּם בְּעֵדֵינוּ הָרָעָה thus provide an apt summary of the attitude of the prophet's hearers. Any interpretation will operate by default with some kind of hermeneutical key that governs its reading of the book. Wolff and many following in his wake found this key in Amos 8:2, a passage that prompted them to understand Amos as a preacher of unconditional and unrestricted doom. This understanding induced them to regard the sections that did not fit their view as later insertions that had been added in order to adapt (so as not to say mitigate) the prophet's message so that later generations could relate to it. Over against this interpretation, we would stress that if we *do* need a hermeneutical key, a statement like 9:10 would provide a more suitable one. And even if that verse were taken to be inauthentic, a judgement that in the light of our investigation seems unnecessary and unconvincing, the whole thrust of

<sup>131</sup> Cf. p. 20 above.

<sup>132</sup> HUFFMON, 'The Social Role of Amos' Message': 110. He adds: 'Amos assumes that the hearers of the oracles understand themselves as God's chosen community (... 3:2), as connected with the Exodus, Wilderness and Settlement traditions (2:9-10 ...), as taking part in the Yahwistic cult at traditional religious centers such as Bethel and Gilgal (4:4-5; 5:5), and as confidently looking forward to the Day of the Lord (5:18).'

<sup>133</sup> BITZER, 'Rhetorical Situation': 254.

the debate as presented by the book confirms its point. Thus, we suggest that the hermeneutical key to the book is the perception that Amos is portrayed as arguing a case against people who find it hard to respond appropriately. This perception, in turn, calls for a rhetorical-critical reading that reckons with overstatements, deliberate provocation and so on. The advantage of such a reading is that it can account for all the data and does not require us to perform major textual surgery. Moreover, it makes sense also against the rhetorical (historical) situation outlined above.

This then brings us to the salvation oracle in 9:11-15. *Contra* Wellhausen and his followers, it needs to be pointed out that this passage does not mitigate, let alone negate, the preceding message of judgement; it does not say, 'es sei nicht so schlimm gemeint'.<sup>134</sup> Amos 9:1-10 clearly underlines the severity and ineluctability of the divine punishment. However, Amos does not envisage the total annihilation of the Israelite population, as we have seen above, and there is no contradiction therefore between vv. 11-15 and the rest of the book. True, the salvation oracle does sound a strikingly different note when compared to the announcements of judgement prevalent throughout the book. Yet, it makes perfect sense when the rhetorical horizon of Amos' message is taken into account.<sup>135</sup> Whereas the *הַטְּאִי עַמִּי* will perish (according to the book these clearly account for a major part of the population); there is a glimmer of hope for some.

This notion of hope when understood in terms of persuasive rhetoric fulfils a dual function. First, it encourages those who are not to be counted among the *הַטְּאִי עַמִּי* by pointing beyond the divine judgement to a time when Israel's fortunes will be restored. Secondly, it is an attempt to motivate the audience to change their life-style by pointing out what they might gain by not being part of the *הַטְּאִי עַמִּי*. To be more precise, whereas all the announcements of judgement provide what can be called 'negative motivation' (i.e. they warn the addressees *not* to do something), the salvation oracle in 9:11-15 offers 'positive motivation'.<sup>136</sup> It does that mainly by appealing to the emotions of the audience and thus falls within the Aristotelian category of *pathos*. As Walton notes, a 'speaker may face hostility from the audience and need to overcome it, especially in the exordium and the epilogue.'<sup>137</sup> Amos 9:11-15 clearly can be un-

<sup>134</sup> Cf. WELLHAUSEN, 96.

<sup>135</sup> A detailed investigation of Amos 9:11-15 is not possible within the confines of this study. Readers are referred therefore to RUDOLPH, 278-287, whose interpretation I largely follow. He stresses, first, that the *כִּכַּת הַיָּרֵד הַנִּפְלָת* in v. 11 refers to the divided kingdom, which will be rebuilt *עוֹלָם עוֹלָם*, i.e. as in the time of David and Solomon. Secondly, he takes the phrase *וְיִרְשׁוּ אֶת-שְׂאֵרֵיט אֲדוֹם* (v. 12) as indicating territorial possession, with *שְׂאֵרֵיט* suggesting that some parts of Edom were already under Israelite control at the time the announcement was made. This, as Rudolph notes, was the case in Amos' time when Elath was 'restored to Judah' (cf. 2 Kgs 14:22). However, the Edomites were able to recover Elath not long afterwards (cf. 2 Kgs 16:6). RUDOLPH, 282, comments: 'Damit ist ein wichtiges Indiz für die Echtheit gewonnen, während wir aus der exilischen oder nachexilischen Zeit vor den Tagen der Makkabäer und Hasmonäer von keiner politischen Konstellation wissen, die es erlaubte, einen Teil von Edom in jüdischen Händen voranzusetzen.' Indeed, he concludes that 'unsere Exegese nichts ergeben hat, was gegen Amos spräche, daß im Gegenteil "der Rest Edoms" (V. 12) eindeutig für Amos entscheidet, und da sich zugleich die Einheitlichkeit des ganzen Abschnitts herausgestellt hat, läßt sich für ihn mit guten Gründen eben wegen V. 12 die Echtheit verfechten' (ibid., 285).

<sup>136</sup> Cf. WATTS, 'Rhetorical Strategy in the Composition of the Pentateuch': 12-14, who employs the concept of motivation in his investigation of the rhetorical function of the Pentateuchal blessings and curses. Thus, in Deut 30:15 the people are asked to choose between *אֶת-הַחַיִּים וְאֶת-הַטּוֹב וְאֶת-הַמָּוֶת וְאֶת-הָרָע*. Watts, in this context, speaks of a 'rhetoric of divine sanction' (p. 12).

<sup>137</sup> WALTON, 'Rhetorical Criticism': 5.



derstood in this light as the final attempt at inducing the readership to react favourably to the message conveyed by means of the presentation of the debate between Amos and his eighth-century audience.<sup>138</sup> It is also interesting to note, in this context, that the book closes with the words יהוה אלֹהֵינוּ אָמַר. This is the only time in Amos that יהוה אלֹהֵינוּ, ‘Yahweh, *your* God’, speaks to the people; and this phrase too seems to be used for rhetorical purposes. It clearly reinforces the emotional impact of the ending of the book and thus plays its part in the attempt to elicit a positive response from the readership.

### 3.2.4 Concluding Remarks on the Arrangement and Rhetorical Strategy

One of the key aspects of our analysis offered above is the suggestion that Amos is presented by the book as interacting with his audience. Sometimes this is made explicit, for instance, when the words of the people are quoted.<sup>139</sup> At other times, however, the reaction of the audience is implied as, for example, in 3:2. Vollmer notes, ‘die geschichtlichen Motive in 3<sub>2</sub> und 9<sub>7</sub> entstammen der Diskussion, sind Antworten auf Einwände, in denen die Hörer mit dem Hinweis auf Jahwes frühere Taten an Israel die Gerichtsdrohung des Amos entkräften wollen.’<sup>140</sup> As we have seen earlier, this is not at all surprising as the prophets’ ministry, by its very nature, involved a fair amount of confrontation. What needs to be stressed at this point, however, is that the arrangement results in what can be called the ‘narrativity’ of the book. Thus, for instance, the joining of a judgement oracle condemning Israel to a passage that refutes a tradition the people cherished (cf. 2:13-16 and 3:1-2) results in what can be called the book’s dialogical character. The resultant ‘narrativity’, however, is not just accidental. It is an integral part of the presentation devised by the authors to function as a means of persuasive rhetoric.

It therefore seems that what Wolff once said concerning the rhetorical questions in Amos 3 is true of the book of Amos in general. Wolff noted that ‘die “rhetorische Frage” peitscht die Affekte durch die Evidenz der Unnötigkeit der fragenden Formulierung auf ... *So spürt noch der Leser die Atmosphäre leidenschaftlichen Streites.*’<sup>141</sup> ‘Der Leser soll noch wie der erste Hörer durch Nötigung zum Mitdenken überzeugt werden, daß Amos durch Jahwes Reden zu seinem furchterregenden Verkünden unwiderstehlich gezwungen wurde.’<sup>142</sup> Throughout the book, the presentation of this bitter conflict between Amos and his audience is meant to induce readers to contemplate the behaviour of Amos’ original audience as well as its outcome. Thus readers are presented with a choice: to act as the original audience and suffer the prospective consequences (consider the past-fulfilment perspective mentioned earlier) or to let themselves be warned and refrain from repeating the mistakes of Amos’ hearers.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. MÖLLER, ‘Rehabilitation eines Propheten’: 50f., for further comments.

<sup>139</sup> This is the case in 2:12; 4:1; 6:13; 7:10, 11, 16; 8:5, 14; 9:10. HOFFMAN, ‘A North Israelite Typological Myth’: 180, speaks of a rhetoric that quotes ‘a popular cliché as a basis for a dispute’. Moreover, CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 202, appropriately remarks that ‘... whenever others beside the prophet speak in this textual world they condemn themselves with their own words. Those who break into the steady condemnatory oracles of Yahweh only confirm their perversity and empty pretensions.’

<sup>140</sup> VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 20.

<sup>141</sup> WOLFF, 220 (my italics), who in this context interestingly refers to Lausberg’s rhetorical compendium *Elemente der literarischen Rhetorik*.

<sup>142</sup> WOLFF, 222.

But can the arrangement of the text be understood in this way? To answer this question, let us consider an in some ways similar proposal offered by Wolff in his commentary on the book of Hosea. Davies notes that according to Wolff the 'kerygmatic units' in Hosea 'were the record of particular appearances of the prophet (*Auftrittsskizzen*), the later sayings often being his responses to objections raised by his audience which the tradition did not preserve'.<sup>143</sup> However, Davies is not convinced; he comments:

This is an interesting theory, with some support in the text, and if it is correct it presents us with some very vivid evidence of the cut-and-thrust of a prophet in debate with his audience. But the facts which it is designed to explain can just as well be explained by envisaging a process whereby utterances on similar subjects were strung together as a convenient way of giving some order to the collections.<sup>144</sup>

The issue at stake is whether the redactors intended to present these 'Auftrittsskizzen' or, in our case, the debate we believe to have detected in the book of Amos. As far as Hosea is concerned, Davies prefers to see the arrangement simply as an attempt to achieve an ordered collection of oracles. In the case of Amos, however, we have already seen that it is difficult, to say the least, to demonstrate an obvious thematic or chronological arrangement. On the other hand, the structural (literary) features discussed in the previous chapter do indicate that whoever was responsible for the book was interested in presenting a well-structured work. So where do we go from here? Is our reading outlined above justified? That is to say, is it likely that the authors/editors did indeed intend the book to be read as the presentation of a debate between Amos and his audience? Or are we making too much of joints and seams that may, in some cases at least, have been the accidental outcome of the compilation of the material into a book?

It is helpful in this context to operate with a distinction between the intention of the real authors and that of the text or its implied author. In the introduction, we have argued for a communication-theoretical framework of interpretation in which the intention of the author matters as *one* component of the hermeneutical enterprise. Yet, there simply is no way for us to uncover the intention of the real author. What we can attempt to do, however, is to extract from the text the intention of its implied author. As this is inscribed in the text, it is often called the intention of the text. Eco stresses its importance for evaluating conflicting interpretations by noting that 'between the unattainable intention of the author and the arguable intention of the reader there is the transparent intention of the text, which disproves an untenable interpretation.'<sup>145</sup>

<sup>143</sup> DAVIES, *Hosea*, 103; cf. WOLFF, *Dodekapropheten 1*, xxiii-xxvii. For additional comments on his concept of 'Auftrittsskizzen' cf. WOLFF, 'Haggai literarhistorisch untersucht', who in turn refers to BEUKEN, *Haggai – Sacharja 1-8*, 204ff., 335. Concerning these 'Auftrittsskizzen' it is important, however, to bear in mind what we said on Shaw's interpretation of Micah (cf. ch. 3.1.1 above). See also BONS, *Das Buch Hosea*, 17, who notes: 'Eingewandt wurde allerdings gegen die Theorie der "Auftrittsskizzen", daß sie eine Redesituation postuliert, in die sie die oft wenig zusammenhängend erscheinenden hoseanischen Sprüche einbettet. Der Kommentator verfaßt somit eine Art Biographie des Propheten, in die er dessen so disparat überlieferten Aussagen einordnet.' This, to repeat the point made earlier, is not what we envisage. The larger prophetic discourses found in the book of Amos are better understood as a secondary development in the 'transmission history'. Thus, they do not (in most cases at least) reproduce Amos' original speeches but are made up of a variety of oracles, with the resultant rhetorical effect being a literary feature.

<sup>144</sup> DAVIES, *Hosea*, 103.

<sup>145</sup> ECO, 'Between Author and Text': 78.



One of the means by which to trace the intention of a text, however, is its arrangement as Eco demonstrates. Commenting on the reception of his novel *Il nome della rosa*, Eco refers to two passages dealing with the theme of 'haste'. Since these appear in close proximity, readers have naturally interpreted one reference in the light of the other despite the fact that Eco, as the 'real' author, claims not to have intended any specific relationship between the two.<sup>146</sup> Yet, Eco acknowledges the validity of the interpretation in noting that 'der Text ist da und produziert seine eigenen Sinnverbindungen. Ob ich es beim Schreiben gewollt hatte oder nicht, man steht jetzt vor einer Frage, ... und ich selbst habe Schwierigkeiten, den Gegensatz zu interpretieren, obwohl ich begreife, daß er einen Sinn enthält (vielleicht viele).'<sup>147</sup>

In similar vein, Brown and Yule note that readers are always going to attempt to make sense of the text as it stands. 'The natural effort of hearers and readers alike is to attribute relevance and coherence to the text they encounter until they are forced not to.'<sup>148</sup> Whether or not the dialogical dimension in the book of Amos is intentional (in the sense of it being intended by the real authors); its editors fortunately did us the favour of following Eco's advice to authors. Eco ironically demands that 'der Autor müßte das Zeitliche segnen, nachdem er geschrieben hat. Damit er die Eigenbewegung des Textes nicht stört.'<sup>149</sup> As far as the book of Amos is concerned, Eco's wish has come true but that means that, not knowing the actual intentions of the real authors, we cannot but rely on the text. And it is on its basis that all interpretations, including ours, must be judged.

Up to this point, we have discussed the rhetorical structure of the book of Amos, its rhetorical situation and the specific problem that occasioned its compilation. We have also looked at the rhetorical strategy and we have outlined the debate between Amos and his audience that is presented in the book. Thus far, that is to say, we have focused on the rhetoric of the book at large. However, in order to illustrate the exegetical implications and relevance of our approach, in the second part of this study, we will take a closer look at Amos 1-4. In addition to general exegetical and structural issues, our focus will be on the rhetorical function of each individual unit. This should enable us to trace the development of the 'argument', as we follow the debate up to the point where Amos voices the ominous warning that Israel is to prepare herself for a meeting with Yahweh (4:12-13). Ideally, of course, it would have been preferable to extend the investigation to the book as a whole. However, because of space limitations, it has been necessary to concentrate on the first three major rhetorical units, i.e. the oracles against foreign nations in Amos 1-2 and the following two discourses in chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.: 74; cf. also idem, *Nachschrift zum 'Namen der Rose'*, 12f. Interestingly, Eco clarifies that one of these passages was not part of the original manuscript but that he inserted it later in order to create a literary bridge. Moreover, Eco notes that when he inserted it he was completely unaware of the thematic correspondence with the other passage (cf. ECO, 'Between Author and Text': 74).

<sup>147</sup> ECO, *Nachschrift zum 'Namen der Rose'*, 13f.

<sup>148</sup> BROWN/YULE, *Discourse Analysis*, 66.

<sup>149</sup> ECO, *Nachschrift zum 'Namen der Rose'*, 14.

PART TWO:  
THE RHETORIC OF AMOS 1-4



## 4. AMOS 1-2

When compared to the other Old Testament prophetic books, Amos stands out because of its unique introduction consisting of a series of oracles against foreign nations (OAN).<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, scholars have devoted much thought to the reasons for this peculiarity. Although some find these still elusive,<sup>2</sup> there is now widespread agreement that the answer has to be sought along rhetorical lines. Thus Amos 1:3-2:16, whatever its textual history, needs to be read as a whole, its rhetorical impact depending heavily on such a reading strategy. This observation is highly significant for our study since the very existence of one large rhetorical unit like Amos 1-2 makes the quest for similarly extensive sections in Amos plausible. However, before we turn to the investigation of the structure and rhetorical function of the OAN we need to take a close look at the prologue of the book in vv. 1-2. It sets the scene for the whole book and thus performs an important rhetorical function as well.

### 4.1 Amos 1:1-2

The prologue (Amos 1:1-2) consists of a historical superscription (v. 1) and what is usually called the book's motto (v. 2). While the superscription briefly introduces the prophet Amos<sup>3</sup> and presents the *דְּבַרְיָי עָמוֹס* in the context of a particular period in Israel's history,<sup>4</sup> the motto, portraying Yahweh as a roaring lion whose roar causes great anxiety, introduces the book's gloomy mood.

<sup>1</sup> In the present study the term 'oracles against the nations' as well as the acronym 'OAN' stand for the literary unit Amos 1:3-2:16 and thus include the Israel oracle in 2:6-16.

<sup>2</sup> FRITZ, 'Fremdvölkersprüche des Amos': 26, for instance, claims that the position of this pericope is 'aus der sonstigen Komposition des Buches nicht einsichtig' (cf. p. 38; and idem, 'Amosbuch, Amos-Schule und historischer Amos': 34).

<sup>3</sup> Studies on Amos' origin, social background, and occupation include BUDDE, 'Überschrift des Buches Amos'; SCHMIDT, 'Herkunft des Propheten Amos'; BIČ, 'Der Prophet Amos'; MURTONEN, 'The Prophet Amos'; KAPELRUD, *Central Ideas in Amos*, 5-7; STOEBE, 'Der Prophet Amos und sein bürgerlicher Beruf'; SEGERT, 'Zur Bedeutung des Wortes *nōqēd*'; YAMASHITA, 'Noqed'; WRIGHT, 'Did Amos Inspect Livers?'; SPEIER, 'Bemerkungen zu Amos'; WAGNER, 'Überlegungen zur Frage nach den Beziehungen des Propheten Amos zum Südreich'; ISBELL, 'A Note on Amos 1.1'; DIETRICH/LORETZ, 'Die ugaritische Berufsgruppe des *NQDM*'; KOCH, *Prophets*, 70; CRAIGIE, 'Amos the *nōqēd* in the Light of Ugaritic'; WEIPPERT, 'Amos: Seine Bilder und ihr Millieu': 1-5; ROSENBAUM, *Amos of Israel*, chs. 3-4; idem, 'Northern Amos Revisited'; HASEL, *Understanding the Book of Amos*, chs. 2, 4; CORNELIUS, 'נִקְדַּי'; STRIJDOM, 'What Tekoa Did to Amos'; BYARGEON, 'Amos: The Man and His Times'.

<sup>4</sup> For the dating of Amos' ministry cf. p. 100. On his historical context see DIJKEMA, 'Le fond des prophéties d'Amos'; MORGENSTERN, 'Amos Studies II'; MEEK, 'Accusative of Time in Amos 1:1'; COHEN, 'The Political Background of the Words of Amos'; HARAN, 'Rise and Decline of the Empire of Jeroboam ben Joash'; SOGGIN, 'Das Erdbeben von Amos 1 1'; SCHWANTES, *Das Land kann seine Worte nicht ertragen*, ch. 1; ROSENBAUM, *Amos of Israel*, ch. 2; BURGER, 'Amos: A Historical-geographical View'; LEVIN, 'Amos und Jerobeam I.'

#### 4.1.1 Exegetical Observations and Structure

The structure of Amos 1:1 is quite complex (cf. Figure 2 below) as it includes two relative sentences introduced by אֲשֶׁר together with two further temporal expressions (a double נְבִיאִי-phrase and the words שָׁנָתִים לְפָנַי הִרְעֵשׂ). This observation, together with the fact that the prophecy is referred to by the phrases רַבֵּר and חֲזָה, has led to a number of theories concerning the redaction history of Amos 1:1 in particular and the book of Amos in general.<sup>5</sup> Often the two terms are taken to refer to distinctive collections of prophetic material within the book of Amos, which are identified as the ‘words’ (Amos 3-6) and visions (chs. 7-9), respectively.<sup>6</sup>

However, already Jepsen argued that חֲזָה, when used in conjunction with a נְבִיאִי, functions as a technical term for the receipt of divine revelation in general or the divine *word* in particular.<sup>7</sup> Jepsen even claims that ‘visual manifestation ... plays no role, or at most a minor one’.<sup>8</sup> This usage is confirmed by Mic 1:1, another prophetic superscription, which reads דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־הִזָּהּ ... אֲשֶׁר־הִזָּהּ. Since the book of Micah contains no visions, Wolff rightly comments that ‘חֲזָה weist hier nicht mehr auf ein spezifisch visionäres Geschehen hin ..., sondern bezeichnet allgemein die Wahrnehmung einer Offenbarung ..., zumal es hier auf “das Wort Jahwes” als eine Spruchsammlung bezogen ist (vgl. Jes 2,1; Am 1,1)’.<sup>9</sup> Such an interpretation of חֲזָה is most appropriate also in the case of Amos 1:1, which then does not indicate a distinction between two prophetic ‘modes’, i.e. words and visions,<sup>10</sup> nor does it hint at the book’s two-fold structure.

Turning to the complex syntax of v. 1, it needs to be stressed that the second אֲשֶׁר is best seen as parallel to the first one; i.e. both are modifying עָמוֹס.<sup>11</sup> The alternative option according to which the second אֲשֶׁר refers to דְּבַר־יְהוָה unnecessarily complicates the grammatical construction<sup>12</sup> and also leaves us with the problematic statement that Amos saw the words of Amos.<sup>13</sup> If, on the other hand, both relative clauses are taken to modify עָמוֹס, the verse would say that the book contains the words of Amos *who saw*, i.e. who functioned as an agent of divine revelation.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. WEISER, 131; idem, *Profetie des Amos*, 252ff.; WOLFF, 146-151; JEREMIAS, 1-2; idem, ‘Zwei Jahre vor dem Erdbeben’: 186; FUHS, ‘Amos 1,1’, 281; and recently ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs*, 8-16.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. SMEND, *Entstehung des Alten Testaments*, 173; FOSBROKE, 778; AMSLER, 167; POLLEY, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 5; and JEREMIAS, 2. For an evaluation of this proposal, see ch. 2.2.1, Reconsidering ‘Words’ and ‘Visions’.

<sup>7</sup> JEPSEN, ‘חֲזָה’: 283-284. According to BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 12 n. 11, at least seventy-five percent of the occurrences of the root חֲזָה in the OT are in the context of prophecy.

<sup>8</sup> JEPSEN, ‘חֲזָה’: 284; against WOLFF, 154, who thinks that ‘חֲזָה bezeichnet den Empfang von Visionen’. PETERSEN, *The Roles of Israel’s Prophets*, 86, oddly claims that according to Jepsen the significant aspect of the root חֲזָה is the visual mode of revelation.

<sup>9</sup> WOLFF, *Dodekapropheton* 4, 6 (italics mine). On the aural dimension of חֲזָה cf. further CALVIN, 148; STUART, 298; WEISER, 234; BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 12; HALAT sub חֲזָה 2. (‘Offenbarungswort’); and Tg, where חֲזָה in Amos 1:1 is rendered as ‘prophesied’.

<sup>10</sup> Against VAN DER WAL, ‘Structure of Amos’: 108.

<sup>11</sup> Against LXX (λόγοι ... οὗς εἶδεν; the Greek translators related even the first relative sentence to דְּבַר־יְהוָה; λόγοι ... οὗ εἶδοντο), Vg (*verba Amos ... quae vidit*), NRSV, KJV, NIV, NASB, and most exegetes. Our view is shared by WEISER, 131; MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 2; RUDOLPH, 110 (who lists further proponents); ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 188f.; BOVATI/MEYNET, 26; ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs*, 12; and FUHS, ‘Amos 1,1’: 277-278, who is probably right to suggest that the prevalent translation is influenced by the superscriptions in Isa 2:1 (הִרְעֵשׂ אֲשֶׁר חֲזָה); Mic 1:1 (... דְּבַר־יְהוָה); and Hab 1:1 (... הִמְשִׂא).

<sup>12</sup> It is considered awkward, for instance, by FOSBROKE, 777; THEIS, 113; WOLFF, 146.

<sup>13</sup> One would rather expect the prophet to ‘see’ the words of Yahweh as, for instance, in Mic 1:1. See WOLFF, 147; RUDOLPH, 110; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 189; and JEREMIAS, 2.



The following two temporal expressions then specify when it was that Amos ‘saw’ the words concerning Israel, namely, during the prosperous and peaceful<sup>14</sup> period of the kings Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam ben Joash of Israel (ca. 780-740 BCE)<sup>15</sup> or, more precisely, ‘two years before the earthquake’.<sup>16</sup> Referred to as הַרְעַשׁ, the quake is supposed to be well known by the hearers/readers of the book.<sup>17</sup> Given the frequency of earthquakes in Israel,<sup>18</sup> it must have been an extremely violent and unparalleled one.

Finally, it should be noted that the verse, despite its syntactical complexity, does not contain any contradictory information.<sup>19</sup> Its structure can be outlined as follows:

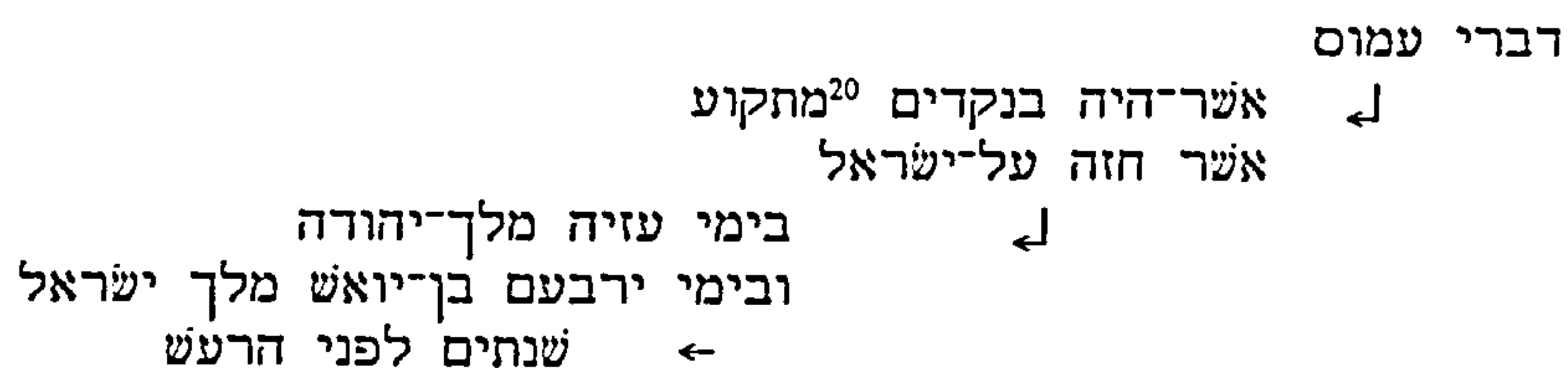


Figure 2: The Structure of Amos 1:1<sup>21</sup>

The motto in v. 2 is introduced by וַיֹּאמֶר, a phrase that is part of the book’s ‘narrative frame’ surfacing only here and in Amos 7, where a ‘story’ is told using *wayyiqtol* forms. In its present context, however, the phrase introduces not only the short utterance in 1:2 but also the entire book as Amos’ speech.<sup>22</sup>

וַיֹּאמֶר	1:2
וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲמָצִיָּה	7:10
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲמָצִיָּה	7:12
וַיַּעַן עָמוֹס	7:14

Figure 3: The ‘Narrative-Frame’ of Amos

<sup>14</sup> Cf. CALVIN, 149f.; HARPER, 5f.; ROBINSON, 75; WEISER, 131; VESCO, ‘Amos de Teqoa, défenseur de l’homme’: 481ff.; KING, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 22; BOVATI/MEYNET, 32; MERRILL, ‘Jeroboam’: 771f.

<sup>15</sup> Sometimes this synchronistic dating is seen as the mark of a dtr. redactor; cf. MAYS, 18; SCHMIDT, ‘Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches’: 170; TUCKER, ‘Prophetic Superscriptions and the Growth of a Canon’: 60, 69; cf. idem, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament*, 71f.

<sup>16</sup> This probably indicates that Amos’ public appearance was confined to the short period of less than one year (WOLFF, 155; RUDOLPH, 114f.; JEREMIAS, 3; PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 24), though some understand the phrase in a durative sense, ‘during two years ...’ (BOVATI/MEYNET, 27).

<sup>17</sup> It is referred to also in Zech 14:4-5 and JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* IX.222-227.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. KALLNER-AMIRAN, ‘Revised Earthquake Catalogue of Palestine’; and MILGROM, ‘Did Isaiah Prophecy during the Reign of Uzziah?’: 179-180. The earthquake in Amos 1:1 is often identified as the one attested at stratum VI of Hazor for which a date of 760 BCE has been suggested (YADIN/AHARONI, *Hazor II*, 24-37; followed by SOGGIN, ‘Das Erdbeben von Amos 1 i’; WOLFF, 155; MAYS, 20; PAUL, 35; G. V. SMITH, 25f.; GOWAN, 352; OGDEN, ‘The Earthquake Motif in the Book of Amos’: 69-72). However, YADIN, ‘Hazor’: 485, 495, later corrected this proposal, suggesting a much broader time-frame, i.e. the first half of the century (BLENKINSOPP, *History of Prophecy in Israel*, 127f. n. 31, reasons that the more precise date given earlier was itself based on the supposed date of Amos’ ministry rather than the archaeological data). Others maintain that even the identification of the earthquake in Amos 1:1 as the one attested at Hazor remains tentative (RUDOLPH, 114; JEREMIAS, 3).

<sup>19</sup> Against FUHS, ‘Amos 1,1’: 274, who thinks that the phrase שְׁנָתַיִם לְפָנַי הַרְעַשׁ ‘steht in deutlicher Spannung zur Datierung in 1h [i.e. the בְּיָמַי-phrase]’. The historical information is rendered more precise by way of gradually zooming in, but there is no tension here.

<sup>20</sup> מִתְקוּעַ is defining the origin of the נִקְדִּים (KEIL, 157; HARPER, 3; GUTHE, 31; TERRIEN, ‘Amos and Wisdom’: 114 n. 13; WILLI-PLEIN, *Vorformen der Schriftexegese innerhalb des Alten Testaments*, 15; STUART, 296) rather than modifying עָמוֹס (against SCHMIDT, ‘Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches’: 170; WOLFF, 146; RUDOLPH, 109f.; FUHS, ‘Amos 1,1’: 275). For partitive מִן (‘from’) cf. GK § 119v; JM § 133e; WO’C § 11.2.11b; see also ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 186f.

<sup>21</sup> ↓ indicates a dependence, ← a specification.

<sup>22</sup> MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 228f., rightly notes that this phenomenon is unique within the prophetic canon.

Most exegetes interpret v. 2 in the context of Israel's theophanic tradition.<sup>23</sup> According to this understanding, Yahweh's roaring manifests itself in a thunderstorm (v. 2a).<sup>24</sup> This interpretation, however, is open to discussion as we shall illustrate, first, by looking at the terms *שׂאג* and *קול נהן* in 2a. The theophanic interpretation of Amos 1:2 is based, among other reasons,<sup>25</sup> on the latter phrase, which – when combined with Yahweh as its subject – in the majority of OT passages indicates thunder.<sup>26</sup> However, this is not always the case<sup>27</sup> so that its precise connotation has to be determined on the basis of its respective context. In the case of Amos 1:2, it is the combination of *קול נהן* with *שׂאג* that deserves special attention. This collocation, with Yahweh as subject, appears also in the parallel passages Jer 25:30 and Joel 4:16. While the former contains no clear allusions to a thunderstorm, the focus being on the mighty voice of Yahweh instead (cf. the accumulation of expressions denoting a loud voice: *ישׂאג, יתן קולו, ישׂאג, יתן קולו, ישׂאג, יתן קולו, ישׂאג, יתן קולו*,<sup>28</sup> this is clearly different in Joel 4:16. There the dramatic account of the nation's judgement in the valley of Jehoshaphat (vv. 9-14) together with the description of cosmic upheaval (v. 15) makes a theophanic interpretation of v. 16 entirely feasible.

Amos 1:2, however, in my view is best understood as portraying Yahweh as a roaring lion.<sup>29</sup> As we have already seen, *נהן קול* seems to have the same meaning also in Jer 25:30. Further confirmation is supplied by two references in which the combination of *שׂאג* and *קול נהן* is actually used in connection with lions (Jer 2:15 and Amos 3:4). These passages demonstrate that both expressions, *שׂאג* and *נהן קול*, *can* signify the roaring of a lion. In addition, Amos 3:8 – where Yahweh's speech is compared to a lion's roar – obviously refers back to Amos 1:2.<sup>30</sup> Finally, reference should be made to the Middle Assyrian 'Fable of the Fox' where the dog, a disputant against the fox and the wolf, describes his own strength in the following terms: 'My strength is overpowering, I am the claw of the Zû-bird, a very lion ... At my terrible

<sup>23</sup> Cf. WEISER, 131-132; WAGNER, 'Überlegungen zur Frage nach den Beziehungen des Propheten Amos zum Südreich': 660; NIEHAUS, *God at Sinai*, 309; CRENSHAW, 'Amos and the Theophanic Tradition': 211; KEDAR-KOPFSTEIN, 'קול': 1249. For a distinction between 'theophanies' and 'epiphanies' cf. WESTERMANN, *Lob und Klage in den Psalmen*, 69-76; SCHNUTENHAUS, 'Das Kommen und Erscheinen Gottes im Alten Testament': 2; and JEREMIAS, *Theophanie*.

<sup>24</sup> WELLHAUSEN, 67; NOWACK, 128; BUDDE, 51-53; GRESSMANN, 331; VAN LEEUWEN, 'Amos 1:2': 94ff.; NIEHAUS, *God at Sinai*, 309. BERTHOLET, 'Zu Amos 1:2', believed that this thunderstorm marked Amos' call to prophesy; but cf. WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 79ff. Others think of an earthquake (MORGENSTERN, 'Amos Studies I': 137 n. 144; WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 84) or an easterly wind (GUTHE, 31), or they understand the text as referring to the divine voice, word, wrath, or self-revelation (LINDBLOM, *Die literarische Gattung der prophetischen Literatur*, 70f.; idem, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 116; SEIERSTAD, 'Erlebnis und Gehorsam bei Propheten Amos': 25; MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 197; BENTZEN, 'Ritual Background of Amos 1,2-2,16': 95f.). For a detailed discussion cf. WEISS, 'Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher': 6-15; idem, *The Bible from Within*, 196ff.

<sup>25</sup> Formal characteristics have also played a role (cf. the works mentioned in n. 23), but WOLFF, 147f., although supporting the 'theophanic interpretation', notes that formally Amos 1:2 differs considerably from other theophanies. Cf. also PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 127; G. V. SMITH, 18; and HAYES, 63, who stresses that in genuine theophanic texts, the deity *comes* from some locale in order to intervene in a certain situation, which is not the case here.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Exod 9:23; 1 Sam 12:17-18; 2 Sam 22:14; Pss 18:14; 46:7; 68:34. The same applies to numerous ANE occurrences many of which refer to a storm-god who reveals himself primarily in the sound of thunder (cf. JEREMIAS, *Theophanie*, 73ff.; CROSS, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 148-156).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. 2 Chr 24:9; Prov 1:20; 2:3; 8:1; Jer 4:16; 22:20; 48:34; Lam 2:7, where the phrase simply indicates a loud voice or sound.

<sup>28</sup> MCKANE, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, Vol. 1*, 648, understands *נהן קול* as an 'utterance of threats'; cf. also HARRISON, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 126f.; against NÖTSCHER, *Das Buch Jeremias*, 193f.; and THOMPSON, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 518f. While it could be argued that the accumulation of metaphors could include a reference to thunder as well, the sequence *ישׂאג, יתן קולו, ישׂאג, יתן קולו, ישׂאג, יתן קולו*, i.e. the framing of *נהן קול* by two occurrences of *שׂאג*, makes this unlikely.

<sup>29</sup> Thus also MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 195-197.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 225f.; and CRAIGIE, 126.



bellow the mountains and the rivers dry up [*e-ta-na-ab-ba-la-a*; cf. אַבֵּל].<sup>31</sup> This passage, which is clearly not a theophany, indicates that the drying up of mountains, pastures, and rivers should be understood as symbolising the fear caused by the roar of Yahweh or, in the case of the fable, the dog. Weiss is therefore right in noting that v. 2a expresses ‘die Seelenstimmung angesichts des Furchtbaren, Furchterregenden, Drohenden in der Kundgebung Gottes’.<sup>32</sup>

The interpretation of Amos 1:2 is further aggravated in that the relationship between the two halves of the verse is not easy to define.<sup>33</sup> However, Weiss emphasised that we should not expect a clear logical relationship between them. He notes that ‘it is methodologically unsound to argue against the unity of our verse or against the understanding of the tenor of its metaphors on the grounds that there is a logical discrepancy between the two parts of the verse.’<sup>34</sup> Reflecting on the nature of metaphors in general, he points out that metaphors are ‘demiurgic tools’ the function of which is to supply analogies and correspondences.<sup>35</sup> Using poetic language, the text paints a picture of the effects the powerful voice of Yahweh is going to have. Weiss comments: ‘In der Welt der Natur führt zwar das Brüllen nur zum Schrecken, Zittern und Fliehen, aber in der Welt, die sich in der Seele gestaltet und die sich durch ein sprachliches Gebilde und in ihr entfaltet, kann das Brüllen auch Dürre verursachen.’<sup>36</sup>

Another interesting feature of Amos 1:2a are the terms מִצִּיּוֹן and מִירוּשָׁלַם, which appear in prominent position and thus emphasise the locale from which Yahweh’s roar goes forth.<sup>37</sup> Whether the verse is an integral part of the original message of Amos,<sup>38</sup> perhaps one of Amos’ utterances that was taken as an apt condensation of his message and placed at the head of the book containing his words,<sup>39</sup> or whether it has been added by a later Judean, possibly dtr., redactor,<sup>40</sup> Blenkinsopp rightly notes that it ‘has the effect of deriving the divine judgment ... from the Jerusalem temple as its ultimate source.’<sup>41</sup>

But what is the precise nature of the consequences of Yahweh’s roar; ‘do [the pastures] dry up, or is it that they mourn?’<sup>42</sup> Sometimes a root אַבֵּל<sup>43</sup>, ‘drying up’, is assumed.<sup>43</sup> However, it

<sup>31</sup> Quoted from LAMBERT, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, 192f. (= Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin, Vorderasiat. Abt. Tontafeln 13836 lines 16, 18).

<sup>32</sup> WEISS, ‘Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher’: 14. For the use of lion imagery to portray a divine judgement cf. BENSON, ‘From the Mouth of the Lion’: 199f.; and STAPLES, ‘Epic Motifs in Amos’: 109.

<sup>33</sup> Hence some have concluded that it contains two originally independent elements; thus BUDDE, 53 (cf. idem, ‘Amos 1 2’); and GRESSMANN, *Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> WEISS, *The Bible from Within*, 202.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.; cf. idem, ‘Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher’: 11.

<sup>36</sup> WEISS, ‘Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher’: 19.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. POLLEY, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 110.

<sup>38</sup> DUHM, 1; SEIERSTAD, ‘Erlebnis und Gehorsam bei Propheten Amos’: 25; ROBINSON, 75; BOTTERWECK, ‘Zur Authentizität des Buches Amos’: 177f.; GOTTLIEB, ‘Amos und Jerusalem’: 452; WAGNER, ‘Überlegungen zur Frage nach den Beziehungen des Propheten Amos zum Südreich’: 659-661; RUDOLPH, 117 n. 37; PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 25; ACHTEMEIER, 176.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 222. CLEMENTS, *Prophecy and Covenant*, 43 n. 1, points out that ‘no absolute ground for denying [the verse] to Amos exists.’

<sup>40</sup> Cf. HARPER, 9f.; WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 85, 265; WOLFF, 151f.; BARRÉ, 210; JEREMIAS, 3.

<sup>41</sup> BLENKINSOPP, *History of Prophecy in Israel*, 88f.

<sup>42</sup> CARROLL R., ‘God and His People in the Nations’ History’: 58. WEISS, ‘Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher’: 7 n. 28, notes that most interpreters understand 2b as depicting a drought. Others have thought of a devastation or dereliction (DUHM, 1; SELLIN, ad loc.) or have understood the text allegorically (KAPELRUD, *Central Ideas in Amos*, 19; cf. Tg). For a detailed account of the various proposals cf. WEISS, ‘Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher’: 16ff.

<sup>43</sup> Its existence has been proposed by DRIVER, ‘Confused Hebrew Roots’: 73-75; and was then accepted by KB; HALAT; GesRMD; MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 117; HAYDEN, ‘אַבֵּל’; cf. also NEB, NIV, NRSV.

was not listed in the older lexica and its existence is now again questioned by many.<sup>44</sup> Clines notes that the primary force behind the proposal for אָבַל<sup>II</sup> was that scholars found it rather odd that inanimate objects should be portrayed as mourning.<sup>45</sup> But, as Clines demonstrates, the textual data does not support the existence of a homonym אָבַל<sup>II</sup> and the verb therefore has to be taken as indicating ‘mourning’. Yet, in the present context אָבַל is followed by יָבֵשׁ, a root that clearly indicates ‘being or becoming dry’.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, however, יָבֵשׁ can also be used metaphorically to signify distress or even death.<sup>47</sup> Thus the two lines complement each other in that the first evokes the notion of mourning, which fits very well with the lion imagery in the preceding line, and the second specifies its outward manifestation, i.e. the drying up or withering.<sup>48</sup> This being the case, it seems that both verbs could be applied to both the נְאוֹת הָרְעִים as well as the רֹאשׁ הַכְּרִמָּל in which case they would reinforce each other. On the other hand, the present order might be significant in that the mourning/withering of the top of Carmel is even more surprising and staggering than the mourning/withering of the pastures of the shepherds.<sup>49</sup> Thus whilst the predicate of the second line interprets the idea of the first line,<sup>50</sup> in the case of the subjects, the second line adds what has been called ‘heightening or intensification’<sup>51</sup>. To conclude, Amos 1:2 is a lucid illustration of parallelism being dynamic rather than static,<sup>52</sup> of being an instance of ‘A, and what’s more, B’, to employ Kugel’s words.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Rhetorical Function

‘The beginning of a novel is a threshold, separating the real world we inhabit from the world the novelist has imagined. It should therefore, as the phrase goes, “draw us in”.’<sup>54</sup> Although the book of Amos differs considerably from a novel, the requirement of ‘drawing the reader/hearer in’, here voiced by Lodge, is a prerequisite for the opening of rhetorical discourse as well. The writer/editor of Amos was obviously aware of this as can be seen especially from Amos 1:2. Here the ‘drawing-in-effect’ is achieved by utilising powerful poetic language that is very picturesque<sup>55</sup> and at the same time somewhat ambiguous. Apart from this, the opening section

<sup>44</sup> Cf. GB; BDB; HAW; STOLZ, ‘אָבַל’: 21; BAUMANN, ‘אָבַל, אָבַל, אָבַל’: 44-48; OLIVER, ‘אָבַל’: 244; and esp. recently CLINES, ‘Was There an ‘bl II “Be Dry” in Classical Hebrew?’; and DCH. See also SCHARBERT, *Schmerz im Alten Testament*, 47ff.; KUTSCH, “Trauerbräuche” und “Selbstminderungsriten” im Alten Testament; BULTMANN, ‘πένθος, πενθέω’: 41f.; KOCH, ‘Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte’: 532 n. 104; JEREMIAS, 1 n. 1; LXX, KJV, NASB, KT.

<sup>45</sup> CLINES, ‘Was There an ‘bl II “Be Dry” in Classical Hebrew?’.

<sup>46</sup> On the term see PREUSS, ‘יָבֵשׁ, יָבֵשׁ, יָבֵשׁ’: and HAYDEN, ‘יָבֵשׁ’.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ps 22:16; Job 14:11f.; Ezek 37:11. The combination of both verbs occurs also in Jer 12:4; 23:10.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. CLINES, ‘Was There an ‘bl II “Be Dry” in Classical Hebrew?’: 9.

<sup>49</sup> The mountainous region of Carmel was famous for its abundant vegetation; MULDER, ‘כְּרִמָּל’: 330; cf. idem, ‘Carmel’; Isa 35:2; Jer 50:19; Nah 1:4. According to HARPER, 11, ‘the greatest calamity imaginable would be the withering of Carmel’.

<sup>50</sup> ALTER, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 19, more vividly describes this as ‘dramatization’.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. again ALTER, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 10ff., who cites SHKLOVSKY (‘The purpose of parallelism ... is to transfer the usual perception of an object into the sphere of a new perception’; ‘Art as Technique’: 21) and also notes that already HERDER, *Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, questioned Lowth’s influential ‘static’ parallelism theory (cf. his *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*). This had been pointed out before by KRAUS, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 119.

<sup>53</sup> KUGEL, *Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 58.

<sup>54</sup> LODGE, ‘Beginning’: 5.

<sup>55</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 228, speak of a ‘balance and synthesis between the realistic and the mythic.’



provides the reader with some important information. Both, the facts and the 'emotive appeal', are intended to influence the reader's interpretation.<sup>56</sup> This function has been adroitly described from the perspective of the author by Callow stating that

it is to be expected that an author would use the opening words to orient the reader/hearer to what is to follow, to give them some clues as to what to expect, and hence to enable them to bring to the front of their minds relevant frames and concepts within which the author's work is to be understood.<sup>57</sup>

As far as the reader is concerned, Ben Zvi notes that

it is expected that after reading the opening sentence or paragraph of a book, ... (re)readers would attempt to develop a working model of what the book is about, and, of course, about its basic genre. Needless to say, even a tentative decision concerning the theme and genre of the text strongly influences the following reading.<sup>58</sup>

At the outset of our encounter with the book of Amos, we are first of all informed in v. 1 that we are about to read the *דְּבַרֵי עָמוֹס*. We are not given many details about this Amos, however, except that he was among the *נְקִיָּים* from Tekoa, that he functioned as an agent of divine revelation, and that he appeared in public during a particular period of Israel's history.

The claim that Amos received divine revelation is arguably the most important point in that it invites the reader/hearer to regard the prophet's words as authorised by Yahweh. Fuhs therefore rightly notes that the phrase *אֲשֶׁר הִזָּה ... עָמוֹס* legitimates the prophet 'als ein von JHWH berufener und autorisierter Sprecher';<sup>59</sup> its functions, we could say, as a 'Legitimationsausweis'.<sup>60</sup> From a rhetorical point of view, this grounding of 'the authority and legitimacy of [Amos'] message ... on God'<sup>61</sup> is of great consequence for the reading of the subsequent material. Ben Zvi, noting the predominant association of the root *י/הזח* with prophecy, is therefore correct to highlight that 'on another level, the title claims that a prophetic book is "prophecy"'.<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, it suggests that the communal reading and learning of this book is akin to receiving prophecy, to get acquainted with YHWH's message.<sup>63</sup> One can, of course, reject such a textual claim, but the fact remains that the text itself urges its readers/hearers to read the book of Amos as the 'words that Amos saw', i.e. received as divine revelation.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Cf. DAVIES, *Hosea*, 106. JEREMIAS, 3, calls Amos 1:2 a 'Lesehilfe'.

<sup>57</sup> CALLOW, 'Units and Flow in the Song of Songs 1:2-2:6': 475-476.

<sup>58</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 37.

<sup>59</sup> FUHS, 'Amos 1,1': 284; cf. BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 12, who notes that 'naming a vision is tantamount to a claim for the legitimacy and social authority of the vision.'

<sup>60</sup> Usually, it is the call narratives that are classified as 'Legitimationsausweis' or 'Legitimationsurkunde'; cf. JEREMIAS, 'Grundtendenzen gegenwärtiger Prophetenforschung': 14-15.

<sup>61</sup> Thus BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 38, commenting on *יָזַח* in Obad 1; cf. FINLEY, 126; BOVATI/MEYNET, 31.

<sup>62</sup> There is an ongoing debate on the nature of prophecy and whether the so-called writing prophets were actually prophets; cf. the articles in *JSOT* 27 (1983) by AULD, 'Prophets through the Looking Glass'; CARROLL, 'Poets not Prophets'; WILLIAMSON, 'Response to A. G. Auld'; AULD, 'Response to Robert Carroll and Hugh Williamson'; and in *JSOT* 48 (1990) by OVERHOLT, 'Prophecy in History'; AULD, 'Prophecy in Books'; CARROLL, 'Whose Prophet?'; OVERHOLT, "'It is Difficult to Read'". See also JARICK, 'Prophets and Losses': 75f., for a brief summary of that debate; and VAWTER, 'Were the Prophets *nābî's*?'; CARROLL, 'Night Without Vision'; BARSTAD, 'No Prophets?'; and ODELL, 'The Prophets and the End of Hosea'; for further developments.

<sup>63</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 38 (cf. also p. 12).

<sup>64</sup> On the authoritative claim of the Biblical literature in general cf. STENDAHL, 'The Bible as a Classic and the Bible as Holy Scripture': 42ff. RICOEUR, 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation': 3, differentiating prophetic, narrative, prescriptive, and wisdom discourse, notes that only prophetic discourse claims this kind of authority of being 'pronounced in the name of [God]'.

In the context of such an authoritative claim, it is interesting to note that the only personal information about Amos is that he 'was among the shepherds of Tekoa'.<sup>65</sup> And it is only later in the book that the prophet himself explains the significance of this detail. In his famous encounter with Amaziah, he points out that he is/was<sup>66</sup> not a prophet nor does/did he belong to a prophetic school but he is/was a בֹּקֵר and he בֹּלֵם שְׂקָמִים. However, Yahweh took him from following the flock and commanded him to הִנְבֵּא (Amos 7:14-15). In contrast to these more detailed explanations, the superscription merely informs us that Amos was one of the shepherds from Tekoa who, nevertheless, became the agent of divine revelation. The text thus accents the prophet's lay background.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, Amos 1:1 sets out the historical framework in which the book is to be understood. The material it contains is portrayed as relating to the eighth century BCE, or to be more precise, to the time of the kings mentioned. This is an important point that has not always received the attention it deserves. However, Darr commenting on the book of Isaiah, emphasised that 'text's invitation to read Isaiah as what it purports to be – the vision that the eighth-century prophet saw'.<sup>68</sup> A similar point has been made by Rendtorff, who remarks that 'the books themselves always give the historical framework in which they are to be read and understood'.<sup>69</sup> These remarks clearly lend support to methods that focus on a text's synchronic dimension and acknowledge the interpretive value of the prophetic superscriptions. Concerning the latter, Ben Zvi correctly stresses that they represent the author's point of view and that, for that reason, they should be taken into account.<sup>70</sup> However, this still leaves us with a number of possible approaches as Ben Zvi himself demonstrates. For the superscriptions could be taken literally as indicating that the book of Amos contains the actual words the prophet spoke. Or the oracles included in the book could be regarded as representing Amos' message *in essentia*, or again the superscription might just 'provide the literary hero who holds together otherwise diverse traditions'.<sup>71</sup> Hence, Rendtorff is correct to stress that the employment of synchronic methods does not cause the diachronic questions to disappear.<sup>72</sup>

How important these diachronic questions are, becomes clear when we consider Carroll's lament, voiced in an article discussing the interpretation of Jeremiah, that 'the colophon [i.e. Jer 1:1-3] is an inflection of the tradition which has given rise to so many *misreadings* of the book'.<sup>73</sup> Which path, then, shall we follow? Shall we accept the text's invitation to read the *entire* book of Amos against an eighth-century background as Darr suggests for Isaiah? Or could

<sup>65</sup> Some have remarked that Amos' style betrays his former career as a shepherd/farmer; cf. KEIL, 159; and WEIPPERT, 'Amos: Seine Bilder und ihr Milieu'.

<sup>66</sup> Amos 7:14 has generated an extensive debate about Amos' understanding of his own status and the nature of Israelite prophecy in general. One important question is whether the nominal clauses should be understood as present or as past tense. For a detailed review of the debate cf. VIBERG, 'Amos 7:14'.

<sup>67</sup> FINLEY, 125.

<sup>68</sup> DARR, 'Literary Perspectives on Prophetic Literature': 141.

<sup>69</sup> RENDTORFF, 'Old Testament Theology': 11; cf. also CHILDS, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 408, who criticises that 'Wolff's historical interpretation of the redactional layers of Amos has the effect of reading the biblical text from a perspective which often runs counter to that demanded by the literature itself.'

<sup>70</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah*, 11.

<sup>71</sup> For these possibilities cf. again BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> RENDTORFF, 'Between Historical Criticism and Holistic Interpretation': 28.

<sup>73</sup> CARROLL, 'Arguing About Jeremiah': 230 (italics added).



that be to misread the text as Carroll claims has been the outcome in the case of Jeremiah? As has been pointed out already, we see no reason not to take the superscription Amos 1:1 seriously, i.e. not to read the book's material against an eighth-century background. It is interesting to note in this context that an early eighth-century perspective has been maintained throughout the book. This can be seen in that, for instance, Assyria is never referred to by name, nor is the chaotic situation in Israel following the death of Jeroboam II reflected in any way.<sup>74</sup> Rofé calls such an assertion an *argumentum e silentio* and points to its limited value. However, his own conclusion, that 'the interpolators and editors [...] took care not to betray their time or place',<sup>75</sup> surely is a much more convoluted argument compared to the simple observation that the book of Amos does not mention Assyria.

To continue with our analysis of the rhetorical function of the superscription, it is further significant that the Judean king Uzziah is mentioned first, a fact that obviously points to a Judean readership.<sup>76</sup> These readers, as we have pointed out above, we would locate historically after the fall of the northern kingdom but before the exile of Judah.<sup>77</sup> However, the text provides yet another interesting piece of information by situating Amos' ministry two years before *the* earthquake (שְׁעָרָה). The rhetorical effect of this statement has been aptly described by Jeremias who notes,

ein Leser des Buches, der es mit dieser Zeitangabe aus der Überschrift im Ohr liest, wird genötigt, die ihm bei der Lektüre begegnenden Ankündigungen eines Erdbebens auf das schon zwei Jahre danach erfolgte Erdbeben rückzubeziehen. Damit ist die Erfahrung des Erdbebens als eine Bestätigung der Wahrheit der Amosworte herausgestellt.<sup>78</sup>

For a Judean readership after the collapse of the northern kingdom in 722 BCE,<sup>79</sup> however, not only this earthquake but most of Amos' announcements including, most significantly, the proclamation of exile would already be history. While, as Jeremias rightly noted, an early reader would be likely to see the book's references to an earthquake, he or she knew about, as proof that Amos was right about that quake, Judean readers, who 'witnessed' the exile of the northern state, would have found even further proof for the reliability of Amos' words. Ben Zvi calls this a 'past-fulfilment' perspective and notes that it 'clearly strengthens the case for the fulfillment of the still unfulfilled section[s]'.<sup>80</sup> In the case of the readers we are envisaging here, this would first of all include the salvation oracle in Amos 9. However, in addition to the rhetorical effect of this 'past-fulfilment perspective', the book, by way of analogy, also contains an implicit warning that the same fate might be in store for the southern kingdom if they copy the attitude of Amos' original hearers.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. BLENKINSOPP, *History of Prophecy in Israel*, 93; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 192.

<sup>75</sup> ROFÉ, *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature*, 34.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. JEREMIAS, 'Zwei Jahre vor dem Erdbeben': 185; STUART, 297, 299.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. ch. 3.1, 'Rhetorical Situation'.

<sup>78</sup> JEREMIAS, 'Zwei Jahre vor dem Erdbeben': 187; cf. RUDOLPH, 110; and FREEDMAN/WELCH, 'Amos's Earthquake and Israelite Prophecy'.

<sup>79</sup> The reference to *the* earthquake clearly indicates an early date for this remark as many have noted. However, that still leaves the issue of the book's redaction history undecided since the superscription could have introduced originally a smaller book. Cf. the contrasting views in JEREMIAS, 3; idem, 'Zwei Jahre vor dem Erdbeben': 187ff.; WOLFF, 150; RUDOLPH, 115; and ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 195.

<sup>80</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 39.

Having discussed the hermeneutical implications of Amos 1:1 in some detail, we now turn to the rhetorical effects of the motto in v. 2.<sup>81</sup> We have already seen that it, together with the bulk of the material, is presented as the prophet's words. The implications of this device are highlighted by Ben Zvi. He notes that 'direct (quoted) speech connotes objectivity, a sense that the words are reported exactly as spoken, and even more so, that the readers are – as it were – at the scene, listening to the envoy.'<sup>82</sup> Direct speech thus 'dramatises' the discourse, as Wendland remarks,<sup>83</sup> and thereby 'draws the reader in' who is now about to meet the prophet Amos delivering his stern message.

That it is going to be a stern message already becomes clear at this point, since v. 2 right at the outset introduces the gloomy mood of the book.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, as Lindblom rightly notes, the verse seems to be 'placed here in order to prepare and evoke the appropriate emotional response to all the oracles which follow.'<sup>85</sup> The metaphor depicting Yahweh<sup>86</sup> as a lion clearly indicates that there is danger in the offing. However, it is not yet apparent what the exact implications of this portrayal will turn out to be. Does it indicate that Yahweh is going to attack somebody? If so, who will be his target?<sup>87</sup> Or is his voice the prime referent so that the verse would hint at what the words concerning Israel (עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל) might be like? This unresolved ambiguity creates tension and suspense as the reader/hearer wonders how Yahweh might eventually act.<sup>88</sup> In any case, the negative connotations, which are evoked here, are reinforced by the illustration of the devastating effects of Yahweh's action in the next line.<sup>89</sup> Baumann notes that the use of אָבַל in this context, i.e. with reference to nature or vegetation, emphasises the totality of the judgement: 'even nature participates in the humiliation, the "diminution" of the people struck with the calamity'.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Scholars disagree concerning the relationship between v. 2 and its context (cf. WEISS, 'Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher': 5-6; and PAUL, 36 n. 39). In my view, it is best seen as a sub-unit of the book's prologue consisting of the superscription in v. 1 and the motto in v. 2. It is, after all, closely linked to the preceding verse by means of אָמַר the referent of which is עָמוּס in v. 1 (cf. KEIL, 163).

<sup>82</sup> BEN ZVI, *Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 36 n. 110.

<sup>83</sup> WENDLAND, 'Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Poetry': 4.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. DINES, 'Reading the Book of Amos': 27; WEISER, 132; and NIEHAUS, 338: 'It is a terrible introduction ...'

<sup>85</sup> LINDBLOM, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 116. I do not agree, however, with his cultic interpretation (cf. pp. 116f.).

<sup>86</sup> VAN LEEUWEN, 'Amos 1:2': 94; and RUDOLPH, 115, draw attention to the fact that the very first word Amos is portrayed to have uttered is the divine name יְהוָה.

<sup>87</sup> Seen in the context of the Twelve as a whole, this question becomes even more interesting. Amos 1:2a parallels Joel 4:16a. In both cases, Yahweh's roar causes devastating effects. However, in Joel the image is followed by the reassuring announcement that Yahweh will protect his people. This, in turn, is followed by an oracle of salvation. Reading Joel and Amos consecutively, one cannot but wonder, therefore, whether Amos is going to repeat Joel's re-assuring message, an idea that momentarily receives support by the subsequent oracles against *foreign* nations in Amos 1:3-2:5. However, once the reader is confronted with the Israel oracle in 2:6-16, this notion turns out to be misconceived.

<sup>88</sup> For a detailed discussion of the concept of ambiguity cf. STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, ch. 6 'Gaps, Ambiguity and the Reading Process' and passim. See also GUNN/FEWELL, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, 155-158 (a section termed 'Multivalence, ambiguity, and metaphor') and passim.

<sup>89</sup> VAN LEEUWEN, 'Amos 1:2': 99, comments: 'Il n'est, pourtant, pas impossible qu'Amos ait déjà fait une allusion voilée au vrai dessein de son message dans sa description des effets de la théophanie en 1:2b' (cf. p. 100). See also KEIL, 164; HARPER, 9; VON ORELLI, 61; CRIPPS, 115; OWENS, 'Exegetical Studies in the Book of Amos': 429; HYATT, 617, who all understand 1:2 as containing the message of the book in a nutshell.

<sup>90</sup> BAUMANN, 'אָבַל, אָבַל, אָבַל': 47. The notion of 'diminution' has been suggested by KUTSCH, "'Trauerbräuche" und "Selbstminderungsriten" im Alten Testament': 23-42, who proposes that the root אָבַל entails not only the idea of being diminished by some catastrophe but also of 'self-diminution' since it describes the outward behaviour rather than the inner feelings of the mourner (cf. MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 115f.; and esp. JAHNOW, *Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung*).



## 4.2 Amos 1:3-2:16

Having discussed the book's superscription, we now turn to the series of oracles against foreign nations (and Israel) in 1:3-2:16. Since our main concern is the development of the argument throughout the book, it will not be necessary to deal with the individual strophes in detail. This is because, as has long been recognised, their rhetorical effect arises mainly from their structural arrangement, which will therefore be our chief interest.

### 4.2.1 Structural Arrangement

The passage Amos 1:3-2:16 features a strophic arrangement in which the parts are built according to a regular pattern. While some elements occur in each strophe, there is also a principle of alternation at work. It is therefore possible to distinguish between two types of strophes (cf. Figure 4). Pattern A is characterised by an elaboration on the nation's punishment and an additional (concluding) divine speech formula. The oracles against Aram (Damascus), Philistia (Gaza), Ammon, and Moab are arranged according to this model. Pattern B (exemplified in the strophes dealing with Tyre, Edom, Judah, and Israel), on the other hand, has an extended guilt section but lacks the elaboration on the punishment and the concluding divine speech formula.

(a)	A	B	divine speech formula	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
(b)	A	B	formulaic reference to the nation's guilt	עַל-שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּשָׁעַי ... וְעַל-אַרְבָּעָה לֹא אָשִׁיבוּ
(c)	A	B	exemplary reference to a specific guilt	עַל introduced by
(d)		B	elaborate guilt section	
(e)	A	B	formulaic announcement of punishment	וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי אֶשׁ בְּבַיִת ... וְאָכְלָה אֶרְמְנוֹת ...
(f)	A		elaborate punishment section	
(g)	A		concluding divine speech formula	כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה <sup>92</sup>

Figure 4: The Internal Structure of the OAN<sup>93</sup>

Interestingly, the arrangement of the series alternates between the two patterns described above. Thus, two strophes of the A-pattern are followed by two of the B-type, etc. This then results in three pairs of oracles dealing with foreign nations proper (AA/BB/AA) followed by the climactic strophes concerning Judah and, most of all, Israel (BB\*) as illustrated in Figure 5.

1.	Aram	A	
2.	Philistia	A	
3.	Tyre		B
4.	Edom		B
5.	Ammon	A	
6.	Moab	A	
7.	Judah		B
8.	Israel		B*

Figure 5: The Alternating Arrangement (Pairing) of the OAN<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> A deviation from this formula occurs in 1:14 where וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי is used instead of וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי. However, there is no need for an 'emendation' because, as FREEDMAN, 'Deliberate Deviation from an Established Pattern of Repetition': 46, points out, editors were more likely to substitute the repeated וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי for the unusual וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי than to introduce an irregularity. SEGERT, 'A Controlling Device for Copying Stereotype Passages?', suggests that the deviation might reflect an attempt to guaranty correct copying.

<sup>92</sup> Amos 1:8 has the extended formula כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַבֵּר, which seems to be a purely stylistic variation.

<sup>93</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 211-213, discuss the ingredients of the OAN at length and offer their findings in tabular form.

Whereas the first seven strophes, notwithstanding their two distinct patterns, overall exhibit a similar construction, the final strophe concerning Israel presents a case on its own. Parts (a) to (c) resemble those of the previous strophes while part (d), although being introduced by על like the others, varies greatly in length thus highlighting Israel's sin. Thereafter, the pattern breaks down completely. First, the formulaic announcement of punishment (e) is not repeated at all. Although the strophe does refer to the divine judgement, it seems to avoid a repetition of the vocabulary employed in the previous oracles. Interestingly, the judgement (f) is outlined in rather vague terms, the formulaic terminology of the preceding strophes being abandoned entirely, and leaves open the question of its precise nature. What vv. 13-16 are stressing instead, is the ineluctability of this judgement, an important feature, to which we will return later on.

A further deviation from the previous strophes occurs in vv. 9-11, which speak of Yahweh's salvific deeds on behalf of Israel and thereby introduce an entirely novel element. These verses are embedded within the section that lists the manifold sins of Israel so that, by way of contrasting the people's behaviour with the divine acts, the inappropriateness of the former comes into sharp focus. Finally, as concerns (g), the Israel strophe features the oracle formula נְאֻם־יְהוָה instead of the divine speech formula יְהוָה אָמַר found in the A-pattern. In fact, the phrase נְאֻם־יְהוָה, the main function of which, as we have argued in our discussion of the book's macro structure, is to provide a 'highly local highlighting',<sup>95</sup> occurs twice (cf. vv. 11, 16). In v. 11 it accompanies a rhetorical question, and these two devices concur to stress the contrast between Yahweh's actions and those of the people: 'I destroyed ..., I brought up ..., and I raised ...; is it not so, O people of Israel? says the Lord; but you made ... and you commanded ...!' The oracle formula features also at the end of v. 16, where it completes the description of the judgement's ineluctability thus stressing this aspect as well. The subsequent figure outlines the structure of the Israel oracle, displaying at the same time the main signifiers of rhetorical emphasis.

Elaboration of Israel's guilt (vv. 6-8)

contrasted with Yahweh's deeds for the people (vv. 9-11)

... וְאָנֹכִי (twice: vv. 9, 10)

divine confirmation (v. 11c): הֲאֵף אֵין־זָאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נְאֻם יְהוָה  
(i.e. rhetorical question + divine speech formula)

guilt resumed (v. 12)

punishment: vague, ineluctability stressed (v. 13-16)

... הֲנִיָּה אָנֹכִי (v. 13)

divine confirmation (v. 16c): נְאֻם יְהוָה

Figure 6: The Rhetorical Structure of Amos 2:6-16

#### 4.2.2 Rhetorical Emphases in and the Rhetorical Function of the OAN

The objective of the following analysis of Amos 1:3-2:16 is to probe into its 'rhetorical design', i.e. to uncover what its rhetorical emphases are, how these are effected, and what the overall

<sup>94</sup> Cf. again ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 203ff., for further structural observations.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. ch. 2.2.4.1, 'The Speech- or Quotation-Formulas and Other Structural Markers'.



rhetorical effect of this extensive section is.<sup>96</sup> It is important, in this context, to direct our attention, first, to the various recurring formulas as these contribute greatly to the passage's rhetorical effect. In addition to this, we will also discuss a number of general issues, which are of fundamental importance for our interpretation of Amos in general.

(1.) To begin with, each oracle is introduced by the divine speech formula *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* in order to stress that, what Amos has to say about the nations' 'crime and punishment', has to be seen ultimately as Yahweh's word. The emphasis of the divine origin of the prophetic message is designed to lend authority to all the statements that follow. Frye aptly called this an expression of the biblical 'voice of authority'.<sup>97</sup> However, Meier recently called into question the designation of the phrase ... *כֹּה אָמַר* as 'messenger formula'.<sup>98</sup> On the basis of an investigation into its use in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East, Meier concluded (a) that the phrase does not indicate messenger speech,<sup>99</sup> (b) that it is an optional feature that is not employed with any regularity in many early writing prophets,<sup>100</sup> so that (c) 'one may confidently argue that there is no perception of the prophet as messenger, for God's voice is rarely identified'.<sup>101</sup> In positive terms, Meier defines the phrase as a 'citation formula', a definition that is much broader and certainly fits the diversity of the data better.<sup>102</sup>

Meier's analysis contains a number of incisive insights but it is marred at points in that he occasionally overstates his case. For instance, he draws too sharp a line between the 'desire to point to the words of God as distinct from man' evidenced by the sixth century prophets and the implied absence of this interest in the earlier prophetic books.<sup>103</sup> To appropriate Meier's in many ways convincing results for our analysis of Amos, some cautionary remarks are therefore pertinent. First, the phrase *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* is not exactly rare in the book of Amos. Secondly, the divine origin of the prophet's words is highlighted also by means of various other phrases, which indicates that it seems to have been an important concern to Amos and/or those responsible for the book.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, I do not share Meier's expectation that 'once the citation

<sup>96</sup> Probably few sections have received as much attention as the OAN. For a concise summary of the main issues under debate see HASEL, *Understanding the Book of Amos*, ch. 5, who lists most of the literature for 1967-1989 (p. 58f. n. 3). Since then, the steady flow of articles on Amos 1-2 has never ceased.

<sup>97</sup> FRYE, *The Great Code*, 212.

<sup>98</sup> MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 273-298. That understanding had been advanced esp. by LINDBLOM, *Die literarische Gattung der prophetischen Literatur*; KÖHLER, *Deuterjesaja (Jes 40-55) stilkritisch untersucht*, 102ff.; and WESTERMANN, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 98ff. Before Meier, doubts had already been expressed by RENDTORFF, 'Botenformel und Botenspruch', and others (cf. MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 277f.). That scholars were working with an inappropriate definition became apparent particularly in WILDBERGER, *Jahwewort und prophetische Rede bei Jeremia*, 73. He felt compelled to conclude that 26 times in Jeremiah the 'messenger formula' is used incorrectly (cf. the critiques in RENDTORFF, 'Botenformel und Botenspruch': 166 n. 7; MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 283).

<sup>99</sup> MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 278.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* Meier also notes that the term *מַלְאָךְ* is never applied to the early writing prophets (p. 288).

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Amos 7:10f. where the words *כֹּה אָמַר עַמּוּס* clearly do not appear in a messenger context. MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 290 n. 3, notes that the broader function of ... *כֹּה אָמַר* as a citation formula has already been acknowledged by WOLFF, 'Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch', 38; WESTERMANN, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 58; and BJØRNDALEN, 'Zu den Zeitstufen der Zitatformel ... *כֹּה אָמַר* im Botenverkehr': 393; but that that insight was overshadowed by the messenger metaphor.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 289f.

<sup>104</sup> MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 228, is in fact aware of this. He notes that 'Amos represents a curious mixture of a number of conventions in different parts of the book that show a high priority for marking explicitly God's voice.' This clearly stands despite his assertion that 'other parts of the book show a contrary reticence to be explicit as to who is speaking, even when it is clear that it is often God within some of these sections (3:2-9; 5:6-15, 18-26; 6:1-7)'.

dimension of the phrase ... כה אמר is recognized, the debate over the significance of the verb tense in *kôh 'amar yhw* (present? past? perfect?) may recede'.<sup>105</sup> In particular, I do not agree with his verdict that 'the verb must be translated as past'.<sup>106</sup> Although the formula refers to words that have been spoken in the past, it may still be rendered in the present tense since the citation represents the *continuously* valid view of the person quoted. Thus Bjørndalen argues for a present tense translation even in the case of כה אמר עמוס in Amos 7:11 because the phrase introduces a 'zeitlose Tatsachenfeststellung'.<sup>107</sup> What Meier calls the 'over-theologizing of the verb tense when applied to God's speech'<sup>108</sup> is therefore not precluded by his definition of the phrase יהוה אמר as 'citation formula'. It may well be that the writing prophets did not conceive of themselves as Yahweh's messengers in a technical sense. However, the fact remains that Amos goes to great lengths to underline that he is in one way or another acting on Yahweh's behalf since he was taken from behind the flock and commanded to הַקְּבִיא (7:15; cf. 3:8).<sup>109</sup>

It is therefore surely legitimate to conclude that the book portrays Amos as claiming divine authority for his message. And in that sense, the phrase here named 'divine speech formula' does function as a 'Legitimationsformel', even though it is not a 'messenger formula'.<sup>110</sup> Finally, when talking about a 'citation formula', we have to be careful not to apply the twentieth century notions about citations (Meier certainly does not fall into that trap). In using the words יהוה אמר, Amos is not indicating that he is repeating *verbally* the very words of Yahweh. In fact, the diversity of contexts in which the phrase ... כה אמר appears in the Old Testament suggests that there was no general concern to distinguish formally between citations and what might be called 'paraphrases'.<sup>111</sup>

(2.) Another recurring feature, the formulaic expression לֹא אֲשִׁיבָנּוּ, stresses that God's decree to punish the nations is settled. There has been some debate about the proper understanding of the suffix of אֲשִׁיבָנּוּ. In my view, it is best interpreted in a *cataphoric* sense as referring to either the subsequent announcement of punishment<sup>112</sup> or, more likely, to the punishment itself.<sup>113</sup> It should also be noted, however, that the ambiguity of the suffix invests the introductory

<sup>105</sup> For that discussion cf. esp. BJØRNDALLEN, 'Zu den Zeitstufen der Zitatformel ... כה אמר im Botenverkehr'; but also ZIMMERLI, *Ezechiel*, 1:73; idem, *Grundriß der alttestamentlichen Theologie*, 87; VON RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2:45; RENDTORFF, 'Botenformel und Botenspruch': 167 n. 8; WOLFF, 166.

<sup>106</sup> MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 290.

<sup>107</sup> BJØRNDALLEN, 'Zu den Zeitstufen der Zitatformel ... כה אמר im Botenverkehr': 398 (my italics). In fact, Meier himself when quoting secondary literature often employs the present tense to the same effect.

<sup>108</sup> MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 291.

<sup>109</sup> Compare the 'call narratives', which also serve to authenticate the respective prophets. See also HABEL, 'Form and Significance of the Call Narratives'; RICHTER, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*; and ZIMMERLI, *Ezechiel*, 1:16-21.

<sup>110</sup> HAYES, 69, classifies prophetic speech as 'assertive, authoritative address' and prefers to call phrases like יהוה אמר 'attribution formulas' rather than 'messenger formulas'.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. RENDTORFF, 'Botenformel und Botenspruch': 168f.; and FISHBANE, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, passim, who showed that the Old Testament writers often handled the *triditum* rather freely.

<sup>112</sup> Thus WOLFF, 160; MAYS, 24; HÖFFKEN, *Untersuchungen zu den Begründungselementen der Völkerorakel*, 52; BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 18.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. WELLHAUSEN, 68; SELLIN, 203; JONES, *Examination of Some Leading Motifs in the Prophetic Oracles Against Foreign Nations*, 165-166; GESE, 'Komposition bei Amos': 89; MCCOMISKEY, 283; FINLEY, 136; PAUL, 46f.

Other proposals include (a) that it refers back to the voice of Yahweh in v. 2 (HAYES, 71; idem, 'Amos's Oracles Against the Nations': 155; but criticised by MCCOMISKEY, 283; NOBLE, "'I Will Not Bring 'It' Back" (Amos 1:3)': 106f.); (b) that it stands for the individual nation which is no longer tolerated by Yahweh as a vassal (MORGENSTERN, 'Amos Studies IV': 314; BARRÉ, 'Meaning of l' 'šhybnw in Amos 1:3-2:6': 622; STUART, 303-305; CERESKO, 'Janus



phrase with a certain mysteriousness and thereby creates tension on the part of Amos' audience.<sup>114</sup> However, this interpretation has been challenged recently by Noble stressing that 'after the first oracle in the series has made [the] identification' of  $\text{נָּבִי}$  - with the subsequent punishment, 'there is no more "mystery" and "tension" in "it"'.<sup>115</sup> Noble suggests instead that the suffix is 'genuinely ambiguous'. In his view, it refers to the judgement subsequently announced *and* the future restoration of the nations envisaged in the salvation oracle 9:11-15, which, as he believes, does not exclude the foreign nations from the depicted reversal of fortunes.<sup>116</sup> This interpretation maintains that not only is the suffix ambiguous, but so is the preposition  $\text{עַל}$ . It can be understood, as Noble points out, in a *causative* sense ('because of three transgressions ... the nations will be punished') or in an *adversative* (or *concessive*) sense ('despite three transgressions ... they will be restored').

Noble's proposals are hardly convincing, however. First, although an *adversative* or *concessive* rendering of  $\text{עַל}$  may be possible,<sup>117</sup> its *causative* use outweighs the other options by far.<sup>118</sup> Secondly, a reference to the restoration depicted in 9:11-15 is highly unlikely because of the textual distance that separates the suffix in chs. 1-2 from its supposed referent in ch. 9.<sup>119</sup> In addition, I am not convinced that Amos 9 envisages a restoration of the nations in the first place. Thirdly, and most importantly, Noble's observation that the first oracle brings the mysteriousness of  $\text{נָּבִי}$  - to an end in fact precludes his own interpretation because the Aram oracle also eliminates the ambiguity he proposes. From now on, that is to say, the audience knows Yahweh's punishment to be the referent of the suffix. But, asks Noble, why did Amos not say 'I will not revoke the punishment' throughout if that was what he meant? For a start, that would have precluded the desired tension at the outset of his speech. Secondly, even Amos' continued use of  $\text{לֹא אֲשִׁיבָנּוּ}$  is best explained in rhetorical terms and that despite the fact that it is clear, after the initial strophe, that Amos is talking about judgement. The effect of the indeterminate 'it' is to leave it open what precisely 'it' is that will not be revoked in the case of Gaza, Tyre, Edom, and so on. Thus, Noble's question shows yet again how difficult many scholars find it to identify rhetorical devices and interpret them as such. In addition, it needs to be stressed that the highly formulaic character of the strophes may provide a further explanation as to why the vague expression is used throughout.

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Parallelism in Amos's "Oracles Against the Nations"; but cf. FINLEY, 140; and esp. NOBLE, 'Israel among the Nations': 56ff.); and (c) that it refers to the wrath of Yahweh (HARPER, 16; KNIERIM, "I Will Not Cause It to Return" in Amos 1 and 2': 170; COOTE, *Amos among the Prophets*, 115f.; refuted by BARRÉ, 'Meaning of *l'*' *šhybnw* in Amos 1:3-2:6': 613; GESE, 'Komposition bei Amos': 89; NOBLE, "I Will Not Bring 'It' Back" (Amos 1:3)': 105f.).

Yet further renderings are to be found in HOGG, 'The Starting Point of the Religious Message of Amos'; GORDIS, 'Some Hitherto Unrecognized Meanings of the Verb *Shub*': 159; idem, 'Studies in the Book of Amos': 202f.; NEHER, *Amos*; FREEDMAN, 'The Burning Bush': 246; MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 247; BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 12f. For an evaluation of these cf. the comments by PAUL, 46f.; and BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 18.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. RUDOLPH, 130; PAUL, 47; MCCOMISKEY, 283; and CARROLL R., 'God and His People in the Nations' History': 59.

<sup>115</sup> NOBLE, "I Will Not Bring 'It' Back" (Amos 1:3)': 108.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.: 108f.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. JM § 171e; GK § 160c; WO'C 36.2.2b (#17).

<sup>118</sup> JM §§ 133f; 170h; GK §§ 119dd; 158c; WO'C 36.2.2b (#14); 38.4a.

<sup>119</sup> NOBLE, "I Will Not Bring 'It' Back" (Amos 1:3)': 109; is, of course, well aware of this possible objection but claims that 'it is by no means implausible to think that an ambiguity that was "left hanging" in the opening section should be resolved in the final chapter.' This is certainly *possible* but whether it is at all *likely* is a different story.

Whatever the precise implications of the suffix, it is important to stress that the passage speaks of the settled will of Yahweh, which is irrevocable. To this, it should be noted, the ending of the Israel oracle (2:14-16) corresponds very well by emphasising that nobody will be able to resist Yahweh's punishment when it finally comes upon the people.

(3.) The statement declaring the irrevocability of the divine judgement is preceded by another formulaic expression, namely, the phrase  $\text{עַל־שְׁלֹשָׁה} \dots \text{וְעַל־אַרְבָּעָה}$ . It has been labelled respectively as 'numerical saying' (*Zahlenspruch*), 'graded numerical sequence' (*gestaffelter Zahlenspruch*), 'staircase formula', or 'ascending numerical pair'.<sup>120</sup> While it is clear that it states the reason for Yahweh's decree to punish the nations, scholars disagree in their considerations of the significance (and *Sitz im Leben*) of the numerical sequence  $x/x+1$ . Wolff, accepting Terrien's suggestion that its background is to be seen in the Old Testament wisdom literature,<sup>121</sup> concluded that Amos had four specific crimes in mind but mentioned only the fourth and most repulsive one.<sup>122</sup> However, Wolff's approach has been criticised precisely because Amos does not list four items, which is what one would expect in the light of the wisdom texts where all items represented by the numbers are listed.<sup>123</sup> Because of this as well as for other reasons, many scholars remained unconvinced of the proposed links between Amos and what Wolff had called *Sippenweisheit*.<sup>124</sup>

According to Crenshaw, the use of numerical pairs is the strongest argument in Wolff's case,<sup>125</sup> but even this device does not prove Amos' dependency on wisdom because, as Roth has demonstrated, it is by no means confined to wisdom texts.<sup>126</sup> Hardmeier, utilising Roth's findings, thus argued convincingly that the use of the 'graded numerical sequence' in Amos 1-2 should be seen not as the 'Niederschlag einer zwangsartigen Ausdrucksgebundenheit ..., die traditionsgeschichtliche Rückschlüsse auf "Amos' geistige Heimat" zuläßt' but rather as a '*rhetorisch motivierte, zitierende Übernahme, die keine traditionsgeschichtlichen Rückschlüsse erlaubt*'.<sup>127</sup> The main significance of Roth's findings for our purpose lies exactly in his demon-

<sup>120</sup> For an extensive bibliography see O'CONNELL, 'Telescoping N+1 Patterns in the Book of Amos': 71-73.

<sup>121</sup> WOLFF, *Amos' geistige Heimat*, 24-30; cf. TERRIEN, 'Amos and Wisdom': 109; further MARGULIS, *Studies in the Oracles Against the Nations*, 245, 250; LINDBLOM, 'Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets': esp. 202f.; idem, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 240; VON RAD, *Weisheit in Israel*, 53-56 (also *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1:437f.).

<sup>122</sup> WOLFF, *Amos' geistige Heimat*, 29; cf. also HARAN, 'The Graded Numerical Sequence': 260, 266f.; GOSSE, 'Le recueil d'oracles contre les nations du livre d'Amos': 24; MAYS, 23f.; JENSON, 'עַל־אַרְבָּעָה': 496. – TERRIEN, 'Amos and Wisdom': 110, however, understood the formula as 'an implication of indefiniteness', thus adopting the approach of those scholars mentioned in n. 129 below.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. FRITZ, 'Fremdvölkersprüche des Amos': 28; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 230; CHISHOLM, 'For Three Sins ... Even For Four': 195; SOPER, 'For Three Transgressions and for Four': 86f.; RUDOLPH, 128f.; WEISS, 'Pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2': 417-419. In the case of a 'graded numerical sequence'  $x/x+1$ , it is the  $x+1$ -phrase that determines how many items are enumerated.

<sup>124</sup> WOLFF, *Amos' geistige Heimat*; cf. the criticism in WHYBRAY, 'Prophecy and Wisdom': 188f; idem, *Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, 119. On the relationship between prophecy and wisdom cf. FICHTNER, 'Jesaja unter den Weisen'; HERMISSON, *Studien zur israelitischen Spruchweisheit*; WHEDBEE, *Isaiah and Wisdom*; WHYBRAY, 'Prophecy and Wisdom'; REVENTLOW, *Hauptprobleme der alttestamentlichen Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 202; VAN LEEUWEN, 'The Sage in the Prophetic Literature'; and with special emphasis on Amos CRENSHAW, 'Influence of the Wise upon Amos'; SCHMID, 'Amos: Zur Frage nach der "geistigen Heimat" des Propheten'; COOTE, *Amos among the Prophets*; WITTENBERG, 'A Fresh Look at Amos and Wisdom'; and recently SOGGIN, 'Amos and Wisdom'.

<sup>125</sup> CRENSHAW, 'Influence of the Wise upon Amos': 49.

<sup>126</sup> ROTH, 'The Numerical Sequence  $x/x+1$  in the Old Testament'; idem, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament*.

<sup>127</sup> HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese*, 293-300 (my italics); the quotes are from p. 294. Cf. FOHRER, 'Bemerkungen zum neueren Verständnis der Prophetie': 480, who stresses the need to differentiate between a 'form' in general and its 'function' in a specific context.



stration that numerical sayings were widely used and would thus obviously have been well-known to Amos' audience.<sup>128</sup> However, before we elaborate on this, let us look briefly at further suggestions concerning Amos' use of the numerical pair that are prevalent in the scholarly literature.

Some have stressed that the formula cannot be taken literally as indicating a precise number, but should be understood rather as denoting an indefinite total of crimes.<sup>129</sup> While this is true in many cases, this interpretation too has been criticised as not fitting Amos 1-2 because, as some have pointed out, if an indefinite number were in view, no specific case should have been referred to.<sup>130</sup> Yet another route has been taken by Weiss who suggested that an interpretation of the formula in Amos 1-2 ought to proceed from the evidence of the eighth strophe where seven crimes, i.e. three *plus* four, are listed.<sup>131</sup> He concludes that 'seven transgressions ... signify the whole, the full sin', and that 'judgment is pronounced on each nation because of its complete sin.'<sup>132</sup> The strength of Weiss' proposal lies not least in the fact that the number seven appears to be of great importance in the book of Amos.<sup>133</sup> According to his investigation then, the Israel oracle is climactic in that it not only hints at the fullness and totality of the nation's sins, but also actually spells them out in unprecedented detail. However, the problem with his suggestion is that he is not able to give further examples of the 'graded numerical sequence' in which its rhetorical impact depends on the numbers of the two parts of the parallelism being added up (i.e.  $x/x+1 = x+x+1$ ), a problem which he himself admits.<sup>134</sup> His pleading to understand the phrase as a hendiadys, which he calls an *ad hoc* interpretation that fits the *ad hoc* creation by Amos,<sup>135</sup> does not solve the problem either because Amos' audience was much more likely to understand the formula in the 'traditional way', i.e. as indicating four crimes in this instance.<sup>136</sup>

The most complex and sophisticated rhetorical analysis has been offered by Chisholm who like Hardmeier presumes that Amos purposefully adapted the 'graded numerical sequence' for his own rhetorical purposes.<sup>137</sup> To evaluate his proposal, it is helpful to return briefly to the interpretation of Wolff. Although proven wrong in his narrow analysis of the phrase's *Sitz im Leben*, Wolff was right to suspect a specific reason for Amos' deviation from the general custom according to which the  $x+1$ -phrase determined the number of items listed. However, while Wolff's conclusion that the one crime that is mentioned was the most repulsive one<sup>138</sup> is a sensible proposal, it is worth postponing such a conclusion for a moment. It should be noted, first,

<sup>128</sup> Cf. ROTH, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament*, 19; and WHYBRAY, *Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, 119, who notes that these 'forms of speech ... were current among the common people'.

<sup>129</sup> Thus KEIL, 164; SELLIN, 202; ROBINSON, 75; STUART, 310; FINLEY, 138; MCCOMISKEY, 282.

<sup>130</sup> See esp. ROTH, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament*, 63 n. 3. – A further interpretation has been offered by the rabbis, according to whom a sin could be forgiven three times but not a fourth time (cf. bYoma 86b; bSanhedrin 7a; thus also SOPER, 'For Three Transgressions and for Four': 87).

<sup>131</sup> Others, however, have arrived at a total of four crimes; cf. p. 116 below.

<sup>132</sup> WEISS, 'Pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2': 420; followed by RUDOLPH, 129.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. the list of seven and seven-plus-one items in Amos on p. 54; see further GORDIS, 'Composition and Structure of Amos': 219; WEISS, 'Pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2': 420; and LIMBURG, 'Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos'.

<sup>134</sup> WEISS, 'Pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2': 421.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*: 421-423.

<sup>136</sup> For a detailed critique of Weiss' proposal cf. PAUL, 27-30.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. CHISHOLM, 'For Three Sins ... Even For Four': 196; HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese*, 295f.; and also BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 15, who speaks of 'Amos as an innovator'.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. also HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese*, 299, who speaks of a 'Verstärkungseffekt'.

that Amos' use of the device may have had a bewildering effect not only on modern scholars. Indeed, such a deviation from normal usage will most likely have puzzled the prophet's original audience as well.<sup>139</sup> Considering therefore the 'temporal flow' of speech, i.e. the fact that in the process of hearing, the expectations and conclusions of the audience are permanently subject to revision, we are in a position to refine Wolff's idea as follows. When Amos employs the 'graded numerical sequence' 3/4 followed by a reference to only one crime in the opening strophes, his audience was in all likelihood surprised by his deviation from the usual pattern. They may also have conjectured, as Wolff did, that the crime, which Amos does refer to, is so severe as to compensate, as it were, for four transgressions. However, we must bear in mind that the 'Normverletzung'<sup>140</sup> caused by Amos initiated a mental process of surprise and conjecture.

It is at this point that Chisholm's contribution comes in. He observed that already prior to the Israel strophe there are two instances where the respective nation's guilt is dealt with in a more elaborate manner, i.e. the Edom (1:10-11) and Judah (2:4-5) oracles.<sup>141</sup> The guilt section of the Edom strophe, depending on how it is construed, either lists four crimes or focuses on one transgression in detail.<sup>142</sup> Whichever view one prefers, it is in any case rhetorically marked. Hence Chisholm suggests that this may have been taken as a marker of conclusion by Amos' audience,<sup>143</sup> which is possible for several reasons. First, the more elaborate treatment of Edom's guilt in itself suggests a climax. Secondly, Edom was Israel's 'arch enemy' so that it would not have been surprising to find this nation's crimes singled out as particularly severe and numerous. Thirdly, if 1:11 is taken to list four crimes, this number would match the x+1 element in the 'graded numerical saying'. It would also match the audience's expectations thereby contributing to the idea that this must be the goal of the entire series. Interestingly, as Chisholm comments, 'the 3/4 pattern of the introductory saying would be mirrored in the structure of the speech as a whole'.<sup>144</sup> However, the series does not end here but continues until Amos turns to Judah, the seventh nation to be accused and threatened with the divine punishment. Chisholm notes that

Amos's Israelite audience would have delighted in this and expected the speech to conclude here, probably with another fourfold list of crimes like that of Edom. Their expectations were almost realized, but instead of capping off the list of Judah's sins with a fourth charge (the list includes only three formal accusatory statements), Amos delivered a brief announcement of judgment (2:5) and then surprisingly turned to Israel. Israel was the worst rebel of all ...<sup>145</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Hardmeier (ibid.) comments: 'Die durchkreuzte Erwartung weckt besondere Spannung ...'

<sup>140</sup> For this designation cf. HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese*, 299.

<sup>141</sup> CHISHOLM, 'For Three Sins ... Even For Four': 192.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Amos 1:11b:

וְשָׁחַת רִחְמָיו	עַל־רִדְפוֹ בְּחָרָב אֲחִיו
וְעִבְרָתוֹ שְׂמָרָה נֶצַח	וַיִּטְרֹף לְעַד אָפוֹ

CHISHOLM, 'For Three Sins ... Even For Four': 191-194, distinguishes between a formal counting of crimes and a conceptual one. While in the former case all the verbal phrases are simply added up, the latter takes into account features such as purpose clauses (cf. לְהַכְנִיחַ in 1:6 and לְמַעַן הִרְחִיב in 1:13), explanatory statements (cf. וְלֹא זָכְרוּ in 1:9) parallelisms (cf. 1:11), etc. and thereby arrives at a smaller number of crimes.

<sup>143</sup> CHISHOLM, 'For Three Sins ... Even For Four': 196.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.: 196. Again interestingly, exactly at this point there is 'missing link' in the so-called 'concatenous pattern' suggested by PAUL, 13-15; idem, 'Amos 1:3-2:3'. CARROLL R., 'God and His People in the Nations' History': 61, notes that the reason for this might be to alert the hearer/reader to pause at Edom.

<sup>145</sup> CHISHOLM, 'For Three Sins ... Even For Four': 197.



Whatever the number of crimes listed in the Israel strophe – four (thus confirming to the  $x+1$  pattern),<sup>146</sup> or seven (i.e.  $x+x+1$  being a rhetorical device created *ad hoc* by Amos)<sup>147</sup> –, it clearly functions as the climax of the whole series. The OAN in Amos 1-2 thus contain two *pseudo-climaxes* before the hearer/reader is confronted with the real one. The unusual use Amos makes of the ‘graded numerical saying’ contributes to this rhetorical strategy evoking anticipation, suspension, a fair amount of surprise and even shock.

(4.) The reason for the divine punishment is regularly given as the respective nations’  $\square\text{פְּשָׁעָי}$ . According to Seebass  $\square\text{פְּשָׁעָי}$  is a general term that designates a variety of offences which are particularly repulsive.<sup>148</sup> This definition fits Amos 1-2 well, where the term in the first six strophes refers to brutal and disgusting war-crimes<sup>149</sup> such as the subjugation of Gilead by extremely brutal means (1:3),<sup>150</sup> the deportation of people and slave trading (1:6<sup>151</sup>, 9),<sup>152</sup> the murder of allies (1:11),<sup>153</sup> the shocking cruelty against pregnant women (1:13),<sup>154</sup> and the burning of the bones of the king of Edom (2:1).<sup>155</sup>

It should be noted at this point that the ‘B-strophes’ dealing with Tyre, Edom, and Judah are often seen as secondary<sup>156</sup> (a) because of form-critical assumptions that do not allow for the variation found in Amos 1-2, (b) because of their vocabulary, which is thought to reflect *dtr.*

<sup>146</sup> GESE, ‘Komposition bei Amos’: 89f.; CHRISTENSEN, ‘Prosodic Structure of Amos 1-2’: 436; idem, *Transformations of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy*, 66, 71; KÖCKERT, ‘Das Gesetz und die Propheten in Amos 1-2’: 146; O’CONNELL, ‘Telescoping N+1 Patterns in the Book of Amos’: 60.

<sup>147</sup> WEISS, ‘Pattern of Numerical Sequence in Amos 1-2’; RUDOLPH, 140; DIETRICH, ‘JHWH, Israel und die Völker beim Propheten Amos’: 315; HAYES, ‘Amos’s Oracles Against the Nations’: 163.

<sup>148</sup> In RINGGREN/SEEBASS, ‘ $\square\text{פְּשָׁעָי}$ ,  $\square\text{פְּשָׁעָי}$ ’: 799.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. KNIERIM, *Hauptbegriffe für Sünde im Alten Testament*, 178; WOLFF, 210.

<sup>150</sup> On the guilt of Damascus cf. VESCO, ‘Amos de Teqoa, défenseur de l’homme’: 487; CROCKER, ‘History and Archaeology in the Oracles of Amos’: 8; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 237ff.; WOLFF, 187f.; KAPELRUD, *Central Ideas in Amos*, 22; and SINGER, *Die Metalle Gold, Silber, Bronze und Eisen im Alten Testament*, 186; who understand the allegation metaphorically. KEIL, 164f.; and PFEIFER, ‘Denkformenanalyse als exegetische Methode’: 60; opt for a literal interpretation.

<sup>151</sup> On the severity of these charges see MUNTINGH, ‘Political and International Relations of Israel’s Neighbouring Peoples’: 139. BIRCH, 182, compares the crime of the Philistines to what we would call ‘ethnic cleansing’.

<sup>152</sup> On the Tyre strophe cf. CAZELLES, ‘L’arrière-plan historique d’Amos 1,9-10’.

<sup>153</sup> The terms  $\square\text{חָיִי}$  and  $\square\text{חָיִי}$  identify the Israelites as Edom’s brothers and allies; cf. FISHBANE, ‘Treaty-Background of Amos 1:11’; idem, ‘Additional Remarks on *rhmyw*’; BARRÉ, ‘Amos 1:11 Reconsidered’; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 264-267; and GORDIS, ‘Edom, Israel and Amos’: 131; but see also COOTE, ‘Amos 1:11’; and SIMIAN-YOFRE/DAHMEN, ‘ $\square\text{חָיִי}$ ,  $\square\text{חָיִי}$ ,  $\square\text{חָיִי}$ ’: 471.

<sup>154</sup> HÖFFKEN, *Untersuchungen zu den Begründungselementen der Völkerorakel*, 108f., notes that the motive (‘to enlarge their territory’) shows that this particular crime stands *pars pro toto* for all the crimes committed.

<sup>155</sup> KLEIN, *I Samuel*, 290, notes that ‘burning was used in certain forms of capital punishment’ (Gen 38:3; Lev 20:14; 21:9; Josh 7:25). It was considered a particularly disgraceful practice (2 Kgs 23:16, 20). Normally, even the corpses of foes were treated with respect as Jehu’s demand that Jezebel be buried demonstrates (2 Kgs 9:34). The addition of  $\square\text{שָׂרֵי}$  even heightens the offence (WOLFF, 197f.; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 288) stressing ‘the completeness of the destruction’ (OSWALT, *Book of Isaiah*, 598).

<sup>156</sup> SCHMIDT, ‘Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches’: 174-178; WOLFF, 170f.; FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehrern*, 19; PFEIFER, ‘Über den Unterschied zwischen Schriftstellern des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts nach und des ersten Jahrtausends vor Christus’: 126; KÖCKERT, ‘Das Gesetz und die Propheten in Amos 1-2’; STRONG, ‘Tyre’s Isolationist Policies in the Early Sixth Century BCE’. DIETRICH, ‘JHWH, Israel und die Völker beim Propheten Amos’: 316f., adds to these the Gaza strophe; JEREMIAS, 13, believes that only the Damascus and Ammon strophes originate with Amos; and FRITZ, ‘Fremdvölkersprüche des Amos’: 38; and NIEMANN, ‘Theologie in geographischem Gewand’: 191 n. 18, consider the entire passage a *vaticinium ex eventu*. For a critique of the latter view cf. PFEIFER, ‘Die Fremdvölkersprüche des Amos’; JEREMIAS, ‘Zur Entstehung der Völkersprüche im Amosbuch’: 177ff. The ‘traditional view’ has been criticised by BOTTERWECK, ‘Zur Authentizität des Buches Amos’: 178-181; HAYES, 52-55; idem, *Oracles against the Nations in the Old Testament*, 177, 180; PAUL, 16-27; idem, ‘Literary Reinvestigation of the Authenticity of the Oracles Against the Nations of Amos’; RUDOLPH, 119-122; idem, ‘Die angefochtenen Völkersprüche in Amos 1 und 2’. CHRISTENSEN, ‘Prosodic Structure of Amos 1-2’, on the other hand, relentlessly trims down all the strophes to make them fit his, no doubt highly aesthetic, ideas of prosody.

influences, and (c) because of historical considerations. Although I do not intend to enter into a detailed discussion of these issues, it needs to be stressed that I am not convinced of the inauthenticity of the strophes in question. First, the rigid form-critical assumptions that do not allow for stylistic variations are too arbitrary to be convincing. Secondly, recent works have shown the analysis of Schmidt, who in his influential 1965 article, 'Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches', argued for a number of dtr. additions in Amos, to be badly flawed.<sup>157</sup> Finally, the authenticity of the disputed strophes is also not precluded on historical grounds.<sup>158</sup>

However, to return to the indictments in Amos 1:3-2:3, we need to consider briefly the grounds on which Amos censures Israel's neighbours as these are of fundamental importance for an appreciation of the rhetorical strategy underlying chs. 1-2 as a whole. As some have pointed out, in condemning the crimes of the foreign nations, Amos appeals to a 'common ethos', or in the words of Barton, 'an ethos which he thought ought to be common'. Barton discusses the basis of Amos' condemnations in great detail and argues for the existence of an 'international customary law' that Amos could build his argument on,<sup>159</sup> thereby rejecting (a) a nationalistic interpretation according to which Amos simply agitates against the enemies of God's people,<sup>160</sup> (b) the so-called 'Davidic Empire theory' which stresses that Israel's neighbours were subject to Yahweh's laws because they once had been, and in the mind of Amos continued to be, vassals of Israel and thus of Yahweh,<sup>161</sup> (c) the idea that Israel's covenantal obligations are applied by way of logical extension also to the nations,<sup>162</sup> and (d) the proposal of a universal law, which in the past was often seen as deriving from the prophets' 'ethical monotheism'.<sup>163</sup> Challenging these theories, Barton emphasises that 'the principles at stake in these oracles are essentially part of conventional morality ... rather than actual laws supposed to be issued by [Yahweh] for all the nations of the world to observe.'<sup>164</sup> However, precisely this contention has been rejected recently by Noble who, while agreeing with Barton that Amos is dealing with crimes that 'should have been recognised as evil ... by their perpetrators', objects

<sup>157</sup> Cf. in particular BONS, 'Denotat von כזביהם'; and LOHFINK, 'Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?'. For further discussion see ns. 181, 183.

<sup>158</sup> For studies of the historical allusions in the OAN (which come to different conclusions) cf. BARTLETT, 'Brotherhood of Edom': 10-16; BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, ch. 4; GORDIS, 'Edom, Israel and Amos'; HARAN, 'Observations on the Historical Background of Amos 1:2-2:6'; idem, 'Rise and Decline of the Empire of Jeroboam ben Joash': 272-278; HÖFFKEN, 'Eine Bemerkung zum "Haus Hasaels" in Amos 14'; MALAMAT, 'Amos 1:5 in the Light of the Til Barsip Inscriptions'; MÜLLER, 'Phönizien und Juda in exilisch-nachexilischer Zeit'; MUNTINGH, 'Political and International Relations of Israel's Neighbouring Peoples'; PRIEST, 'Covenant of Brothers'; SCHOVILLE, 'A Note on the Oracles of Amos Against Gaza, Tyre, and Edom'; idem, 'The Sins of Aram in Amos 1'; and SOGGIN, 'Amos VI:13-14 und I:3'. See also HAYES, ad loc., whose views on the historical background of the OAN I follow.

<sup>159</sup> BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, ch. 6; see also HAYES, 58f.; idem, *Oracles against the Nations in the Old Testament*, 187f.; WRIGHT, *Living as the People of God*, 124; and AMSLER, 'Amos et les droits de l'homme'.

<sup>160</sup> As advocated by TOY, 'Judgment of Foreign Peoples in Amos i. 3-ii. 3'; HARAN, 'Rise and Decline of the Empire of Jeroboam ben Joash': 273f.; WÜRTHWEIN, 'Amos-Studien': 35-40.

<sup>161</sup> Thus BEAUCAMP, 'Amos 1-2': esp. 439f.; CHRISTENSEN, *Transformations of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy*, 71f.; BARRÉ, 'Meaning of ל' שִׁיבְנוּ in Amos 1:3-2:6'; MAUCLINE, 'Implicit Signs of Persistent Belief': esp. 289; POLLEY, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, passim. BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 39f., discusses the first two views under the same heading, 'Nationalism and Covenant', but focuses more on the former. For another detailed discussion – and rejection – of the 'Davidic Empire theory' cf. NOBLE, 'Israel among the Nations': 56-62.

<sup>162</sup> FENSHAM, 'Common Trends in Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and *Kudurru*-Inscriptions Compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah' 173.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. CRAMER, *Amos*, 156ff.; KAPELRUD, *Central Ideas in Amos*, 26-29; VESCO, 'Amos de Teqoa, défenseur de l'homme': 486f.; CARPENTER/GRISANI, 'עֲשֵׂה': 708.

<sup>164</sup> BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 44.



to Barton's view. In particular, he rejects 'its implicit anthropocentrism: Mankind is given the primary role in developing moral norms, whereas God has a reflexive role of recognising (where appropriate) the rightness of what man has formulated. ... Amos' thought actually moves in precisely the opposite direction ...'<sup>165</sup>

Noble himself therefore prefers the universal law theory (option [d]) and cites Lindblom who contends that the nations are condemned because 'they have offended against the holy will of Yahweh, which is valid for all peoples.'<sup>166</sup> This view was rejected by Barton because, according to him, we have no reason to think that Yahweh ever revealed his law to the nations. It would thus be unjust of him to punish them 'for breaking an edict they were unaware of'.<sup>167</sup> However, Noble points out that there is no need for any *revelatio specialis*<sup>168</sup> because the crimes for which the foreign nations are condemned 'are particularly *extreme* instances of wrongdoing which all right-minded men ought to recognise as wrong'.<sup>169</sup> Thus Barton and Noble agree that Amos' indictments do not require a *revelatio specialis* but disagree on whether they presuppose, rather generally, a 'conventional morality' (Barton) or, more specifically, a *revelatio generalis sive naturalis* (Noble). This being a theological issue, it cannot be discussed here,<sup>170</sup> but Noble's rejection of Barton's interpretation as too anthropocentric for an Israelite prophet in my view strikes the right note. From a rhetorical perspective, however, what is important to note at this point is that Amos accuses the nations of actions, which it should have been obvious to everybody were inhuman and detestable crimes.

Thus, while we want to affirm the OAN's rhetorical purpose,<sup>171</sup> it needs to be stressed that Amos does portray Yahweh to be a judge even of foreign nations, a judge who does not tolerate their crimes and cruelties. In fact, these underlying *theological principles* are very important if the rhetoric is to work at all. This has been rightly underlined by Hayes, who remarks that

if, in speaking on the other nations, Amos could convince his Israelite audience that Yahweh was in charge, had condemned their atrocities, and would bring punishment upon them, then he was in a better position to convince his hearers that Yahweh has also judged and would bring judgment on Israel.<sup>172</sup>

In 1950, Würthwein in his 'Amos-Studien' criticised Weiser for his rhetorical interpretation of the OAN.<sup>173</sup> According to Würthwein, 'eine "Rhetorik" in dem Ausmaß, wie es Weiser voraussetzt, [ist] undenkbar in einer Welt, der das Wort nicht nur "Schall und Rauch", sondern wirkungsmächtiges Wort ist.'<sup>174</sup> Würthwein bases his view on the contention of Procksch who claims, 'jeder  $\text{וְיָקָר}$  ist mit Kraft gefüllt, die sich in den verschiedensten Energien kundtun

<sup>165</sup> NOBLE, 'Israel among the Nations': 63f.

<sup>166</sup> LINDBLOM, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 335.

<sup>167</sup> BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 43.

<sup>168</sup> At this point, I deliberately introduce the systematic concepts of *revelatio specialis* and *revelatio generalis sive naturalis* as they may help us to get a clearer picture of the differences that separate Noble and Barton.

<sup>169</sup> NOBLE, 'Israel among the Nations': 64 (his emphasis); cf. also DEISSLER, 102; G. V. SMITH, 33.

<sup>170</sup> For a discussion of the two concepts of *revelatio specialis* and *revelatio generalis sive naturalis* cf. PÖHLMANN, *Abriß der Dogmatik*, 50-59, 202-205.

<sup>171</sup> WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 86, regards the first seven strophes as a 'rednerische Vorbereitung'.

<sup>172</sup> HAYES, 'Amos's Oracles Against the Nations': 166; cf. BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 3f. Against WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 100ff.; and GEYER, 'Mythology and Culture in the Oracles Against the Nations': 135, who view the individual oracles as having 'little significance in themselves'.

<sup>173</sup> See WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 100ff.

<sup>174</sup> WÜRTHWEIN, 'Amos-Studien': 37.

kann.<sup>175</sup> As already said, we certainly want to maintain that the OAN have a theological significance. However, it needs to be added that this is not due to the 'kraftgeladene' character of the  $\text{קָרָה}$  but to the authority of Yahweh who announces the punishment.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, their theological significance does surely not preclude them from being used to a rhetorical end.<sup>177</sup>

To return to the rhetorical effect of the OAN; scholars have rightly pointed out that from an Israelite perspective the condemnation of the surrounding nations, who time and again inflicted pain and suffering on the people, must have been much appreciated.<sup>178</sup> Amos thus utilises the nationalistic feelings of his audience to a rhetorical end, but his charges against Israel's neighbours are not motivated by such sentiments on his part, as we have already noted above. This is confirmed in particular by the Moab strophe, which does not deal with offences perpetrated against Israel.<sup>179</sup> However, two points need to be underlined here. First, Amos' audience will have thought it quite appropriate that Yahweh should punish their neighbours for their brutal deeds. Secondly, it should not be overlooked that most strophes do speak of crimes committed against Israel and thereby trigger a process of 'self-identification', a consciousness of having been violated by one's enemies.<sup>180</sup> This, it is hardly necessary to point out, obviously contributes greatly to the enormous rhetorical effect of the passage.

When Amos then moves on to Judah, his audience's enjoyment of the speech inevitably increases. What is interesting, however, is that Judah's guilt – although being called a  $\text{פֶּשַׁע}$  as well and thus being equated with that of the nations – is portrayed in different terms. Amos accuses Israel's southern relatives of a wholesale rejection of the divine law and a willingness to be deceived by the teaching of false prophets.<sup>181</sup> Whatever the terms  $\text{תּוֹרָה}$  and  $\text{חֻקִּים}$  allude to in this

<sup>175</sup> PROCKSCH, "Wort Gottes" im AT': 90.

<sup>176</sup> Against DÜRR, *Wertung des göttlichen Wortes im Alten Testament und im antiken Orient*. A similar dynamic view of the spoken word has been advocated by JACOB, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 127-134; ZIMMERLI, 'Wort Gottes im AT'; GREYER, *Name und Wort Gottes im Alten Testament*, 103-107; EICHRODT, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2:40-48; VON RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2:89-107 (who refers to CASSIRER, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*); et al. I owe these references to THISELTON, 'The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings': 283, who criticises this view because it proceeds from mistaken semantic conceptions (pp. 289f.; cf. BARR, *Semantics of Biblical Language*), and generalises a principle that applies only to words uttered by a deity (or sometimes an authoritative person like a king or prophet) (pp. 290-293). Thiselton also points out that when words 'do things', this is not due to an inherent magical power but to social conventions as has been shown by linguists and speech act theorists (pp. 293-296; cf. DE SAUSSURE, *Cours de linguistique générale*; LYONS, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*; ULLMANN, *Semantics*; AUSTIN, *How to Do Things With Words*; SEARLE, *Speech Acts*; idem, *Expression and Meaning*; see also THISELTON, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, passim; idem, 'The Parables as Language-Event'). Finally, Thiselton maintains that Procksch and von Rad wrongly polarised the discussion around the two views of language being either *dynamic* or *dianoetic* (THISELTON, 'The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings': 296-298).

<sup>177</sup> Such a use would not strip them of their own power; cf. LEHMING, 'Erwägungen zu Amos': 158; against WÜRTHWEIN, 'Amos-Studien': 37.

<sup>178</sup> PAUL, 'Literary Reinvestigation of the Authenticity of the Oracles Against the Nations of Amos': 197.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 9, 21; GOTTWALD, *All the Kingdoms of the Earth*, 109f.; against WÜRTHWEIN, 'Amos-Studien': 36 n. 51.

<sup>180</sup> This has been observed by CARROLL R., 'God and His People in the Nations' History': 63f.

<sup>181</sup> Traditionally v. 4c has been seen as a reference to idol worship (G. A. SMITH, 135; VON ORELLI, 63; NOWACK, 133; ROBINSON, 76; WOLFF, 163; MAYS, 41; DEISSLER, 98; MOSIS, 'כִּזְבִּי': 114; CARPENTER/GRISANI, 'כִּזְבִּי': 620; for other interpretations cf. PFEIFER, 'Ich bin in tiefe Wasser geraten': 337f.). However, this view has been challenged recently by BONS, 'Denotat von כִּזְבִּיָהֶם'. First, he notes that כִּזְבִּי nowhere else refers to idols (p. 201). Secondly, הִפְחֵה *hiph* is generally used with humans as subject, not gods (pp. 209f.). Thirdly, both terms are used in particular in connection with false prophets (p. 210). Fourthly, the idiom הִלַּךְ אֲחֵרֵי, although often used as a technical term for the worship of foreign gods (p. 209), does not always denote idolatry. It can signify also an attitude that Bons describes as 'sich [z. B. in der Erwartung eines Vorteils] an jemanden halten' (p. 211). He also notes that there is some indication that כִּזְבִּיָהֶם refers to humans, very probably to false prophets (pp. 211-213). Cf. LOHFINK, 'Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?': 331f.; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 301-305.



context – a so-called ‘prophetic torah’ or Yahweh’s commands in a more general sense<sup>182</sup> –, they do not require the existence of the book of Deuteronomy. Indeed, the entire accusation is most likely not of dtr. origin as Bons and Lohfink have shown recently.<sup>183</sup> More importantly, however, some have argued that the charge against Judah, couched in somewhat formulaic language, is a colourless and anti-climactic move at this point. This understanding of formulaic language is misconceived as has been shown by Niditch in her study *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature*. Basing her argument on Foley’s work *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*, she notes that a formula is

a signifier rich in inherent cultural meanings, ... a template of the tradition and an indicator of worldview. Formulas bring the larger tradition to bear on the passage, allowing a few words to evoke a wider and deeper range of settings, events, characters, emotions, and meanings than the immediate textual context of the phrase might suggest.<sup>184</sup>

Thus even though the reference to the torah in Amos 2:4 is correctly classified as being formulaic, this does in no way diminish its role. Similarly misconceived is Wellhausen’s understanding of the passage’s rhetoric. He complains, ‘ausserdem wird durch das Zwischeneintreten Judas die Überraschung abgeschwächt, dass das Gewitter schliesslich in Israel selber einschlägt ...’<sup>185</sup> Apart from the fact that an exclusion of Judah might easily have been interpreted as favouritism,<sup>186</sup> the strophe actually heightens the rhetorical impact of the whole piece in that it misleads the prophet’s audience to assume that with the condemnation of their southern relatives the climax has now been reached.

To appreciate the clever organisation and rhetorical power of the OAN, let us return to their arrangement. First, the general effect of dealing with all these *foreign* nations in such an elaborate *tour de force* must have been to ‘lull the audience into a false sense of security’.<sup>187</sup> We have

<sup>182</sup> For the former option cf. BONS, ‘Denotat von כִּזְבִּיהֶם’: 208; for the latter view see RUDOLPH, ‘Die angefochtenen Völkersprüche in Amos 1 und 2’: 48; and NIEMANN, ‘Theologie in geographischem Gewand’: 185. Cf. also the excursus in DRIVER, 230f.

<sup>183</sup> BONS, ‘Denotat von כִּזְבִּיהֶם’; LOHFINK, ‘Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?’: 329-333. SCHMIDT, ‘Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches’, found the following characteristics of dtr. language in Amos 2:4-5: מָאֵס מֵאֵס הַיְהוָה אֶת-תּוֹרַת יְהוָה, שָׁמַר חֻקֵי יְהוָה, the parallelism of תּוֹרַת and חֻקֵי with foreign gods as object, and the combination of the rejection of Yahweh’s laws and the following of foreign gods. Reviewing the Old Testament evidence, Lohfink concludes that none of these is specifically deuteronomistic. Schmidt’s analysis, therefore, proves to be badly flawed. It has been criticised also by WAGNER, ‘Überlegungen zur Frage nach den Beziehungen des Propheten Amos zum Südreich’: 666; RUDOLPH, 120f.; idem, ‘Die angefochtenen Völkersprüche in Amos 1 und 2’: 48f.; BLENKINSOPP, *History of Prophecy in Israel*, 89; HAYES, 102-104; VAN LEEUWEN, 76; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 295-306; PAUL, 20-23; idem ‘Literary Reinvestigation of the Authenticity of the Oracles Against the Nations of Amos’: 194ff.; G. V. SMITH, 76ff. For a research review cf. MARTIN-ACHARD, *Amos: L’homme, le message, l’influence*, 128f.; for an extensive bibliography see PFEIFER, ‘Ich bin in tiefe Wasser geraten’: 332-335. Some scholars now warn against the danger of a ‘pandeteronomism’ (cf. LOHFINK, ‘Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?’; BRAULIK, ‘Theorien über das Deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk’: 131; DAY, ‘Pre-Deuteronomic Allusions to the Covenant’: 1; BREKELMANS, ‘Deuteronomistic Influence in Isaiah 1-12’: 176) which is quite appropriate in the light of Ringgren’s claim to ‘know at least one scholar who is prepared to write off the entire book, with the exception of two or three verses, as a Deuteronomistic composition’ (RINGGREN, ‘Israelite Prophecy’: 204). Recently ROTTZOLL, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs*, 23-30, also rejected the attribution of 2:4-5 to a dtr. redactor but, noting some similarities with the holiness code in Lev 17-26 and the book of Ezekiel, advocated a ‘priestly-deuteronomistic redaction’ instead.

<sup>184</sup> NIDITCH, *Oral World and Written Word*, 11; cf. FOLEY, *Immanent Art*, passim.

<sup>185</sup> WELLHAUSEN, 71; cf. also NOWACK, 133.

<sup>186</sup> BONS, ‘Denotat von כִּזְבִּיהֶם’: 203; RUDOLPH, ‘Die angefochtenen Völkersprüche in Amos 1 und 2’: 48; WAGNER, ‘Überlegungen zur Frage nach den Beziehungen des Propheten Amos zum Südreich’: 668.

<sup>187</sup> Thus BARTON, *Isaiah 1-39*, 84. CARROLL R., ‘God and His People in the Nations’ History’: 60, notes that the repetitious formulaic language together with the concatenous pattern observed by PAUL, ‘Amos 1:3-2:3’, have the effect of ‘pulling forward’ the hearer/reader to the next strophe.

already seen that this strategy involves two pseudo-climaxes in the Edom and Judah oracles, but in addition, two further observations can be made. First, the oracles proceed in a staircase fashion from foreign nations proper to blood relatives in general,<sup>188</sup> the sister nation Judah in particular, and, finally, Israel as the ultimate target.

*A Condemnation of foreign nations*

1. Aram (1:3-5)
2. Philistia (1:6-8)
3. Tyre (1:9-10)

*B Condemnation of blood relatives*

4. Edom (1:11-12)
5. Ammon (1:13-15)
6. Moab (2:1-3)

*C Supposedly climactic condemnation of the sister nation*

7. Judah (2:4-5)

*D Climactic condemnation of Israel*

8. Israel (2:6-16)

Figure 7: The Rhetorical Structure of the OAN<sup>189</sup>

Secondly, the series is arranged also geographically according to a pattern that closes in on Israel. As some have noted, the oracles alternate between nations that border on Israel and those that are neighbours of Judah; and as they alternate they move progressively closer to Israel and Judah's common border. The geographical orientation thus moves from the north-east (Aram) to the south-west (Philistia), the north-west (Phoenicia), the south-east (Edom, Ammon, Moab), and finally to Judah and Israel.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>188</sup> For this differentiation cf. THEIS, 114; CHISHOLM, 'For Three Sins ... Even For Four': 188.

<sup>189</sup> BOVATI/MEYNET, 38, proposed a chiasmic structure (A: 1:3-2:3, B: 2:4-5, A': 2:6-16), the outer parts of which form further chiasms. Thus section A (1:3-2:3) is defined as A (1:3-8), B (1:9-12), A' (1:13-2:3) (ibid., 39), and A' (2:6-16) as A (2:6a), B (2:6b-8), C (2:9-10), D (2:11-12), C' (2:13), B' (2:14-16a), A' (2:16b) (ibid., 73). However, MCLAUGHLIN, 'Review of BOVATI/MEYNET, *Le livre du prophète Amos*': 115f., rightly notes that the proposal of the major chiasm distorts the passage's rhetoric by making the Judah oracle the core element instead of regarding it as 'a building block in an argument culminating in the final sequence.'

<sup>190</sup> STEINMANN, 'The Order of Amos's Oracles Against the Nations': 687; HAYES, 'Amos's Oracles Against the Nations': 153f.; BIRCH, 181; NIEMANN, 'Theologie in geographischem Gewand': 187f.; ESLINGER, 'Education of Amos': 36.



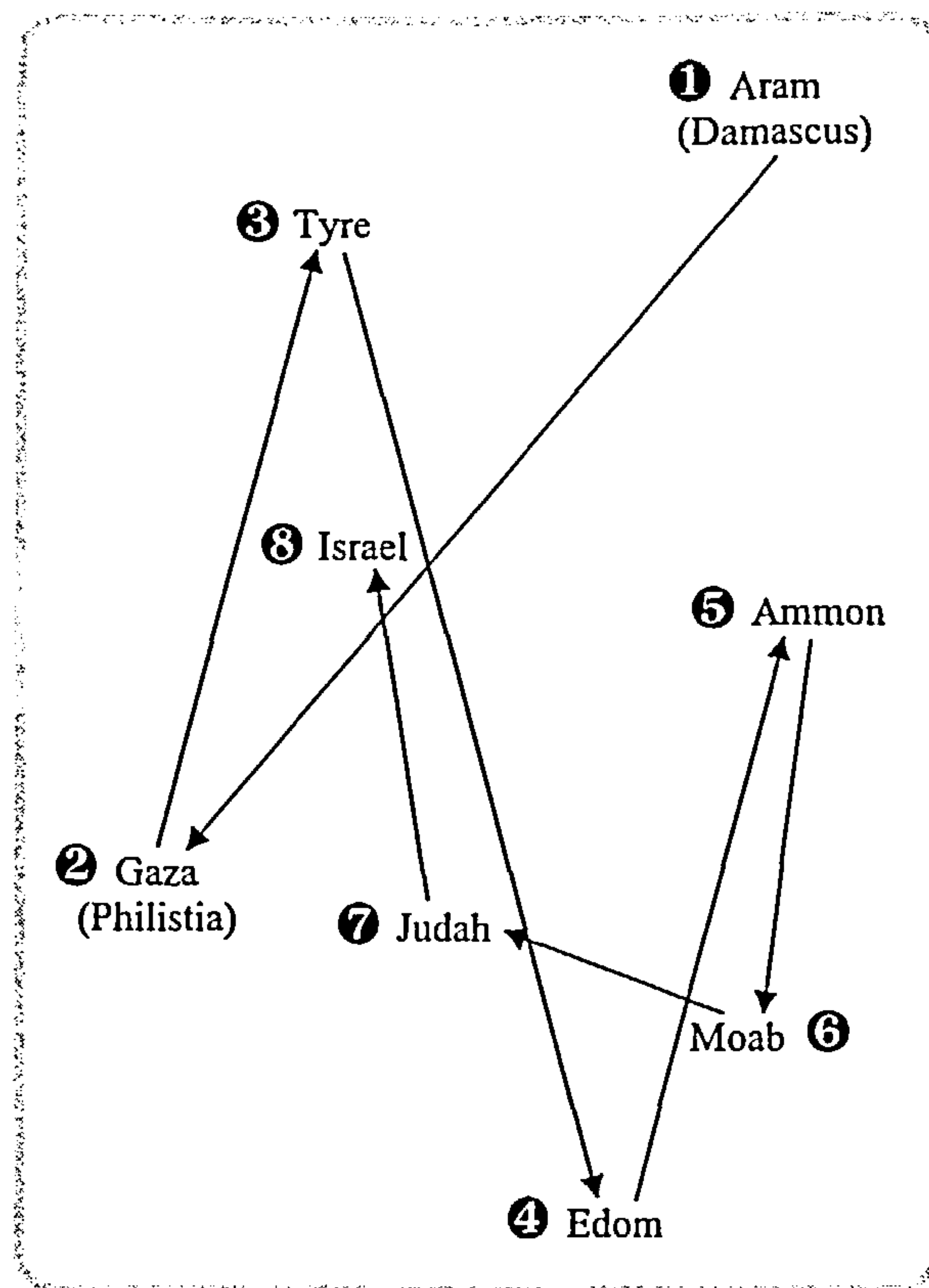


Figure 8: The Geographical Arrangement of the OAN<sup>191</sup>

Earlier on, other geographical arrangement theories have been proposed by Marti and Bentzen, neither of which carried its point although Bentzen's ideas were influential for a while.<sup>192</sup>

Combining the two analyses suggested above, we would suggest that the rhetoric works in two ways. First, the movement from strangers to blood relatives etc. advances the divine judgement ever closer to the people's own sphere. Secondly, the rhetorical effect of the geographical order is 'to throw a kind of geographical noose around Israel and thus to make the climactic accusation against her even more devastatingly powerful.'<sup>193</sup> In a similar vein Jemielity notes,

this series works like a progressively chilling, ironic thriller in which the ultimate and principal victim, disarmingly satisfied and rendered complacent by the misfortune of others, comes slowly and fearfully to realize that she has been witnessing an irresistible movement towards her own destruction. Amos moves geographically from the farthest peripheries of the northern kingdom in Damascus and Gaza, Tyre and Edom, to the very eastern and southern borders of the kingdom – Ammon,

<sup>191</sup> BEENTJES, 'Oracles Against the Nations': 204, finds a similar order in the OAN in Ezek 25-32; and ZENGER, *A God of Vengeance?*, 43, detects a geographical pattern of encirclement in Ps 83:7-8.

<sup>192</sup> MARTI, 'Zur Komposition von Amos 1 3-2 3', 326f., thought the order was determined by the conquest route of the Assyrians, but his theory could accommodate only for the oracles against Aram, Ammon, Moab, and Israel. BENTZEN, 'Ritual Background of Amos 1,2-2,16' (followed by KAPELRUD, *Central Ideas in Amos*, 17-33; BEAUCAMP, 'Amos 1-2': 438ff.; VAN SELMS, 'Amos' Geographic Horizon': 166; FOHRER, 'Prophetie und Magie': 40ff.; idem, 'Bemerkungen zum neueren Verständnis der Prophetie': 479; HAYES, 'Usage of Oracles against Foreign Nations in Ancient Israel'; GOTTWALD, *All the Kingdoms of the Earth*, 103-112), proposed that the arrangement was based on the pattern of the Egyptian execration texts, a theory that has been criticised by WEISS, 'The Pattern of the "Execration Texts" in the Prophetic Literature'; FEY, *Amos und Jesaja*, 46; WOLFF, 177f.; and BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 12-14. WOLFF, 179, also refuted Reventlow's relation of the OAN to a ritual cursing at a covenant festival (cf. *Amt des Propheten bei Amos*, 73-75; WÜRTHWEIN, 'Ursprung der prophetischen Gerichtsrede'). For a discussion of various proposals concerning their *Sitz im Leben* cf. BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, ch. 2.

<sup>193</sup> WRIGHT, *Living as the People of God*, 123; cf. NOGALSKI, 'Teaching Outline for Amos': 147, who speaks of an 'encircling'.

Moab, and Judah – until, ironically, only Israel is left, to receive not words of encouragement but rather the longest of the oracles of doom.<sup>194</sup>

On the other hand, however, some scholars are not convinced that the series does reflect a deliberate geographical arrangement since the one outlined above is not as neat as it might have been. Perhaps then the audience would not have been alert to this geographical movement. Even if that were the case, however, the rhetorical power of the passage would not have been lessened as Good notes pointing out that

we can imagine the xenophobic listeners nodding in happy agreement as the prophet's doom moves across one enemy after another, the very piling up of oracles lulling them to a doze until suddenly, with that characteristic prophetic shock, they are jerked awake with 'For three transgressions of – Israel, or for four ...' *The oracles are so adroitly arranged as to appear haphazard, satisfying the hearers' desire for destruction on their enemies, while all the time the doom circles closer and closer. The irony lies in the shock of the climax, which is surely not intended to be noticed until too late.*<sup>195</sup>

But however the minutiae of the oracles' arrangement are interpreted, once the by-now-familiar words 'for three sins and for four of ...' resound again followed by the mention of Israel herself, it is clear that the real climax has been reached. And it is no less obvious that the entire piece is contrived in a masterly fashion, designed to achieve what has been called a 'rhetoric of entrapment'.<sup>196</sup>

Before we then turn to the rhetoric of the Israel oracle, it should be noted that this equation of Israel with the surrounding nations must have been regarded by Amos' audience as extremely impudent. As Wolff puts it, 'unerhört aber ist Israels Einstufung in die Reihe dieser gerichtsreifen Völker. Solche Gleichstellung vollzieht erstmals Amos, und zwar wiederholt (9,7; vgl. 6,2).'<sup>197</sup> In a similar vein, Stuart notes that '*Israel, being the most guilty of the group, has become in effect a foreign nation to Yahweh*',<sup>198</sup> and according to Carroll R., 'Israel is enmeshed within several entwining webs of structural devices that make it part of this world of nations and their history.'<sup>199</sup>

The equation is achieved by employing the same introductory formula as in the preceding strophes, including the catchword עֲשֵׂה. This in effect means that the social injustice against the poor and needy, of which Israel is guilty, is placed on a par with the shocking war-crimes committed by her neighbours, 'transferring as it were the horror to commonplace everyday misdemeanours which people may have regretted but would mostly shrug off as the kind of thing that just happens in an imperfect world.'<sup>200</sup> Sometimes this is seen as a 'rhetorical trick' used in an attempt to justify Yahweh's judgement as well as to provide an answer to the burning question of theodicy which arose in consequence of the nation's exile.<sup>201</sup> However, Noble rejects the notion of a 'rhetorical trick' because

<sup>194</sup> JEMIELITY, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 91.

<sup>195</sup> GOOD, *Irony in the Old Testament*, 34 (emphasis added).

<sup>196</sup> ALTER, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 144; cf. also DELL, 'Misuse of Forms in Amos': 54f. Similar examples of entrapment are to be found in 2 Sam 12:1-14; 1 Kgs 20:35-43; and, of course, Amos 3:1-8.

<sup>197</sup> WOLFF, 180; cf. EICHRODT, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2:114; GESE, 'Komposition bei Amos': 93; and JEREMIAS, 'Völkersprüche und Visionsberichte im Amosbuch': 90.

<sup>198</sup> STUART, 309 (italics mine).

<sup>199</sup> CARROLL R., 'God and His People in the Nations' History': 63.

<sup>200</sup> BARTON, *Amos's Oracles against the Nations*, 48; cf. MCALPINE, 'The Word Against the Nations': 5.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. BARTON, 'History and Rhetoric in the Prophets': 60f.; and MÜLLER, 'Ein Paradigma zur Theorie der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft': 113ff., who compares the use of the socio-critical indictments to the thought-model of the *usus*



if Amos' attempt to persuade us that sharp practices in the marketplace are every bit as reprehensible as ripping open pregnant women is really just a rhetorical trick that masks the difference in content behind the similarity of form, then, once we recognise the trick, we will no longer be persuaded – and quite rightly too, for our moral sense protests that there really is a massive difference of degree between such things. But with this Amos' theodicy collapses ...<sup>202</sup>

It is therefore best to take the prophet's words at face value. Indeed, the fierceness of Amos' accusations against Israel, illustrated by the often highly emotive language,<sup>203</sup> confirms that, in his view, the offences of God's people were just as bad as, or perhaps even worse than, the crimes committed by the foreign nations. The Israelites wronged, after all, their fellow citizens.<sup>204</sup> A similar point is made in Amos 3:9-11, where two former oppressors of Israel (representing *inter-national* crimes) are called to witness the oppression that is to be found *within* Israel.<sup>205</sup> Commenting on Amos 1-2, Marks therefore rightly notes that 'the cited atrocities of the nations [...] are only preliminaries to the more severe transgressions against social justice perpetrated in Israel.'<sup>206</sup>

Having turned to Israel herself, Amos makes it unmistakably clear where his main emphasis lies. The list enumerating the people's sins (2:6-8) is much longer than in any of the preceding oracles. As regards the content of the accusations, Amos' principal focus is on social offences.<sup>207</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of the present investigation to engage in a minute discussion of the socio-economic issues involved in the interpretation of Amos in general, or to present a detailed exegesis of the passage in question, some brief comments are required at this point. It is often affirmed that throughout the book, Amos accuses *all* Israel and accordingly threatens the whole people with a comprehensive divine judgement.<sup>208</sup> This view, however, fails to pay sufficient attention to the actual referents of Amos' accusations as well as to the fact that the prophet's charges imply a distinction between culprits and victims. The neglect of these two aspects, in turn, results in questionable theological implications as is illustrated by Schmidt's complaint that Amos

droht das Ende des Gottesvolkes an, begründet diese Zukunftsansage in der Regel jedoch mit der Erpressung, die die Reichen an den Armen üben, obwohl dieser Tatbestand doch nur als Motiv für die

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*elenchiticus legis*. FRITZ, 'Amosbuch, Amos-Schule und historischer Amos', regards almost the entire book as a '*vaticinium ex eventu* ... , um das eingetroffene Unheil als gerechtes Handeln Jahwes zu deuten' (p. 41).

<sup>202</sup> NOBLE, 'Israel among the Nations': 66.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. esp. וְעַל-בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְמַעַן חָלַל אֶת-שֵׁם קְדוֹשִׁי וְהִשְׁאֵפִים עַל-עַפְרָאֲרָךְ בְּרֹאשׁ דְּלִים וְדָרְךְ עֲנֻיִם יְטוּ in v. 7 as well as וְעַל-בְּגָדֵיהֶם לְמַעַן חָלַל אֶת-שֵׁם קְדוֹשִׁי in v. 8; see also 3:9f.; 4:1; 5:7, 10-13; 6:1-6, 12; 8:4-6.

<sup>204</sup> Similarly WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 105; JEREMIAS, 'The Interrelationship Between Amos and Hosea': 183; DEISSLER, 102. Whether this is then taken as an attempt to answer the question of theodicy or as an endeavour to alert the audience to how serious their wrongdoings are and what consequences they might have depends on how the oracles are dated.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. p. 146 below.

<sup>206</sup> MARKS, 'Twelve Prophets': 222; cf. also G. A. SMITH, 122f., who rather tendentiously speaks of 'the atrocities of Barbarism' on the one hand and 'the sins of Civilisation' on the other.

<sup>207</sup> There appear to be cultic overtones as well, however, which it is not necessary to delete (contra ELLIGER, BHS ad loc.; VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 21f.; and DIETRICH, 'JHWH, Israel und die Völker beim Propheten Amos': 321ff.) since Amos frequently portrays the social and cultic spheres as interwoven dimensions of Israel's life (cf. p. 166; this has been stressed in particular by CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, ch. 5; cf. idem, 'The Prophetic Text and the Literature of Dissent in Latin America').

<sup>208</sup> Cf. SMEND, 'Das Nein des Amos'; WOLFF, 123-126 passim; idem, *Stunde des Amos*, 23ff.; idem, 'Das unwiderstehliche Wort'; JEREMIAS, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung*, 151; SCHMIDT, 'Die prophetische "Grundgewißheit"'; idem, 'Suchet den Herrn, so werdet ihr leben'; idem, *Zukunftsgewißheit und Gegenwartskritik*; SCHMID, 'Amos: Zur Frage nach der "geistigen Heimat" des Propheten': 97.

Bestrafung der high society (vgl. Am. 4, 1f.), aber nicht für die Unheilsdrohung über jedermann (5,2 u. a.) ausreicht.<sup>209</sup>

Crüsemann even goes a step further in noting that 'unsere europäische Exegese hat ... diesen Amos durch literarkritische, formgeschichtliche und theologische Operationen so weit radikalisiert, daß er letztlich als Verkünder eines völkermordenden Gottes erscheint, den man dann getrost für theologisch überholt ansehen kann.'<sup>210</sup> Finally, the view that Amos simply announces a total end for all Israel is characterised all too often by a patent literalism that does not take into account the rhetoric of Amos' message in particular, let alone the functional aspect of literary and/or oral discourse in general.<sup>211</sup>

Instead of attempting to solve the many questions involved in the interpretation of Amos 2:6-8,<sup>212</sup> however, we shall merely set out the issues at stake, an integrated explanation of which is possible only in the context of Amos' entire message.<sup>213</sup> First, how are we to define the culprits portrayed in these verses? Do they belong exclusively to the higher stratum of society,<sup>214</sup> or is a broader definition indicated?<sup>215</sup> How significant is the distinction between victims and culprits? Does it imply a non-inclusive understanding of the prophet's charges in that some people were simply victims,<sup>216</sup> i.e. not guilty themselves, and thus not in view in the prophet's an-

<sup>209</sup> SCHMIDT, 'Die prophetische "Grundgewißheit": 546.

<sup>210</sup> CRÜSEMANN, 'Vorwort': 10.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. MÖLLER, 'Rehabilitation eines Propheten': 45ff.

<sup>212</sup> Extensive discussions of 2:6-8 are FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehren*, 47-79; and REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 31-50; but cf. also BACH, 'Gottesrecht und weltliches Recht in der Verkündigung des Propheten Amos': 28-33; BEEK, 'Religious Background of Amos 2:6-8'; BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, ch. 2; LANG, 'Sklaven und Unfreie im Buch Amos'; idem, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority*, passim; DEARMAN, *Property Rights in the Eighth-Century Prophets*, 19-25; DIETRICH, 'JHWH, Israel und die Völker beim Propheten Amos': 320-324; HILLERS, 'Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Old Testament'; and the commentaries ad loc. For a general discussion of the referents of Amos' social criticism cf. FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehren*, ch. 3.2. He summarises and evaluates the proposals by NOTH, 'Das Krongut der israelitischen Könige'; DONNER, 'Die soziale Botschaft der Propheten'; TIMM, *Die Dynastie Omri*; SCHÄFER-LICHTENBERGER, *Stadt und Eidgenossenschaft im Alten Testament*; CLAUSS, *Gesellschaft und Staat in Juda und Israel*; RÜTERSWÖRDEN, *Die Beamten der israelitischen Königszeit*; and FENDLER, 'Zur Sozialkritik des Amos'. See also the annotated bibliography by SANDERSON, 'War, Peace, and Justice in the Hebrew Bible', which lists works on 'Political Power and Modes of Government in the Hebrew Bible' (pp. 149-158) and 'Violence, Peace, and Justice in the Hebrew Bible' (pp. 158-164).

<sup>213</sup> As stated elsewhere (cf. 'Rehabilitation eines Propheten': 53f. n. 30), I favour the approach of Carroll R. who rejects any simplistic solution that turns Amos into a champion of the poor and is then forced to disregard all those passages that are at odds with such a theory. Comparing the complex cultural (esp. cultic/religious) and socio-economic factors surfacing in the textual world of Amos with those at work in modern Latin American countries, Carroll R. stresses that the prophet's message 'cannot be reduced to a neat liberation paradigm' ('God and His People in the Nations' History': 68). Even if those who argue for a narrow definition of the culprits condemned in 2:6-8 are correct, the book as a whole paints a more complex picture. It portrays a society characterised by social injustice, a nationalistic cult/religion serving the people's self-satisfaction and a utopian militarism. All these are censured by the prophet. Cf. CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, ch. 2 (for a discussion of sociological studies of OT texts) and ch. 5 (for his reading of Amos 3-6); see also his articles 'God and His People in the Nations' History'; 'The Prophetic Text and the Literature of Dissent in Latin America'; and 'Reflecting on War and Utopia in the Book of Amos'.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. DONNER, 'Die soziale Botschaft der Propheten'; KOCH, 'Entstehung der sozialen Kritik bei den Propheten'; LANG, 'Sklaven und Unfreie im Buch Amos'; idem, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority*, passim; DEARMAN, *Property Rights in the Eighth-Century Prophets*, 19-25; FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehren*, 47-79; and REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 31-50.

<sup>215</sup> FENDLER, 'Zur Sozialkritik des Amos'; HUFFMON, 'The Social Role of Amos' Message'; JARUZELSKA, 'Social Structure in the Kingdom of Israel in the Eighth Century B. C.'; G. V. SMITH, 72; and CAMPBELL, 'Archaeological Reflections on Amos's Targets', who because of archaeological evidence at Shechem infers that cheating in trade and a comfortable life-style at the expense of others were not restricted to the higher classes.

<sup>216</sup> On the victims cf. FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehren*, ch. 3.1; SCHWANTES, *Das Recht der Armen*, esp. 87-99; KOCH, 'Entstehung der sozialen Kritik bei den Propheten': 242ff.; GILES, 'Dal and 'ebyon'; see also the lexical entries by JOHNSON, 'צָרָק, צָרָקָה, צָרָקָה, צָרָקָה'; REIMER, 'צָרָק'; BOTTERWECK, 'אָבְיוֹן'; DOMERIS, 'אָבְיוֹן'; FABRY, 'צָרָק, צָרָקָה, צָרָקָה, צָרָקָה': esp. 222f.; CARROLL R., 'דָּלָל'; GERSTENBERGER, 'עָנָה II'; and DUMBRELL, 'עָנָה'.



nouncements of judgement? How, on the other hand, are we to understand the general reference to *יְשָׁרָאֵל* in v. 6? Does this indicate that the entire people are in view as is often assumed? Or do the specific cases listed in vv. 6-8 require the term *יְשָׁרָאֵל* to be defined on the basis of these examples? Are these, after all, to be taken as *the* motive for Amos' harangue? Or may it not be the case that they are just samples of a society that as a whole disregards Yahweh's standards? What light do vv. 9-12 shed on the interpretation of vv. 6-8, and how comprehensive is the punishment announced in vv. 13-16?

We will attempt to find answers to these questions in the course of our reading. What needs to be stressed here, however, is that the prophet's charges must have been well justified, if ever he was to convince his hearers of his position. Thus, Israelite society must have been permeated thoroughly by a social injustice of the kind referred to. Secondly, the general reference to *יְשָׁרָאֵל* in v. 6 clearly opens up the possibility that not only those guilty of the wrongdoings listed in vv. 6-8 but the populace at large is in view here.<sup>217</sup> And as Amos subsequently expands his critique of Israelite society to include its wrong perception and performance of the cult, the list of the guilty extends well beyond the culprits of 2:6-8. But what then is the rhetorical function of this section? Rather than reducing the options to the question as to whether Amos aimed at leading his audience to repent of their life-style or whether he simply announced Israel's end, we ought to consider the possibility that the prophet attempted to convince the people of how short they fell of Yahweh's standards.<sup>218</sup> As the ensuing discussion between Amos and his audience indicates, this was not an easy task since the Israelites relied heavily on their religious traditions as well as on their military and economic successes. Perhaps the drastic language in passages like 3:9-10; 4:1-5; 5:21-23 is best explained in this context, i.e. as an attempt to overcome the people's ill founded but nevertheless deeply rooted self-assurance?

Proceeding then to the next sub-section in vv. 9-12, we note that the structure, established in the previous strophes, is here expanded. This serves to underline the inappropriateness of the people's behaviour by contrasting it with Yahweh's past acts of salvation (2:9-10) as well as his attempts to guide his people by raising up prophets and nazirites (v. 11).<sup>219</sup> This is followed by a statement charging the people with the rejection of these divine representatives (v. 12).<sup>220</sup> The

<sup>217</sup> This, however, does not imply that the proponents of the 'utter doom theory' are correct in their belief that Amos announces the total end of the entire populace.

<sup>218</sup> This is close to the 'repentance theory', but it is not the same. By defining the prophet's objective as an attempt to correct the audience's perceptions of reality, criticisms like that by Smend against the 'repentance theory' are foreclosed (cf. p. 91 for a brief discussion). It is suggested here, however, that Amos did not focus on repentance simply because the reaction of his audience (as captured in the book of Amos) shows that they saw no need for it.

<sup>219</sup> There is no need to take the reference to the prophets as an 'abschließende Würdigung der Unheilspredigt' (against KÖCKERT, 'Das Gesetz und die Propheten in Amos 1-2': 148 and SCHMIDT, 'Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches': 181f.). It is just as easily understood as referring to the 'line of [named and unnamed] prophetic messengers following Moses' (PAUL, 92; cf. RIEGER, *Die Bedeutung der Geschichte für die Verkündigung des Amos und Hosea*, 11; RUDOLPH, 146).

<sup>220</sup> Amos 2:9-12 (or certain parts of the passage) have sometimes been attributed to dtr. editors (cf. SCHMIDT, 'Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches': 178-183; REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 29f. [n. 5]; DIETRICH, 'JHWH, Israel und die Völker beim Propheten Amos': 320f.; KÖCKERT, 'Das Gesetz und die Propheten in Amos 1-2': 147ff.). This has been questioned by KRAUSE, *Das Verhältnis von sozialer Kritik und kommender Katastrophe in den Unheilspredigten des Amos*, 71-88; HOBBS, 'Amos 3 1b and 2 10'; and LOHFINK, 'Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?': 325-327. The latter two challenged the supposed dtr. origin of the Exodus formula as it appears here and in 3:1 because Amos uses – the 'pre-dtr.' (thus RUDOLPH, 146 n. 21; PAUL, 90) – *עלה* rather than the 'dtr.' *צא*. On the two formulas cf. HUMBERT, 'Dieu fait sortir'; WIJNGAARDS, *The Formulas of the Deuteronomic Creed*; idem, 'הוציא and העלה'; GROSS, 'Herausführungsformel': 443; and CHILDS, 'Deuteronomic Formulae of the Exodus Tradition'.

conflict between Yahweh and his people is accentuated by the double use of an emphatic  $\text{וְאֶנְכִי}$ <sup>221</sup> (vv. 9, 10). The rhetorical impact of the ‘expansion’ is heightened further by the interesting grammatical phenomenon of repeated shifts in number (i.e. Yahweh is referred to in the first as well as the third person and Israel is either addressed directly, employing second person pronouns, or spoken about using the third person).

In the past, scholars have often been tempted to purge the texts of such ‘unevennesses’. However, given the frequency of these phenomena in the OT as well as ANE literatures, there is now an increasing number of exegetes who, instead of finding fault with the ancient authors or detecting evidence for editorial work, prefer to look into the possible reasons for these grammatical inconsistencies. Thus, Goldingay in a recent article on Isa 42:18-25 stressed that so-called ‘unevennesses’ in the Hebrew text ‘may seem such because of mistaken expectations on our part’.<sup>222</sup> He also maintained that phenomena, such as a combination of singular and plural, finite verb and infinite, second and third person verb or first and third person verb, etc., serve to make a point. Thus, ‘different rhetorical effects are achieved by each form of speech – for instance, distancing which encourages open thinking, or confrontation which encourages self-examination, or identification which encourages openness by forswearing a criticism such as aspires to lofty transcendence.’<sup>223</sup>

Taking these observations into account, let us then probe into the effects of the grammatical shifts that occur in Amos 2:6ff. First, it should be noted that up to the end of v. 9, Yahweh is not addressing Israel but is talking *about* her. This changes in v. 10 where Yahweh suddenly begins to speak *to* his people (‘I brought *you* up’,  $\text{הֵעֲלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם}$ ). Seen in the light of the overall argument and rhetoric of the OAN, the following picture emerges. In 1:3-2:5 Yahweh is portrayed as speaking *about* Israel’s surrounding nations, interrupted only by Amos’ use of the introductory and closing formulas  $\text{אָמַר יְהוָה כֹּה}$  and  $\text{אָמַר יְהוָה}$ . When, finally, Israel herself becomes the target of the divine harangue, the fact that she, just like the foreign nations, is also spoken *about* in the third person creates the impression of Yahweh distancing himself from his people by reducing them to the same status as their neighbours.

At the same time, Yahweh talks about himself in the first person ( $\text{וְאֶנְכִי הֵשֵׁמַדְתִּי}$ ) thus expressing his personal involvement. The latter is particularly stressed in the phrase ‘so that my holy name is profaned’ in 2:7b. However, there is one notable exception to this first person discourse, namely, the construct  $\text{בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵיהֶם}$  in v. 8 which is used instead of the otherwise expected  $\text{בַּיִתִּי}$ .<sup>224</sup> Reverting to one of the possible reasons for grammatical inconsistencies suggested by Goldingay, this, we would suggest, is an example of deliberate distancing by Yahweh. It achieves an ironic effect in that Israel’s God is portrayed as talking about his people who, he says, desecrate the temple of – who they believe to be – *their* god.<sup>225</sup> However, as Amos emphasises time and again in the remainder of the book, this belief is mistaken in that Yahweh is not

<sup>221</sup> Cf. GK § 135a.

<sup>222</sup> GOLDINGAY, ‘Isaiah 42.18-25’: 46.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.: 48.

<sup>224</sup> See also  $\text{אֶת־הַתּוֹרַת יְהוָה}$  in 2:4 and the comments by RUDOLPH, 121; and HAYES, 102.

<sup>225</sup> FINLEY, 162, suggests that the phrase ‘might get across Amos’s desire to disassociate himself from [the people’s] practices’.



their god. That is to say, he is not a deity that is easily manipulated by cultic rituals replacing the obedience to his demands (e.g. of social justice).

From v. 9 onwards, Yahweh relates his saving acts on Israel's behalf. And it needs to be remembered that Israel is still spoken *about* as if she were just another foreign nation: Yahweh destroyed the Amorites 'before them' (מִפְּנֵי־הֶם). However, in v. 10 the narrational stance suddenly changes when Yahweh addresses his people in a very personal way by reminding them that 'I brought *you* up out of Egypt'. The rhetorical effect of this grammatical shift is best understood in the light of the Aristotelian concept of *pathos*. According to Aristotle, 'the orator persuades by means of his hearers, when they are roused to emotion by his speech, for the judgements we deliver are not the same when we are influenced by joy or sorrow, love or hate'.<sup>226</sup> This idea of rousing the audience's emotions explains very well the shift in 2:9-10 from talking *about* the Israelites to speaking *to* them.<sup>227</sup> In relating the exodus, the guidance in the desert as well as the raising up of prophets and nazirites as something '*I did for you*', Yahweh appeals to the people's cherished memories of the 'golden past'. These divine acts, however, the Israelites mistakenly took to be a guarantee for a promising future.

We may note in passing that some were irritated by the 'wrong order' of the narration of Israel's history in vv. 9ff. and have taken this, as one might have guessed, as indicative of intrusive editorial work.<sup>228</sup> However, Hoffman maintains that the premise 'that chronological order is the only possible structure in such a prophetic address' is an unnecessary one.<sup>229</sup> He adds that the progress of thought here is circular, proceeding from Yahweh's destruction of the Amorites, which is related to the inheritance of the land, to the exodus and then back again to the possession of the land. This, Hoffman concludes, is due to the nature of the passage in question, which 'is not a pure historiographical review, but a sharp polemic using historiographical motifs'.<sup>230</sup> Mays adds that the unusual order 'emphasizes that Israel's existence in the land of the Amorites is the result of Yahweh's work',<sup>231</sup> the effectiveness of which is underlined in that Yahweh affirms to have 'destroyed [the Amorite's] fruit above, and his roots beneath' (וְאַשְׁמִידָהּ וְשָׂרְשָׁיו מִתַּחַת).<sup>232</sup> However, this self-portrayal of Yahweh as a deity who attended to his weak people stands in sharp contrast to Israel's current treatment of her own weak members of society.<sup>233</sup> Thus, the affirmation of Yahweh's total destruction of the Amorites implies that a dangerous threat is now looming over his own people.<sup>234</sup>

<sup>226</sup> *Rhet.* 1.2.5: διὰ δὲ τῶν ἀκροατῶν, ὅταν εἰς πάθος ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου προαχθῶσιν· οὐ γὰρ ὁμοίως ἀποδίδομεν τὰς κρίσεις λυπούμενοι καὶ χαίροντες ἢ φιλοῦντες καὶ μισοῦντες. UEDING, *Klassische Rhetorik*, 44, points out that this 'rhetorical psychagogy' received particular attention in CICERO'S *De Oratore* (cf. 2:178, a passage that well illustrates the interdependence of the two concepts of *ethos* and *pathos*).

<sup>227</sup> B. K. SMITH, 66, notes that the shift 'heightens the direct and personal nature of the appeal.'

<sup>228</sup> Cf. e.g. WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 95; and WOLFF, 205f.

<sup>229</sup> HOFFMAN, 'A North Israelite Typological Myth': 178.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. RUDOLPH, 146, also opposes both a re-arrangement of the verses as well as the deletion of v. 10; and AMSLER, 182 n. 1, notes that 'un glossateur aurait certainement respecté l'ordre chronologique.'

<sup>231</sup> MAYS, 50; cf. HAYES, 114. STRYDOM, 'Sosiale geregtigheid by die profet Amos', stresses the importance of the land-promise as the basis for Amos' social criticism.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Isa 37:31; and a curse in the Phoenician 'Esmun'azar inscription, which reads אֵל יִכֵּן לָם שֶׁרֶשׁ לִמְט וּפְרִי לִמְעַל (cf. DONNER/RÖLLIG. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, § 14:11f.; see also GINSBERG, 'Roots Below and Fruit Above').

<sup>233</sup> DEISSLER, 100; cf. WOLFF, 204.

<sup>234</sup> Thus also JEREMIAS, 24; NIEHAUS, 368.

But the crisis in the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is even graver, inasmuch as his people went so far as to thwart Yahweh's attempts to guide them by the prophets and nazirites he appointed (vv. 11-12). This charge interestingly anticipates the reaction of Amos' audience to his own message. Thus, as Carroll R. remarks, 'the difficulty at 2:11-12 that God's people do not often listen to his words is reconfirmed in the following chapters'.<sup>235</sup> The ensuing rhetorical question in v. 11b urges the hearers/readers to acknowledge the claims made by Yahweh vv. 9-11.<sup>236</sup> Amos thus forces his audience to confirm that there is a great discrepancy between Yahweh's actions on their behalf and their own behaviour which includes not only the merciless exploitation of the weak and defenceless but also the deliberate attempt to corrupt Yahweh's servants and prevent them from performing their task.

(5.) Having focused on the series' overall arrangement and the prolonged guilt section of the Israel oracle, we now turn to the fifth formulaic expression, i.e. the punishment formula *וְשָׁלַחְתִּי אֵשׁ בְּבַיִת ... וְאָכְלָה אֶרְמִנוֹת* (in 1:14), which is followed by a statement outlining the actual details of the divine punishment. The fact that the judgement sections (as well as the passages charting the nations' wrongdoings) are not entirely formulaic but reflect the respective nation's circumstances underlines that the introductory oracles, although being employed primarily as the rhetorical preparation for the final blow against Israel, are themselves of theological significance as well. Yahweh, Amos strongly affirms, is as disgusted by the crimes of Israel's neighbours as his hearers/readers are and will therefore deal with them accordingly.

The most significant aspect concerning the punishment formula, however, is its absence from the Israel strophe. Precisely at the point when we would expect the words *וְשָׁלַחְתִּי אֵשׁ בְּבַיִת ... וְאָכְלָה אֶרְמִנוֹת* to be repeated, Yahweh relates his past beneficent dealings with his people. And when he finally comes to announce the punishment that is to befall Israel, the formulaic introductory phrase is dropped in favour of *הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי*. This construction highlights once more the crisis between the deity and Israel ('You made ... drink wine [וַתִּשְׁקֶנּוּ], and commanded ... [צִוִּיתֶם]. So, I ...').<sup>237</sup> In addition, the ensuing account of the punishment differs considerably from those of the preceding strophes. Not only is it much more detailed, but what is particularly striking is that it focuses not so much on the nature of the punishment as on its ineluctability. This is stressed by means of one of the book's many heptads listing various members of the military who will find it impossible to resist (cf. vv. 14-16). Thus, neither will Yahweh revoke his judgement (*לֹא אֲשִׁיבֶנּוּ*), nor will anybody, regardless of his strength or swiftness, be able to resist it or flee from it.

The nature of the punishment in question is not easy to determine because the meaning of *מַעֲיָק* and *תַּעֲיָק* is not at all clear. There is not even agreement concerning the root the terms are

<sup>235</sup> CARROLL R., 'God and His People in the Nations' History': 67f., who lists some examples of this 'reconfirmation'.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. RUDOLPH, 147. It is rhetorically marked in that the question marker *וְ* is followed by *אֵשׁ* (cf. GB sub *אֵשׁ*<sup>1</sup>; HALAT sub *אֵשׁ*<sup>1</sup> 5.) and the entire phrase is ended by what we have seen to be a local marker of emphasis, i.e. the oracle formula *וְאָכְלָה אֶרְמִנוֹת* (cf. 2.2.4.1; and NOBLE, 'The Function of *n'm Yhwh* in Amos': 624 n. 3).

<sup>237</sup> *אֲנֹכִי* might even be considered a 'Leitmotif' in vv. 9ff. Yahweh, who destroyed the Amorites, brought Israel up out of Egypt, etc., will now *מַעֲיָק* them (cf. MAYS, 53; JEREMIAS, 27).



derived from.<sup>238</sup> Regardless of this impediment, however, most commentators believe that v. 13 refers to an earthquake.<sup>239</sup> Alternatively, others maintain that vv. 14-16 clearly demand a battle context for the entire section.<sup>240</sup> This, however, is not the case as the connection between v. 13, on the one hand, and vv. 14-16, on the other, could be highly ironic. Thus, while Israel trusts in her army (cf. 6:13), Yahweh threatens them with a major quake that renders the (בְּרִגְלֵיו) קל, the חֲזָק, those who rely on their כַּח, the גְּבוּר, the תַּפֵּשׁ הַקֶּשֶׁת, the רֶכֶב הַסּוּס, and the אֲמִיץ אֲלֵימֹת אֲלֵימֹת אֲלֵימֹת אֲלֵימֹת alike utterly helpless. The nature of the punishment therefore needs to be determined, first and foremost, on the basis of v. 13. And although the exact meaning of מַעֲיֵק and תַּעֲיֵק is difficult to ascertain, the likening of Yahweh's action to something a cart full of sheaves does, might indicate that an earthquake is in view here. From a rhetorical point of view, however, the most interesting comment on the image of v. 13 comes from Ryken who notes that Amos inverts 'the idealized associations of pastoral literature. A cart full of sheaves is supposed to be an image of abundance, a pastoral version of the good life, yet here it becomes an image of torture.'<sup>241</sup>

Some have contended that the textual order of vv. 14-16 is rather awkward and that some lines ought to be deleted.<sup>242</sup> However, a more convincing way of dealing with these textual problems has been suggested by Rendtorff, who thinks that the *stichos* 15b is misplaced due to a scribal error and should be transferred so that it follows 14a.<sup>243</sup> This solution is indeed quite intriguing as it results in a logical order in that the first *bistichos* deals with the swift (קל, קל (ברגליו), the second one with the strong (חזק, גבור), and the final one with those who are armed (רכב הסוס, תפש הקשת).<sup>244</sup> In addition, each *bistichos* would end on the refrain לא ימלט (נפשו).<sup>245</sup> Given Amos' frequent use of formulaic language and strophic arrangements, both the reconstruction and the logic behind it are entirely feasible. To facilitate a comparison between Rendtorff's suggested reconstruction and MT, both are reproduced here:

Reconstruction by Rendtorff			MT	
לא ימלט	וקל ברגליו	ואבד מנוס מקל	וחזק לא יאמץ פחו	ואבד מנוס מקל
לא ימלט נפשו	וגבור	וחזק לא יאמץ פחו	ותפש הקשת לא יעמד	וגבור לא ימלט נפשו
לא ימלט נפשו	ורכב הסוס	ותפש הקשת לא יעמד	ורכב הסוס לא ימלט נפשו	וקל ברגליו לא ימלט

Table 3: Comparison of MT and Rendtorff's Suggested Reconstruction of Amos 2:14-15

<sup>238</sup> There is no lack of proposals, however, for which cf. WEISER, *Profetie des Amos*, 97; GESE, 'Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches': 417-424; MÜLLER, 'Die Wurzeln 'yq, y'q und 'wq': 556-564; ARIETI, 'The Vocabulary of Septuagint Amos': 344f.; RICHARDSON, 'Amos 2:13-16': 362; as well as the commentaries.

<sup>239</sup> VON ORELLI, 64; WEISER, 143; WOLFF, 208; MAYS, 54; RUDOLPH, 148f.; MARKERT, *Struktur und Bezeichnung des Scheltworts*, 81; DEISSLER, 101; FLEISCHER, *Von Menschenverkäufern, Baschankühen und Rechtsverkehrern*, 21f.; G. V. SMITH, 90f.; JEREMIAS, 27f.; and GOWAN, 366.

<sup>240</sup> KEIL, 173; HARPER, 61; FEINBERG, 93f.; HAYES, 119; CHISHOLM, 83; BIRCH, 188. For other interpretations see e.g. PAUL, 94f.; and REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 50f.

<sup>241</sup> RYKEN, 'Amos': 344.

<sup>242</sup> Thus Elliger in BHS sub loc.; WOLFF, 164; DIETRICH, 'JHWH, Israel und die Völker beim Propheten Amos': 325; and JEREMIAS, 28.

<sup>243</sup> Rendtorff speaks of lines 14aα and 15aβ whereas we prefer to refer to them as *stichoi* 14a and 15b. Thus there are three *stichoi* each in vv. 14-15, or, according to Rendtorff's counting, one and a half lines each.

<sup>244</sup> According to REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 52, both, the תַּפֵּשׁ הַקֶּשֶׁת and the רֶכֶב הַסּוּס, were part of the crew of the war chariot (he refers to Zech 9:10; as well as HENRY, 'Pferd'; MOWINCKEL, 'Drive and/or Ride in O.T.'; RÜTHI, 'Reiter/Reiterei'; and BACH, 'Der, der Bogen zerbricht').

<sup>245</sup> RENDTORFF, 'Zu Amos 2 14-16': 226f.

Richardson, on the other hand, argues for the text to be retained as it stands. Although he, too, notes that the *stichoi* 14a and 15b together constitute a *bistichos*, which, as he points out, is arranged chiastically (cf. Table 4 col. 1), he considers the present arrangement of the *stichoi* to be ‘a very skillful interlocking’<sup>246</sup> (col. 2). Interestingly, however, he also feels tempted to displace 15b. Yet whilst Rendtorff transferred it to follow 14a (col. 4), Richardson remarks that if it followed 14c, the order of the interlocking *stichoi* would be of a ‘more common type’ (col. 3).

<i>The Chiasm in 2:14a/15b</i>	<i>MT</i>	<i>Richardson</i>	<i>Rendtorff</i>
	14a A 14b B 14c B' 15a C 15b A' 15c C'	14a A 14b B 14c B' 15b A' 15a C 15c C'	14a A 15b A' 14b B 14c B' 15a C 15c C'

Table 4: The Chiasm in Amos 2:14a/15b;  
Suggestions Concerning the Order of the *Bistichoi* in Amos 2:14-15

In the end, however, Richardson does not succumb to this temptation because he regards the order of the MT as ‘more striking, very skillful and quite unusual’.<sup>247</sup> He also thinks that ‘one would be hard pressed to find an explanation as to how the change came about.’<sup>248</sup> His second point is indeed well taken since Rendtorff has to conjecture that ‘der ... Stichos v. 15aβ [15b according to our reckoning] wurde beim Abschreiben versehentlich ausgelassen, am Rand nachgetragen und bei erneutem Abschreiben an falscher Stelle in den Text (wieder) einbezogen.’<sup>249</sup> Yet, although this is no more than a conjecture, I am inclined to follow Rendtorff’s analysis for a number of reasons.<sup>250</sup> First, it causes the *bistichos* constituted by 14a/15b to stand together, which in turn brings the chiasm to the fore.<sup>251</sup> Secondly, the ‘strophic’ result displays a logical order of thought. It also induces the refrain (נִפְשׁוּ) לֹא יִמְלֹט to be pushed towards the end of the ‘strophes’ thus resulting in a patterned arrangement not unlike those found elsewhere in the book (i.e. 1:3-2:5; 3:3-6; 4:6-11; 7:1-9; 8:1-3). This predilection of Amos for strophic arrangements may perhaps be seen as lending further support to Rendtorff’s analysis.

In line with the theory that Amos announces the end of Israel, it is often maintained that this notion of an all-encompassing judgement is present also in vv. 13-16.<sup>252</sup> This, however,

<sup>246</sup> RICHARDSON, ‘Amos 2:13-16’: 363.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.: 364.

<sup>249</sup> RENDTORFF, ‘Zu Amos 2 14-16’: 227.

<sup>250</sup> It has also been accepted by REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 51, but was rejected by PAUL, 95 n. 507.

<sup>251</sup> On the other hand, however, TSUMURA, ‘Inserted Bicolon’: 234f., alerts us to an ‘inserted bicolon’ in Amos 1:5 which results in what he calls the ‘distant parallelism’ of A || B:

וְשִׁבְרֹתַי בְּרִיחַ דְּמִשְׁקָא	A
וְהִכְרַתִּי יוֹשֵׁב מִבְּקַעַת-אֲנָן	X
וְהוֹמַךְ שֹׁבֵט מִבֵּית עֵדֶן	Y
וְגָלוּ עַם-אֲרָם קִירָה	B

<sup>252</sup> Cf. WOLFF, 124f.; VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 26; and JEREMIAS, 20, 28.



cannot be deduced with certainty.<sup>253</sup> Although the text makes it quite clear that nobody has the ability to resist Yahweh's punishment or flee from it, the verses do not explicitly claim that Israel's God is going to destroy his entire people. On the other hand, however, the fact that it is specifically the military that is in view here cannot be taken as unambiguous proof that others are excluded from the judgement to come.<sup>254</sup> As we have said before, the primary function of vv. 14-16, rather than to define precisely who the objects of the punishment will be, is to stress its ineluctability.<sup>255</sup> And it is no wonder that, in order to convey this idea, Amos refers to the strongest, bravest, swiftest and best armed, i.e. the military. If these cannot escape or withstand the divine intervention, nobody can.

Considering the rhetoric of the Israel oracle as a whole, therefore, a picture of ambiguity and uncertainty emerges. On the one hand, the unrestrained reference to 'שָׁרְאֵל' in v. 6 together with the relation of the people's 'salvation history' in vv. 9-11 points towards an inclusive understanding, i.e. that the northern kingdom in general is in view. The juxtaposition of the people's treatment (cf. the unrestricted 'you' in v. 12) of the prophets and nazirites and of Yahweh's punishment (again the 'you' in v. 13 is unlimited in scope) has the same effect. Furthermore, the hint that Yahweh *completely* destroyed the Amorites (v. 9) underlines the enormity of the threat by emphasising that Israel's God certainly has the capacity to annihilate his people.

On the other hand, however, vv. 6-8 clearly distinguish between culprits and victims<sup>256</sup> and thus Yahweh is portrayed as singling out certain members of society as being responsible for the wrongdoings he condemns. Does it not follow, then, that the punishment is to befall the culprits only rather than all and sundry including even the צַדִּיקִים of v. 6?<sup>257</sup> Since vv. 13-16 do not explicitly state otherwise, a restrictive understanding of the judgement is certainly possible. But there is no way of telling at this point which interpretation is correct. This, we suspect, is precisely the effect the text is designed to achieve as it leaves the hearer/reader in the dark concerning its exact implications and thus sustains the tension that incites continued attentiveness. What else could we desire from a rhetorically well contrived introduction?

(6.) To return once more to the recurring devices of Amos 1:3-2:16, the one that yet needs to be mentioned is the concluding divine speech formula אָמַר יְהוָה, which is used only in the strophes modelled on the A pattern. Since we have already discussed its significance else-

<sup>253</sup> Thus with REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 53-58, who takes issue with Wolff because of his failure to pay sufficient attention to the actual referents of Amos' charges and declarations of punishment. Reimer further argues that neither do the preceding strophes indicate an annihilation of the foreign nations (pp. 61ff.).

<sup>254</sup> Against Reimer (*ibid.*, 53ff., 65).

<sup>255</sup> This interpretation avoids the problem of vv. 6-8 being incongruous with vv. 14-16. Cf. Reimer who wrestles with this difficulty. He remarks that '*in der Israelstrophe eine deutliche Unstimmigkeit zwischen Angeklagten und Bedrohten besteht*. In der Strafansage wird dem Militär ein Desaster angekündigt. Nach meinen Analysen der in V. 6b-8 aufgelisteten Vergehen konnte jedoch eine Verantwortung des Militärs *allein* nicht erwiesen werden' (*ibid.*, 55; italicised in the original). He attempts to solve this problem by affirming that what is under attack here as well as in the preceding strophes is the mechanism of the state (p. 63). KRAUSE, *Das Verhältnis von sozialer Kritik und kommender Katastrophe in den Unheilsprophezeiungen des Amos*, 139, on the other hand, postulates that those referred to in vv. 6-8 and 14-16 are 'wenn nicht identisch, so doch in der sozialen Stellung und in der Intention gleich ..., nämlich möglichst viel Bodenbesitz für das Krongut zu erwerben'.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 55.

<sup>257</sup> Reimer favours this interpretation when he suggests to equate 'שָׁרְאֵל' in v. 6 with the culprits responsible for the wrongdoings listed in vv. 6-8 (*ibid.*).

where,<sup>258</sup> it should suffice at this point to repeat that it functions as a ‘local marker of emphasis’. As such, it is used in the OAN to accentuate the prolonged judgement sections of the ‘A strophes’. However, the Israel oracle, an adaptation of the A pattern, once again deviates from the established model in that it features the oracle formula  $\text{נְאֻם־יְהוָה}$  instead of  $\text{אָמַר יְהוָה}$ . As regards its function, we found that it is employed to the same effect,<sup>259</sup> although it is perhaps possible to attribute to it a slightly more nuanced force. This would certainly be appropriate here following as it does the vivid portrayal of Yahweh’s irresistible punishment.

*Conclusion and final observations:* The OAN in 1:3-2:16 clearly serve as the book’s introduction, the function of which comes into sharper focus once the following observations, advanced in the course of the preceding investigation, are taken into account:

- ♦ The ‘rhetoric of entrapment’ takes the hearers by surprise in putting them on a par with their heathen neighbours. It promotes a novel perspective on Israel’s internal affairs (in particular the social injustice prevalent in their society) as well as the people’s relationship with their God. To employ Brueggemann’s concept of imagination, Amos instigates his audience’s imagination by having them think that in the perception of their God they are no better, indeed, perhaps even worse than the foreign nations.<sup>260</sup>
- ♦ The equation of Israel’s domestic infringements with the war crimes of her neighbours is rather provocative and contentious. It therefore carries both the chance of evoking a positive shock that might lead to change as well as the danger of being rejected forthwith. Generally speaking, what we would suggest this introductory passage does is to start off a dialogue or debate between the prophet and his audience whose interpretation of their traditions Amos rejects.
- ♦ Mention should be made, finally, of the ambiguity surrounding the referents of Amos’ charges and threats. This adds to the rhetorical power of the introduction by creating plenty of tension. It clearly leaves the audience in the dark about the precise implications of the prophet’s message.

All this contributes to the effect of ‘drawing the hearer/reader in’, to revert once again to Lodge’s phrase. However, there is one aspect that needs some further comment, i.e. the elucidation of the OAN as a ‘rhetoric of entrapment’. This label clearly evinces an *internal* perspective in that it recapitulates the rhetorical effect from the point of view of the text’s internal audience. Or, to state it in historical terms, the device is directed at an *Israelite* audience. As regards the *book* of Amos, however, we have seen above that its reception-history (as well as its compila-

<sup>258</sup> Cf. ch. 2.2.4.1, ‘The Speech- or Quotation-Formulas and Other Structural Markers’, esp. p. 49.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, esp. p. 48. NOBLE, ‘The Function of *n'm Yhwh* in Amos’: 623, suggested that it is equivalent to ‘And mark my words!’. I disagree, however, with his contention (advanced previously by ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 215, 239) that the judgement section in 2:14-16 applies to all the oracles in chs. 1-2 and that the function of  $\text{נְאֻם־יְהוָה}$  is to hint at precisely that (NOBLE, ‘The Function of *n'm Yhwh* in Amos’: 625).

<sup>260</sup> His interpretive concepts of ‘imagination’ (cf. BRUEGGEMANN, *Prophetic Imagination*; *idem Hopeful Imagination*), of a ‘counterworld’ (*Texts under Negotiation*, ch. 2), the ‘destabilising presence’ of a prophet (‘The Prophet as a Destabilizing Presence’), or a ‘countertestimony’ (*Theology of the Old Testament*, Part II) have been very helpful in that they have spurred my own imagination. That is not to say, however, that I necessarily agree with Brueggemann’s views, illuminating though his approach is.



tion) have to be understood against a *Judean* background. It is clearly required, therefore, that we briefly consider the impact this passage would make on a Judean readership.

In saying this, we are not implying, however, that the preceding discussion of the text's *internal* perspective is obsolete. Far from it, as the book addresses its hearers/readers by *presenting* the prophet Amos debating with his eighth century Israelite audience, it is important to unravel the 'poetics' of that presentation.<sup>261</sup> Thus, in the case of Amos, we would suggest that the primary effect of its poetics is to transfer the reader to the scene, as it were, and to enable him/her to follow that debate. The text's main effect thus arises out of the reader's encounter with the debating prophet.

However, when considering the text's function for a Judean audience, what needs to be stressed in particular is that the rhetorical situation is a post 722 BCE one. This means that the readers of the book will have been informed about the exile of the northern kingdom, i.e. they will have had a 'past-fulfilment perspective' knowing that Amos' warnings of exile had come to pass. Read with that knowledge, the presentation of Amos' futile attempts to convince his Israelite audience of the danger they were in becomes even more powerful. The book as a whole now urges its Judean readers not to repeat the mistakes of the prophet's original audience lest they suffer the same fate. The Judah oracle in 2:4-5 increases the text's impact even further by indicating that Amos, who after all was right about Israel, included Judah in his list of nations to be condemned. If, as we think likely, the references to Judah originated with Amos, they may have been one reason for keeping the 'Amos tradition' alive long after the prophet disappeared from the scene.

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<sup>261</sup> BERLIN, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 15, defines poetics as 'an inductive science that seeks to abstract the general principles of literature from many different manifestations of those principles as they occur in actual literary texts.' However, CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 155, referring to STERNBERG, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, rightly regards the goal as 'more than the grasp of formal textual mechanics'. In his view, the aim must be 'to move beyond mere aesthetics to what Sternberg calls the "ideology" of the text, which seeks not just to entertain, but to persuade.'

## 5. AMOS 3

Due to form-critical considerations, Amos 3 is usually thought to consist of five small units (vv. 1-2, 3-8, 9-11, 12, 13-15).<sup>1</sup> Old form critics regarded these as virtually independent, but their fragmentising approach has now been almost universally abandoned. Hayes, for instance, criticises any dividing of Amos 3 ‘into a series of supposedly self-contained sayings or oracles’ because it ‘leaves them without meaningful contexts.’<sup>2</sup> However, the form-critical outline of Amos 3 is a good starting point for our analysis; indeed, as we shall see, it is confirmed by our findings.<sup>3</sup> Yet our concern is not with these small parts but with the rhetorical structure and function of the prophetic discourse in Amos 3:1-15 as a whole. Dorsey, in an article entitled ‘Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos’, has recently suggested that the passage consists of a seven-part chiasm, which he outlines as follows:<sup>4</sup>

- A Yahweh will punish Israel for their sins (vv. 1-2)  
introduced by: שָׁמַעוּ; key word: פִּקְדוֹן
- B Coming disaster, declared by the prophets (vv. 3-8)  
theme: lion (אַרְיֵה) and its prey
- C Foreign people called to gather on the mountains of Samaria (v. 9)  
key word: אֲרָמְנוֹת
- D Condemnation:  
Israel does not know how to do right (v. 10)
- C’ Israel’s fortresses and strongholds will be destroyed (v. 11)  
key word: אֲרָמְנוֹת
- B’ Near-total disaster coming (v. 12)  
theme: lion (אַרְיֵה) and its prey
- A’ Yahweh will punish Israel for their iniquities (vv. 13-15)  
introduced by: שָׁמַעוּ; key word: פִּקְדוֹן

Figure 9: Amos 3 as a Seven-Part Chiasm (Dorsey)

Interestingly, this outline is in accordance with form-critical findings in that the units of the seven-part chiasm more or less correspond to those detected by form critics. However, Dorsey’s analysis differs slightly in that he divides vv. 9-11 into three parts whereas form critics regard these verses as one unit. Although I am not convinced of the chiastic arrangement of the chapter, Dorsey’s analysis is a helpful starting point for our discussion because it recognises some important key words that lend unity to the passage. In the following examination of the structure

<sup>1</sup> Cf. STUART, 321, 324, 329; MELUGIN, ‘Formation of Amos’: 377-379, following KOCH; WOLFF, 212-213, 217, 228-229, 234-235, 237; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 369. Some have come to different conclusions but as I do not intend to provide a detailed research review, these need not concern us at this point.

<sup>2</sup> HAYES, 122.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. MELUGIN, ‘Formation of Amos’: 378-379, who classifies the five units as follows: 3:1-2, prophetic oracle of judgement; 3:3-8, disputation; 3:9-11, oracle of doom; 3:12, proclamation of the future; 3:13-15, proclamation of disaster.

<sup>4</sup> DORSEY, ‘Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos’: 310-311.



and rhetoric of Amos 3, we shall attempt to show how the individual parts not only hang together but also contribute to the communication of the overall message.

## 5.1 Amos 3:1-2, 13-15

### 5.1.1 Exegetical Observations and Structure

To begin with the outer parts of the proposed chiasm (A [vv. 1-2],<sup>5</sup> A' [vv. 13-15]), it is evident that both announce the divine punishment of Israel. Moreover, as Dorsey points out, both sections are introduced by שְׁמַעוּ, and use the verb פָּקַד to refer to the judgement to come.<sup>6</sup> That is to say, both units open with a call to listen, which is then followed by the announcement of the divine punishment. However, there are also some important differences between the two, which is of course to be expected, as has been stressed by Wendland who notes that within a concentric structure

recursion is not [normally] exact, but [that] there is a progressive augmentation of the main constituent notions occurring at the same time, both to maintain interest and to highlight the main elements of the author's theme line. Thus, despite the correspondences which may be present, the ending of the discourse is not really the same as its beginning, either cognitively or emotively, because it has been subtly, and often substantially, modified and refined by what has been presented between them.<sup>7</sup>

In both parts, the initial *call to listen* is extended by a second element (cf. Figure 10). In vv. 1-2 the focus is on the addressee, that is, the Israelites whom alone the Lord has delivered out of Egypt. Although the first part of this unit comes to an end with the infinitive לְאָמַר which signals the beginning of the following speech of the Lord, the first part of the Lord's short speech (v. 2a) still focuses on the Israelites whom alone he has known of all the families of the earth. This focus is highlighted through the reversal of the normal word order so that the words רַק אֶתְכֶם receive a prominent position and a special emphasis,<sup>8</sup> the use of the verb יָדַע, which underlines the close relationship between Yahweh and his chosen people,<sup>9</sup> as well as the phrase כָּל מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָדָמָה, which reflects Yahweh's covenant with the patriarchs (Gen 12:3; cf. also Gen 28:14).<sup>10</sup>

The closing unit (vv. 13-15) begins also with the call שְׁמַעוּ, but as the speech of the Lord proceeds, we suddenly realise that he is not speaking to the Israelites and asking them to listen.

<sup>5</sup> Various deletions have been proposed for these verses, for which cf. PFEIFER, 'Amos und Deuterjesaja denkformen-analytisch verglichen': 440. Following SCHMIDT, 'Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches': 173, many have attributed the passage to dt. redactors, but cf. recently LOHFINK, 'Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?': 327f., for a rejection of this view.

<sup>6</sup> פָּקַד appears once in the first part (v. 2) and twice in the second (v. 14). The inclusio provided by the use of this verb is all the more remarkable once it is realised that פָּקַד is used nowhere else in the book of Amos. Cf. GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 295; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 377, 382; PAUL, 102, 108; and HUBBARD, 153, who rightly stresses that 'the twice used verb *punish* (v. 14; Heb. *pqd*) harks back to the general announcement of 3:2 and is a clue to the unity of the chapter.'

<sup>7</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 6-7.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. GK § 142f; and also CRIPPS, 151; PAUL, 101; G. V. SMITH, 105. It is also interesting to note that both parts of this first unit (vv. 1, 2) contain the word מִשְׁפְּחוֹת, which ties them together.

WILDBERGER, *Jahwes Eigentumsvolk*, 108, rightly points out that although יָדַע is not a technical term for the election of Israel, in combination with רַק אֶתְכֶם it clearly does indicate a 'Sonderstellung Israels'.

<sup>9</sup> WOLFF, 214-215; RUDOLPH, 153.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. CRIPPS, 151; FINLEY, 181.

Instead he is speaking to someone else, namely, the witnesses of vv. 9-11 who are requested to hear and to testify against (*hiph.* עוֹד + ב) the Israelites.<sup>11</sup> The further emphasis is then on the Lord himself, that is, on the one who is going to punish his chosen people. He is referred to as אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְּבָאוֹת, a title that is obviously deliberately chosen in order to underline his authority.<sup>12</sup> This emphasis on the Lord (or the word of the Lord) is further strengthened at the end of the whole chapter where it is again stated that it is the Lord who has declared this punishment (נִאֲמַר-יְהוָה).

The second element, which is to be found in both parts (vv. 1-2, 13-15), is the *announcement of the divine punishment*. There are, however, remarkable differences between the two parts concerning this element, too. In the first part, this announcement is very short. The Lord only declares that he is going to punish Israel for all her iniquities (כָּל-עֲוֹנוֹתֶיכֶם) *because* (עַל-כֵּן) he has known only them of all the families of the earth.<sup>13</sup> Paul calls our attention to the fact that Amos here employs for the third and climactic time the word כָּל (*all* Israel [the whole family] is known of *all* the families of the earth, therefore, she will be punished for *all* iniquities).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Hubbard rightly speaks of an entrapment technique: 'It is not until *iniquities* are mentioned at the end of the verse that its full meaning can be understood, since *punish* (Heb. *pqd*) means literally "to visit" whether with weal or woe'.<sup>15</sup>

The second unit (vv. 13-15), on the other hand, has a very much extended punishment section, where it is not only said that the Lord is going to punish Israel for its transgressions (פָּשַׁע). It is, moreover, explicitly stated that the Lord's punishment will encompass all the luxurious houses of the oppressors (v. 15)<sup>16</sup> (note the *Leitmotiv* בַּיִת in vv. 13-15<sup>17</sup>) as well as the altars at Bethel (v. 14). The cutting off of the horns of the altar underlines the ineluctability of the punishment already referred to in 2:14-16 and the totality of the judgement, since by grasping these horns an offender could gain sanctuary (cf. Exod 21:13-14; 1 Kgs 1:50; 2:28). 'Thus the destruction of the altar and its horns actually symbolizes the end of the sanctuary, immunity, and expiation for the people.'<sup>18</sup> Most shockingly, Yahweh himself will bring about the end of Israel's cultic existence. This reference to the destruction of the horns of the altar fits well into the context of this chapter (and, indeed, the message of the book of Amos as a whole) since the

<sup>11</sup> So also CRIPPS, 162; FINLEY, 192; HUBBARD, 153. If Amos 3 is one prophetic discourse, then it is not impossible to identify those who are called to hear and testify against the Israelites, namely, the foreign witnesses that are called in v. 9. Against HARPER, 82. It is also unnecessary and in the light of the entire unit (Amos 3:1-15) not justified to claim that in v. 13 'sind andere jetzt schon in Samaria anwesende Ausländer angesprochen', as WOLFF, 238, does.

<sup>12</sup> Dempster, in his illuminating study of the distribution of the various names and titles of God (cf. 'The Lord is His Name': 178), comes to the conclusion that 'it is no accident that such a lengthening [of the name, as in v. 13] occurs before the climactic announcement of judgment.' He again remarks concerning the unusual or unique forms of the divine name in 3:13 and 5:16: 'Both lengthened names are unique in the Hebrew Bible. But why? The reason is clear. They have a unique discourse function in their specific contexts.' (*ibid.*: 185-186)

<sup>13</sup> MCKEATING, 26, remarks that this announcement in v. 2 'is virtually a summary of Amos' entire message.' MARTIN-ACHARD, 28, notices that 'the prophet had turned the history of salvation into a history of judgment.'

<sup>14</sup> PAUL, 102.

<sup>15</sup> HUBBARD, 148 (*his italics*); cf. also G. V. SMITH, 106.

<sup>16</sup> MCKEATING, 31, is surely beside the point in saying that Amos, whom he describes as a semi-nomad, 'displays the contempt that such men feel for settled life.' Concerning the winter and summer houses cf. PAUL, 'Amos iii 15': 358-360.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. STUART, 332.

<sup>18</sup> PAUL, 124. Cf. also RUDOLPH, 166; HUBBARD, 153; and PFEIFER, 'Das Ja des Amos': 499.



whole discourse seems to be designed against the people's self-assurance that Yahweh will not punish them.<sup>19</sup>

Another important difference between these two announcements of punishment is that in v. 2 the Lord addresses the Israelites directly in the second person plural, while vv. 13-15 take up the courtroom motif from vv. 9-11<sup>20</sup> so that the Lord speaks to the witnesses about his chosen people in the third person.

The following figure displays the corresponding elements in both units (call to listen, announcement of punishment) as well as the differences between the two parts (various further specifications). Concerning the internal structure of vv. 13-15 it is also important to note that it again contains one of Amos' typical heptadic series, in this instance consisting of seven verbs depicting Israel's coming destruction.<sup>21</sup>

a) Call to listen	שמעו את-הדבר הזה אשר דבר יהוה עליכם בני ישראל	1
(1.) Addressee specified	על כל-המשפחה אשר העליתי מארץ מצרים לאמר	
	רק אתכם ידעתי מ <sup>(b)</sup> כל משפחות האדמה	2
b) Announcement of punishment	על-כן אפקד עליכם את כל-עונותיכם	
a) Call to listen	שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב	13
(1.) Further specification of Yahweh	נאם-אדני יהוה אלהי הצבאות	
b) Announcement of punishment	כי ביום <sup>(1)</sup> פקדי פשעי-ישראל עליו	14
(1.) Further specification of the punishment:	<sup>(2)</sup> ופקדתי על-מזבחות בית-אל	
	<sup>(3)</sup> ונגדעו קרנות המזבח <sup>(4)</sup> ונפלו לארץ	
	<sup>(5)</sup> והכיתי בית-החרף על-בית הקיץ	15
	<sup>(6)</sup> ואבדו בתי השן <sup>(7)</sup> וספו בתים רבים	
(2.) Concluding divine speech formula:	נאם-יהוה	

Figure 10: The Relationship Between Amos 3:1-2 and Amos 3:13-15

<sup>19</sup> Cf. GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 301.

<sup>20</sup> Vv. 13-15, however, do not contain another courtroom motif since their focus is exclusively on the divine punishment. It seems, therefore, possible to regard the whole of vv. 9-15 as one courtroom motif with an extended punishment section (vv. 11-15). But v. 12 does not fit into such a proposal since it has nothing whatsoever to do with a courtroom motif. O'ROURKE BOYLE, 'The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos': 342, even regards the whole of Amos 3:1-4:3 as one covenant lawsuit with the following parts:

- I. Call to witnesses to hear and testify (iii 1-iv 3)
- II. Introductory statement of the case (iv 4-5)
- III. Recital of the plaintiff's benevolent acts and indictment (iv 6-11)
- IV. Sentence and warning (iv 12)
- V. Recognition (iv 13).

But O'Rourke Boyle's proposal does not stand to careful examination. At this point, however, I only want to draw our attention to one incongruity, namely, that her first unit differs greatly in length from the others. Moreover, it seems to me impossible to fit the whole of ch. 3 plus ch. 4:1-3 under her proposed heading. What have vv. 3-8 to do with a summons of witnesses? With regard to vv. 1-2 she even has to propose that 'the prophet arraigns Israel to testify against itself' (ibid.: 344). But vv. 1-2 say nothing about witnessing. Relying on v. 7, O'Rourke Boyle also gathers the prophet among the witnesses of that proposed lawsuit.

With regard to ch. 3 it is important to recognise the different devices that Amos employs: rhetorical questions (vv. 3-8), a courtroom motif (vv. 9-11), an ironic illustration (v. 12), and again an allusion to the preceding courtroom motif (vv. 13-15). But it was obviously not his aim to develop one of these very different forms to greater length. Instead he uses various forms in order to surprise and shock his audience time and again.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 311. – I have highlighted the repeated words שמעו and פקד and indicated the heptadic series of verbs by numbering them. In addition, the letters (a) to (c) point out the threefold כל in vv. 1-2.



### 5.1.2 *Rhetorical Function*

After discussing the similarities and differences between these two units, two important questions arise: First, why are they composed in such a way as to form an *inclusio* of the entire chapter? Secondly, what are the reasons for the differences between them?

Concerning the first question it is obvious that the main aim of the whole prophetic discourse of Amos 3 is to convince the Israelites that Yahweh will indeed punish them for their sins. Therefore, it is appropriate that Amos highlights this aspect at the beginning as well as at the end of his discourse.<sup>22</sup> This is also noted by Martin-Achard who remarks, 'God's "visit" ... evoked at the beginning just as at the end of this collection (3:2, 14) signifies in a concrete way a catastrophe without precedent for the northern kingdom.'<sup>23</sup>

But the differences between the two units also serve to underline this particular message of divine punishment. In order to achieve this goal, Amos begins his discourse with the paradoxical notion that Yahweh will punish Israel precisely because he has known only them of all the families of the earth. Gitay remarks, 'from the rhetorical perspective the unexpected turn functions as a tool for arousing curiosity and attracting attention.'<sup>24</sup> In order to achieve this paradoxical effect, Amos extends the designation of the addressees and highlights that they alone are delivered out of Egypt<sup>25</sup> and that they alone are known by the Lord. But just because of these privileges they will be punished.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Andersen and Freedman appropriately remark, 'The first two verses summarize the case against Israel.'<sup>27</sup>

Since this announcement must surely have caused opposition, Amos goes on to explain that this message is indeed nothing other than the Lord's word (vv. 3-8) and that Israel deserves this punishment (vv. 9-10). At the end, however, he again announces the punishment, which is now particularly emphasised because it is described at greater length (vv. 14-15), and because it is made abundantly clear that it is the 'Lord GOD, the God of hosts' who is announcing it and who is going to carry it out (cf. v. 13, 15).<sup>28</sup> The connection between the three parts vv. 9-11, v. 12, and vv. 13-15 is also clearly recognised by Wolff:

... die seltene Spruchform einer Zurüstung von Zeugen des nahenden Untergangs macht einen engen räumlichen wie auch zeitlichen Zusammenhang mit den beiden voraufgehenden Sprüchen (9-11. 12) wahrscheinlich. Er erklärt das Fehlen des Schuld aufweises. In 9b. 10 war der Schuld aufweis schon gegeben. Der Schuld, die sich dort in den 'Wohnburgen' zeigt, entspricht die Strafe der Zerstörung der Gebäude hier. Jedoch sollte man 13-15 nicht als unmittelbare Fortsetzung von 9-11 ansehen. Denn nicht nur schließt das Botenwort in 11 einen wohlgerundeten Spruch ab ..., vielmehr gehört wohl auch 12 zu den Voraussetzungen des neuen Wortes.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The introductory character of vv. 1-2 is also noted by HAYES, 123, who remarks: 'The "iniquities" (a term occurring only here in Amos) are not defined in verse 2, indicating that 3:1-2 should not be treated as an independent, self-contained saying.' Cf. GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 295. WOLFF, 216, also states: 'Die Strafandrohung wird im Unterschied zu allen anderen Sprüchen nicht konkret; [...] Gerade so aber ist dieses Wort des Amos als Eingangsspruch einer Sammlung hervorragend geeignet.' But how could it then be a 'selbständige rhetorische Einheit' as Wolff claims (*ibid.*, 213)?

<sup>23</sup> MARTIN-ACHARD, 32.

<sup>24</sup> GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 300.

<sup>25</sup> STUART, 321, remarks: 'Throughout the OT, reminders of the exodus deliverance serve as reminders of Israel's covenantal relationship to Yahweh.'

<sup>26</sup> FINLEY, 179; PFEIFER, 'Amos und Deuterjesaja denkformenanalytisch verglichen': 442.

<sup>27</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 371.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. CRIPPS, 165, who speaks of an 'effective climax'.

<sup>29</sup> WOLFF, 238.



Ironically, at the end of the chapter, the Lord is not addressing the Israelites directly any more. Foreigners (those of vv. 9-11) are commanded to hear and to testify against the people of Israel that the Lord is really going to punish them (v. 13).

## 5.2 Amos 3:3-8

### 5.2.1 Exegetical Observations and Structure

According to Dorsey vv. 3-8 may be compared with v. 12 and represent B, respectively B', of the proposed chiasm. Although it is true that both units contain the theme of 'a lion and its prey', I am far from being convinced of Dorsey's suggested themes 'Coming disaster, declared by the prophets', and 'Near-total disaster coming' which are chosen in order to demonstrate the comparability of these units. The following analysis, especially the discussion of the function of both units, will reveal why I question Dorsey's results.

Amos 3:3-8 is one of those parts of the book that have attracted many scholars. The internal structure of these six verses has thus been subject to many studies. I will, nevertheless, discuss this series of rhetorical questions because I intend to show how it functions in its context.<sup>30</sup> The following figure displays the structure of the whole unit:

<sup>30</sup> Often vv. 3 and 7 have been regarded as later additions that do not match the context. A rhetorical analysis, however, shows that this is a misjudgement since both verses are in fact indispensable in that they make a fundamental contribution to the rhetoric of the passage.

RUDOLPH, 155, ironically comments on v. 3: 'Der kleine V. 3 hat eine lange Leidensgeschichte.' The main reasons for disregarding it have been that (a) it has no parallel, (b) it conveys no threatening implication, and (c) the content is too obvious. Cf. GESE, 'Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches': 425; and MITTMANN, 'Gestalt und Gehalt einer prophetischen Selbstrechtfertigung': 135. However, since the unit (vv. 3-6) consists of seven rhetorical questions, one of the verses must by necessity contain only one question due to the fact that seven is an odd number. The peaceful character and the triviality of its content, on the other hand, are obviously intentional, 'in order to lure the audience into the prophet's train of thought.' Thus PAUL, 109.

Verse 7 is seen as the main problem of the unit. It has very often been regarded as a gloss because (a) it interrupts the series of questions, (b) it contains 'dtr.' vocabulary, (c) it is written in prose, whereas the rest of this passage is poetry, and (d) it does not speak about cause and effect. Cf. BAUMGARTNER, 'Amos 3 3-8': 78; LEHMING, 'Erwägungen zu Amos': 152; WOLFF, 218; RUDOLPH, 157; MCKEATING, 27; MARTIN-ACHARD, 29; GESE, 'Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches': 424-425; WOLFF, *Amos' geistige Heimat*, 5; PFEIFER, 'Unausweichliche Konsequenzen': 342; WILLI-PLEIN, *Vorformen der Schriftexegese innerhalb des Alten Testaments*, 21-23; EICHRODT, 'Die Vollmacht des Amos': 125; and SCHENKER, 'Steht der Prophet unter dem Zwang zu weissagen ...?': 251.

A closer look at the development of the argument in this passage, however, reveals that v. 7 is by no means a disturbing gloss but an important part of Amos' case as the subsequent structural analysis will show. Especially HAYES, 126-127, presents a strong case for maintaining the verse on the following grounds: '(1) Syntactically, one would expect a statement about authority to take the form of an assertion rather than a question. (2) Prose is more assertive than poetry; the break from poetry to prose highlights the assertion as assertion. (3) The parallel between this text and deuteronomistic passages does not prove anything more than a shared perspective and vocabulary.' Cf. also GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 305; and STUART, 325. The rhetorical function of the verse is also observed by ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 392, who comment: 'the fact that the prophet shifts here from metaphoric language to the substance of his argument ... is sufficient to explain the break in the previously established pattern.' Cf. also FINLEY, 186, who rightly asks: 'does an interruption in form have to mean a secondary intrusion? As a literary device, might it not also indicate climax? In fact, v. 7 does form the climax to vv. 3-6 and sets them off from v. 8.'

Rather peculiar is the treatment of the whole issue by Schenker, who does not discuss the question of the authenticity of v. 7 but presupposes that it is secondary. He, however, discusses the proposals of VERMEYLEN, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptique*, 525-528; and RENAUD, 'Genèse et théologie d'Amos 3,3-8': 356-361, who both regard vv. 3, 7, and 8 as a redactional advancement of the original unity vv. 4-6. Because both argue mainly on the basis of stylistic arguments, Schenker opts for a more cautious treatment of such arguments: 'Die Gefahr ist, daß man als Kriterien der Einheitlichkeit oder Uneinheitlichkeit einen Maßstab des prophetischen Denk- und Sprachstils setzt, der uns nirgends objektiv gegeben ist, sondern den wir uns selber subjektiv zurechtlegen. [...] [Folglich] stellt sich die Frage, ob die unverkennbaren Unterschiede innerhalb eines Bereiches kompositorischer Freiheit ... liegen können oder nicht. [...] [Somit] liegt es näher, diese Verse vorerst als Einheit zu betrachten, bes. wenn sie als solche Einheit einen guten Sinn



בלתי אִם-נועדו	הילכו שנים יחדו	3
וטָרַף אִין לו	הישאג אריה ביער	4
בלתי אִם-לכד	היתן כפיר קולו ממענתו	
ומוקש אִין לה	התפל צפור על-פח הארץ	5
ולכוד לא ילכוד	היעלה-פח מן-הארמה	
ועם לא יחדרו	אִם-יתקע שופר בעיר	6
ויהוה לא עשה	אִם-תהיה רעה בעיר	
כי אִם-גלה סודו אל-עבדיו הנביאים	כי לא יעשה אדני יהוה דבר	7
מי לא יירא	אריה שאג	8
מי לא ינבא	אדני יהוה דבר	

Figure 11: The Structure of Amos 3:3-8

Limburg notices that these verses are another instance of a 7+1-series (seven rhetorical questions followed by the focal point of the whole unit).<sup>31</sup> The questions in vv. 3-5 are introduced by הַיִּ which is followed by a negation in the second part of each sentence (אִם, בְּלֹא, or לֹא). The sixth and seventh question, however, are introduced by אִם followed by the construction הַיִּ + subj. + לֹא + verb in the second part of each question. This structural difference serves to highlight the thematic development as the following table shows:

General Description	Structure of the first part	Structure of the second part	Function
a) five rhetorical questions (vv. 3-5)	introduced by הַיִּ	negation: אִם, בְּלֹא, or לֹא	introductory and preparatory questions, similarly constructed
b) two rhetorical questions (v. 6)	introduced by אִם	הַיִּ + subj. + לֹא + verb	a shift to another structure coincides with a <i>thematic intensification</i> <sup>32</sup>
c) one prose statement (v. 7)	introduced by כִּי לֹא	introduced by אִם	important clarification of the Lord's purposes which could not have been demonstrated with a rhetorical question <sup>33</sup>
d) two short statements followed by rhetorical questions (v. 8)	subj. + verb	כִּי לֹא + verb	the <i>focal point</i> of the entire unit; again marked by the shift to another structure <sup>34</sup>

Table 5: The Structure of Amos 3:3-8

ergeben.' ('Steht der Prophet unter dem Zwang zu weissagen ...?': 251) – But do not the same arguments apply as well to v. 7?

<sup>31</sup> LIMBURG, 'Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos': 220. Limburg regards v. 7 as a 'parenthetical comment' followed by the climax in v. 8. Cf. also DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 311; PAUL, 105-106.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. FINLEY, 183: 'The change in structure from *he*-interrogative to coordinating *im* marks the change in focus from lions and fowling to distress in a city.' Cf. also HUBBARD, 149, who points out that the form of the questions intensifies in v. 6; and GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 304. GREENSTEIN, 'How Does Parallelism Mean?': 62-63, underlines that the two lines in v. 6 match precisely in structure (which is not the case with regard to vv. 4-5). Cf. the following figure of the two lines in v. 6:

אִם	יִתְקַע	שׁוֹפֵר	ב	עִיר	ו	עַם	לֹא	יִחַרְדּוּ
אִם	תְּהִיָּה	רְעָה	ב	עִיר	ו	יְהוָה	לֹא	עֲשֶׂה

Greenstein calls this the 'sharpening of a focus and the tightening of a vise' and concludes: 'The line of thought that the prophet develops beginning in v. 3 culminates in the logic of v. 6'.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. HAYES, 126-127: 'one would expect a statement about authority to take the form of an assertion rather than a question.'

<sup>34</sup> EICHRODT, 'Die Vollmacht des Amos': 128, remarks concerning the meter of v. 8: 'Durch die Änderung der bisher angewandten fünfhebigen Zeile in die vierhebige läßt der Sprechende das ihm selbst wiederfahrende [sic!] Geschehen dem Hörer entgegentreten.' HARPER, 73, regards v. 8 as 'the last of the rapidly rising climax'. Cf. also HAYES, 127.



The overall structure of vv. 3-8 is fourfold: Vv. 3-5, which are all structured according to the same pattern, provide the introduction and prepare the reader for the final effect. The series is surely not intended to be understood as an allegory<sup>35</sup> but is characterised by analogies drawn from common experience. Each question mentions one event that is closely related to another one.<sup>36</sup> Paul comments: 'The prophet employs this literary expression in order to draw his unexpected audience logically and skillfully into the flow of a persuasive and penetrating presentation of the inextricable relationship of all events and happenings.'<sup>37</sup> The internal development of the whole series is climactic:<sup>38</sup> a peaceful beginning (v. 3)<sup>39</sup> is followed by a struggle between animals (v. 4), which in turn precedes a struggle between men and animals (v. 5).<sup>40</sup> Mittmann remarks, 'Die Jagdbilder der ersten Strophe haben eine vorbereitende Funktion. Mit ihrer bedrohlichen Atmosphäre, der Unerbittlichkeit ihres Geschehens und der unausweichlichen Logik ihrer Sätze stimmen sie den Hörer ein ...'<sup>41</sup> V. 6 is clearly a transitional element in the overall arrangement of this unit.<sup>42</sup> Wolff notes: 'Spricht Amos in Samaria, so rückt er der Erfahrungswelt seiner Hörer immer näher, zumal nun in der Kette der Fragen der Mensch selbst der Gefährdete ist.'<sup>43</sup> Whereas v. 6a focuses on the interpersonal realm, v. 6b ascends to the human-divine sphere.<sup>44</sup> V. 6b thus brings the first part of this sub-unit to a close, thereby alluding to the Israelite belief that it is certainly nobody else than the Lord who is ultimately responsible for any disaster that might befall a city.<sup>45</sup> Smith remarks: 'This verse springs the trap and foreshadows the final climax in 3:8.'<sup>46</sup> However, at that point the prophet makes it clear that it is not the Lord's intention to punish Israel without a warning.<sup>47</sup> No, he reveals his plans to the prophets who in turn are responsible for warning the people. Thus v. 7 prolongs the transitional element<sup>48</sup> and is closely related to the preceding statement in v. 6b. The following figure

<sup>35</sup> PFEIFER, 'Unausweichliche Konsequenzen': 342; RUDOLPH, 154. For the opposite view, see SHAPIRO, 'The Seven Questions of Amos': 327-331; and FINLEY, 180.

<sup>36</sup> SCHENKER, 'Steht der Prophet unter dem Zwang zu weissagen ...?': 253.

<sup>37</sup> PAUL, 104.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. GESE, 'Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches': 426; and POLLEY, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 13. Against MITTMANN, 'Gestalt und Gehalt einer prophetischen Selbstrechtfertigung': 138.

<sup>39</sup> HAYES, 124, characterises v. 3 as 'an interrogative statement which may be seen as a neutral or rather banal way of getting the series going.' PAUL, 106, speaks of a 'introductory question'. Cf. also ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 388.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. WOLFF, 220-221; PAUL, 106.

<sup>41</sup> MITTMANN, 'Gestalt und Gehalt einer prophetischen Selbstrechtfertigung': 143. Cf. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 389: 'The entire series is pervaded by an atmosphere of terror.' Cf. also MARTIN-ACHARD, 29.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. FINLEY, 184: 'Thus the second half [of v. 6] brings this part of the passage to a climax, at the same time making a transition into the underlying thought behind the entire section.' Cf. also ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 389-390.

<sup>43</sup> WOLFF, 224.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. PAUL, 106.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. MITTMANN, 'Gestalt und Gehalt einer prophetischen Selbstrechtfertigung': 137; RUDOLPH, 154; and PFEIFER, 'Unausweichliche Konsequenzen': 345, who observes: 'Amos setzt bei seinen Hörern voraus, daß sie ihm auch da zustimmen.' Cf. also EICHRODT, 'Die Vollmacht des Amos': 126, who speaks of a 'typisch gemeinisraelitische Glaubenslehre'. Against STUART, 325; GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 296.

<sup>46</sup> G. V. SMITH, 110.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. SHAPIRO, 'The Seven Questions of Amos': 330. The verse refers to the heavenly council, *סִדֵּן*, where the true prophets receive the divine word. Cf. MILLER, 'World and Message of the Prophets': 103; WATTS, 'Images of Yahweh': 136-137; LINDBLOM, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 112f.; and MCKANE, *Prophets and Wise Men*, 124.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. HUBBARD, 149, who remarks with regard to the function of v. 7: 'its literary purpose may be to postpone the climax and thus to enhance the suspense of the sequence of questions.'

shows that v. 7a employs almost the same vocabulary as the second part of v. 6<sup>49</sup> and is clearly intended as a further clarification of the statement of that verse:<sup>50</sup>

(v. 6bβ)	ויהוה לא עשה
(v. 7a)	כי לא יעשה אדני יהוה דבר

Figure 12: The Interrelation of Amos 3:6bβ and v. 7a

At this point Amos has already made two important points. First, if there is a disaster in the city, then it is the Lord himself who is responsible for it. Secondly, the Lord warns his people through his servants, the prophets, that he is going ‘to do something’ (עשה דבר). However, if this be the case, how can a prophet remain silent if the Lord has spoken. In order to highlight the impossibility of keeping Yahweh’s words to himself, Amos once again employs rhetorical questions (מי לא + verb). V. 8, the climax of the whole section, thus contains two short statements followed by two similarly short questions.<sup>51</sup> These questions force the audience to apply the obvious answers to themselves:<sup>52</sup> if a lion roars, they will surely be afraid; if Yahweh speaks, Amos has no choice but to deliver his words.<sup>53</sup> This last statement is clearly the focal point of the entire unit<sup>54</sup> and is again structurally marked as such as Wolff correctly observes: ‘Der Schluß ist erst mit den beiden schlagend knappen Doppelzweiern in 8a.b erreicht. [...] Denn hier erscheint wie nie zuvor die entscheidende Aussage zunächst thetisch’.<sup>55</sup> Mittmann also underlines the shift to another meter as well as the re-employment of the ‘Löwenbild’ and concludes:

Diese Mittel dienen einer effektvollen rhetorischen Steigerung. Nach der Monotonie der vorausgehenden sechs Fragen gleichen Stils wird der Hörer durch den jähen Umschwung überrascht und aufgeschreckt. [...] es zeugt geradezu von rhetorischer Raffinesse, wie in Vs 8a durch den übertra-

<sup>49</sup> This link between v. 6bβ and v. 7a was also observed by PAUL, 108. Cf. also ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 393.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. FINLEY, 179, who notes that v. 7 serves to make the connection explicit: ‘when the Lord plans to act in the affairs of Israel, He reveals his secret counsels to prophets.’ HUBBARD, 149, also observes: ‘It [v. 7] serves as a link between the question on divine activity (v. 6) and the climactic one on the inescapable duties of the prophet.’ Cf. also HAYES, 126; and GITAY, ‘A Study of Amos’s Art of Speech’: 305.

<sup>51</sup> V. 8 is also linked to v. 7 through the phrases אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה דִּבֶּר (7aβ) || אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה דִּבֶּר (8bα) and the words הִנְבִּיאִים (v. 7) and יִנְבֵּא (v. 8). See PAUL, 108. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 393, observe that this catchword method is used throughout the poem. Cf. לָכֵד (v. 4) || יִלְכֹּד ... וְלָכֹד (v. 5); פָּח (v. 5a) || פָּח (v. 5b); בָּעִיר (v. 6a) || בָּעִיר (v. 6b); אָרִיָּה (v. 4) || אָרִיָּה (v. 8).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. FINLEY, 180.

<sup>53</sup> SCHENKER, ‘Steht der Prophet unter dem Zwang zu weissagen ...?’: 250, speaks of a ‘Nötigung’ (compulsion); and JEREMIAS, ‘The Interrelationship Between Amos and Hosea’: 182, notes that the word of disaster is ‘forced upon Amos’; cf. also WOLFF, ‘Das unwiderstehliche Wort’: 10f; and GUNKEL, ‘Die geheimen Erfahrungen der Propheten’: 138f.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. BAUMGARTNER, ‘Amos 3 3-8’: 78; PFEIFER, ‘Unausweichliche Konsequenzen’: 342, who argues against the dividing of this unit into two parts (vv. 3-6, and [7-] 8), that some have suggested, because v. 6b is neither the ‘Abschluß [sic!]’ nor the ‘Zielpunkt’ of the unit. Against DAICHES, ‘Amos iii. 3-8’: 237; who thinks that vv. 7-8 are ‘additional observations’ which are ‘not vital to the subject’.

Although WOLFF, 220, does not regard v. 7 as originally belonging to this unit he, nevertheless, observes the transitional character of v. 6 as well as the climactic character of v. 8: ‘Insofern bereitet 6b mit seiner erstmaligen Erwähnung Jahwes als eine besonders wichtige Prämisse den eigentlichen Schluß in 8b vor. Entscheidend dafür, daß die Pointe der Fragenreihen erst in 8 zu sehen ist, könnte gerade *der stilistische Umbruch* sein. [...] Der Umschlag in die neue syntaktische Form will die neue These zum Schluß hervorheben. [italics mine]’ Cf. also: ‘Dieses Ziel ist *stilistisch doppelt markiert*: (1.) Die Sätze beginnen nicht mehr mit der Fragepartikel, die immer mit einem imperf. verbunden war, sondern jetzt erfolgt der Einsatz mit der konstatierenden Aussage im perf.; (2.) die Frage nach dem Wirkungszusammenhang rückt ins zweite Glied und wird persönlich andringlich als Wer-Frage zugespitzt: Wer kann diese Reaktion vermeiden? [italics mine]’ (ibid., 225)

<sup>55</sup> WOLFF, 221; cf. also GESE, ‘Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches’: 427.



schenden und gleichzeitig retardierenden Rückfall in die Bildsprache die Spannung vor dem Schluß- und Kernsatz Vs 8b eine letzte Intensivierung erfährt.<sup>56</sup>

### 5.2.2 *Rhetorical Function*

How does the unit Amos 3:3-8 fit into its context? What is its function as a part of the entire prophetic discourse? The series of rhetorical questions begins apparently unprepared. After having announced that Yahweh will punish Israel for all her iniquities, Amos suddenly starts to ask seemingly insignificant and stupid questions. It is not until v. 6 that his audience is directly involved. Thus, vv. 6-8 reveal at last the reason why Amos asks all these questions.

The result of Amos' announcement of punishment was obviously that his audience questioned his authority.<sup>57</sup> Though we are not explicitly informed that this was indeed the reaction of Amos' audience, the arrangement of the text implicitly portrays the prophet's *addressees* as evoking Amos' reaction which is recorded in vv. 3-8.

How could he dare to declare such horrible things? How could he have known that Yahweh is going to punish his own chosen people? Why could he not shut his mouth and remain silent? These are the questions that Amos had to answer. He does so mainly by asking questions himself. Is it not obvious why he had to announce such terrible things? The employment of rhetorical questions at this point is very appropriate in that they force the audience 'to take an active role in the persuasion process.'<sup>58</sup>

## 5.3 *Amos 3:9-11*

### 5.3.1 *Exegetical Observations and Structure*

According to Dorsey, this unit may be subdivided and the resulting three parts may be arranged chiastically (A = v. 9, B = v. 10, A' = v. 11).<sup>59</sup> The similarity of the outer parts of this chiasm, however, is limited to the fact that v. 9 as well as v. 11 speak about fortresses (אַרְמְנוֹת). Thematically both verses have very different focuses; in v. 9 the people in the fortresses of Ashdod and Egypt are called to assemble on Mount Samaria in order to assess the oppressions that are to be found in that city. In v. 11, however, the focus is on the coming destruction of the Israelite fortresses. Dorsey's point is further weakened because the word אַרְמְנוֹת, which in his view ties

<sup>56</sup> MITTMANN, 'Gestalt und Gehalt einer prophetischen Selbstrechtfertigung': 141.

<sup>57</sup> HUBBARD, 148: 'There must have been some formal protest lodged contesting both the negative promise and Amos' right to deliver it.' PAUL, 105, remarks: 'In defense of his previous oracle announcing impending punishment of the elected people (3:1-2), he forcefully and cogently argues that prophecy is not a self-generating act; rather, the prophet is irresistibly compelled to deliver God's words.' Cf. also RUDOLPH, 151-152; WOLFF, 219, 222; G. V. SMITH, 97, 106-107; MARTIN-ACHARD, 28; and MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 381. GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 300, also summarises the function of vv. 3-8 correctly when he states: 'The introduction, presenting the stunning issue of the people's punishment, needs confirmation. [...] The chain of rhetorical questions which follow the introduction stresses Amos' position and is intended to refute the basic opinion of the audience that God will not punish them.' Thus JEREMIAS, 'The Interrelationship Between Amos and Hosea': 182, speaks of the 'legitimizing function' of the questions.

<sup>58</sup> Thus GITAY, 'Deutero-Isaiah': 197. Cf. LABUSCHAGNE, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, 23: 'The rhetorical question is one of the most forceful and effectual ways employed in speech for driving home some idea or conviction. Because of its impressive and persuasive effect the hearer is not merely listener: he is forced to frame the expected answer in his mind, and by doing so he actually becomes a co-expressor of the speaker's conviction.' See also CRAIG, 'Interrogatives in Haggai-Zechariah': 230, who emphasises the heightening effect of sequential questions.

<sup>59</sup> DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 310.

these two verses together, appears also in v. 10, the middle part of the proposed chiasm, where it is said that the Israelites store up violence and robbery in their fortresses.<sup>60</sup>

In my opinion it is, therefore, more appropriate to consider vv. 9-11 as one unit, as it normally is by form critics. This unit is not arranged chiastically but it is, of course, governed by the *Leitmotiv* אַרְמְנוֹת. The arrangement is better described as being linear, thus displaying a progressive development:

Someone shall proclaim in the strongholds of Ashdod and Egypt (v. 9a)

→ that they shall gather on Mount Samaria (v. 9b $\alpha$ )

→ in order to have a look at the oppressions that are going on in that city. (v. 9b $\beta$ )

→ Then the Lord explains why there is such violence and robbery. (v. 10)

→ Therefore, declares the Lord, an enemy shall surround the land, (v. 11a)

→ destroy the Israelite defences, (v. 11b $\alpha$ )

→ and plunder the fortresses. (v. 11b $\beta$ ).

These verses are a good example of a poetic text that establishes what Alter calls 'a miniature narrative continuum'.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the text might be arranged as follows:

9      השמיעו על-ארמנות באשדוד  
ועל-ארמנות בארץ מצרים ואמרו  
האספו על-הרי שמרון  
וראו מהומת רבות בתוכה  
ועשוקים בקרבה

10      ולא ידעו עשות-נכחה  
נאם-יהוה  
האוצרים חמס ושר בארמנותיהם

11      לכן כה אמר אדני יהוה  
צר וסביב הארץ  
והורד ממך עזך  
ונבזו ארמנותיך<sup>62</sup>

Figure 13: The Linear, Progressive Development in Amos 3:9-11

Form critics like Sinclair call this unit a courtroom scene despite the fact that the term רִיב is missing in this context.<sup>63</sup> Although Sinclair's analysis seems to me convincing with regard to

<sup>60</sup> Dorsey is also wrong when he states that each of the units of the proposed seven-part chiasm of Amos 3 contains a divine speech formula (cf. *ibid.*) since this is not true with regard to v. 9.

<sup>61</sup> ALTER, 'Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry': 618.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. PFEIFER, 'Die Denkform des Propheten Amos': 478, who remarks concerning v. 11: 'Auch die angekündigte Eroberung Samarias ist ganz konkret *in drei Akten* beschrieben [italics mine].' Cf. also GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 307: '... the description of punishment is constructed by a verse of three lines, depicting a military campaign: siege, defeat, and plunder. The lines are short, with no detailed description; hence construction dramatizes the quickness of the fall.'

<sup>63</sup> SINCLAIR, 'The Courtroom Motif in the Book of Amos': 352. He arranges the unit in the following way:

- I. A description of the judgement scene (v. 9a)
- II. The speech of the judge (v. 9b)
  - A. Address to the defendant
  - B. Pronouncement of guilt (indictment) (v. 10)
  - C. Sentence (v. 11)

Cf. also MCKEATING, 29, who speaks of a trial.



vv. 9-11,<sup>64</sup> we have to bear in mind that these verses are only a small part within a larger whole. It was thus obviously not Amos' concern to develop this rhetorical device at greater length. Because of my aim to demonstrate the progressive argument of vv. 9-11, however, I arranged the sentences in such a way as to show that Amos' oracle progresses very fast from the calling of the witnesses (v. 9a) to the announcement of the punishment (v. 11).<sup>65</sup>

The whole unit is a very provoking one since Amos commands emissaries to invite the leadership of Egypt and Ashdod, who do not know Yahweh and who do not keep his law, to witness against Yahweh's chosen people.<sup>66</sup> The Israelites would certainly consider themselves morally superior to these witnesses.<sup>67</sup> Rudolph ironically characterises these witnesses as 'Fachleute in puncto Bedrückung', 'die den Samariern gleichwertige Leistungen bescheinigen müssen.'<sup>68</sup> And according to Dearman the specific choice of Ashdod and Egypt has been made on the ground that these nations are two former oppressors of Israel who 'are called as witnesses ... to see the capital city of Samaria now playing a similar role of oppression.'<sup>69</sup> The commands of v. 9 are, of course, rhetorical devices and not meant to be carried out literally. Finley remarks: 'The effect lends much more vividness to the scene than a simple statement that even the Gentile nations would know Israel was guilty of inhuman actions.'<sup>70</sup> The fact that two witnesses are invited, might also be of specific importance since these were necessary in a capital case (cf. Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:5; 1 Kgs 21:10ff). In this particular instance they are commanded to have a look at the great terror (מְהוֹרָתָהּ) that is going on in Samaria. The wickedness of the leaders of Samaria, who are ironically portrayed as storing up violence and robbery,<sup>71</sup> is so severe that the Lord himself explains that they simply do not know how to do what is good or right.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, declares the Lord, they deserve a severe punishment.<sup>73</sup> Those strongholds, in which violence and robbery are stored up, shall be plundered. All the riches were collected in vain because they will be robbed from them. 'Die Häuser der Räuber werden selbst ausgeraubt.'<sup>74</sup> Gitay additionally observes: 'It is remarkable that v. 11, which confronts the

<sup>64</sup> SINCLAIR, 'The Courtroom Motif in the Book of Amos': 353, proposes another courtroom scene in 3:1-2 which, however, seems to me in no way convincing. Sinclair himself admits that there are no witnesses mentioned in these verses. Therefore, I would conclude, it is no courtroom scene at all.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. PFEIFER, 'Die Denkform des Propheten Amos': 480: 'Keine Pause tritt ein, es wird nicht gewartet, was die Zeugen, wenn sie denn kämen, für ein Gutachten abgeben würden, zu welchem Urteil sie wohl gelangten, sondern unmittelbar auf die kurze und doch erschöpfende, das Wesentliche zusammenziehende Zustandsschilderung folgt Jahwes Urteil: Ein Feind wird kommen und das Land erobern, die Befestigungen schleifen, die Paläste ausplündern.' He, therefore, speaks of a 'unerbittliche Konsequenz' (inexorable consequence).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. STUART, 329; FINLEY, 187. The text does not give any indication that this request to summon witnesses should be understood as a part of the heavenly proceedings to which v. 7 refers. Against ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 374.

<sup>67</sup> HUBBARD, 151. Cf. also HARPER, 74, 76; PAUL, 115.

<sup>68</sup> RUDOLPH, 163.

<sup>69</sup> DEARMAN, *Property Rights in the Eighth-Century Prophets*, 26.

<sup>70</sup> FINLEY, 188. Cf. also RUDOLPH, 163; and G. V. SMITH, 119.

<sup>71</sup> WOLFF, 232, speaks of 'beißende Kritik'. Cf. also G. V. SMITH, 120; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 375.

<sup>72</sup> HARPER, 77, remarks: 'the emphasis is on *know*' [italics his]. The phrase נִדְּבַר יְהוָה is very important in this context because it underlines that it is the Lord's evaluation. Paul's notion that it is a 'delaying tactic' (p. 117) seems to me less probable.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. ROFÉ, *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature*, 57: 'If the words "declares the Lord" in v. 10, are indeed original, they show that the Lord drew his conclusions from the facts denounced by the prophet.'

<sup>74</sup> WOLFF, 233. PAUL, 118, notes that the 'punishment is in the form of *lex talionis* [italics his]'. Cf. also G. V. SMITH, 121; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 375.

audience directly, maintains the punishment. The function of the sudden transition from the third person to the second, called *aversio*, is to emphasize and to raise emotion.’ [italics his]<sup>75</sup>

### 5.3.2 Rhetorical Function

Again, it is astonishing how well the structure of this middle part of Amos 3 serves to communicate the message of Amos. As we have observed earlier, Amos began his message with a paradoxical announcement of the divine punishment, namely, that the Lord will punish his chosen people just because they are the only one he has chosen. Since this announcement obviously caused opposition the prophet goes on to assure the people that it is really God’s word and that he has to announce it even if it is not exactly what the people wanted to hear (vv. 3-8). However, as the end of the entire discourse shows, Amos’ actual aim is to stress that the Lord is going to punish his people (vv. 12-15).

The middle part (vv. 9-11) serves this purpose well in that it shifts the focus back to this theme of punishment. Amos employs another startling rhetorical device when he suddenly declares that someone, some unspecified emissaries, shall proclaim to the strongholds of Ashdod and Egypt that they shall assemble and witness against Israel. Wolff remarks, ‘Will man Amos’ Zuständigkeit bezweifeln, so sollen Kenner hochentwickelter Wohnkultur als Augenzeugen zugezogen werden.’<sup>76</sup> The linear progressive arrangement of the whole unit also fits well at this point since it serves the aim of coming back to the vital theme in v. 11, i.e. the theme of punishment. This is also emphasised by Wolff who comments: ‘Im literarischen Kontext liefert der Spruch [vv. 9-11] nach dem eingeschalteten Legitimationsdisput (3 3-6.8) den ersten Kommentar zu dem grundsätzlichen Wort am Kopf der Sammlung [vv. 1-2] ...’<sup>77</sup>

This theme of punishment is developed even further in the following dramatic illustration and reaches its climax in the last unit where the prophet highlights that the horns of the altar shall be cut off and that all the luxurious houses in Israel shall be destroyed. This latter aspect is particularly emphasised through the significant repetition of the *Leitmotiv* בַּיָּהּ.

## 5.4 Amos 3:12

### 5.4.1 Exegetical Observations and Structure

Amos 3:12 may be regarded as one of the five sub-units of ch. 3 because it belongs neither to the preceding nor to the following verses.<sup>78</sup> The beginning of this sub-unit is marked by the divine speech formula כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה as well as the shift from the courtroom scene in vv. 9-11 to a forceful illustration of Amos’ message in v. 12. Amos 3:13 marks again the beginning of a new unit as the introductory שְׂמַעוּ reveals.

<sup>75</sup> GITAY, ‘A Study of Amos’s Art of Speech’: 306.

<sup>76</sup> WOLFF, 231.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 230. Against NOBLE, ‘Literary Structure of Amos’: 217 n. 29, who considers vv. 9-11 an anticlimax.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. PFEIFER, ‘“Rettung” als Beweis der Vernichtung’: 274. Cf. also GESE, ‘Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches’: 427. Against G. V. SMITH, 121.



The illustration in v. 12 is given in a comparative clause with כַּאֲשֶׁר in the protasis and כִּן in the apodosis.<sup>79</sup> Following these particles in each part of the sentence, we find the verb נָצַל that depicts the theme of the illustration: salvation. However, it becomes apparent at once that Amos' statement is highly ironic.<sup>80</sup> As the small remains of an animal,<sup>81</sup> that a shepherd was able to rescue from a lion's mouth, only serve to confirm the loss of the animal (Exod 22:13; 1 Sam 17:34-35; cf. also CH § 266;<sup>82</sup> Gen 31:39), so will the worthless parts of once luxurious furniture only reveal that there once must have lived wealthy people: "Gerettet" wird nur die Erinnerung an ein bequemes Leben.<sup>83</sup> The following figure displays the structure of this small unit:

	כה אמר יהוה	12
שתי כרעים או בדל-אזן (aβ)	כאשר יציל הרעה מפי הארי (αα)	
בפאת מטה ובדמשק ערש (bβ)	כן ינצלו בני ישראל הישבים בשמרון (βα)	

Figure 14: The Structure of Amos 3:12

The last phrase of v. 12, בַּפְּאֵת מֶטֶה וּבְדִמְשֶׁק עֵרֶשׁ, poses some difficult questions. First, to which part of the sentence is v. 12bβ attributive? Secondly, how are we to interpret the two prepositional prefixes ב in v. 12bβ? Thirdly, what does the hapax legomenon דִּמְשֶׁק mean?<sup>84</sup>

A great variety of different solutions have been proposed, but since it is not my aim to provide a detailed exegesis of Amos 3, I will refer only to the results of Rabinowitz, 'The Crux at Amos III 12' and Moeller, 'Ambiguity at Amos 3:12',<sup>85</sup> whose proposals seem to me the best solution. Moeller remarks that because

the verse is composed of two parallel main clauses [a + b] which express a comparison [...] [the] literary structure demands that the final phrases of clause two [bβ] ... stand in parallel to the final phrase of clause one [aβ]. It also demands that, just as the final phrase of the first clause [aβ] is attributive to the main verb, the final compound phrase of the second clause [bβ] be understood as being attributive to the main verb in its clause.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Cf. JM § 174a+b.

<sup>80</sup> STUART, 331, speaks of a 'mocking, scornful tone'. Cf. CRIPPS, 161; G. V. SMITH, 122; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 373; and PFEIFER, "'Rettung" als Beweis der Vernichtung': 276.

<sup>81</sup> PAUL, 119, interprets these remains as a merism: 'from top (ear) to bottom (leg), almost nothing whatsoever will be saved.'

<sup>82</sup> HAASE, *Die keilschriftlichen Rechtssammlungen*, 56.

<sup>83</sup> WOLFF, 236; cf. also PFEIFER, "'Rettung" als Beweis der Vernichtung': 271; and PAUL, 120.

<sup>84</sup> HAYES, 133, speaks of 'a major crux interpretum in Old Testament studies'.

<sup>85</sup> RABINOWITZ, 'The Crux at Amos iii 12': 228-231; and MOELLER, 'Ambiguity at Amos 3:12': 31-34.

<sup>86</sup> MOELLER, 'Ambiguity at Amos 3:12': 32. I added the exact references to the various parts of the verse in order to facilitate their identification. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 409, question the parallelity between v. 12a and 12b because 'v 12b does not have anything to match the lion or the shepherd. It changes the active *yassil* to the passive or reflexive *yinnāšēlū*.' GREENSTEIN, 'How Does Parallelism Mean?': 46, however, criticises a too narrow definition of the term 'parallelism' and claims: 'In order to reveal a repetition of syntactic patterning one must of necessity examine not only the surface structure of the line but also its more abstract underlying relations.' He adds: 'Parallelism may not be evident superficially, but it may be present deep down.' (ibid.: 47) As an illustration of this principle he quotes Ps 105:17 whose two lines read:

He (God) sent a man ahead of them	שָׁלַח לְפָנֵיהֶם אִישׁ
Joseph was sold as a slave.	לְעֶבֶד נִמְכַר יוֹסֵף

Greenstein comments: 'On the surface the two lines differ in syntactic structure. However, if one removes the passivization involved in the second line, a case of parallelism materializes.' (ibid.: 48) The two lines would now read:

(he) sent before them a man	שָׁלַח לְפָנֵי הֵם אִישׁ
(he) sold as a slave Joseph	נִמְכַר לְ עֶבֶד יוֹסֵף

The same applies to Amos 3:12 as well. If we remove the passivization of v. 12b, the two lines are easily perceived as being parallel.

Rabinowitz proposed to divide and vocalise the problematic term  $\text{וְגִבַּר מִשֶּׁק}$  to  $\text{וְגִבַּר מִשֶּׁק}$  meaning ‘and a piece from a leg’. This interpretation regards the  $\text{ב}$  of this phrase as the first letter of the noun  $\text{גִּבַּר}$ , whereas the  $\text{ב}$  of  $\text{בְּפֶאֱתָה}$  is a *beth essentiae* whose force extends to both members of v. 12b $\beta$ .<sup>87</sup> The whole expression would then mean that the Israelites, those who live in Samaria, would be rescued ‘as a piece of a couch and a part from the leg of a bed’. Moeller summarises the advantages of this rendering as follows:

(1) it interprets the problem phrase in terms of words known to be in the classical Hebrew vocabulary, without alteration of the consonants of the text; (2) it interprets the passage in keeping with the regular norms of Hebrew syntax ...; (3) the obviously-intended comparative parallelism between the final phrases of the two clauses is restored; and (4) the resulting sense fits the demands of both the immediate linguistic and the larger sense contexts much better than other suggestions which have been offered.<sup>88</sup>

Although Paul rejects the proposal of Rabinowitz and Moeller because  $\text{שֶׁק}$  never refers to the ‘foot’ of a bed<sup>89</sup> he, nevertheless, comes to a very similar solution:

Even though the etymology and meaning of the word are still unknown, most likely it refers to another part of the bed. In the light of the first half of the verse, in which the prophet uses the imagery from bottom (legs) to top (ear) to create an anatomical merism, it stands to reason that here, too, he names chiastically the two opposite sides of the bed, from top to bottom:  $\text{פֶּאֱתָה}$  (‘front/head’) and  $\text{דְּמִשֶּׁק}$ , which in the present context would then represent the ‘rear/foot’ of the bed.<sup>90</sup>

Pfeifer largely agrees with Rabinowitz and Moeller but understands  $\text{דְּמִשֶּׁק}$  as referring to Damascus.<sup>91</sup> He remarks that it might be a dialectical difference or ‘ein ausländisches Modewort für das modische ausländische Bett’. However, Moeller and Finley list a number of reasons why the reading ‘Damascus’ is very unlikely.<sup>92</sup>

Wolff and Hayes criticise the solution of Rabinowitz and Moeller for different reasons. Wolff remarks that  $\text{שֶׁק}$  is never used for the leg of a bed, and ‘nach dem Vergleich in 12a ist eine solche neue Bildrede weder zu erwarten noch klar verständlich.’<sup>93</sup> That Wolff does not expect such a ‘Bildrede’ in v. 12b, however, is his subjective presupposition which deserves no further comment. He gives no reasons why it should not be intelligible. But he is unquestionably right that  $\text{שֶׁק}$  is never clearly used for the leg of a bed. That, however, does not prove that it cannot be used in such a way.<sup>94</sup> Wolff himself follows the suggestion of Gese, ‘Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches’, who ‘emended’ the phrase to  $\text{בְּפֶאֱתָה מִשֶּׁק}$ .<sup>95</sup> But for this a major scribal error has to be assumed.

Hayes, on the other hand, states, ‘the statements in the verse are not constructed so that the last four words are parallel to “two legbones or a piece of an ear”.’<sup>96</sup> Whereas we have the parti-

<sup>87</sup> Cf. MOELLER, ‘Ambiguity at Amos 3:12’: 33-34.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.: 34. The same solution is adopted by G. V. SMITH, 116, 123.

<sup>89</sup> PAUL, 121.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>91</sup> PFEIFER, “‘Rettung’ als Beweis der Vernichtung’: 273-274.

<sup>92</sup> MOELLER, ‘Ambiguity at Amos 3:12’: 32-33; and FINLEY, 191-192. Cf. already WELLHAUSEN, 77, who suggested that  $\text{דְּמִשֶּׁק}$  is a corruption of some word corresponding to  $\text{פֶּאֱתָה}$ . Cf. also G. V. SMITH, 122-123.

<sup>93</sup> WOLFF, 234.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 409, who remark concerning the proposed  $\text{שֶׁק}$  that ‘the term could be metaphorical and appropriate in the context.’

<sup>95</sup> GESE, ‘Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches’: 427-432. He understood  $\text{דְּמִשֶּׁק}$  as ‘eine Analogiebildung zu dem vorhergehenden  $\text{בְּשִׁמְרוֹן}$ ’ (ibid.: 428).

<sup>96</sup> HAYES, 135.



cle וַיִּשְׁׁ in the first half, the two phrases in 12b are joined by a *waw*. He, therefore, maintains the reading ‘Damascus’ and reads v. 12bβ literally ‘and in Damascus (is) a bed’. He explains: ‘Samaria will be salvaged along with some fragments of bedding but their place of sleeping will be in Damascus; that is, they will be exiled from the land.’<sup>97</sup> The problem with this reading, however, is that it does not recognise the two parallel statements in v. 12bβ as such (וַיִּשְׁׁ + noun + noun designating a bed [עַרְשׁ || מַטָּה]). All other suggestions and proposed emendations have to change the text of the MT to a higher degree than Rabinowitz and Moeller.<sup>98</sup>

#### 5.4.2 Rhetorical Function

Although v. 12 is the smallest part of the entire chapter it, nevertheless, has an important role to play. As I already mentioned above, the whole prophetic discourse portrays Amos as desperate to convince his addressees that Yahweh will indeed punish them because of their obvious wrongdoings.

Amos very creatively employs several astonishing devices in order to reach his goal. After the highly provocative section of vv. 9-11 in which even foreign nations confirm to the need of the divine punishment, Amos shifts to a bitter ironic or even sarcastic illustration in order to highlight that the punishment will be so severe that there will be no survivors.

The sudden shift to this illustration playing on the theme of rescue, which even seems a bit disturbing in its context (vv. 13-15 would fit very well as a direct extension to vv. 9-11), again seems to reflect the fact that Amos’ audience objected to the sentence in v. 11 and proposed that Yahweh would deliver them from their enemies instead. Pfeifer remarks:

Amos knüpft an die Worte seiner Hörer an, er greift die Rede von der Rettung auf und bestätigt sie, ja, es wird in dem bevorstehenden Gericht Gottes über Israel eine Rettung geben, aber was da gerettet werden wird, sind ein paar Trümmer ihres Mobiliars, die Zeugnis ablegen von dem Leben, zu dem sie einst gehört hatten [...] Diese ‘Rettung’ ist nur der Beweis der Vernichtung.<sup>99</sup>

Again the reaction as such is not recorded but the present arrangement portrays the addressees as reacting in such a way.

Concerning its emotional effect this small unit provides the climax of the entire discourse<sup>100</sup> and at the same time serves as an introduction to the concluding remarks, which focus entirely on the divine punishment. Additionally, Melugin highlights that v. 12 fits well in the context of the entire chapter: ‘v 12 seems to presuppose the context of ch. 3 as a whole. Its use of the mes-

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> For other discussions of this verse (and other proposed solutions) see HARPER, 80-83; CRIPPS, 291-292; RUDOLPH, 159-160; FINLEY, 191-192; HUBBARD, 152; MITTMANN, ‘Amos 3,12-15 und das Bett der Samarier’: 152-167. GESE, ‘Kleine Beiträge zum Verständnis des Amosbuches’: 429, lists even more proposals and also discusses the interpretations of LXX, Vg, and Tg in some detail. – LORETZ, ‘Vergleich und Kommentar in Amos 3,12’: 122-125, has no problems at all with the disputed phrase because he regards it together with large parts of the verse as a prosaic gloss. For a severe critique of Loretz’s treatment of v. 12 see MITTMANN, ‘Amos 3,12-15 und das Bett der Samarier’: 150.

<sup>99</sup> PFEIFER, ‘“Rettung” als Beweis der Vernichtung’: 276. Cf. also RUDOLPH, 164; and WOLFF, 235.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 405: ‘Verse 12 is the centerpiece. It represents the last scene in the process of destruction threatened and described in vv 11 and 14-15.’

senger formula, as well as the language about household furnishings and the verb *yšb*, relates to both vv 9-11 and vv 13-15. The mention of the 'lion' in v 12 is reminiscent of vv 3-8 (4, 8).'<sup>101</sup>

### 5.5 The Rhetorical Structure of Amos 3

The whole discourse is bracketed by two declarations of the divine punishment, each of which is introduced by *שמעו* and uses the key word *פקד* in order to allude to this judgement. This *inclusio* is clearly intended and it expresses the central message of the entire discourse.<sup>102</sup>

In between we find three sub-units that serve to underline that this message is indeed Yahweh's word which the prophet has to proclaim as a warning (vv. 3-8), that the divine judgement is justified (vv. 9-11), and that it will be a devastating punishment (v. 12). The prophet seems to have abandoned his initial theme of vv. 1-2 in the subsequent second part (vv. 3-8). But in the following units he gradually comes back to it until he finally reaches his starting point again. The whole discourse might, therefore, be arranged as follows:<sup>103</sup>

- A Initiating declaration: 'Yahweh will punish his chosen people' (vv. 1-2)  
introduced by: *שמעו*; key word: *פקד*
  - B Argumentation: 'Yahweh's words have to be announced as a warning' (vv. 3-8)
  - C Provocative confirmation: 'Even foreign witnesses will confirm the need of the punishment' (vv. 9-11)  
key word: *ארמנות*
  - D Ironic intensification: 'The punishment will be a complete punishment without any hope of survival' (v. 12)
- E Initiating declaration reaffirmed and extended: 'Yahweh will indeed punish Israel' (vv. 13-15)  
introduced by: *שמעו*; key word: *פקד*

Figure 15: The Rhetorical Structure of Amos 3

Wendland proposes a slightly different analysis which divides the chapter into two parts each of which in turn consists of an A-B-A' structure.<sup>104</sup> The reasons for his analysis are the *inclusios* which he observes in both parts: *יהנה דבָּר || דבָּר יהנה* (vv. 1a/8b)<sup>105</sup> on the one hand, and *ארמנות || ארמנותיך* in A (vv. 9a/11b) together with the corresponding *house(s)* in A' (vv. 13a/15b) on the other hand. He outlines the structure as follows:

<sup>101</sup> MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 382. He, however, concludes that it 'was created by a redactor who already had the material in ch. 3 before him.'

<sup>102</sup> Cf. LUBSCZYK, *Auszug Israels aus Ägypten*, 46, who also remarks that 'das Ganze eine Gerichtsdrohung darstellt, in die die einzelnen Teile sich nahtlos einfügen.'

<sup>103</sup> The advantage of this outline against that of Dorsey is that it presents the development of the argument more clearly because it is based not only on structural devices and key words but on the meaning of the various parts and their contribution to the entire message of ch. 3 as well.

<sup>104</sup> WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 11-12.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. also MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 381.



Cycle one: the threat of imminent punishment (1-8)

- A Introduction "Listen ... Yahweh has spoken" (1-2)
- B Illustration: seven rhetorical questions with a progressive intensification (3-6)
- A' Conclusion: climax – the *lion* (Yahweh) *roars* through his prophets (7-8)

Cycle two: the punishment is specified (9-15)

- A Introduction: call to witness, indictment, verdict (9-11)
- B Illustration: vivid simile (12)
- A' Conclusion: the indictment and verdict of unit A is continued (13-15)

Figure 16: Amos 3 as Two Chiastic Cycles (Wendland)

However, this analysis does not recognise the more important *inclusio* provided by vv. 1-2 and vv. 13-15 which not only consists in the repetition of such terms as שָׁמַעוּ and פִּקְרוּ but also in the thematic similarity. Although the words *Yahweh has spoken* in v. 1 and v. 8 provide a formal *inclusio*, the parts to which these verses belong are clearly not parallel with regard to their meaning. Whereas the first part (vv. 1-2) serves as an introductory statement which ironically portrays the punishment of God's chosen people, the second part (vv. 7-8) speaks of the Lord's decision to reveal his plans to the prophets as well as of the prophet's responsibility to make Yahweh's decisions known. It, moreover, seems to me preferable to regard vv. 3-8 as one unit that prepares the reader for the following announcements.

Wendland's case is much stronger with regard to the second cycle since vv. 13-15 are, indeed, a continuation of vv. 9-11. A close look at these verses, however, reveals that the indictment is not continued in vv. 13-15 (as Wendland claims) but only the verdict which was already mentioned in v. 11. But again, even if we admit the possibility of regarding vv. 9-15 as one unit consisting of three chiastically arranged sub-units,<sup>106</sup> it nevertheless seems to me more appropriate to consider vv. 1-2 and vv. 13-15 as corresponding units which function as a frame around the whole prophetic discourse. Gitay thus properly regards vv. 13-15 as 'the epilogue to the discourse.'<sup>107</sup>

*Further conclusions:* The form-critical results are helpful and appropriate as far as the structure of Amos 3 is concerned: the chapter consists indeed of the five sub-units that have been identified by form critics. The various sub-units that make up the prophetic discourse in Amos 3 are very diverse with regard to their form as well as their content. But this does not prove that they represent different prophetic oracles that once were delivered independently. Instead, the variety of forms (rhetorical devices) should be seen as the prophet's skilful attempt to deliver his message convincingly. It is, moreover, impossible to be sure that the prophetic discourse in Amos 3 was once delivered orally in (approximately) this form.<sup>108</sup> We can, how-

<sup>106</sup> The proposed chiasm, however, is not evident with regard to the function of the three parts. Whereas the first part (vv. 9-11) mentions the indictment as well as the verdict, its function seems to be to underline and justify the indictment, as the summons of foreign witnesses as well as the Lord's explanation that the Israelites do not know how to do right reveal. Having confirmed that the indictment is justified, the verdict is announced (v. 10), whose severity is then illustrated (v. 12) and vividly described in greater detail (vv. 13-15). The message of these three parts is thus not arranged concentrically but linearly.

<sup>107</sup> GITAY, 'A Study of Amos's Art of Speech': 301.

<sup>108</sup> In fact, this seems to me rather unlikely. Although all the various parts of this discourse might have belonged originally to the same orally delivered message, they are obviously not the *ipsissima verba* of the prophet but rather the *ipsissima vox*, that is, they contain the prophet's original message in an abbreviated and concentrated form.

ever, be sure that the whole discourse was deliberately arranged by the author of the book of Amos in order to supply the following generations with the prophet's as well as Yahweh's words.

It is, therefore, not necessary to isolate the various small units and to reconstruct their original historical background in order to understand their message. Instead, we should rather read them within their present context, that is, the prophetic discourse in Amos 3 as well as the whole book of Amos. Even in their present context, the various units reflect a communicative situation. Although the sub-units of ch. 3 at first glance seem to be rather unconnected, a closer look reveals that they presume a reaction of the addressees. Whereas we do not know the exact reaction of the original audience, the various units as they now stand contribute in creating a dialogue between the prophet and his addressees.<sup>109</sup>

Although Amos 3 is clearly a self-contained unit, it is also very carefully and skilfully connected with the preceding unit (1:3-2:16) and most likely also with the subsequent material. On the one hand, the whole discourse of Amos 3 clearly develops the oracle against Israel (2:6-16) and reflects also the theme and language of the book's title (1:2), on the other hand, however, I would suppose that it also prepares the reader for the following message. Finally, it is important to realise that ch. 3 is connected with the preceding material in the same way as the various sub-units of Amos 3 are connected with one another, that is, by means of an implied reaction of the addressees.

Besides, the analysis of the interrelation of the structure and the prophetic message of Amos 3 has also revealed that it is inappropriate to focus only on a specific structural device (as, i.e. an *inclusio*). Some of the proposed *inclusios* are actually only a repetition of an important term because they are often not parallel with regard to either their structure or their function. Moreover, a structural analysis should never be accomplished without a simultaneous investigation of the content of the particular passage. We have to bear in mind that the author of a prophetic book was not primarily interested in creating an artificial piece of literature, although he might have achieved such a result, but in communicating an important divine message. The structure, therefore, serves to convey this message as effectively as possible.

### 5.6 *The Rhetorical Function of Amos 3*

The main aim of this chapter, as I indicated above, was to examine the literary structure of Amos 3. However, this task is not complete once we have investigated the micro-structure of that chapter. The discussion of the necessity of a literary approach showed that exegetes have often failed to understand the meaning of certain parts of this chapter because they have not considered the context in which these parts appear. In order to avoid a similar fault we must refrain from analysing Amos 3 without looking at the literary context to which this chapter belongs. Thus, we have to ask: why does the chapter follow the previous unit; and how does its message anticipate the following material?

<sup>109</sup> Cf. also the 'final note' at the end of this chapter.



Dorsey remarks, 'The unit appears to be positioned here to develop one of the themes introduced in the final stanza of the previous message, viz., the judgment of Israel.'<sup>110</sup> The whole unit displays, indeed, close links with the previous one. Although ch. 3 should be regarded as a new unit, it is important to note these links. The most important one is the use of the term אֶרְמוֹן.<sup>111</sup> It occurs exclusively in chs. 1-3 with only one exception in 6:8.<sup>112</sup> In chs. 1-2 it is stereotypically said that Yahweh will send a fire that shall devour the strongholds of the various nations. Such a notion is missing with regard to Israel. Amos 2:13-16 only alludes to the divine punishment, focusing mainly on the ineluctability but not on its nature.<sup>113</sup> In ch. 3 follows another announcement of this punishment (vv. 1-2) which, for reasons we have discussed earlier, is not developed further until v. 11. After inviting witnesses from the אֶרְמוֹת of Egypt and Ashdod who are called to examine and corroborate the crimes that are practised within the אֶרְמוֹת of Samaria, Amos then goes on to proclaim the word of the Lord that exactly these latter אֶרְמוֹת shall be plundered. Vv. 12-15 are intended to develop this theme of judgement even further as we have seen above. Vv. 9-11, however, provide a strong link to the preceding chapters, and it is, therefore, obvious that the entire unit of ch. 3 fits very well at this part of the book to develop the theme of the divine judgement of Israel.<sup>114</sup>

But אֶרְמוֹן is not the only term that is of particular importance in chs. 1-3. The same is true also with regard to פְּשָׁע which is employed to designate the wrongdoings of each of the accused nations in Amos 1-2. It also 'introduces' the oracle against Israel (2:6). The same word, however, occurs again in 3:14, where it once more functions as a summary-word for all evildoing,<sup>115</sup> thereby tying the extended accusation against Israel (2:6-3:15) together.

Another theme that was already mentioned in the book's first major unit and is brought up again in Amos 3 is the issue of the prophets (cf. 2:11-12 and 3:3-8). In ch. 2 it was a part of Israel's guilt that they prevented the prophets from speaking while in ch. 3 Amos states that he has no choice but to proclaim the word of the Lord.<sup>116</sup> This again reflects that the Israelites were not willing to listen to Amos' announcements of judgement. They questioned his authority as a prophet and denied that he could know the divine will.

Moreover, both units (1:3-2:15; and 3:1-15) refer to the exodus theme and use exactly the same phrase (הַעֲלִיתִי מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם) in order to designate the delivery of Yahweh's chosen

<sup>110</sup> DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 310; cf. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 369.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. also HUBBARD, 147; MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 383.

<sup>112</sup> The term appears in Am 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5; 3:9 (twice), 10, 11; 6:8. Of the 32 occurrences of this expression in the Old Testament, no less than 12 are found in the book of Amos.

<sup>113</sup> Although Amos 2:13 might be an allusion to an earthquake.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. HAYES, 128, who remarks with regard to 3:9-11: 'The oppression and outrage referred to in this text are no doubt to be seen as synonymous with the list of wrongdoings denounced in 2:6-8.' Cf. also ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 406; and RUDOLPH, 165, who connects vv.14-15 with the previous unit and notes that 'dieser kleine Abschnitt von Haus aus in den Gedankenkreis von 2,6-16 [gehört] und [...] der Erläuterung von 2,13ff [dient].' Moreover, PAUL, 100-101, regards vv. 1-2 as 'a sort of minirecapitulation of some of the main motifs and expressions of the first two chapters'. The connection of ch. 3 to chs. 1-2 is also emphasised by MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 376.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. RUDOLPH, 162; HUBBARD, 147; and MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 383-384. Melugin draws our attention to the fact that the word פְּשָׁע or its accompanying verbal form occurs apart from its use in chs. 1-3 (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 3:14) only in 4:4 and 5:12. Cf. also G. V. SMITH, 125; and ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 377, 411.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 310; HUBBARD, 147; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 378.

people out of Egypt (cf. 2:10 and 3:1).<sup>117</sup> Melugin thus concludes, 'The composer of 1:3-2:16 has created this passage as an introduction to 3:1ff. by using language which is employed elsewhere in his collected material.'<sup>118</sup> Finally, the theme of Yahweh's roaring referred to in 3:4, 8 not only connects ch. 3 with the previous unit 1:3-2:16 but also with the book's 'title' in 1:2.

But apart from the various links that connect the two major units it is important to have a closer look at the transition between these two parts. Although Amos 3:1-2 is clearly the introduction of ch. 3 it also functions as a transitional element. A superficial look at the prophetic discourse in Amos 3 seems to reveal only various fragments with sometimes obscure transitions. A closer look, however, shows that all these transitions reflect a reaction of the addressees. The same is true with regard to the beginning of Amos 3.<sup>119</sup> When Amos compared the sins of Israel to those of the surrounding nations (chs. 1-2) and concluded that Israel is even worse than they are and will therefore experience a divine punishment, the addressees rely on Israel's special status as God's chosen people. Thus according to Hoffman, in talking about the exodus Amos makes use here 'of a popular expression, which he quotes ironically, or at least polemically.'<sup>120</sup> This he does in order to make it very clear that in the end even their reliance on their tradition will work out against them. This has been pointed out also by Vollmer who regards Amos 3:2 as a 'Niederschlag aus der Diskussion'. He notes that '3<sub>2a</sub> wird im Zusammenhang mit der Verkündigung des Amos nur verständlich als ein Zugeständnis, das Amos seinen Hörern macht, ohne sich mit ihm zu identifizieren. Der Halbvers ist nur verständlich als Einwand, der Amos auf Grund seiner Gerichtsverkündigung entgegengebracht wird.'<sup>121</sup>

<sup>117</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 378; PAUL, 101; FINLEY, 180; HUBBARD, 147; and PFEIFER, 'Amos und Deuterjesaja denkenformanalytisch verglichen': 441. G. V. SMITH, 104, remarks: 'This setting and connection with 2:10 is lost if 3:1b is omitted as a secondary gloss.' He adds: 'If all of 3:1 is part of God's message (instead of a prophetic introduction) one of the major reasons for omitting 3:1b is removed.' He is also right when he states: 'The incongruity is not eased by blaming it on a redactor who should have seen the problem just as clearly as Amos.' (ibid., n. 20).

<sup>118</sup> MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 383.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. RUDOLPH, 153, who remarks that Amos 'erlebte [...] gewiß immer wieder, daß ihm die Erwählungstatsache entgegengehalten wurde.' Cf. also HARPER, 64; CRIPPS, 149-150; PAUL, 101; G. V. SMITH, 97; MARTIN-ACHARD, 28; and MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 381.

<sup>120</sup> HOFFMAN, 'A North Israelite Typological Myth': 180. He refers to Jer 16:14; 23:7, where a similar exodus formula features as an oath formula (cf. also KEIL, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 168). This strengthens the idea that we are dealing here with a phrase belonging to the repertoire of popular tradition.

<sup>121</sup> VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 31.



## 6. AMOS 4

A review of previous investigations of Amos 4 shows that there is no consensus concerning the structure of the chapter. Usually vv. 6-13<sup>1</sup> or vv. 4-13<sup>2</sup> are seen as interrelated (at least insofar as the final form of the text is concerned) by most interpreters. But in recent years the whole chapter has been more frequently regarded as a unity.<sup>3</sup> Whereas we do not know which parts of the chapter originally, that is, in their oral context belonged together, it is clear that they are linked in the book's final form, either explicitly or at least by arranging them in such a way as to complement one another. By looking at the structure, content, rhetoric, and function of Amos 4 we intend to show how all these devices work together to achieve their specific mode of persuasion.

### 6.1 Amos 4:1-3

#### 6.1.1 Exegetical Observations and Structure

The interpretation of the first part of ch. 4 (vv. 1-3) is aggravated because the text poses some serious problems. Three main questions have to be answered: How is the phrase פְּרוֹת הַבָּשָׂן together with the alternating masculine and feminine forms in vv. 1-3 to be understood? What kind of judgement is depicted by the phrases צָנֹחַ and סִירוֹת דְּיוֹגָה in v. 2? And finally: what is the meaning of הַהֲרָמוֹנָה in v. 3?

Whereas the latter two problems are of minor importance in the context of the investigation in hand (since it is clear that a judgement *is* referred to), the first question does affect the interpretation of vv. 1-3 to a considerable degree. Concerning this problem two major solutions have been proposed:

(1.) *Amos Attacks Israel's Wealthy Women Who Oppress the Poor and Needy.* The majority of commentators have taken the oracle as an attack on the Samaritan women of the upper class who are addressed by the prophet in a provoking and shocking manner. The women are rebuked

<sup>1</sup> MAYS, 76ff; WEISER, 153ff; WOLFF, 247ff (esp. 249); PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 53.

<sup>2</sup> HARPER, 90ff; RUDOLPH, 169ff; STUART, 333ff; G. V. SMITH, 133ff; PAUL, 137ff; CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 206ff; JEREMIAS, 46ff.

<sup>3</sup> Vv. 1-3 present the main problem because they are thematically linked with the preceding oracles. Yet, for structural reasons I regard ch. 4 as one of the book's larger units (cf. ch. 2.3). Among those who treat the chapter as a unity are CRENSHAW, '*W edōrēk 'al-bāmōtē 'āreṣ*': 42; MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 377-378; BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 37ff; LIMBURG, 'Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos': 218; WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 12-14; HUBBARD, 154ff; FINLEY, 197ff; DEMPSTER, 'The Lord is His Name': 175; DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 311-312; and NIEHAUS, 328.

because of their extravagant and hence oppressive life-style.<sup>4</sup> This solution has been reached mainly because Bashan is an area which is known for its rich pastures and fat animals (cf. Deut 32:14; Ezek 39:18; Mic 7:14; Ps 22:13). For example, Smith remarks, 'The oaks of Bashan symbolize the proud and haughty in Isaiah 2:13, the bulls of Bashan symbolize violence and strength in Psalm 22:12 ...'<sup>5</sup> The adherents of this perception also point out that the context explicitly highlights social crimes.

In this view, אֲרֻנִיָּם in v. 1 refers to the husbands of the women who are commanded to supply their wives with the required drinks. Thus the term would have been used in a sarcastic sense since the usual words for a husband are אִישׁ or בַּעַל.<sup>6</sup> While these husbands are called 'lords' the women's command clearly shows who is the real lord.<sup>7</sup> In addition, it is remarkable that the term could also be used for a man who has a concubine (cf. Judg 19:26-27) so that it might even establish a deliberate ambiguity.

The advocates of this interpretation find it difficult to deal with the curious combination of feminine and masculine forms that in two instances (v. 1a and v. 1d) are even intermingled within the same line.<sup>8</sup> But it is possible to explain the masc. form of שָׁמְעוּ (v. 1) on the ground that it is used as a fixed formula in the book of Amos.<sup>9</sup> Concerning אֲרֻנִיָּהֶם (v. 1), עַלֵיכֶם and אֲרֻנֶיכֶם (v. 2) it should be pointed out that the phenomenon of masculine pronouns referring to feminine substantives occurs not infrequently in Biblical Hebrew.<sup>10</sup>

(2.) *An Attack Against the Israelite Leaders Who Commit Social and Religious Offences.* According to the second view it is the ruling class in general, though of course mainly consisting of the male leaders, that is indicted in these verses. In this case, the feminine forms are regarded as a figure of speech and the characterisation of Israel's ruling men as female cattle, an insulting and provocative epithet, is seen as exactly the point Amos wants to make:

<sup>4</sup> Among those in favour of this interpretation are HARPER, 86; CRIPPS, 165; WOLFF, 243; PAUL, 128; HAYES, 139; WEISER, 150; KING, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 126; G. V. SMITH, 127-128; FINLEY, 198; HUBBARD, 155; SOGGIN, 69-70; STUART, 332; NIEHAUS, 392; REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 88; SAWYER, *Prophecy and the Prophets of the Old Testament*, 42; JEMIELITY, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 89; MCCOMISKEY, 302; FEINBERG, 98; MCKEATING, 32; and JEREMIAS, 44.

RUDOLPH, 167, does not regard the address as insulting but sees it as a term that designates quality. For this view cf. also HAMMERSHAIMB, 65; PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 50; MARTIN-ACHARD, 33; HOLLAND, 134; and MAYS, 72.

However, LIMBURG, 99, notes that Amos' words 'were spoken in public, in the context of confrontation. It is difficult to imagine that those who heard them would take them as a compliment' [italics mine].

<sup>5</sup> G. V. SMITH, 128.

<sup>6</sup> אֲרֻן is applied to refer to a husband in Gen 18:12. According to REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 89-90, the term in Amos 4:1 refers to the king who is addressed with a *pluralis reverentiae*. Thus he concludes: 'das Zitat [in v. 1] ist ... eine kollektive Aufforderung der Frauengruppe am Hof an ihren Gebieter, den König: "Schaff du herbei!"' NIEHAUS, 392, thinks of 'husbands of high rank or social standing'.

<sup>7</sup> For this interpretation cf. RUDOLPH, 167; WEISER, 150; DEISSLER, 107; CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 201-202; and G. V. SMITH, 128-129, who speaks of 'a derogatory remark about the husband's authority'.

<sup>8</sup> Thus, for instance, ELLIGER, the BHS editor of Amos, suggests changing all masculine forms to feminine forms in order to get a more straightforward text. Cf. also WELLHAUSEN, 78; and REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 89, 92, who remarks (p. 95): 'Als Spuren einer Bearbeitung sind der Wechsel zwischen Feminin- und Maskulinsuffixen und die Anrede in 4,1-3 zu werten. Das Ziel der (späteren) Bearbeitung war vielleicht, zusammen mit 4,4ff einen zusammenhängenden Text zu schaffen, in dem die religiöse Kritik einen Schwerpunkt darstellt.'

<sup>9</sup> שָׁמְעוּ is also employed in such formulas in 3:1 and 5:1. Cf. also GK §§ 110k and 144a for the use of the 2nd masc. sg. *ipv.* with a feminine subject.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. GK § 135o. – With regard to the ending of אֲרֻנִיָּהֶם CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 202, suggests that the switch to the masc. suffix might be an instance of rhyming to maintain the *wt-ym* pattern of the previous line. He refers to WATSON, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 231-232.



The use of animal names – buffalo, ram, stag, stallion, bull (*šôr*) – for strong brave men, especially warriors, was popular among North Semitic peoples. ... To call men who fancied themselves such heroes “cows” would then be a parody and an insult. Such a taunt or curse is found in other texts, where soldiers behave like women. The military background of v 2 supports this result.<sup>11</sup>

This interpretation emphasises not only the social crimes that are referred to in v. 1 but also identifies a cultic background for the expression פְּרוֹת הַבָּשָׁן and the command in the last line of the verse. Thus Barstad, for instance, claims:

*Pārôt habbāšān* steht als Anrede an das ganze Volk. Hinter dieser Bezeichnung verbirgt sich eine Polemik gegen den Baalkult, da *pārâ* als ein prophetisches ‘Scheltwort’ gegen die Anhänger des Fruchtbarkeitskults zu werten ist, möglicherweise auch als ein terminus technicus für die Teilnehmer am hieros gamos des Fruchtbarkeitskults ...<sup>12</sup>

Several arguments have been brought forward to establish this interpretation: (1.) the context of this small piece (ch. 3; 4:4-13) is clearly directed against the whole people (or at least the whole leadership);<sup>13</sup> (2.) the recurring formula שְׁמַעוּ הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה, that elsewhere in Amos is directed against the whole people, suggests that פְּרוֹת הַבָּשָׁן is a metaphorical description of all Israel;<sup>14</sup> (3.) the alternating use of both masculine and feminine forms is regarded as suggesting complementarity;<sup>15</sup> (4.) the words פְּרוֹת and בָּשָׁן both occur in contexts that allude to cultic activities;<sup>16</sup> and (5.) the occurrence of אֲרוֹן in v. 1 could be easily explained as referring to a foreign deity instead of husbands,<sup>17</sup> with the masc. suffix of אֲרוֹנֵיהֶם showing that males are in

<sup>11</sup> Thus ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 421. Cf. also WATTS, ‘Critical Analysis of Amos 4:1ff.’: 496.

<sup>12</sup> BARSTAD, ‘Die Basankühe in Amos iv 1’: 296. Cf. idem, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 40; and KOCH, *Prophets*, 46, who also favours a cultic interpretation but thinks that, nevertheless, the women are addressed. He argues that Amos ‘may be mockingly picking up a cultic name the women gave themselves, since they imagined themselves to be the worshippers of the mighty bull of Samaria (Hos. 8.5f.)’. Koch’s view is supported by JACOBS, ‘Cows of Bashan’: 109-110. Tg. CALVIN, 223f., also considered the wealthy men to be the target of the prophet’s attack. However, Calvin did not interpret the passage along cultic lines. Instead, Calvin thinks that the use of the feminine pronouns should be understood in a derogatory sense. Amos ‘does not think them [i.e. the chief men of the kingdom] worthy of the name of men’ (CALVIN, 224). For this view cf. also BAUER, ‘Einige Stellen des Alten Testaments’: 437.

<sup>13</sup> BARSTAD, ‘Die Basankühe in Amos iv 1’: 290; idem, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 40.

<sup>14</sup> In this context Barstad refers to בְּחֹלֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל in 5:2 as another metaphorical address of Israel (‘Die Basankühe in Amos iv 1’: 291; *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 40-41). He additionally alludes to the similarity of the expressions הַיְשָׁבִים בְּשִׁמְרוֹן in 3:12 and בְּהַר שִׁמְרוֹן in 4:1 (‘Die Basankühe in Amos iv 1’: 290). Since the former phrase refers to the whole people, Barstad interprets the latter in the same way.

<sup>15</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 420. WILLIAMS, ‘Further Suggestion about Amos iv 1-3’: 206 n. 1, proposes that ‘an ambiguity in the phrase between the people of Israel as a whole and its female members could be an element in the prophet’s thought’. Cf. B. K. SMITH, 84, who also thinks that the male population was not excluded. PRAETORIUS, ‘Zum Texte des Amos’: 43; and HOLLAND, 135, suggest that the alternating use of masculine and feminine forms is (at least with regard to v. 2) significant, as Praetorius’ paraphrase shows:

*und man wird euch (Männer) an den Schilden wegnehmen,  
und euch (Weiber) bis auf die letzte an den Kochtöpfen.*

However, they offer no explanation for the remaining cases.

<sup>16</sup> BARSTAD, ‘Die Basankühe in Amos iv 1’: 293. Concerning בָּשָׁן he refers to Ps 68:15-17. Cf. WILLIAMS, ‘Further Suggestion about Amos iv 1-3’: 210-211: ‘In Ps. lxxviii 15 a certain rivalry between Mount Zion and the hills of Bashan is implied which no doubt has cultic overtones ... The reference to “bulls” in Ps. xxii 13 should also be noted ... There may be a reference to a foreign cultic tradition originating in the region of Bashan.’ But G. V. SMITH, 128, remarks that we have no evidence that an important Baal cult was located at Bashan. MELUGIN, ‘Formation of Amos’: 382-383, correctly notes that (a) the ‘bulls of Bashan’ in Ps 22:13 alongside with dogs and lions ‘are images of the supplicant’s enemies rather than cultic figures’; and (b) neither the reference to the mountain of Samaria nor to the ‘cows of Bashan’ are clearly cultic terms.

With regard to פְּרוֹת Barstad (p. 293-294) mentions Hos 4:16 where the term is applied to Israel in a context that is clearly cultic. Thus he prefers to translate the phrase פְּרוֹת סַרְרָה as ‘zügellooses’ or ‘geiles’ rather than ‘widerspenstiges Rind’. However, such a conclusion is by no means certain since the phrase in question may still simply be a metaphorical allusion to the stubbornness of Israel. In addition, Barstad refers to Jer 2:24, but that verse speaks of a פְּרוֹת (‘a wild ass in the wilderness’) instead of a פְּרוֹת.

<sup>17</sup> BARSTAD, ‘Die Basankühe in Amos iv 1’: 292; idem, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 41, remarks that the term sometimes refers to Baal.

view rather than females.<sup>18</sup> Further evidence in favour of this interpretation is said to be found in Amos 2:8 where Amos condemns the Israelites for drinking wine in the house of their God. In both verses there are references to 'drinking' as well as to 'their God' or 'lord' (וּבְשֵׁתָהּ || יְשֻׁתוֹ, and אֶרְנִיָּהֶם || אֶלְהֵיהֶם). Thus the conclusion is drawn that both passages (Amos 2:6-8 and Amos 4:1-3 [4-5]) speak of *social and religious offences*. Watts additionally claims: "Come. Let us drink!" is a reference to Baalistic rites.<sup>19</sup>

At present, a definitive solution is not in sight. But regardless of how the question concerning the group addressed in vv. 1-3 is answered (that is, even if a cultic reference is intended), it is obvious that the main focus of the indictment of this first paragraph is the exploitative life-style of the ruling class on which Koch aptly comments, 'Like replete cattle, they wilfully trample down their pastures, the lower classes of the people, on whom their existence in fact depends.'<sup>20</sup>

Amos portrays the Israelite leaders as people whose main interest is to tend their own self-indulgence. This they achieve by continually exploiting and oppressing those of lower status.<sup>21</sup> The exploitation and oppression is referred to with the verbs עֲשֶׂק and רָצַץ. Whereas עֲשֶׂק refers to direct and indirect forms of exploitation of human working power,<sup>22</sup> רָצַץ contains a connotation of extreme violence. This can be seen from Judg 9:53 and Ps 74:14, where it describes the breaking of the head of Abimelech and Leviathan, respectively.<sup>23</sup> On the basis of Jer 22:17, Reimer concludes that Amos is referring to compulsory labour.<sup>24</sup> The victims that are to suffer under the ruling elite are the אֲבִיּוֹנִים and הַדְּלִים, the financially poor, who also are of lower social rank, that is, the uninfluential in society.<sup>25</sup>

It was Wolff in his article 'Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch' who illustrated the intensifying rhetoric of the indictment of 4:1 most clearly in highlighting the function of the quote in v. 1d. He explained that one function of prophetic quotes is to provide a climax. Thus according to him the motivation for the following announcement of judgement (vv. 2-3) is given in a 'three-step staircase'. First comes the insolent address 'cows of Bashan' followed by two participles that describe the despicable deeds of the women. But the actual climax is reached in quoting these 'cows' themselves<sup>26</sup> thus revealing their disgusting attitude.

<sup>18</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 422; WATTS, 'Critical Analysis of Amos 4:1ff.': 496.

<sup>19</sup> WATTS, 'Critical Analysis of Amos 4:1ff.': 496. Unfortunately, however, he does not explain how he has reached this conclusion (if it is a conclusion, that is). According to BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 42, the phrase refers to a sacred meal, the *mrzḥ*.

<sup>20</sup> KOCH, *Prophets*, 46. Cf. also MAYS, 72.

<sup>21</sup> This notion of continuity is conveyed by the participles (cf. GK § 116a). According to NIEHAUS, 392, the use of the three participles parallels 'the pattern of an ancient Near Eastern divine or royal titulary'.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 89.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. also Ezek 29:7 (where it is parallel to עֲשֶׂק); Judg 10:8 (רָצַץ); and Eccl 12:6 and Isa 58:6 (נָחַק). WOLFF, 243, speaks of 'Mißhandlungen durch Bedrücken und Erpressen (עֲשֶׂק), durch Stoßen und Schlagen (רָצַץ)'. NIEHAUS, 392, regards the two terms as 'a hendiadys meaning "cruel oppression"'. According to HARPER, 88, 'רָצַץ refers ... to open attack and assault'. JEREMIAS, 45, remarks 'daß es Amos nicht um einzelnes Unrecht geht, sondern um das Zugrunderichten der Existenz ganzer Familien.'

<sup>24</sup> REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 89. Both verbs occur together also in Deut 28:33; 1 Sam 12:3-4; Jer 22:17; Hos 5:11.

<sup>25</sup> According to the law they should have been treated with compassion and justice (cf. Deut 15:4-11; 24:14). For a more detailed treatment of these two terms cf. FABRY, 'הַדְּלִים, הַלְּלִים, הַלְּלִים': 208-230; and BOTTERWECK, 'אֲבִיּוֹנִים': 27-41. BRENNER, 'Introduction': 23, comments on this accusation (as well as on Isa 3:12-15a): 'Apparently, when women allegedly have political and social influence, injustice reigns.' However, these remarks are clearly besides the point since Amos condemns the social offences of men and women alike. Amos 4:1-3 (let alone the rest of the book) does in no way imply that injustice is a (or the) consequence of the influential status of women in the Israelite society.

<sup>26</sup> WOLFF, 'Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch': 79.



The following proclamation of judgement (vv. 2-3) is strongly emphasised in that it is introduced with a divine oath that יהוה אלהינו swears by his holiness. This oath is introduced by the ear-catching הנה<sup>27</sup> and the prophetic expression ימים בָּאִים. On the use of the oath formula Wolff remarks, 'Wenn die Schwurformel an die Stelle der Botenspruchformel tritt ..., so wird damit die Unumstößlichkeit des Verkündeten auf das kräftigste herausgestellt.'<sup>28</sup> In addition, the use of the longer form of the divine name emphasises who it is that swears this oath against Israel. It even seems to be employed with an ironic touch since it stands in contrast to the reference to 'the lords' in v. 1. Whereas the Israelite women demand 'their lords' to get them enough to drink, they will receive 'enough punishment' from the real lord.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the first line of v. 2 stresses the certainty and ineluctability of the coming judgement.

In the entire prophetic corpus, similar oath-formulas are employed only six times. Three of them are to be found in the book of Amos (4:2; 6:8; and 8:7; cf. also Isa 14:24; 62:8; and Jer 51:14). In each of the oaths in Amos the Lord swears by something different ('his holiness'<sup>30</sup>, 'his life', 'the pride of Jacob'); and in each case the following judgement speech is characterised by great solemnity. It is also noteworthy, that these divine oaths are directed against Israel only in the book of Amos. In the other three instances, they introduce oracles that speak about salvation for God's people but punishment for their enemies. The expression ימים בָּאִים alludes to a new era,<sup>31</sup> an era of divine judgement that is opposed to the expectations of those who regard themselves as God's favourites.<sup>32</sup> A further irony can be seen in that whereas the Israelite women command their husbands to 'bring' (הביא) them something to drink, it is certain days, namely, days of punishment that will come (בָּאִים) to them.<sup>33</sup>

Another major problem of this first passage of ch. 4 is the description of the punishment.<sup>34</sup> The difficulties revolve around the terms צָנֹת and סִירוֹת דְּיוֹגָה. However, since the question of the nature of the judgement that is awaiting God's people does not affect the structure and meaning of the paragraph under discussion, I will not discuss the problems of the text in detail. The majority of interpreters think that Amos is depicting a deportation.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it is evident

<sup>27</sup> WO'C § 40.2.2b, regard it as signifying emphasis. הנה also serves to introduce announcements of punishment in 2:13; 4:2, 13; 6:11; 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1, 11; 9:8, 9 (only in 9:13 it introduces a salvation oracle).

<sup>28</sup> WOLFF, 244; cf. idem, 'Einführung in die klassische Prophetie': 15, where he notes that if the oracle as a whole is not introduced as a divine utterance, at least the proclamation concerning the future is marked as such.

<sup>29</sup> Thus also PAUL, 130; and CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 202 (cf. n. 2). WOLFF, 229, misses this irony when he proposes to delete אלהינו. DEMPSTER, 'The Lord is His Name': 178, presents a table that lists the various forms of the divine name that occur in Amos 4:1-13.

<sup>30</sup> For this expression outside the prophetic corpus cf. Ps 89:36.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. PAUL, 130; WOLFF, 244; HUBBARD, 156; and STUART, 332. MAYS, 72, states that the phrase is 'used to designate the imminent inbreaking time when Yahweh would effect his great setting-right, whether for woe (8.11) or weal (9.13).'

<sup>32</sup> ימים בָּאִים introduces another judgement oracle in 8:11, but refers to future restoration in 9:13. According to WATTS, 'Critical Analysis of Amos 4:1ff.': 493, it is related to the concept of the 'Day of the Lord'.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. PAUL, 130 n. 19; and WOLFF, 'Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch': 79, who translates:

*Laßt uns zu trinken kommen!*

*Ja, Tage kommen über euch, da schleppt man euch fort ...*

According to Wolff, this 'Stichwortverknüpfung' (concatenation) shows that the quote of the women receives a certain emphasis within the indictment.

<sup>34</sup> HAYES, 139, speaks of an interpreter's nightmare.

<sup>35</sup> Concerning the exact nature of the punishment several solutions have been proposed: (1.) the removal of corpses on large shields, favoured by DRIVER, 'Babylonian and Hebrew Notes': 20-21; and MCCOMISKEY, 303; (2.) the use of hooks (which is the traditional interpretation); cf. WILLIAMS, 'Further Suggestion about Amos iv 1-3': 208; HARPER, 87; CRIPPS, 167; RUDOLPH, 161; HAMMERSHAIMB, 66; G. V. SMITH, 130; FINLEY, 200-201; and FEINBERG, 99; (3.) the use of ropes, suggested by SCHWANTES, 'Note on Amos 4 2b': 83; and WOLFF, 244-245; and (4.) a carrying away in

that the vivid description of the prophet is intended to emphasise the brutality as well as the completeness of the judgement in store. The latter is underlined by the fact that even those ‘who are unwilling, the obstinate remnant of them’<sup>36</sup> will be led away. No one will escape the deportation that will occur in a very straightforward manner. Each inhabitant will have to leave the city straight ahead through one of the countless breaches in the walls (cf. Josh 6:20).<sup>37</sup> The notion of the destroyed wall with its many breaches is emphasised by the initial position of פְּרָצִים. Although the final word of this judgement oracle (הַהֲרַמְנָה) is another *hapax legomenon* it is fairly safe to conclude that it denotes a location.<sup>38</sup> The structure of this first paragraph of ch. 4 can thus be displayed as follows:

Introductory address	שמעו הדבר הזה (masc. pl.) פרות הבשן אשר בהר שמרון (fem. pl.)	1
Detailed accusation (designation of addressee)	העשקות דלים (fem. pl.) הרצצות אביונים (fem. pl.) האמרת (fem. pl.) לאדניהם הביאה ונשתה (suff. masc. pl.)	
Announcement of punishment:		
Introduction: divine oath formula	נשבע אדני יהוה בקדשו	2
General: ‘Intervention of God’	כי הנה ימים באים (masc. pl.) עליכם	
Detailed description of punishment	ונשא (masc. pl.) אתכם בצנות ואחריתכן (suff. fem. pl.) בסירות דוגה ופרצים (fem. pl.) תצאנה (fem. sg.) אשה נגדה (fem. pl.) והשלכתנה (fem. pl.) ההרמונה	3
Concluding oracle formula	נאם־יהוה	

Figure 17: The Structure of Amos 4:1-3<sup>39</sup>

baskets or pots; cf. PAUL, ‘Fishing Imagery in Amos 4:2’: 185-188. – BRENNER, ‘Introduction’: 23, to some extent following the LXX (cf. καὶ ἐξενεχθήσεσθε γυμναὶ) translates ‘and brought out naked, and thrown into the harem’ which is rather fanciful. Lengthy investigations of the *hapax legomena* in v. 2 are to be found in the articles referred to in this note. Cf. also the detailed treatments in the commentary by PAUL, 130-135.

<sup>36</sup> Thus HASEL, *Remnant*, 183. Although the usual term for ‘remnant’ would be שְׁאֲרִית (cf. Amos 1:8; 5:15; 9:12), ‘remnant’ is a possible meaning for אַחֲרִית. It is also used in this sense in Amos 9:1. Cf. HARPER, 87; CRIPPS, 167; WOLFF, *Stunde des Amos*, 118-120; CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 202 n. 4; and RUDOLPH, 161, 168, who speaks of a ‘rhetorische Figur, um die Totalität der Katastrophe zu veranschaulichen’. Some commentators propose that the term refers to the backside or rear end of an animal, but since this meaning is otherwise not attested, an ‘emendation’ to אַחֲרִי is propounded (cf. Exod 26:12; 33:23; 1 Kgs 7:25; Ezek 8:16). HASEL, *Remnant*, 182, points out that this interpretation contradicts the other uses of the term in Amos.

<sup>37</sup> פְּרָצִים is an *acc. loc.*, cf. GK § 118 d+h. REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 92, remarks that this description alludes to the siege and conquest of the city in 3:11.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. WILLIAMS, ‘Further Suggestion about Amos iv 1-3’: 210, who recommends to retain the word as it stands. FREEDMAN/ANDERSEN, ‘Harmon in Amos 4:3’: 41, suggest the identification of Harmon with modern Hermel near Kadesh on the Orontes. See further HARPER, 88-89; PAUL, 136; and MCKEATING, 32. According to PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 51 n. 67, the word might be a dialectal form of הַרְמוֹן. Cf. also Amos 5:27, where an exilition ‘beyond Damascus’ is in view. On the other hand, HAYES, 142, prefers to read הַמְרַמְנָה ‘the dung-pit, garbage heap’ (cf. also NEB; NJPSV); and VAN DER WAL, ‘Structure of Amos’: 109-110; and REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 93, suggest to emend the text to הַהֲרַמְנָה. Reimer remarks: ‘Mit der Annahme, daß es sich bei dem letzten Wort in der Strafansage Am 4,3b um *arm enôt* / “Palastbauten” handelt, gewinnen wir einen durch das Stilmittel der “inclusio” in sich abgerundeten Textkomplex.’ For an evaluation of this proposal cf. my remarks on p. 41.

Concerning the verb הַשְׁלַכְתָּנָה it seems best to accept the translation of the LXX (ἀπορριφήσεσθε) which reflects the passive הַשְׁלַכְתָּנָה ‘and you will be thrown out’. Cf. REIMER, *Richtet auf das Recht!*, 93; RUDOLPH, 162; PAUL, 136; FINLEY, 202; HAMMERSHAIMB, 67; SOGGIN, 68; STUART, 328; HOLLAND, 133-134; and CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 203 n. 1. The final ה might be a case of dittography from the following word (cf. GK § 44k). NIEHAUS, 394, prefers to retain the *hiphil* because it is the *lectio difficilior*.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. the comparable though slightly different outlines of the passage by WESTERMANN, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 174; and TUCKER, ‘Prophetic Speech’: 40.



### 6.1.2 Rhetorical Function

Like the opening verses of ch. 3, this oracle also functions as an introduction to a larger part of the book, namely, the prophetic discourse of Amos 4. Both units (3:1-2 and 4:1-3) are opened by a  $\text{הָזָה הַזֶּה בְּרַחֲמֵי הָאֱלֹהִים}$ -phrase followed by a designation of the addressees. In addition, both oracles end with an announcement of punishment, which in each case provides the provocative starting-point for the discourse.

But there are also differences between these two units that should not be overlooked. While 4:1-3 features a more detailed accusation (v. 1), the opening verses of ch. 3 only *allude* to the sinfulness of the people in the context of the announcement of punishment ( $\text{כֹּל-עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם}$  – v. 2). Also the addressees themselves are different: whereas the  $\text{בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל}$  are addressed in 3:1, ch. 4 opens with a reference to the  $\text{פְּרוֹת הַבָּשָׁן}$ . But although it is only the noble women who are addressed explicitly in 4:1, Jeremias is right that ‘der Kontext verbietet dem Leser ... diese eingeschränkte Perspektive. Die Einzelworte stehen unter dem Vorzeichen von 3,1-8 (und 4,6-13), die auf das Gottesvolk als ganzes zielen.’<sup>40</sup> According to him the expression  $\text{כִּי הִנֵּה יָמִים}$   $\text{כִּי הִנֵּה יָמִים עָלֵיכֶם}$  in v. 2 thus serves to widen the perspective in that it includes the male members of the upper class as well.<sup>41</sup> In addition, Hardmeier observed ‘daß zB in Am 4,1 ... von den Adressaten des Höraufrufs plötzlich in der dritten Person die Rede ist (vgl. Am 4,1b ...), und darum ... zu vermuten ist, daß von vornherein Abwesende adressiert sind gegenüber einem Hörerpublikum, dem diese Adressaten nicht angehören.’<sup>42</sup>

Thus we can assume that the shift to the address  $\text{פְּרוֹת הַבָּשָׁן}$  is adopted in order to mention the malicious behaviour of the Israelite women as another *example* of the sin of the people as a whole (thus the address itself functions as a rhetorical device somewhat similar to the one in 3:13 where foreign witnesses are called to hear and testify), an example that provides another argument for the prophet’s claim that God will indeed punish his chosen people.<sup>43</sup>

Another factor that has to be taken into account at this point is the language of the introductory part of ch. 4 that is characterised by a remarkable radicalism and the use of insulting vocabulary.<sup>44</sup> However, this should not be regarded as a mere emotional outburst but as a means of persuasion employed deliberately to provoke and stir the addressees. Jemielity compares this prophetic use of language to satire and remarks: ‘Whatever intensity the prophetic text conveys, unmistakable traces of artfulness also appear, signs of that careful attention to the ordering of language which suggest that the prophetic text, like the satiric, is not so much emotion as emo-

<sup>40</sup> JEREMIAS, 39.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 45. This is achieved by using a masculine pronoun.

<sup>42</sup> HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese*, 379.

<sup>43</sup> It should also be pointed out at this point that although I regard the initial phrase of ch. 4 as an introduction to that chapter, the break should not be overstated. There are clear links between chs. 3+4, and the first unit of Amos 4 with its condemnation of the social crimes of the upper-class women fits very well at this point following on the reference to the tumults and oppressions that are to be found in Samaria (3:9-10) and the announcement of the destruction of the luxurious houses (3:15). Nevertheless, ch. 4 appears to be a distinct rhetorical unit.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. WOLFF, ‘Begründungen der prophetischen Heils- und Unheilssprüche’: 12-13: ‘Die Hörer bekommen ihre Schuld an den Kopf geworfen.’

tion recollected in tranquility.’<sup>45</sup> A similar assessment is implied by Weippert who regards the portrayal of the ‘cows of Bashan’ in 4:1 as a caricature.<sup>46</sup>

Thus we may conclude: (1.) that the initial phrase ‘hear this word ...’ signals the beginning of a new discourse, (2.) that the reference to the ruthless deeds of the *פְּרוֹת הַבָּשָׂן* functions as a *concrete example* that opens another debate concerning the deserved divine judgement<sup>47</sup>, and (3.) that the use of satirical language which is provocative and annoying is also best understood in that way, i.e. as providing a powerful overture for the entire discourse.

## 6.2 Amos 4:4-5

### 6.2.1 Exegetical Observations and Structure

Without any transition or introduction, Amos goes on to invite the people to come to Bethel and Gilgal, the national shrines. Imitating a ‘priestly invitation to worship’,<sup>48</sup> he sarcastically invites the people not to come and worship but sin. While from the perspective of the Israelites, the purpose of the pilgrimage to these shrines was a positive one, namely, thanksgiving and the fulfilment of vows, Amos equates it with the horrible deeds of the heathen nations that are condemned in chs. 1-2. This link is provided by the use of the term *פֶּשַׁע*.<sup>49</sup> In addition, the stress on the sinfulness of the worship is highlighted by the expression *הִרְבוּ לְפֶשַׁע*<sup>50</sup> as well as another of the book’s heptads that in this instance consists of seven verbs with imperatival force.<sup>51</sup> They invite the people to fulfil the cultic demands in unsurpassed abundance.

No site is mentioned more often in the book of Amos than Bethel (cf. Amos 3:14; 4:4; 5:5, 6; 7:10, 13) which in Amos’ time was the primary national sanctuary of Israel. Gilgal is only mentioned twice, but always in connection with Bethel (Amos 4:4; 5:5). Mays appropriately notes that ‘one could not name two more hallowed and venerable places for worship of the

<sup>45</sup> JEMIELITY, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 89.

<sup>46</sup> WEIPPERT, ‘Amos: Seine Bilder und ihr Milieu’: 10 n. 20. The characteristics of ‘caricature’ are listed by SEYBOLD, ‘Verwendung der Bildmotive in der Prophetie Zefanjas’: 32-34, who quotes the following apt definition by VON WILPERT, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*, 278: ‘Karikatur (ital. *caricare* = überladen, -treiben), Zerrbild, das durch Überbetonung einzelner, dennoch erkennbarer Charakterzüge komisch oder satirisch wirkt, dient durch die einseitige Verzerrung neben dem Spott oft auch der Kritik, mit der Absicht, durch Aufdeckung verurteilenswerter Schwächen und Mißstände auf politischem, sozialem oder sittlichem Gebiet zu deren Abstellung anzuregen.’

<sup>47</sup> This debate is somewhat similar to the one in ch. 3 as we will see later on.

<sup>48</sup> This comparison to the priestly call to worship originates with BEGRICH, ‘Die priesterliche Tora’: 77. He is followed by many: cf. PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 52; JEMIELITY, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 54-55, 91; WOLFF, 258; idem, ‘Prophet und Institution im Alten Testament’: 59; RUDOLPH, 175; MAYS, 74; PAUL, 138; HAYES, 142; HUBBARD, 157; SOGGIN, 71; STUART, 337; WEISER, 151; and DEISSLER, 108. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, *Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, 160, refers to this passage as an illustration of sarcasm; and LIMBURG, 102, speaks of ‘language unmatched for irony in the Bible’. Similar summonses are to be found in Lev 7:22-25; 19:58; Deut 14:4-8, 21; Isa 2:3; Ps 122:1.

<sup>49</sup> JEREMIAS, 48, calls the employment of this term, to which he refers as the ‘härteste und vergleichsweise seltene Wort des Alten Testaments für Vergehen gegen Menschen’, a bitter sarcasm.

<sup>50</sup> For the construction cf. GK § 114n. Cf. also CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 206; and WOLFF, 258: ‘die Aufforderung ... “Verbrechen zu üben” ... wird sofort steigend wiederholt: “massenhaft Verbrechen zu üben”.’

<sup>51</sup> See LIMBURG, ‘Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos’: 220; and PAUL, 140. The fifth verb, *קָטַר* (piel inf. abs.), also functions as an imperative; for which cf. GK § 113z+bb; JM § 123x; and FREEDMAN, ‘Deliberate Deviation from an Established Pattern of Repetition’: 47f., who treats it as a deliberate deviation from an established pattern. He refers to Exod 20:8 and Deut 5:12 where the respective *זָכוֹר* or *שָׁמֹר* stand for the fuller *זָכוֹר הַזְּכוֹר* or *שָׁמֹר הַשְּׁמֹר* and remarks: ‘Whether or not that is the rationale behind the appearance of the infinitive absolute in a series of imperatives, the form serves effectively as a substitute for the normal forms with the full force of the imperative.’



Lord'.<sup>52</sup> The religious importance of the sanctuary at Bethel can be seen especially in Amos 7:13, where it is referred to as the King's sanctuary.

The following lines underline that the multiplying of sins consists in the many sacrifices the people brought every morning (instead of once a year) and the tithes they gave every three days (instead of once in three years).<sup>53</sup> They were eager to offer their thank-offerings along with their freewill offerings.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly enough, however, the sacrifices to which Amos alludes have no connection whatsoever with sin and repentance.<sup>55</sup> In addition, Amos ironically emphasises the egotism that these offerings, etc. display by constantly referring to them as 'your offerings' and 'your tithes'.

It is debated whether Amos denounces the people for burning leavened תִּירוֹת, or whether his remark does not imply such an accusation. Since Amos is not attacking improper offering practices but excessive performances that go much beyond what is required, it seems likely that he does not condemn the people for wrongly offering leavened thank-offerings.<sup>56</sup>

In addition, freewill offerings were made and publicised in order to invite others to participate in the consummation of them to which Hayes refers as a 'gala barbecue'.<sup>57</sup> Amos ironically stresses the desire to receive the praise of others by repeatedly commanding the people to publicise their freewill offerings: הִשְׁמִיעוּ ... קְרְאוּ.<sup>58</sup> The last line of the oracle clearly shows the main thrust of all their activities, namely, to satisfy themselves. The use of אָהֲבָתָם thus corre-

<sup>52</sup> MAYS, 75. For further remarks on these two cites cf. KING, *Amos, Hosea, Micah*, 40-41; BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 49-54.

<sup>53</sup> Thus understanding the phrases לְבֹקֶר and לְשִׁלֶּשֶׁת יָמִים as distributive ('morningly' and 'every three days'); cf. WILLIAMS, *Hebrew Syntax*, 103. This interpretation is also advocated by CRIPPS, 170; PAUL, 140; SOGGIN, 71; STUART, 338; NIEHAUS, 396; MOTYER, 95 n. 4; and G. V. SMITH, 134: 'This sarcastic parody employs Israelite traditions but transforms their normal meaning through the use of exaggeration ...'

Others (e.g. WOLFF, 259; RUDOLPH, 176; HAMMERSHAIMB, 69; CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 208) understand the phrases as referring to the day of arrival at a pilgrimage festival and its third day, respectively (cf. Exod 19:10-16 and Hos 6:1-2 for such a festival). In this case, the punctiliousness as such would be the target of Amos' mockery. But CRIPPS, 170; PAUL, 140; and MCKEATING, 34, remark that the custom of presenting tithes two days after the arrival of the pilgrim at the sanctuary is attested nowhere else.

<sup>54</sup> For these offerings, two different types of the peace offering, cf. WENHAM, *Book of Leviticus*, 76-81, 123-125.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 209.

<sup>56</sup> This is emphasised by most commentators: cf. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 433 (who refer to Lev 7:11-13); PAUL, 141; HAMMERSHAIMB, 70; HAYES, 144 (who takes the verb קָטַר in a generic sense, 'to offer a sacrifice', so that it would not necessarily imply a burning of leaven); RUDOLPH, 176 n. 11; and ELLIGER, *Leviticus*, 46 n. 16. Cf. also FINLEY, 207-208: 'The prohibition against using leaven in a burnt offering applies to the cereal offering (Lev. 2), not to the peace offering (Lev. 7:11-36). Leavened bread was required as part of a thanksgiving offering, a subdivision of the peace offering (Lev. 7:11-15). Leavened bread thus seems to be a distinguishing feature of this offering. The Mosaic commandment does not mention burning of the leavened bread, but a portion of each segment of the offering goes toward a "contribution to Yahweh." The thank offering may be exceptional, then, in that leavened bread could be part of a burnt offering.'

FINLEY, relying on the examination of JENNI, *Das hebräische Pi'el*, 271-272, stresses the *piel* form of the verb קָטַר and remarks 'that the *piel* forms occur in contexts that speak of general situations (cf. 2 Kings 14:4), whereas the *hiphil* is used for specific occasions (cf. 1 Kings 13: 1). Thus, Amos chose the *piel* ... to give an ironical invitation that applies to the general practice of the Israelites.'

Among those who regard the phrase מִתְהַמְּיָו as denoting an offence are CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 208-209 (cf. n. 1); STUART, 338; NIEHAUS, 396-397; and MOTYER, 95 n. 5: 'Amos makes his case here by joining together the words "offer (lit. "burn") that which is leavened", the very thing the law forbade.' According to KEIL, 182f.; and HARPER, 92-93, Amos refers to an overzealousness, 'a new custom, just now being developed'. For a critique of this view, cf. FINLEY, 208.

<sup>57</sup> HAYES, 144.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. B. K. SMITH, 88: 'Together the terms suggest a prideful and boastful attitude towards their generous sacrifices and offerings.'

sponds to the reference to ‘your sacrifices’ and ‘your tithes’ in v. 4.<sup>59</sup> The ironic force of this final line is pointed out by Mays, who comments,

At the conclusion some declaratory formula spoken as the basis for the summons to worship would be expected: “for I am Yahweh your God” or a reference to Yahweh’s will or pleasure in the cult. But instead Israel’s own pleasure in the cult is thrust into the place of the divine. [...] The shift is in effect a charge that the sacrificial cult has nothing to do with Yahweh. [...] However pious and proper all their religious acts, the sacrifices and offerings are no submission of life to the Lord, but merely an expression of their own love of religiosity.<sup>60</sup>

This small oracle is concluded by a longer form of the oracle formula נָאִם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה that underlines who it is that points out the seriousness of the people’s guilt.<sup>61</sup> The following figure displays the structure of the oracle:

General ironic invitation to come and sin	בָּאוּ בֵּית־אֱלֹהִים (1) וּפְשְׁעוּ (2) הַגִּלְגָל הַרְבּוּ לַפֶּשַׁע (3)	4
Specific ironic summonses to fulfil the cultic demands	וְהִבִּיאוּ (4) לְבַקֵּר זִבְחֵיכֶם לְשֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים מֵעֲשֵׂרְתֵיכֶם	
	וּקְטַר מַחֲמֵץ תּוֹרֵה (5) וּקְרָאוּ נְדָבוֹת (6) הַשְּׂמִיעוּ (7)	5
The real reasons for the people’s eagerness	כִּי כֵן אֲהַבְתֶּם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	
Concluding oracle formula	נָאִם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה	

Figure 18: The Structure of Amos 4:4-5<sup>62</sup>

### 6.2.2 Rhetorical Function

Although the transition between vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-5 at first glance may appear to be somewhat casual, especially in the light of the absence of any connecting device (such as כִּי or לְכֵן) and the abrupt thematic change, the arrangement of the text is not so arbitrary as one might think. First, it is important to emphasise that the present combination of social themes (vv. 1-3) and religious/cultic issues (vv. 4-5) is not an isolated phenomenon in Amos.<sup>63</sup> Concerning the rhetoric of the passage, however, what is even more important is the ironic effect that is achieved by this arrangement in that the people are portrayed as fulfilling their cultic duties punctually and excessively while at the same time not obeying the heart of the law in that they continuously exploit and abuse the poor.<sup>64</sup>

As in ch. 3, the arrangement again illustrates the dialogistic character of the book of Amos. Having condemned the wrongdoings of the Israelite women, Amos ironically invites them to come and bring their offerings because it is exactly this eager observance of the religious obli-

<sup>59</sup> CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 210, notes that this is the eighth verb after seven commands that functions as their climax (7+1). Cf. LIMBURG, ‘Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos’: 220.

<sup>60</sup> MAYS, 74, 75, 76. Cf. also WOLFF, ‘Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie’: 222; and SCHMIDT, ‘Die prophetische “Grundgewißheit”’: 552 n. 27.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 210; and DEMPSTER, ‘The Lord is His Name’: 178-179.

<sup>62</sup> The numbers in the figure refer to the seven verbs with imperatival force.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. 2:6-8; 3:9-11, 13-15 (although in vv. 9-11 Amos only condemns social crimes, the punishment in vv. 13-15 includes not only the luxurious houses but the altars at Bethel as well); and 5:21-24. HUBBARD, 154, speaks of the ‘twin themes of oppressive wealth and abuse of worship’.

<sup>64</sup> This contrast has been recognised by NIEHAUS, 396.



gations that makes them confident that their relationship with God is intact.<sup>65</sup> Amos, however, makes it very clear that in the context of their selfish and ruthless life-style, their cultic efforts are not acceptable to God. Thus they will not spare them the divine punishment just as their status of being God's chosen people is not a guarantee for going unpunished (cf. 3:2).

The connection between the first two units of Amos 4 is strengthened by the use of the root בוא in vv. 1, 2, and 4 (where it occurs twice) as has been observed by Paul.<sup>66</sup> As already noted above, this verb contributes to establish an interesting irony in vv. 1-3 in contrasting the demand of the women with the unexpected answer of their God.<sup>67</sup> This ironic contrast between God's people and Yahweh himself is developed even further in that Amos again uses the same word to request the people to 'come' (באו) and 'bring' (הביאו) their God what pleases *them*. Thus, the sequence runs like this:

- ♦ The women demand something to drink from their husbands (הביאה ונשתה).
- ♦ What they will receive, however, is days of judgement coming upon them (ימים באים עליכם).
- ♦ Thus they may well come and bring God their offerings (באו ... והביאו); it will be worthless.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to these observations, it should also be noted that vv. 4-5 invite the hearer/reader to reconsider his ideas of who the target of the prophet's rebukes and threats actually is. Up to this point the sins that have been reprimanded were primarily social wrongdoings committed as it seems, first of all, by the well-to-do. And as we have seen earlier,<sup>69</sup> this solicits the idea that Amos, while speaking of ישראל (2:6; 3:14), the בני ישראל (2:11; 3:1, 12), or the בית יעקב (3:13), in fact primarily refers to the middle and upper classes. However, it is not possible to reduce Amos' message to a neat liberation paradigm that simply accuses the wealthy and powerful and favours the poor and uninfluential. As Carroll R. has pointed out, at a number of places in the book the 'masses of people' are included in the prophetic critique. Especially the frequent 'interwovenness' of social and cult-related criticism points to a joined participation of the rich *and* the poor in the nation's guilt.<sup>70</sup> Carroll R. accordingly remarks that the latter's 'complicity in the nationalistic cult and social sin make impossible simplistic categorizations of the larger populace as simply victims of an unjust system'<sup>71</sup> and further comments:

<sup>65</sup> This connection has also been observed by G. V. SMITH, 133: 'No public reaction is recorded ..., but if the response was anything other than a move to repent, Amos would need to persuade his audience that their actions were inadequate.' He adds (p. 141): 'Once Amos understands *the response of the audience*, he launches into a sarcastic parody of a priest calling the nation to worship and praise God ...' [italics mine].

<sup>66</sup> PAUL, 138.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. p. 160.

<sup>68</sup> A further connection between the first two units of ch. 4 has been observed by HAYES, 142, 145, who remarks: 'The sacrifices implicated in this text [vv. 4-5] are those primarily consumed by the worshippers. The worship was thus treated by the prophet as constituting another example of extravagant self-indulgence. Thus, this pericope is a natural continuation of the material in 3:13-4:3 especially 3:15 and 4:1. [...] The context indicates that the sacrifices were condemned as another example of the self-indulgence of the ruling establishment (see 3:15; 4:1). ... The lower classes of Israelite society were probably incapable of such sacrificial extravagance because of the expense involved ...'

<sup>69</sup> Cf. p. 124.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. 4:1-3 ⇔ vv. 4f.; 5:4f. ⇔ vv. 6f. and 5:21-23 ⇔ v. 24.

<sup>71</sup> CARROLL R., 'The Prophetic Text and the Literature of Dissent in Latin America': 86. On the significance of the cultic criticism in Amos cf. also BARTH, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV,2:507f.

Irony reigns, as cultic celebrations mask the harsh facts of national failures. This superficial faith in a benevolent deity is not limited to an elite or to the monarchy and its propagandists. The prophetic text portrays this as a generalized belief and an integral part of the complex understanding of social life and of the divine. The world in Amos is fervently and actively religious, yet this Yahwism is a mixture of joyous nationalism and communal self-satisfaction (with perhaps also a hint of underlying or accompanying non-Yahwistic beliefs and practices; 2:8; 4:13; 5:6; 26; 8:14). The rulers and the governed share the Yahwistic faith at different levels and in various ways, as all move about in a world that claims YHWH but does not truly meet him at the sanctuaries.<sup>72</sup>

### 6.3 Amos 4:6-11

#### 6.3.1 Exegetical Observations and Structure

Again Amos employs a series of similarly constructed components (vv. 6-11; cf. 1:3-2:16 and 3:3-8) in this instance consisting of five strophes each of which begins with a perfect verb. These five parts, on the one hand, may be grouped together under three headings with the first four components representing two pairs.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, the strophes speak of seven plagues<sup>74</sup> – famine (v. 6), drought (vv. 7-8), blight and locusts (v. 9), pestilence and sword (v. 10), and overthrow (v. 11) – that are portrayed as divine interventions against Israel.<sup>75</sup> The text presents these plagues as a climactic sequence heading toward the final blow, thereby stressing Yahweh's desperate struggle to make the people turn back to him.<sup>76</sup>

*Hunger and Thirst* (vv. 6-8). One striking similarity of the two initial strophes is the identical beginning *וְגַם אֲנִי (אֲנֹכִי) נִתְתִּי (מְנַעֲתִי) לְ (מִ) כָּם* (vv. 6, 7). Thus the contrast between the following actions of God (vv. 6-11) and those of God's people (vv. 4-5) is highlighted (cf. *לִשְׂרָאֵל כִּן אֶהְבֶּתֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* in v. 5).<sup>77</sup> But the strophes are also thematically linked by the com-

<sup>72</sup> CARROLL R., 'The Prophetic Text and the Literature of Dissent in Latin America': 92; cf. idem, 'Reflecting on War and Utopia in the Book of Amos': 114f.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. WEISER, 'Zu Amos 4 6-13': 53ff. He is followed by JEREMIAS, 50.

<sup>74</sup> Several scholars have observed the parallels of this piece with Lev 26:14-45; Deut 28:15-68; and 1 Kgs 8:33-37. Cf. esp. WOLFF, 252, who presents a detailed list of the similarities of these texts. MAYS, 79, 80, concludes that the 'cogency of reciting this narrative as a record of Israel's failure to respond to Yahweh presupposes that Amos had a basis for recognizing the blows as the personal overtures of Yahweh, and that the people should have recognized them as such and responded. The context in which these disasters could possess such significance is the covenant tradition. [...] Of course there is no literary dependence of Amos on the later compositions preserved in Deut. 28 and Lev. 26. [...] Amos' narrative of disasters is a rather free construction using some traditional curses and depending on the general tradition that Yahweh acts in typical ways to punish those who are disloyal to the covenant. In using the curse tradition to tell a narrative Amos makes a distinctive and new use of the curse materials.' Cf. also HUBBARD, 161: 'Amos has given the covenant curse a special twist by interpreting it ... as a lens through which to look at past judgment ...'

But O'ROURKE BOYLE, 'The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos': 354, rightly cautions: 'To concentrate on the similarity of language to the covenant curses is to miss the intention of the author altogether. The emphasis is upon Yahweh's authorship of the events and upon the Israelites' failure to recognize him through them and return repentant.' Cf. also VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 18.

<sup>75</sup> Amos is of course speaking of past events as WEISER, 'Zu Amos 4 6-13': 52, correctly emphasises: 'Würde das Stück von zukünftigen Plagen, und mit ihm natürlich auch der Kehrsvers von ihrer Erfolglosigkeit reden, so würde damit Jahwe seine eigene Ohnmacht zugeben, und jegliche weitere Gerichtsdrohung zur selben Wirkungslosigkeit verdammt sein.'

<sup>76</sup> The subsequent analysis will show how this climactic movement is achieved rhetorically. Among those who emphasise the climactic arrangement of the piece are ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 417; GESE, 'Komposition bei Amos': 85-86; CRENSHAW, 'Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity': 31; JEREMIAS, 52; CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 211; VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 17; HUBBARD, 158; STUART, 339; and BRUEGGEMANN, 'Amos iv 4-13 and Israel's Covenant Worship': 7. – For a different view see REVENTLOW, *Amt des Propheten bei Amos*, 84, who remarks: 'In dem Abschnitt V. 6-11 herrscht ... das vollkommene Gleichmaß, fast die Monotonie.' Cf. also RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 32; and MAYS, 78.

<sup>77</sup> Thus HARPER, 96; CRIPPS, 171; G. V. SMITH, 144; SOGGIN, 74; JEREMIAS, 49; MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 380; CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 210; and VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 10, who, however, deletes the latter *וְגַם אֲנֹכִי*.



plementary concepts of hunger and thirst. Whereas the first strophe ironically speaks of a 'cleanness of teeth'<sup>78</sup>, the portrayal of the drought in v. 7 is much more vivid and emphasises the desperate struggle of the people to quench their thirst. Thus, the climactic movement of the whole piece is initiated.

*Strophe 1: famine* (v. 6). Apart from the ironical reference to the clean teeth, it is especially the extent of the plague that receives emphasis since Amos underlines that כָּל-עָרֵיכֶם as well as כָּל מְקוֹמֵיכֶם were affected by it.

*Strophe 2: drought* (vv. 7-8). In this most complex part of the entire series,<sup>79</sup> Amos emphasises that a lack of rain at the crucial time during the last three months before harvest had catastrophic effects on the people. In addition, the detailed portrayal of the calamity underlines its moody nature.<sup>80</sup> Time and again some parts of the country lacked rain while others were rained upon.<sup>81</sup>

Also the consequences that this devastating lack of rain had caused are vividly portrayed as Rudolph observes: 'Lebhaft stellt der Prophet seinen Hörern wieder jene trostlosen Bilder vor Augen, wie die Zukurzgekommenen sich mit dem unsicheren Gang des Erschöpften zu ihren glücklicheren Nachbarn aufmachten ...'<sup>82</sup> A good structural analysis of vv. 7-8 is presented by Carroll R.:

4.7a	field:	rain withheld before the harvest (disaster)
b	city:	uneven rainfall among the cities (disaster)
a'	field:	uneven rainfall, crops withered (disaster + result)
4.8b'	city:	people wandered, were not satisfied (result) <sup>83</sup>

*Destructive Forces* (vv. 9-10). The second pair of strophes is characterised in that each strophe portrays two calamities. Additionally, these constituents portray destructive forces or agents. Whereas the calamities mentioned in vv. 6-8 are caused by God taking something away from the people (bread<sup>84</sup> or rain respectively), now something is given to them: grain diseases, locusts, pestilence and sword. The climactic movement increases<sup>85</sup> in the depiction of locusts devouring all that is available (gardens, vineyards, fig trees, and olive trees), of a pestilence af-

<sup>78</sup> RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 32, calls this an 'Ausdruck bitteren Galgenhumors'.

<sup>79</sup> Many commentators find this broad descriptive presentation inappropriate in its context. Cf. WEISER, 'Zu Amos 4 6-13': 53-54; HARPER, 96; and RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 29 n. 5, who remarks: 'V. 7b ist der Zusatz eines Pedanten, der feststellen wollte, daß sich das Regnen oder Nichtregnen auch auf das umliegende Land auswirkt.' But PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 54 n. 72, rightly rejects this: 'W. Rudolph, ... der V. 7b als pedantische Glosse ausscheiden möchte, übersieht, daß es sich um einen dritten Fall handelt.'

VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 10, comments: 'Zwei, drei Städte wankten nicht deswegen zu einer Stadt, weil über der einen Stadt Regen fiel, über der anderen nicht ..., sondern weil die eine Stadt über bessere Zisternen und damit einen größeren Wasservorrat verfügte als die anderen.' How does he know that?

<sup>80</sup> Cf. FEINBERG, 101; and MCCOMISKEY, 306. According to PAUL, 144, the detailed description also serves to stress 'the divine origin of the disaster'. HAYES, 146, shows that there is no problem with this description because the Israelite and Judean area 'has an enormous diversity in climate'.

<sup>81</sup> The imperfect forms should be regarded as iterative; not as future as the LXX does. Thus JEREMIAS, 46 n. 4, aptly remarks: 'Das Perf. in V. 7aα nennt zusammenfassend die faktischen Gegebenheiten, die Iterative in V. 7aβb bzw. 8a geben die näheren Umstände bzw. die Folgen an'. Cf. RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 32; PAUL, 144 n. 48; and G. V. SMITH, 137.

<sup>82</sup> RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 32. According to PAUL, 145, 'the correct nuance of the verb [נוע] is "to reel, to stagger," describing the tipsy tottering of a drunkard. Here in Amos they are portrayed as taking a zigzag course not because of drunkenness but due to dehydration'.

<sup>83</sup> CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 212.

<sup>84</sup> Although the withholding of bread is ironically referred to as a giving of clean teeth.

<sup>85</sup> This is also observed by WEISER, 'Zu Amos 4 6-13': 55.

ter the manner of Egypt, the actual reference to killing of which the choicest young men are the victims, and the penetrating stench that is caused by the corpses on the battle-field.

*Strophe 3: blight and locusts* (v. 9). The שֶׁדֶּפּוֹן and יִרְקוֹן mentioned in the third strophe always occur together and denote grain diseases, such as blight or mildew (cf. Deut 28:22; 1 Kgs 8:37; 2 Chr 6:28; Hag 2:17), that destroyed the crops and with them the hope of getting any food for the coming year.

הַרְבוֹת is often regarded as problematic, and thus usually an emendation is proposed.<sup>86</sup> But it is quite possible to maintain the reading of MT which might be understood as an adjective referring to the many gardens, vineyards, etc.<sup>87</sup> Thus the phrase would read:

*I struck you with blight and mildew;  
your many gardens, vineyards, fig trees, and olive trees devoured the locust.*<sup>88</sup>

The imperfect יֹאכַל (again an iterative) highlights that the devastation of the agricultural products through locust invasions occurred over and over again. The description of the tragedy also emphasises the completeness of the destruction: the whole food supply was endangered since all important agricultural products of the land were affected. The climactic portrayal of the calamities in this verse is also recognised by Jeremias who remarks that ‘die dritte [Plage] (v. 9) von häufiger erfahrenen Ernteschäden [...] zur gefürchteten Heuschreckenplage über[geht] (vgl. besonders Joel 1,4) und vom Getreide als Alltagsspeise zu Gemüse und Obst der Gärten bis zum Luxus von Feigen, Öl und Wein’.<sup>89</sup>

*Strophe 4: pestilence and sword* (v. 10). In this component, two paratactic clauses (... הַרְגָתִי ... שְׁלֵחָתִי) are followed by one *waw*-consecutive clause (וְאָעֲלָהּ). This creates the very realistic picture of a defeated army in its camp, where men have been killed by the sword and a pestilence has arisen (note that plague and sword often go together; cf. Exod 5:3; Lev 26:25; Deut 28:49-59) that resulted in the stench in the camp.<sup>90</sup> This description of the stench rising

<sup>86</sup> Cf. the suggestion of BHS to read הַרְבֵּי. This proposal originates with WELLHAUSEN, 80, and is adopted, for instance, by the NRSV which reads:

*I struck you with blight and mildew;  
I laid waste your gardens and your vineyards;  
the locust devoured your fig trees and your olive trees ...*

Wellhausen’s suggestion has been accepted by MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 21-22; WEISER, ‘Zu Amos 4 6-13’: 55; PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 54 n. 73; VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 11; HARPER, 99; CRIPPS, 173; WOLFF, 249; MAYS, 76; HUBBARD, 159; and JEREMIAS, 46 n. 6. But to arrive at this conclusion, BHS not only changes הַרְבוֹת but also deletes the *waw* from וְאָעֲלָהּ.

PAUL, 147; and FINLEY, 214, on the other hand, hesitate to change the text because the ancient versions support MT even though they had difficulties with it. STUART, 336; and NIEHAUS: 401, also object to an emendation.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. PAUL, 147. הַרְבוֹת is also used as an adjective in Prov 25:27: ‘It is not good to eat much honey.’ Cf. the translation in PLÖGER, *Sprüche Salomos*, 295. Apart from these two instances (Amos 4:9; Prov 25:27) the word is used in a finite sense in Deut 17:16; 28:63; Prov 22:16; 1 Chr 27:23. But in these instances it is always preceded by a finite verb followed by either לְמַעַן or לְ. Concerning Amos 4:9 FINLEY, 210, 214, also advocates an adjectival translation.

Other options are to take it: (a) as equivalent to the inf. abs. and thus adverbially (‘repeatedly’) (cf. PAUL, 137); or (b) as a substantive that refers to ‘the multitude of your gardens etc.’ (thus NIEHAUS, 401).

<sup>88</sup> I regard the syndetical words ‘your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees’ as one compounded phrase (cf. Figure 19 on p. 172). For this solution cf. PAUL, 146-147; and NIEHAUS, 401. According to CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 213, the use of הַרְבוֹת involves an irony: ‘they multiply sin (*hrbw*, 4.4a), even as their multiple gardens were devoured.’

<sup>89</sup> JEREMIAS, 53.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 437. WEISER, ‘Zu Amos 4 6-13’: 55, prefers to eliminate the notion of the stench because ‘lange bei einem Bild zu verweilen, ist nicht die stilistische Eigenart dieses Stückes’. However, Weiser overlooks that it is precisely a stylistic characteristic of these strophes that they are not build according to a firm pattern. Thus, the author is able to achieve the climactic movement of the whole piece. Cf. KRAFT, ‘Some Further Observations Concerning the



into the nostrils of the Israelites<sup>91</sup> demonstrates again Amos' picturesque language. Moreover, the rhetorical emphasis is achieved in various ways: (a) the pestilence is referred to as בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, 'after the manner of Egypt' in order to underline its gravity (cf. Exod 15:26; Deut 7:15; 28:60; Isa 10:24-26; Ezek 20:30);<sup>92</sup> (b) the severity of the war-tragedy is highlighted in that it is the בְּחֹרֵי יָם ('young men', or 'elite troops') who were killed; and finally (c) the battle-horses have been carried away, that is, the people have lost their all-important cavalry.<sup>93</sup> In addition, the rhetoric of the passage accentuates the divine origin of the calamities (... הֲרָגָתִי ... וְאֶעֱלֶה).

*Climactic Overthrow* (v. 11). The final strophe is clearly the climax of the whole piece since the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is the parade example of God's wrath, 'the archetype of total calamity'.<sup>94</sup>

*Strophe 5: overthrow* (v. 11). Finally, God has overthrown<sup>95</sup> some of the people<sup>96</sup> as he once overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. According to Paul the 'point of comparison between the

Strophic Structure of Hebrew Poetry': 73: 'variety in strophic organization normally indicates, not chaos, but artistic design.'

Concerning שָׂאָה, RUDOLPH, 171, rightly remarks: 'Das seltene Wort von m hat vor dem geläufigen שָׂאָה von g ('ich ließ in Feuer aufgehen') weitaus den Vorzug ...' Cf. SOGGIN, 75.

<sup>91</sup> Many exegetes delete the *waw* in מְצַרְרָה together with the LXX (cf. VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 12; SOGGIN, 75). A better solution seems to me to regard it as an emphatic or explanatory *waw*; cf. GK § 154a n. 1b; MAYS, 76; WOLFF, 249; FINLEY, 213; STUART, 336; and CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 214. However, RUDOLPH, 171, remarks: 'Daß ו hier das hervorhebende oder erläuternde ו sein soll ("und zwar in eure Nase"), wirkt lächerlich, da das Riechen mit der Nase keiner Erläuterung bedarf.' It is, of course, not necessary to explain that it is the nose into which the stench rises, but the emphasis may well be on the fact that *the Israelites themselves* experienced this tragedy, that is, it is *your* nose that receives the stress.

<sup>92</sup> RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 33, remarks: 'Bei dem Hinweis auf Ägypten ist nicht an die fünfte Plage von Ex 9,3-7 gedacht, die nur das Vieh betraf, sondern an die Tötung der Erstgeburt ..., so daß man fragen kann, ob Amos nicht ein Wortspiel zwischen בחור and בכור beabsichtigt hat.' Cf. CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 213; and G. V. SMITH, 145. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 442-443, note that this could be an allusion to Deut 28:60, where covenant rebels are threatened with the diseases of Egypt.

According to HAYES, 147, the reference 'is simply a general statement about a plague like those for which Egypt was famous', that is, he sees no connection to the plagues associated with the exodus. Thus also CRIPPS, 174.

<sup>93</sup> The reference to the carrying away of the horses is sometimes regarded as a gloss because it is seen as too trivial or as an anti-climax alongside the killing of the elite troops. Cf. HARPER, 100; CRIPPS, 174 (n. 2); WOLFF, 249; RUDOLPH, 171; and VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 11. However, already WELLHAUSEN, 80, pointed out that this combination of the troops and the cavalry should not be considered an anti-climax 'da die Rosse selten und hochgeschätzt waren.' This is also noted by CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 214, who refers to DALLEY, 'Foreign Chariotry and Cavalry in the Armies of Tiglat-Pileser III and Sargon II': 31-48, according to whom Israel was famous for its chariots. According to CRAIGIE, *Psalms 1-50*, 187, chariots and horses 'represented the most powerful military resources available in the ancient Near Eastern practice of warfare.' Cf. AP-THOMAS, 'All the King's Horses?': 135-151. Thus FEINBERG, 101, rightly speaks of 'their boasted cavalry'.

יָבִי is often emended to צָבִי ('beauty, pomp') because the root צבה in almost all cases refers to human beings. Cf. e.g. MAAG, *Text, Wortschatz und Begriffswelt des Buches Amos*, 21-22. PAUL, 148, however, rejects this proposed emendation because the root is also employed in relation with animals in Exod 22:9.

<sup>94</sup> HAYES, 147. JEMIELITY, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, 91, comments on vv. 10-11: 'Drawing on the hated role of Egypt and the despised place of Sodom and Gomorrah in their history, Amos, ironically, has Israel play the role of these three despised nations in experiencing like them the ineffectual chastisement of the LORD and soon to experience like them the doom of the LORD ... *Israel is the new Egypt, the new Sodom and Gomorrah*' [italics mine].

<sup>95</sup> The objects of such an overthrow are often cities or nations. Cf. 2 Kgs 21:13 (Jerusalem); Jon 3:4 (Nineveh); Isa 13:19; Jer 50:40 (Babylon); Jer 49:18 (Edom); and Deut 29:22 (Israel). The verb הפך in itself is a general term which denotes a radical change. RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 34, remarks that '... die Folge der מהפכה ist, daß an der betroffenen Stätte niemand mehr siedeln kann (Jes 13,19; Jer 49,18; 50,40), weil nichts mehr wächst (Dt 29,22) und so eine Wüstenei entsteht (Jes 1,7).' In the book of Amos the root is also employed in 5:7, 8; 6:12; 8:10.

<sup>96</sup> The *beth* of בְּכָם is used in a partitive sense so that, as with the second plague, the disaster was partial. This is not only suggested by the preposition ב but also logically required since an overthrow of Israel similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah would have caused the irrevocable end of the nation. For a similar view cf. HARPER, 102; CRIPPS, 175; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 444; and FINLEY, 213. There is no need to change the word in order to read בְּכָמֶם as is suggested in BHS.

tale in Genesis and the verse in Amos is the suddenness and thoroughness of the destruction.<sup>97</sup> Once again Amos highlights the divine initiative in employing the construct **כְּמַהֲפֹכֶת אֱלֹהִים**.<sup>98</sup>

The final phrase **וַתְּהִי כְּאוֹר מִצֵּל מִשְׁרָפָה** is a proverbial expression that signifies a narrow escape (cf. Zech 3:2; Isa 7:4). Andersen and Freedman remark that **מִצֵּל** speaks of a rescue, not just a survival.<sup>99</sup> Thus the people should have recognised this rescue as the saving hand of God and turned back to him, but the refrain stresses once again that that was not what they did.

A look at the five strophes shows that only the openings (1st pers. masc. sg. perf. verb) and the closing formulas (refrain + oracle formula) are constant throughout the series. The paragraphs themselves vary considerably. It is the refrain that receives the major stress of the entire pericope because it is repeated in each strophe. The attention of the reader is thus drawn to the unwillingness of the Israelites to return to their God. Thus Mays comments, 'The refrain interprets the disasters as Yahweh's quest for Israel's return to him and rings like a lament in its reiteration of the failure of the quest.'<sup>100</sup> By using **עָרִי** instead of **אֵלַי**, the phrase not only indicates the direction ('toward') but also stresses the (non-) attainment of the purpose.<sup>101</sup> Concerning the function of the refrain, Crenshaw rightly observed that it 'points forward to the final judgment, the real focus of the passage.'<sup>102</sup> In repeating the oracle formula **נְאֻם יְהוָה** at the end of each strophe, Amos stresses that the evaluation of Israel's history is not his own but that of Yahweh himself.<sup>103</sup>

### *Hunger and Thirst (vv. 6-8)*

Calamity 1	וּגַם־אֲנִי נַחְתִּי לָכֶם נִקְיוֹן שְׁנַיִם בְּכָל־עֲרִיכֶם וַחֲסֹר לֶחֶם בְּכָל מְקוֹמֵיכֶם	6
Refrain		וְלֹא־שַׁבְתֶּם עָדִי
Concluding oracle formula		נְאֻם־יְהוָה
Calamity 2 (detailed description)	וְגַם אֲנֹכִי מִנְעַתִּי מִכֶּם אֶת־הַגֶּשֶׁם בְּעוֹר שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים לִקְצִיר וְהַמְטַרְתִּי עַל־עֵיר אַחַת וְעַל־עֵיר אַחַת לֹא אֲמַטִּיר חֲלֵקָה אַחַת תִּמְטַר וְחֲלֵקָה אֲשֶׁר־לֹא־תִמְטַר עָלֶיהָ תִּיבֹשׁ	7
Consequence	וְנָעוּ שְׁתַּיִם שֶׁלֶשׁ עָרִים אֶל־עֵיר אַחַת לִשְׁתּוֹת מִיָּם וְלֹא יִשְׁבְּעוּ	8
Refrain		וְלֹא־שַׁבְתֶּם עָדִי
Concluding oracle formula		נְאֻם־יְהוָה

<sup>97</sup> PAUL, 149. According to NIEHAUS, 403, it is the result of the judgement.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. PAUL, 149, who notes that this term 'expresses not only the source of the catastrophe but also its incomparable enormity and immensity.'

<sup>99</sup> ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 444.

<sup>100</sup> MAYS, 78. Cf. G. V. SMITH, 135. KAPELRUD, 'God as Destroyer in the Preaching of Amos and in the Ancient Near East': 36, rightly stresses that Yahweh was willing to show mercy: 'He had given them warning several times, through different means, in order to make them stop and think, but in vain ...'

<sup>101</sup> Cf. CRENSHAW, 'Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity': 33; VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 14; WOLFF, 'Das Thema "Umkehr" in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie': 145; idem, *Stunde des Amos*, 138; WEISER, 'Zu Amos 4 6-13': 59 n. 1; HARPER, 98; BUDDE, 97; HAMMERSHAIMB, 71; and PAUL, 144, who notes that the use of **עָר** with **שׁוֹב** is limited to references to a return to God (cf. Deut 4:30; 30:2; Isa 9:12; 19:22; Hos 14:2; Joel 2:12; Job 22:23; Lam 3:40).

<sup>102</sup> CRENSHAW, 'Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity': 35.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. EISING, 'נְאֻם': 120. He (p. 121) also claims that the formula underlines the credibility of the divine word. Cf. already HARPER, 59, who remarks: 'נְאֻם is the strongest word denoting prophetic utterance and especially marks its divine character'. However, these conclusions have been called into question by MEIER, *Speaking of Speaking*, 311-313, who notes that Tg and LXX do not distinguish between **נְאֻם יְהוָה** and **אָמַר יְהוָה**. In Tg both are rendered by the Aramaic **אָמַר** while LXX translates them by **λέγει**. Since the term **נְאֻם** is also used to refer to the speech of humans (e.g. Balaam, David, Agur), Meier comments (p. 312) that it 'is precarious to insist that the word refers specifically to divine speech.'



*Destructive Forces (vv. 9-10)*

Calamity 3	9 הכיתי אתכם בשדפון ובירקון
Calamity 4	הרבות גנותיכם וכרמיכם ותאניכם וזיתיכם יאכל הגזם
Refrain	ולא־שבתם עדי
Concluding oracle formula	נא־סִיְהוּה
Calamity 5	10 שלחתי בכם דבר בדרך מצרים
Calamity 6	הרגתי בחרב בחוריכם עם שבי סוסיכם
Consequence	ואעלה באש מחניכם ובאפכם
Refrain	ולא־שבתם עדי
Concluding oracle formula	נא־סִיְהוּה

*Climactic Overthrow (v. 11)*

Calamity 7	11 הפכתי בכם כמהפכת אלהים את־סדם ואת־עמרה
Consequence	ותהיו כאוד מצל משרפה
Refrain	ולא־שבתם עדי
Concluding oracle formula	נא־סִיְהוּה

Figure 19: The Strophic Arrangement and the Structure of Amos 4:6-11

*6.3.2 Rhetorical Function*

Many scholars have noted the connection of vv. 6-11 with the previous unit by means of the introductory words וְגַם־אָנִי.<sup>104</sup> With this juxtaposing arrangement the text emphasises that religiosity is not the same as repentance, that going to Bethel is not returning to Yahweh, and that bringing tithes in abundance is not equal to returning to God. Thus, Vollmer properly comments: ‘Dem verfehlten Handeln Israels gegenüber Jahwe im Kult (v. 4-5) wird v. 6-11 Jahwes Handeln an Israel in der Vergangenheit gegenübergestellt. Sind die v. 4-5 ganz beherrscht von dem ‘Ihr’ Israels, so ist in den v. 6-11 im Kontrast dazu von dem ‘Ich’ Jahwes die Rede ...’<sup>105</sup>

Highlighting the dialogistic character of the passage, Vollmer adds: ‘Fraglich ist auch, ob v. 4-5 ... als selbständige Einheit wahrscheinlich ist. [...] Der Jahwekultus war den Israeliten heilig. Wenn Amos ihn als Frevel bezeichnet, muß er dies *begründen*. Diese *Begründung* liegt vor in 4,6-11.’<sup>106</sup> A similar conclusion has been reached by Rudolph according to whom ‘der Abschnitt [v. 6-13] aus der Diskussion erwachsen ist’.<sup>107</sup> To this general observation, he adds the following explanatory remarks:

<sup>104</sup> Cf. e.g. ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 445; and CRENSHAW, ‘Liturgy of Wasted Opportunity’: 31. Although for some this connection is only secondary (thus WEISER, ‘Zu Amos 4,6-13’: 50; and JEREMIAS, 47; idem, ‘Amos 3-6: Beobachtungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte eines Prophetenbuches’: 129, who regards the piece as a *Fortschreibung* of older material), it cannot be denied that the text in its final form clearly links vv. 6ff to the preceding component.

<sup>105</sup> VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 13-14.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 14-15 (italics mine). For a different view cf. JEREMIAS, 48, who claims that ‘Am 4,4f. ist als ursprünglich selbständige rhetorische Einheit denkbar und wahrscheinlich, 4,6ff. dagegen nicht’. According to SOGGIN, 76, however, it is vv. 6-11 that prove ‘to be substantially a self-contained unity.’ These opposed views are telling in that they reveal the difficulties of reaching safe conclusions concerning the original oral contexts of the oracles.

<sup>107</sup> RUDOLPH, ‘Amos 4,6-13’: 28.

Den Hintergrund bildet das Widerwort der Hörer des Propheten, daß seine scharfen Mahn- und Drohreden nicht am Platze seien, weil doch die Blütezeit, in der man lebe, beweise, daß Jahwe mit seinem Volk zufrieden sei. Amos entgegnet, so könne nur reden, wer die Augen bewußt vor der Wirklichkeit verschließe. In fünf Strophen (V. 6-11) führt er Nöte und Plagen aus den letzten Jahrzehnten auf, die für sie eine Mahnung hätten sein müssen, ihren optimistischen Wahn zu überprüfen und sich zu fragen, ob sie wirklich keinen Anlaß hätten, von ihrer penetranten Selbstzufriedenheit zu lassen.<sup>108</sup>

Thus vv. 6-11 provide a further argument in the discussion that is going on between Amos and his addressees; they are another attempt of the prophet to convince the people that their behaviour is not acceptable to God. According to his view, they must have realised that already because of the frequent divine punitive interventions in their history.

A further conceptual connection between vv. 4-5 and 6-11 is exhibited by Carroll R.: 'The sacrifices that are mentioned [in 4:4-5] are those that express gratitude for divine blessing and protection, yet 4.6-11 put the lie to that misconception of Yahweh's involvement in the national history'.<sup>109</sup> Amos accordingly presents a sort of 'Parodie zur Heilsgeschichte' as von Rad noted.<sup>110</sup>

It should also be pointed out that the rhetoric of both passages (vv. 4-5, 6-11) stresses the abundance of the objects in question: whereas the Israelites fulfilled their cultic obligations abundantly, God's answer to them was an abundant supply of calamities. Ironically, both 'presentations' have not been able to fulfil their intended aim: all the offerings and tithes established no real relationship with God, but on the other hand, all the calamities did not achieve the restoration of this relationship either.

Finally, there is also one important verbal link between vv. 1-3 and vv. 6-11 that has been observed by Melugin:

The most striking similarity in language is the parallel between 'bring that we may drink' (v 1) and 'two or three cities wandered to one city to drink water and were not satisfied' (v 8). [...] the redactor who joined vv 1-3 with vv 4-5 and vv 6-12 seems to have intended a contrast between the wealthy women who, before the destruction announced in vv 2-3, were able to say, 'Bring that we may drink!' and the situation in which cities could not find water to drink.<sup>111</sup>

## 6.4 Amos 4:12-13

### 6.4.1 Exegetical Observations and Structure

הַלְכֵן כֹּה connects the judgement section in vv. 12-13 with the recital of the plagues in vv. 6-11.<sup>112</sup> Continuing with the first person singular of Yahweh, the text now employs an imperfect verb that refers to a future action as against the recounting of the past in the previous strophes.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.: 31. Cf. WEISER, 155; and DEISSLER, 109: 'Wenn der Text auf Amos zurückgeht, ist als Anlaß für diesen geschichtstheologischen Rückblick eine Einrede der Zuhörer anzunehmen, in der sie auf die "Segenszeit" (unter Jerobeam II.) als Kontrast zu Amos' pessimistischen Schelt- und Drohreden hinweisen.'

<sup>109</sup> CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 218.

<sup>110</sup> VON RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2:187.

<sup>111</sup> MELUGIN, 'Formation of Amos': 383.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. RUDOLPH, 180; MAYS, 81; ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 413; DEISSLER, 110; and VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 16.

In the book of Amos, הַלְכֵן is always used to introduce a threat of punishment. Cf. 3:11; 5:16; 7:17 (הַלְכֵן כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה), and 4:12; 5:11, 13; 6:7 (הַלְכֵן).



But the interpretation of the following material is disputed because of the phrases  $\text{כֹּה אֶעֱשֶׂה-לָךְ}$  and  $\text{זֹאת אֶעֱשֶׂה-לָךְ}$ . In the context of the whole discourse it is obvious that they refer to a notion of punishment.<sup>113</sup> But where do we find their exact referent? Also the repetitiveness of the two phrases has been considered problematic but Carroll R. emphasises that a stylistic explanation that reckons with rhetorical reasons is a better explanation than the idea that the text is conflated.<sup>114</sup> He also offers the best explanation concerning the referent of  $\text{כֹּה}$  and  $\text{זֹאת}$  in observing that ‘the colon develops suspense by postponing definition. What is “this”? Will there be more of the same suffered in 4.6-11? The reader must push on.’<sup>115</sup> This concept of ‘suspense’ is a very helpful one since it unites the ideas of a certain vagueness and a pointing forward. The notion is left vague in order to create suspense. But this also means that the solution of the question (or rather the resolution of the suspense) is to be found in the course of further reading, that is, in the subsequent material.

Following the ominous notion that God will do something to the people, they are commanded to be prepared for a meeting with this God. In the light of the previous refusal of the people to turn to Yahweh this is, of course, a highly ironic instruction.<sup>116</sup> In addition, the final line of v. 12 (especially the phrase  $\text{הַכּוֹן לְקִרְאָתוֹ}$ ) contains another ambiguity. What will the meeting with God be like? Since both words appear in the context of the holy war tradition as well as in covenant contexts they convey positive *and* negative connotations. Seen against the larger context, it is more likely that Amos is referring to a punishment that will go much beyond the calamities described in vv. 6-11, which failed to accomplish their task,<sup>117</sup> but a certain ambiguity persists.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Whereas this is generally agreed upon, the question of the exact referent of the words has evoked several solutions: (a) the particles refer to a judgement previously announced: G. V. SMITH, 147 (namely, in 3:2); O’ROURKE BOYLE, ‘The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos’: 349, 358 (in 3:11-12, 12bc-14); (b) they refer to the calamities mentioned in vv. 6-11 (ANDERSEN/FREEDMAN, 450-452), or at least to the last one referred to in v. 11 (JEREMIAS, 54); (c) they point forward to 4:12b $\beta$ : RUDOLPH, 181; (d) they were accompanied by a pointing or threatening gesture: WOLFF, 256-258; idem, ‘Das Ende des Heiligtums in Bethel’: 442-453 (esp. pp. 450-453); HAMMERSHAIMB, 74; HUBBARD, 161-162; and PAUL, 150, who, however, rightly opposes Wolff’s interpretation according to which the clause refers to the ruined temple at Bethel that had been destroyed during the Josianic reform; (e) the prophetic threat was either left unspecified deliberately or a portion of it has been lost: HARPER, 103; CRIPPS, 175; WEISER, 156; idem, ‘Zu Amos 4 6-13’: 57; CRENSHAW, ‘YHWH Šeba’ôt šemô’: 161; FEINBERG, 102; HOLLAND, 142; VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 12; and MAYS, 81.

RAMSEY, ‘Amos 4:12’: 187-191, interprets Amos 4:12 in the context of a *rib*. In his opinion Israel is tauntingly commanded ‘prepare to call “your” gods, O Israel!’ (p. 190). Thus he interprets  $\text{לְקִרְאָתוֹ}$  in the sense of ‘to call’ and understands  $\text{אֱלֹהֵי-לְוָי}$  as a reference to foreign gods. YOUNGBLOOD, ‘ $\text{לְקִרְאָתוֹ}$  in Amos 4:12’: 98, however, showed that while  $\text{לְקִרְאָתוֹ}$  occurs 121 times in the OT, it never clearly means ‘to call’. Since he nevertheless favours RAMSEY’S interpretation, he suggests that the text is corrupted because of a haplography and should be read as  $\text{לְקִרְאָתוֹ אֵת}$ . The preceding verses, however, do not speak of foreign deities as SOGGIN, 75, rightly objects. On the contrary, it is exactly the strict and fanatic observation of the sacrificial laws that is condemned as inappropriate because it does not include genuine repentance (cf. vv. 4-5 and 6-11). Moreover, an emendation of the text is clearly not necessary since it is perfectly understandable as it stands.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. also MCCOMISKEY, ‘The Hymnic Elements of the Prophecy of Amos’: 142: ‘Either this statement is a literary device calculated by the author to create an aura of uncertainty by purposefully omitting a reference to the judgment, or it is textually corrupt.’ He, however, refers to various other incidents in the book of Amos that create a similar uncertainty (cf. pp. 142-143).

<sup>115</sup> CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 215 (cf. n. 2).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. WEISER, ‘Zu Amos 4 6-13’: 57. WOLFF, ‘Zur Gotteserfahrung der Propheten’: 36, remarks: ‘die Zukunft, sie wird unentrinnbar die Begegnung mit Jahwe bringen. Das Ende bringt seine unerwünschte, seine unerwartete, aber unausweichliche Ankunft.’ Cf. also idem, ‘Endzeitvorstellungen und Orientierungskrise in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie’: 68.

<sup>117</sup> BRUEGGEMANN, ‘Amos iv 4-13 and Israel’s Covenant Worship’: 1-15, in a detailed discussion of the two terms shows their military connotations. According to his findings,  $\text{כּוֹן}$  describes the preparations for war within the context of the

In addition, the rhetoric that is employed towards the end of the entire passage intensifies the address by shifting it from the plural (שְׁבָהֶם) to the singular (הַכּוֹן) and by using the personal pronoun in referring to God (אֱלֹהֵיךָ). Both expressions highlight the personal accountability of the people of Israel to their covenant God.

V. 13 is almost generally considered as one of the book's hymn fragments (the others being 5:8-9 and 9:5-6), namely, a doxology that praises the creator of the world.<sup>119</sup> In this view the previous *catalogus calamitatum*<sup>120</sup> is concluded by v. 12 which contains an unspecified threat of punishment. V. 13 is then seen as not or only loosely connected to the preceding material.<sup>121</sup>

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holy war tradition, and לְקַרְאֵהוּ 'refers to going out into "the field" to engage the enemy' (p. 4) and thus also belongs to the holy war context. But Brueggemann emphasises that both terms also occur in what he calls 'positive' contexts. הַכּוֹן is used in covenant texts (e.g. in the Sinai tradition, cf. Exod 19:11, 15; 34,2), and לְקַרְאֵהוּ occurs, for example, in the case of an encounter between a suzerain and his vassal where the renewing of the covenant is in view (p. 5). In the end Brueggemann concludes that Amos 4:12 contains an appeal for renewing the covenant (pp. 5-6).

CARNY, 'Doxologies – A Scientific Myth': 153, however, rightly criticises that Brueggemann 'seems to prefer the meaning of הַכּוֹן and לְקַרְאֵהוּ which is conveyed by a minority of instances, neglecting as "secondary" the meaning in which these words occur most often in the Bible.' Cf. Josh 8:4; Isa 14:21; Jer 51:12; Ezek 7:14; 38:7; Ps 7:13; Prov 21:31 (for הַכּוֹן), and Num 21:23; Josh 8:14; 11:20; Judg 7:24; 20:31; 1 Sam 4:1-2; 17:21, 48, 55; 23:28; 2 Sam 10:9-10; 18:6; Ps 35:3; Job 39:21 (for לְקַרְאֵהוּ). Thus RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 35, comments: 'während in der Sinai-Situation trotz der die Theophanie begleitenden tremenda der heilwirkende Gott in Erscheinung tritt, wird hier auf den richtenden und strafenden vorbereitet. Es geht hier also keineswegs um Bundeserneuerung ..., sondern allein um Strafankündigung'. Cf. also HUNTER, *Seek the Lord!*, 121; MAYS, 82; HAYES, 148-149; and G. V. SMITH, 147, who speaks of a 'theophany of judgment'.

<sup>118</sup> Carny emphasises that the ultimate meaning of the discourse is to bring about repentance (for the opposite view see WEISER, 'Zu Amos 4 6-13': 58) although 'it is not in the habit of Amos to conclude his descriptions of destruction with an appeal for repentance. This he leaves for his audience to figure out. It is his personal style to conclude his orations with a description of terrible doom, apparently inevitable, and he is never tempted to commit the rhetorically serious mistake of mitigating the strong effect in any way' (p. 153). For a similar view cf. BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 60; VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 16-17; and HESCHEL, *Prophets*, 12, who claims that 'every prediction of disaster is in itself an exhortation to repentance.' Cf. also the discussion in ch. 7 'Amos and the Call for Repentance' in POLLEY, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, 139ff.

The dispute whether Amos reckoned with a repentance or whether he preached unconditioned doom is largely due to the fact that the book already contains the knowledge that the people did not repent. This can be seen from the structural arrangement in 5:1-17 where the exhortations to seek Yahweh (v. 6) or to seek good (v. 14) are framed by laments that indicate that the exhortations were not heeded.

<sup>119</sup> These hymn fragments have received much treatment with the main stress being laid on questions of authenticity. Because of their elevated theology and a vocabulary that is distinguished from the rest of Amos, they have been considered exilic or postexilic additions to the book. According to PAUL, 152, the first to question their authenticity was DUHM, *Theologie der Propheten*, 119. Cf. also WELLHAUSEN, 80; and MAYS, 82-84. HAYES, 149, points out that 'practically all interpreters agree that all three hymnic texts have features in common and share some type of relationship.' For this conclusion cf. also HASEL, *Understanding the Book of Amos*, 84.

For these hymns see HORST, 'Doxologien im Amosbuch': 45-54; GASTER, 'An Ancient Hymn in the Prophecies of Amos': 23-26; WATTS, 'An Old Hymn Preserved in the Book of Amos': 33-39; idem, *Vision and Prophecy in Amos*, 9-27; FROST, 'Asseverations by Thanksgiving': 380-390; CRÜSEMANN, *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*, 95ff; BERG, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente im Amosbuch*; KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 504-537; CRENSHAW, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*; BERGLER, *Die hymnischen Passagen und die Mitte des Amosbuches*; STORY, 'Amos – Prophet of Praise': 67-80; MCCOMISKEY, 'The Hymnic Elements of the Prophecy of Amos': 139-157; PFEIFER, 'Jahwe als Schöpfer der Welt': 475-481; GILLINGHAM, 'Der die Morgenröte zur Finsternis macht': 114-116; MATHYS, *Dichter und Beter*. Cf. also the detailed comments in BOTTERWECK, 'Zur Authentizität des Buches Amos': 182-186; HASEL, *Understanding the Book of Amos*, 83-89; WOLFF, 254-256; MAYS, 83-84; PAUL, 152-153; FINLEY, 329-333; and JEREMIAS, 56-59.

<sup>120</sup> For this expression cf. RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 34.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. HORST, 'Doxologien im Amosbuch': 45; WEISER, 156; BARSTAD, 'Die Basankühe in Amos iv 1': 290; and MATHYS, *Dichter und Beter*, 106-107. According to GASTER, 'An Ancient Hymn in the Prophecies of Amos': 23, the hymnic pieces 'obtrude upon the contexts in which they are to be found'.

Often the final verse is regarded as an addition by a later editor whose aim it was to emphasise the praiseworthy character of God in the context of the harsh threat of punishment in v. 12. Cf. e.g. WEISER, 'Zu Amos 4 6-13': 58; and VOLLMER, *Geschichtliche Rückblicke und Motive in der Prophetie des Amos, Hosea und Jesaja*, 13. HORST, 'Doxologien im Amosbuch': 50-54, introduced the idea of the hymn functioning as an *Exhomologese* (which is both, *confessio* as well as *doxology*), nowadays called a *Gerichtsdoxologie* (*doxology of judgement*). He is followed by VON RAD, 'Gerichtsdoxologie': 28-37; CRENSHAW, 'Wedōrēk 'al-bāmōtē 'āreš': 44; idem, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*,



Carny, however, questioned this view in his 1977 article 'Doxologies – A Scientific Myth'. First, Carny claimed that v. 12 on its own is not an appropriate conclusion for the preceding series of calamities.<sup>122</sup>

Accordingly, the initial words of v. 13 (כִּי הִנֵּה) indicate the adjunction of an explanation as to why the people have to be prepared for their meeting with God. According to Muilenburg these words give a 'dramatic and climactic force to the oracle.'<sup>123</sup>

In exceptional rhetorical style, the reason for the people's need of being prepared for an encounter with God is given simply in the description of Yahweh's power and might. He is the creator of the world as the two initial participles emphasise. They are thus to be understood as referring to attributes of God.<sup>124</sup> Carny remarks that they have no active aspect but are merely adjectives demonstrating the nature of the God with whom Israel will have to deal, namely, God the creator.<sup>125</sup> He is the one who formed the mountains, יָצַר describing the activity of the potter, and created (בָּרָא) the wind (רוּחַ).<sup>126</sup> The sense of these two phrases is aptly summarised by Rudolph:

Wenn Jahwe der Schöpfer der Berge und des Windes ist, so ist damit das Festeste und das Beweglichste, zugleich das Nichtzuübersehende und das Niesichtbare nebeneinandergestellt. Die Zusammenfügung von Gegensätzen drückt aber immer die Totalität aus ..., somit bezeichnen die beiden ersten Partizipialsätze Jahwe als den Schöpfer des Alls.<sup>127</sup>

References to God as creator in the book of Amos always reinforce his threatened judgements (cf. 5:8f; 9:5f).

141-143 ('The doxologies were added to the prophetic text for use on special days of penitence and confession, and their function was later taken over by cultic prayers instead of prophetic word of judgment plus doxology.' p. 143); and JEREMIAS, 55. Cf., however, the critique of this view by KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 506.

According to STEUERNAGEL, *Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 616, the hymnic pieces should be regarded as 'liturgischer Zusatz, der wohl das Ende eines Leseabschnittes im Synagogengottesdienst markiert' (quoted in BOTTERWECK, 'Zur Authentizität des Buches Amos': 182 n. 42). Recently a deletion of the verse has been proposed by NOBLE, 'Literary Structure of Amos': 216, because it 'would cut across the palistropic structure' and 'would not be balanced by a corresponding connection'. 'Presumably', Noble concludes, 'it was added by a later redactor [...] who did not realize that it disrupted the overall pattern.' Presumably, Noble's structural analysis requires a revision rather than the text.

<sup>122</sup> The connection with the preceding context is also emphasised by PAUL, 153: 'The present doxology, Amos 4:13, styled in participial fashion, follows naturally upon the previous verses by emphasizing the power and might of the omnipotent God of creation whom Israel is about to confront in final judgment.' Cf. RUDOLPH, 181, who states 'daß die mit dem begründenden כִּי angeschlossene Doxologie V. 13 einen guten und wirkungsvollen Abschluß von V. 6-12 bildet.' A similar view has already been advocated by CRAMER, *Amos*, 90; and CRIPPS, 176.

<sup>123</sup> MUILENBURG, 'Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle כִּי in the Old Testament': 137. PAUL, 153, notes that 'כִּי is used as a "linking device"'.  
<sup>124</sup> According to NIEHAUS, 407, the list of participles functioning as divine epithets or titles resembles ancient Near Eastern divine titularies.

<sup>125</sup> CARNY, 'Doxologies – A Scientific Myth': 155.

<sup>126</sup> The link with Gen 1-3, where we also find the words יָצַר, בָּרָא, and רוּחַ, is obvious. On the use and meaning of the verb בָּרָא cf. BERGMAN/RINGGREN, 'בָּרָא': 242-249.

PAUL, 154 n. 144, is probably right that in the present context of cosmic activities the reference is primarily to the creation of the 'wind' rather than the 'spirit'. Cf. also HAMMERSHAIMB, 74-75; and WOLFF, 264, who adds an interesting observation: 'Es mag sich empfehlen, die Doppelsinnigkeit des hebr. רוּחַ gerade in unserem Hymnus beim Übergang von der ersten zur dritten Partizipialaussage zu bedenken [...] Die dritte Aussage führt eindeutig zum Menschen. Gott wird gepriesen, weil er im Wort Kontakt mit ihm aufnimmt.' Cf. also CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 217 n. 2; and LYS, 'Rûach', *le souffle dans l'Ancien Testament*, 66: 'celui qui a formé les montagnes a créé le souffle (= vent); et celui qui a créé le souffle (= respiration) fait connaître à l'homme ses pensées' (cited in BERG, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente im Amosbuch*, 274, n. 17).

<sup>127</sup> RUDOLPH, 'Amos 4,6-13': 36. Concerning the impact the mountains had on the Hebrew writers cf. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, *Das alte Testament als literarisches Kunstwerk*, 348; and BERG, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente im Amosbuch*, 272-273.

The next participle points out that God reveals his plans to man. Carny shows that the conjoining *waw* links it with the two preceding phrases. Thus Israel is dealing with a God who is portrayed not only as the creator but also as the one who informs man of his intentions (cf. 2:11; 3:7-8).<sup>128</sup> Again this is depicted as an ongoing divine action.<sup>129</sup>

Whereas the preceding participles are all conjoined to each other by a *waw*, this is not the case with regard to the final pair. Carny, therefore, concludes that they are syntactically independent and mark the beginning of a new topic or theme.<sup>130</sup> At this point, it is important to note one significant difference between the initial phrases and the following ones. While Amos' addressees would have agreed with the prophet that Yahweh is indeed the creator of the mountains and the wind as well as a God who reveals mankind his intentions, they would not have perceived the deity as being a 'turner of dawn into darkness'; and though they might have thought of God as the one who treads in triumph on the heights of the earth, they would not have thought that this may have negative implications for them. In addition, it seems that the final phrases are not conjoined to the previous ones because they refer to actions that God is about to perform in the near future as against the references to his attributes in the previous lines.<sup>131</sup> On the grounds of the presented results the verse reads:

*For behold, (your God)  
the former of the mountains  
and the creator of the wind  
and the revealer of his thoughts to man  
is the one who turns (= the turner of) dawn into darkness  
and who treads (= the treader) on the heights of the earth  
– the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!*

<sup>128</sup> The pronoun of וְחָוֹ refers most likely to God himself, who declares his own thoughts to man (against RUDOLPH, 181-182; HAMMERSHAIMB, 75; STORY, 'Amos – Prophet of Praise': 69 (n. 6), 80; MCCOMISKEY, 308; and NIEHAUS, 407). This is confirmed by the participle מְגִיד which suggests *revelation* rather than *declaration* (cf. WOLFF, 264; HAMMERSHAIMB, 75; FINLEY, 217-218; JEREMIAS, 58-59; and PFEIFER, 'Jahwe als Schöpfer der Welt': 479). But BERG, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente im Amosbuch*, 279, objects that the verb is not only applied to God 'etwa in dem Sinn, daß nur verborgene göttliche Dinge "kundgemacht" würden.' According to his view the pronoun refers to the thoughts of man (cf. pp. 286-287). However, he regards v. 13 as entirely independent from its context, that is, as a hymn that praises God as the Creator. Thus he claims: 'So paßt der Versteil sehr gut in ein Bekenntnis zu Jahwe als dem Schöpfer, aber auch zur heilsgeschichtlichen Bekenntnisformel "Jahwe ... ist sein Name"' (p. 287). Accordingly, he offers the following paraphrase of the line מְגִיד לְאָדָם מַה־שָׁחַו:

*der dem Menschen kundtut (kundgetan hat),  
was (= Jahwes Taten in Schöpfung und Geschichte)  
"Gegenstand" seines (= des Menschen) Sinnens ist.*

This interpretation, however, is inappropriate in the present context as PFEIFER, *Theologie des Propheten Amos*, 56 n. 79, objects: 'Das Wort auf den Sinn des Menschen zu beziehen, ... ist in diesem Zusammenhang weniger ratsam, da es ja um eine Ankündigung künftigen Handelns Gottes geht.' Cf. also the critique of Berg's proposal by MATHYS, *Dichter und Beter*, 111 n. 51.

Thus חָוֹ, a by-form of חָוִי (cf. CRIPPS, 177; WOLFF, 249; RUDOLPH, 171; JEREMIAS, 47 n. 9), resembles סוֹד in 3:7 that also speaks of God's plans. For the meaning of חָוִי cf. MOWINCKEL, 'The Verb *šiah* and the Nouns *šiah*, *šihā*': 1-10; and MÜLLER, 'Die hebräische Wurzel שִׁיח': 361-371.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. CARNY, 'Doxologies – A Scientific Myth': 155.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.: 155-156. In his view the middle phrase (וּמְגִיד לְאָדָם מַה־שָׁחַו) 'serves to separate God's manifestation in the past through the act of creation and his control of the universe, which is a positive manifestation, from the acts that he is about to perform: the reversal of the laws of nature ending up in total destruction' (cf. p. 156). Others proposed to emend this line in order to relate it too to the realm of nature. Cf. GASTER, 'An Ancient Hymn in the Prophecies of Amos': 24-25; HARPER, 104; MÜLLER, 'Die hebräische Wurzel שִׁיח': 369; and HORST, 'Doxologien im Amosbuch': 49, who thinks that it speaks about the creation of the vegetation. He reads וּמְגִיד לְאָדָם מַה־שָׁחַו and translates: 'der den Menschen reichlich spendet, was sie begehren bzw. bedürfen'. However, CRENSHAW, '*Wedōrēk 'al-bāmōtē 'āreš*': 42, rightly stresses that there is no necessity for an emendation.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 509, who comments on the phrase וְרָכַךְ עַל־בְּמַתֵּי אֶרֶץ 'ein Einerschreiten über die (Kult-) Höhen oder ein Drauftreten auf sie ... meint ... keinen einmaligen urzeitlichen Akt, sondern einen zukünftigen, oder ein öfter wiederholtes Geschehen.'



Amos is thus announcing that Israel's God will bring about a deadly darkness<sup>132</sup> which is a recurring threat in the prophecy of his book (cf. 5:18, 20; 8:9). This indicates that in response to the behaviour of his people, the creator of the world will even reverse the laws of nature. A triumphant and destructive divine intervention is also implied by the phrase *וְרָרַךְ עַל-בְּמֹתַי אֶרֶץ*.<sup>133</sup>

In the light of this analysis, we are now able to conclude that v. 13 'clearly fits its context and brings the thought of verse 12 to a logical conclusion.'<sup>134</sup> This has been emphasised by McComiskey who remarks:

The theophanic depiction in the doxology of Amos 4:13 ... immediately follows the announcement that an encounter between Yahweh and the people is imminent. The *theme of the hymn* is exactly consonant with the theme of the immediately preceding context and is thus in *conceptual agreement* with it [italics mine].<sup>135</sup>

While those scholars who regard the hymnic pieces as markedly different from their context underline that they employ a distinct vocabulary, McComiskey rightly referred to the *thematic* and *conceptual similarity* between Amos 4:13 and its preceding context. We may add that the verbal differences seem to be due to the specific rhetorical function of the closing hymn at this point.<sup>136</sup>

Hence, the ending of ch. 4 contains a climactic reference to an impending divine judgement.<sup>137</sup> That this is indeed the implication of the hymn is reinforced once the book is regarded as a literary unity that shows a gradual development of its argument. In this case it would be natural to pursue with the course of reading in order to look for the answers to the questions that the final part of ch. 4 evokes in the subsequent material that proceeds with the phrase *שְׂמַעַר*

<sup>132</sup> Cf. BERG, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente im Amosbuch*, 288, who compares *עִיפָה* to *עִיפְתָה* and notes that 'dabei mag des (sic!) Grauens, das in "ēpātāh enthalten und überhaupt mit der Vorstellung der nächtlichen Dunkelheit ohne irgendein Licht verbunden ist, bei "ēpāh mitschwingen.' KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 513, speaks of a 'todbringendes Übel'. *עִיפָה* is a *hapax legomenon*, but cf. *עִיפְתָה* (Job 10:21), *מָעַרָה* (Isa 8:22), and *תְּעַפָּה* (Job 11:17). Some have asked whether God is portrayed here as turning morning into darkness or as making morning out of darkness. Cf. and PAUL, 155, who understands *עִיפָה* as meaning 'darkness' and *עִיפְתָה* as 'glimmering dawn' and translates 'He who turns blackness into daybreak'. According to RUDOLPH, 182, 'geht es in den beiden letzten Partizipialsätzen um das sich täglich wiederholende Wunder des Sonnenaufgangs.' However, on the basis of the syntax employed as well as the present context the most likely interpretation is that the text refers to a divine reversal of light into darkness. Cf. GK § 117ii; KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 508 n. 16; and BERG, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente im Amosbuch*, 289: 'Bei der Deutung und Übersetzung von W. Rudolph dürfte man, analog zu Am 5,8ba, vor *šhr* den Dativpartikel "le" erwarten.' Concerning the meaning of *עִיפָה* cf. KÖHLER, 'Die Morgenröte im Alten Testament': 56-59.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Deut 33:29, where this triumphal connotation is most obvious; cf. also Job 9:8; Mic 1:3; and Hab 3:19. In Job 9:8, God is portrayed as treading on the back of the sea-monster which represents his enemy. Cf. CLINES, *Job 1-20*, 231. Clines remarks: 'The same idiom for trampling on the backs of defeated foes occurs in Deut 33:29; Amos 4:13; Mic 1:3'. In Mic 1:3 God's treading on the high places of the earth causes a destructive earthquake (v. 4). Thus PAUL, 156, speaks of the 'imagery of a mighty conqueror'. For further discussions of the phrase cf. CRENSHAW, '*W'dōrēk 'al-bāmōtē 'āreš*': 43; BERG, *Die sogenannten Hymnenfragmente im Amosbuch*, 291-293; KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 509-513; and KOCH/BERGMAN, '*וְרָרַךְ*': 270-293. For *בְּמָה* see SCHUNCK, '*בְּמָה*': 139-145. Do the words *עִיפָה עַל-בְּמֹתַי אֶרֶץ* imply an allusion to cultic high places? Cf. *בְּמֹתַי אֶרֶץ* in Amos 7:9, and see PFEIFER, 'Jahwe als Schöpfer der Welt': 479.

<sup>134</sup> HAYES, 150.

<sup>135</sup> MCCOMISKEY, 'The Hymnic Elements of the Prophecy of Amos': 141 (cf. p. 154).

<sup>136</sup> According to MCCOMISKEY, 'The Hymnic Elements of the Prophecy of Amos': 154, 'the doxologies are *poetic representations of theological truth* written by Amos himself to give awesome validation to the content of the oracle that precedes each doxology [italics mine]. Though it is hard to prove that Amos wrote the hymns himself (they may as well represent older material that has been incorporated into the book) McComiskey rightly notes that their specific vocabulary is due to their rhetorical function.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. CRIPPS, 296-297. KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 512, speaks of a 'Vernichtungstheofanie' (cf. p. 515).

אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי נֹשֵׂא עֲלֵיכֶם קִינָה בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל (5:1) thus introducing a lamentation that implies a negative outcome of the encounter between Yahweh and his people.

However, the actual climax of the whole prophetic discourse in Amos 4 is the declaration יהוה אלהי צבאות שמו as Brueggemann correctly underlines: ‘The use of the name at this climactic point is a reminder of the terror of the God of Sinai who came again and again into the history of Israel.’<sup>138</sup> The same is emphasised by Smith who comments: ‘... in almost oath-like fashion closes the hymn with the certainty that Yahweh’s authority and character stand behind it.’<sup>139</sup> The rhetorical structure of this final part can thus be outlined as follows:

Unspecified reason for the following exhortation	12 לכן כה אעשה-לך ישראל עקב כי זאת אעשה-לך
Exhortation	הכון לקראת-אלהיך ישראל
Reason for the exhortation	13 כי הנה יוצר הרים וברא רוח ומגיד לאדם מה-שחור עשה שחר עיפה ודרך על-במתי ארץ
God’s (traditional) attributes	
God’s future actions	
Climactic conclusion (corresponding to the previous oracle formulas)	יהוה אלהי-צבאות שמו

Figure 20: The Rhetorical Structure of Amos 4:12-13

#### 6.4.2 Rhetorical Function

The intimate connection of this final part to the previous material is obvious because of the initial words לָכֵן כֹּה. As has been demonstrated above in the discussion of the structure and meaning of the passage, vv. 12-13 provide a climactic closure to the preceding unit. Thus we are able to conclude with Mays that vv. 6-11 function as an indictment that ‘serves as a basis for the announcement of judgment in v. 12.’<sup>140</sup> The arrangement thus represents another example of the book’s seven plus one series:<sup>141</sup> seven typical plagues that occurred in Israel’s past (each introduced with a first pers. perf. verb referring to the divine interference) will be followed by an eighth intervention in the future (cf. the imp. verb).

As Dempster noticed, a further connection of vv. 12-13 with the preceding verse is the reference to God as אלהים. Whereas elsewhere in the entire chapter either יהוה or ארני יהוה function as divine epithets, vv. 11-13 employ the term אלהים. Dempster comments, ‘in the context, the name functions to mark an abrupt transition – the onset of climax. Yahweh (4, 6, 8, 9, 10) is the God (אלהים 11) who destroyed the cities of the plain. This Yahweh (11) is Israel’s God (אלהיך 12)! And He is none other than the Lord God of Hosts (יהוה אלהי צבאות 13).’<sup>142</sup>

But vv. 12-13 are not only the climactic conclusion to the list of the calamities mentioned in vv. 6-11. In addition, they ironically contrast the people’s futile attempt to get in touch with God by means of abundant offerings and tithes (vv. 4-5) with the certainty of this predicted (final)

<sup>138</sup> BRUEGGEMANN, ‘Amos iv 4-13 and Israel’s Covenant Worship’: 13. Cf. HAMMERSHAIMB, 75; FINLEY, 216; CARROLL R., *Contexts for Amos*, 217; and DEMPSTER, ‘The Lord is His Name’: 179-180.

<sup>139</sup> G. V. SMITH, 148.

<sup>140</sup> MAYS, 78; cf. MARTIN-ACHARD, 36.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. LIMBURG, ‘Sevenfold Structures in the Book of Amos’: 220; and PAUL, 151.

<sup>142</sup> DEMPSTER, ‘The Lord is His Name’: 179-180.



encounter with Yahweh. This has been observed by Stuart who comments, 'What the Israelites improperly sought by worshipping at Gilgal and Bethel (v 4) they will genuinely get, although in a way they would never have chosen, when Yahweh reveals himself to them (v 13).'<sup>143</sup>

### 6.5 The Rhetorical Structure of Amos 4

In addition to the previous observations concerning the connections between vv. 12-13 and the preceding parts it has to be added at this point that there are also clear signs which show that the whole chapter should be regarded as one prophetic discourse. First of all, this can be seen by the introductory formulas *הָיָה בְּרֵךְ הַזֶּה* (אַתָּה) *שָׁמְעוּ* in 4:1 and 5:1. Additionally, the first and the final part of Amos 4 exhibit some features that distinguish them from the remaining units of the chapter as has been observed by Hubbard:

The judgment speech of 4:1-13 begins and ends with descriptive participles. In verse 1 the women are indicted as oppressing, crushing and begging; in verse 13 God is lauded as creating, declaring, making and treading. We cannot be sure that Amos intended such a contrast, but the idea of it is certainly in line with everything he has said about the ultimate and tragic difference between God's ways and those of his people.<sup>144</sup>

These descriptive participles in vv. 1 and 13 employed to characterise the two antagonists provide an *inclusio* to the whole piece.<sup>145</sup> This *inclusio* is reinforced by the allusion to mountains in both verses. Whereas the accused women are located on *הַר שִׁמְרוֹן*, Yahweh is introduced as the *יוֹצֵר הָהָרִים*.<sup>146</sup> The latter statement, of course, implies God's sovereignty over the mountains and the people who live on them.

Thus, the whole discourse stresses the crisis that exists in the relationship between the Israelites and their God. The text highlights that there is a fundamental tension between the lifestyle of the people and the divine expectations as has been emphasised by Carny who notes that 'the whole chapter ... is a unified oration, relating the deeds and attitudes of the people, belonging to the dominant classes, who had failed to interpret correctly God's warnings as manifested in the terrible events of the past.'<sup>147</sup>

Another seven plus one series reinforces the structural unity of the chapter. Whereas vv. 6-11 and 12-13 are linked in that they speak of seven past calamities which will be followed by a final climactic and ominous meeting with God, on the structural level vv. 1-3, 4-5, and 6-11 in-

<sup>143</sup> STUART, 336.

<sup>144</sup> HUBBARD, 163.

<sup>145</sup> However, concerning the *inclusio* a warning should be in order. Whereas some scholars are much inclined to search for *inclusios* in order to delineate the structure of texts, the present *inclusio* in Amos 4:1 and 13 would not be decisive for structuring the text since participles (for their use in Amos cf. PFEIFER, 'Jahwe als Schöpfer der Welt': 475-477, according to whom the book contains 74 participles) and references to mountains (cf. 3:9; 4:1, 13; 6:1; 9:13) occur repeatedly throughout the book of Amos. However, once the delineation of the text is established, the recognition of such devices aids to grasp the rhetoric of the passage in question.

<sup>146</sup> For this observation cf. PAUL, 154 n. 146, and p. 156. A further support of this solution is presented by Koch's analysis of Amos 4:13, who also observed the 'Stichwortanschluß' of v. 13 to v. 1 (*הָרִים* || *הָרַר*). In addition, he speaks of an 'Ideenassoziation' between v. 13 and v. 4 that both are concerned with the cult (KOCH, 'Rolle der hymnischen Abschnitte': 514). Arguing along these lines he finally concludes concerning v. 13: 'Demnach ist hier eine Zerstörung der Kulthöhen angedroht ...' (p. 512). Because of the plural *בְּמִתֵּי* he speaks of 'Kulthöhen' which in his view refers to Bethel, Gilgal, and Samaria (which is mentioned in v. 1) (p. 514).

<sup>147</sup> CARNY, 'Doxologies – A Scientific Myth': 157. Also BARSTAD, *Religious Polemics of Amos*, 59, regards ch. 4 as a 'coherent speech unit'. In his view, however, the unifying theme is the polemic against 'non-Yahwistic or Yahwistic/syncretistic cults'.

corporate seven oracle formulas (נְאֻם יְהוָה) followed by the climactic reference to God's name (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ) in v. 13.<sup>148</sup> By means of this repeated reference to the divine speaking followed by a portrayal of Yahweh at the end of the discourse, it is highlighted throughout the chapter that it is God himself who regards the social misbehaviour of the upper-class women, the futile religious activities as well as the constant refusal to turn to him in repentance as sufficient reason for a final disastrous encounter.

Thus, the rhetorical aim of the chapter is to demonstrate that the punishment that is depicted as a meeting with God is justified because of the people's social and religious behaviour as Hubbard rightly observed:

All of the awful terror which God displayed to Israel in covenant grace at Sinai will now be unleashed in judgment against him because of the triple indictment – the ruthless opulence of Samaria's women (4:1-3), the empty, self-centred rituals of Bethel and Gilgal (4:4-5), and the refusal to read the invitation to repentance in the messages of judgment (4:6-11).<sup>149</sup>

Having examined the whole of ch. 4, we are now able to outline the rhetorical structure of the chapter, which in many ways resembles that of Amos 3. Like the previous chapter, the discourse opens with an announcement of judgement that provides the thesis for the subsequent discussion. This is very clear in 3:1-2; but also in 4:1-3 where we find a more detailed reference to the sins of the Israelite women, the actual stress of the unit is on the notion of punishment as the solemn introduction נְשַׁבַּע אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה בְּקִרְשׁוֹ כִּי הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים עָלֵיכֶם as well as the concluding oracle formula נְאֻם־יְהוָה show.

In both chapters, the opening units are followed by rather unexpected material so that in each case at first glance the prophet seems to have abandoned his initial theme. However, as the reader moves on it becomes clear that these parts serve to defend Amos' announcements of judgement. While the prophet argues in ch. 3 that he is speaking as a divine messenger who cannot refrain from telling the people what he has heard from the Lord (3:3-8), in Amos 4 he makes it clear that the judgement will come although (or even because) the people are so eager to fulfil their religious obligations (4:4-5).

Also the following parts play similar roles in both instances in that they serve as a confirmation to the preceding message. In Amos 3 foreign witnesses are called to assess the social crimes of the Israelites and to confirm the need of the divine punishment on the basis of what they have seen (3:9-11), whereas in ch. 4 the Israelites themselves are challenged to have a look at their own history which will confirm that Yahweh was not content with the life-style of his people and as a matter of fact they already did experience the divine punishment in their past (4:6-11).

However, the two chapters are not constructed according to a firm pattern as our investigation has shown. Also, with regard to their rhetorical structure they differ slightly in that ch. 3 incorporates five units whereas Amos 4 consists of only four. Thus, 3:12 which serves to inten-

<sup>148</sup> Cf. DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 311; and WENDLAND, 'The "Word of the Lord" and the Organization of Amos': 13. Concerning the function of the final line of v. 13 cf. BRUEGGEMANN, 'Amos iv 4-13 and Israel's Covenant Worship': 13, who notes that it 'serves a function not unlike *ne'um YHWH* in vv. 6-11'. Cf. also MUILENBURG, 'Study in Hebrew Rhetoric': 107, who observed that the final component of a series often 'breaks the repetitive sequence' and 'gives point and force to the whole series'.

<sup>149</sup> HUBBARD, 161. Cf. DORSEY, 'Literary Architecture and Aural Structuring Techniques in Amos': 312.



sify the notion of punishment in that it highlights its totality is not paralleled in ch. 4. But that does not weaken our observation that the two chapters resemble each other in the way their rhetoric works. This is confirmed by the endings of the two pericopes (3:13-15; 4:12-13). Although their surface structure is totally different they, nevertheless, function in similar ways in that they both tie the respective units together in that they, following on the discussions that are to found in the middle parts, come back to the initial theme of judgement. While in 3:13-15 Amos emphasises the actual destruction of the altars at Bethel together with the luxurious houses of the rich, 4:12-13 alludes to the punishment in terms of an ominous encounter with God. Based on these investigations, the rhetorical structure of the whole discourse of Amos 4 can thus be outlined as follows:

- A Opening declaration: *'Those who exploit the poor will experience a brutal but appropriate punishment'* (vv. 1-3)  
closed by the formula: נְאֻם־יְהוָה
- B Ironic invitation: *'Come and sin'* (vv. 4-5)  
closed by the extended formula: נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה
- C Historic confirmation: *'I punished you severely, and yet you did not return to me'* (vv. 6-11)  
each of the five strophes is closed by the formula: נְאֻם־יְהוָה
- D Concluding 'invitation': *'Be prepared to meet the Lord, the God of hosts'* (vv. 12-13)  
closed by the phrase יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ

Figure 21: The Rhetorical Structure of Amos 4

This concludes our investigation of Amos 1-4, the aim of which it was to illustrate the exegetical implications of the rhetorical-critical approach advocated in the present study. At this point, it would have been desirable to extend the investigation to the remaining five chapters of the book of Amos but because of space limitations, it has been necessary to concentrate on the first three major rhetorical units. However, our outline, in chapter 3.2.3, of the debate between Amos and his audience indicated that a communication-theoretical approach could be fruitfully applied also, for instance, to the vision cycle in 7:1-8:3 or the subsequent discourses in 8:4-14 and 9:1-15.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Cf. also in this context MÖLLER, "Hear this Word against You".

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, we investigated the literary structure and the rhetoric of persuasion of the book of Amos arguing that it was not compiled simply to preserve the prophet's words. Moreover, we challenged the common redaction-critical view that regards the book as the result of a lengthy redactional process involving several generations of redactors, who continually adapted it to guarantee its relevance for changing times and circumstances. Against this view, we argued that the book was compiled shortly after the time of Amos, and that it was intended to capture or present the debate between Amos and his original eighth-century Israelite audience.

Interpreting the book within a communication-theoretical framework, and employing the methodological tools provided by rhetorical criticism, we claimed that it has been compiled for a specific persuasive purpose. That is to say, those responsible for the book in its present form presented the debate between Amos and the Israelites in order for it to function as a warning for a pre-exilic Judean audience. To be more specific, when read in the light of the catastrophic events of 722 BCE, the presentation of Amos struggling – and failing – to convince his contemporaries of the imminent divine punishment is a powerful warning admonishing Judean readers/hearers not to repeat the stubborn attitude of their northern brothers and sisters lest they too be severely punished by Yahweh.

In the introductory chapter, we outlined our definition of rhetorical criticism, its interpretive potential and the interpretive tasks it engenders. This was done partly by contrasting the approach with the tenets, aims and interests that characterise redaction criticism, which then led to a discussion of the issues of synchrony and diachrony. In addition, the involvement of the reader in the interpretive process was looked at followed by an outline of the methodological steps of the rhetorical-critical enquiry. Chapter two, in turn, discussed the macro structure of the book beginning with a review of recent proposals. An approach was then advocated that takes into account the 'oral world' of the original hearers of the book, and seeks to establish what kind of structural markers would have been recognisable in such an oral setting. In chapter three, the rhetorical situation and the rhetorical problem that caused the production of the book were considered. This was followed by a discussion of its overall rhetorical strategy, which, as we pointed out, is best described in terms of a presentation of the debating prophet intended to function as a warning to pre-exilic Judean readers. Chapters four to six then looked at Amos 1-4 applying the rhetorical-critical notions mentioned above.

Towards the end of our introductory chapter, we outlined five methodological steps of rhetorical-critical enquiry, the last of which we have not yet addressed. We noted that, having analysed *how* the rhetoric of the work under consideration 'operates', the critic also needs to evaluate its 'rhetorical effectiveness'. He or she needs to ask, that is to say, whether, or to what



degree, the utterance is a fitting response to the exigency that occasioned it. This can be clarified by establishing whether the rhetorical utterance successfully modified the exigency or at least had the potential of doing so. This differentiation is necessary since the rhetorical effectiveness of an utterance evidently does not depend on internal factors alone (such as its genre, disposition, etc.). To mention only one external factor, it is influenced also by the disposition of the audience towards the originator(s) of the utterance and the message it conveys.

Applying the scenario we suggested earlier, i.e. that the book was meant to admonish a pre-exilic Judean audience not to repeat the mistakes of the Israelites who would not listen to the prophet Amos, the following conclusions can be drawn. Judging on the basis of what we know about the history of eighth- and seventh-century Judah, the book of Amos evidently did not successfully modify the exigency that had caused its compilation. That is to say, the Judeans ultimately did experience a fate similar to that of their northern brothers and sisters, which would suggest that they would not be warned by what had happened to Israel. However, our limited historical knowledge does not allow us to rule out the possibility that the book may have made an impact on some of its hearers. Conversely, although this may of course have been the case, this is a highly conjectural scenario, so much so that we do not feel encouraged to go beyond the simple mention of it. However, as pointed out above, for a rhetorical utterance to be an appropriate response to the exigency that occasioned it, it is not necessary that it actually does modify that exigency. All that is in fact required is that it has the potential of doing so. This, according to our judgement, clearly seems to be the case as far as the book of Amos is concerned. That is to say, at a time when the prophet Isaiah criticised the luxurious life-style of the Judean upper class and the lack of justice that went with it, and announced the divine judgement as a consequence of it all, the book of Amos would have been a powerful means for backing up that message by pointing to a precedent for both, the intolerable behaviour of the people and the unexpected, i.e. judgmental, reaction of Yahweh.

Let me add that, if asked how exactly, I think, the book would have been used in that situation, I would envisage a public reading, quite possibly in the Jerusalem temple. I am of course well aware of the predominant view according to which the final form of most, if not all, Old Testament books is attributed to redactors who were active in post-exilic (i.e. Persian) times. However, even if the formative period for the Old Testament literature was the Persian era (which I do not venture to question), it does by no means follow that all the books received their final shaping in those days. Thus, if for a particular book it can be shown, on the basis of linguistic and historical considerations, that the material is, or might be, early and also that it makes better sense, from a rhetorical point of view, when read against an earlier background, then a review of the current paradigm might well be necessary.

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