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IMPOSSIBLE MOURNING:
LAMENTATIONS AS A TEXT OF MELANCHOLIA

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ABSTRACT

The connecting thread that runs through this thesis is the attempt to read the text of Lamentations as representing a melancholic who suffers from several of its symptoms. The term melancholia is used in a psychoanalytical sense, specifically as it is set out in Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia." The first chapter explores some of the symptoms of the text, previous interpretational treatments, and then offers an interpretation of these symptoms as evidence of melancholia. The second chapter relates Julia Kristeva's theory of melancholia to Lamentations. The third, and final, chapter looks at the much debated issue of the speaking voice(s) in Lamentations and interprets them from the work on melancholia by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, particularly Jacques Derrida's understanding of their work.

PREFACE

"What is a poet?" asks Søren Kierkegaard at the beginning of *Either/Or*, and he answers himself: "An unhappy man who in his heart harbours a deep anguish, but whose lips are so fashioned that the moans and cries which pass over them are transformed into ravishing music."[1] Similarly, when reading Lamentations one is struck both simultaneously with a sense of the suffering from which it arose, but also with the beauty of the text. One of the critic's tasks, as I view it, is to somehow do justice to both of these at the same time. That is, if the text does not influence you viscerally, then perhaps you have not succeeded in a proper reading of it.

Readers of the Bible, both historical and present, provide the best example of those who search a text for themselves. In the same way, psychoanalysis is a way of reading everything, even yourself. As a young student who attempts to read the Bible from a psychoanalytical perspective, I did not think that I would have to do much analysis of myself. I started out from the traditional assumption that I (as the analyst) would offer an interpretation or diagnosis of the text (the analysand). I have now come to realize that I was, and am, just as much in need of "healing" as the text, and that it is only by the two of us working together that any type of analysis can near completion. Of course, this blurring of the lines between analyst and analysand has been present from the beginning of the concept of transference. But the realization does not come easy; it is best described as a difficult pleasure. Yet, a pleasure it is, and in my experience it is the most healing of pleasures.

[1] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* (2 vols.; trans. David F. Swenson, Lillian Marvin Swenson, and Walter Lowrie; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 1:19.

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INTRODUCTION

Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the Soul's subterranean depth unborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.[2]

It has been over 2,500 years since the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its temple by the Babylonians, and yet still, the airs and echoes of this tragedy can be found today. No text better displays this than the book of Lamentations. In the book the tragedy is fresh and vivid, the poet writes as if he is one who has experienced and is still experiencing the horrors and devastation, which is perhaps a sign of dating, but more likely a sign of the skill of the poet.[3] How can one do justice to this melancholic text given the distance of the event it speaks of? Or to play off Derrida's remark on Hegel: "What, after all, today, for us, here, now, about Lamentations?" What (and why?), today (after centuries of interpretation, readings and re-readings of Lamentations), for us (modern readers), here (modern readers from the west in an academic setting) about Lamentations (a text that is almost completely peripheral to the larger social memory and consciousness)? How are we to read this text in such a context? What kinds of questions should we ask as readers of the text? Why should we read it at all? The answer may

[2] From the Poem "The Buried Life," by Matthew Arnold, as quoted in J. Hillis Miller, *Reading Narrative* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 230.

[3] Having said that, the vast majority of scholars regard the events of the Babylonian crisis of the early sixth century as those to which the book reacts. This is even true of those who argue for the composition of the book to be more than a century after this catastrophe. A few scholars have highlighted though, that there is a complete lack of specific historical reference and suggest that the link between the text and the particular events is tenuous. See S.J.D. Cohen, "The Destruction: From Scripture to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982): 18-39; Iain Provan, "Reading Texts Against an Historical Background: The Case of Lamentations 1," *SJOT* 1 (1990): 130-43.

I, along with the vast majority of other scholars on Lamentations, remain unconvinced and continue to view the book as a direct response to the catastrophe in 586 B.C.E. A more moderate approach, and one that I follow for the most part, is offered by Paul Joyce in his essay "Sitting Loose to History: Reading the Book of Lamentations Without Primary Reference to Its Historical Setting," in *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament in Honour of Ronald E. Clements* (ed. Edward Ball; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 246-62. Joyce argues that while one should remain an agnostic about dating Lamentations, it is best understood in reference to the destruction of 586 B.C.E. However, this does not stop the interpreter from reading the book as indicative of all falls from divine grace or offering interpretations that bracket the question of historicity. In fact, all language, but poetry especially, universalizes whether the reader, writer, or interpreter wants it to or not.

be as simple as "why not?" Why not read Lamentations? Of course, there will always be more questions than answers. But perhaps there is something more to offer.

Bernard Shaw was once asked whether he really thought that the Bible was the work of the Holy Ghost. He responded: "I think the Holy Ghost has written not only the Bible, but all books." Perhaps there *is* something holy and divine in every text in the sense that each is an occasion for beauty. For what is a book?

> It is a set of dead symbols. And then the right reader comes along, and the words—or rather the poetry behind the words, for words themselves are mere symbols—spring to life, and we have a resurrection of the word.[4]

To say that the Holy Ghost wrote all texts is also to affirm the *spectrality* of all texts. As the quote from Borges asserts: there is resurrection (a coming back), and this cannot happen without at first a death. Hélène Cixous reminds us: "To begin (writing, living) we must have death."[5] And I mean not just the death of the author (though that indeed is very true), but a death also of the reader. We need not only the "Holy" but also the "Ghost." For in the same book Cixous quotes a letter from Kafka which states:

> I think we ought to only read the kind of books that wound and stab us. If the book we are reading doesn't wake us up with a blow on the head, what are we reading it for? So that it will make us happy, as you write? Good Lord, we would be happy precisely if we had no books, and the kind of books that make us happy are the kind we could write ourselves if we had to. But we need the books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us. That is my belief.[6]

And it is my belief that Lamentations is just such a book: one that grieves us deeply. It focuses on the central calamity of the Hebrew Bible: the destruction of the temple and the city of

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[4] Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse* (ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 4.

[5] Hélène Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (trans. Sarah Cornell and Susan Sellers; New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 7.

[6] Ibid., 17.

Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. This event would become a turning point in Jewish religious thought and leave a mark on all subsequent biblical literature. It shattered the existing paradigms of meaning, especially in regard to the bonds between God and the people of Israel. Tod Linafelt adequately summarizes:

> A more relentlessly brutal piece of writing is scarcely imaginable. This short biblical book affronts the reader with a barrage of harsh and violent images: from its opening portrayal of the city of Jerusalem as an abandoned widow exposed to endless danger, to the broken man of chapter three, to the bleak description in chapter four of the inhabitants of a devastated city, to the final unanswered appeal of chapter five, the reader is not so much engaged by the book of Lamentations as assaulted by it.[7]

Such books are a rare commodity, but they are the books that we need. We need books that hurt us because they tell us a little of what we are unable to say.[8] This is all the more pertinent in light of the fact that, historically, the reaction to Lamentations by many readers has been to emphasize the so-called "positive" verses that provide hope (e.g. 3:21-22) and to devalue the strong lament language found in the majority of the text.[9] It is true; (the) language makes us uncomfortable at times, it reminds us of death and asks for the punishment of others. But, for Kafka, this lack of comfort is exactly what we need, for we certainly do not read merely to be happy. And in this sense Lamentations continues to have contemporary significance for today. Indeed, after the most brutal and violent century these airs and echoes of melancholia do not seem so far off.

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[7] Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2. Interestingly, Linafelt begins his book by quoting W.P. Merrill who begins his commentary on Lamentations wondering almost the same thing as he retorts:

> One wonders how many ever read this book! In the old days when the Bible was read through from cover to cover at daily devotions, Lamentations was undoubtedly read. But how many really enjoyed it? Why should such a book be in the Bible?

This offers another twist, for Merrill wants to know not only why we should read Lamentations, but implies that we should enjoy it at the same time. I believe that the quote from Kafka is an adequate answer to Merrill's question, that is, one does not read Lamentations for enjoyment alone.

[8] Cixous, *Three Steps*, 53.

[9] See Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 5-18, for a summary and commentary on the devaluing of strong language in Lamentations.

The most central theme of Lamentations, pervasive throughout the whole book, is mourning. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was experienced as a national death, all Judeans became mourners. Adele Berlin, working off the observations of Gary Anderson, notes that mourning in Ancient Israelite custom was associated with the absence of sacrificing, for sacrifice and praise of God were seen as parallel activities.[10] It is only when the mourner is delivered from trouble that he or she is able to go to the temple, sacrifice, or utter praise to God. But after the catastrophe of 586 B.C.E. and the destruction of the temple, the very means of completing mourning were not possible. Furthermore, the people were removed from their land and, thus, many of their customs and mourning processes. In this sense, exile becomes the new Sheol, a type of death where the people are cut off from God. Both share the terrifying feature that one may never be able to return back to life (normalcy, etc.). The symbolic world of the poet of Lamentations was shattered leaving him to search in the dark for an answer for the suffering. Again, the work of Kafka can be a useful intertext here, as perhaps no other writer has shown so clearly that the very symbols we create are more than just metaphors. That is, if the state declares you to be dead, you are dead even if you are very much biologically alive. Or if you are accused by the "Law" of committing a crime that you are certain you did not commit (indeed, you may not even be aware what the crime is!), then you *have* committed this crime, and you may even feel guilty for it.[11] Indeed, like Josef K. of Kafka's *The Trial*—who searches desperately for some answer to explain both his accusations and his guilt—the text of Lamentations switches

[10] See Gary Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

[11] The destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem and ensuing loss of the symbolic can be understood from a (Lacanian) psychoanalytical perspective as that decisive act which breaks the regular "run of things" and causes one to, perhaps, encounter the utter meaningless of things (the void). That is the poet of Lamentations could no longer accept the symbolic world that had been created before the catastrophe (e.g. the infallibility of Zion), and for a brief period of time before he created another symbolic world (i.e. Second Isaiah to most commentators), he confronted the void without symbolizing and interpreting or giving meaning to the suffering, and this is the book of Lamentations.

between self-blame, accusing Yahweh for unjust punishment, or accepting that the catastrophe happened as the result of blind chance. Thus, the book perpetuates the state of mourning; it "holds out no comfort, and denies the existence of a comforter, thereby making the cessation of mourning impossible."[12] This is not to say though that there is a lack of desire to be done with this mourning, as the poet asks that God should hear, see, remember, pay attention, and, at its climax, that he should take his people back (5:21). Yet, the plea is never answered, and so the state of mourning does not end.

It is this essential feature of Lamentations that has caused interpreters such as Tod Linafelt and Hugh Pyper to read the book as a symptom of melancholia, with melancholia being differentiated from normal mourning in that it unhealthily persists.[13] Similarly, the connecting thread that runs through this paper is the attempt to read the text of Lamentations as representing a melancholic who suffers from several of its symptoms. Both Linafelt and Pyper look primarily at Freud's concept of melancholia, specifically the definition he set out in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia." Similarly, I will use the term melancholia in the paper in a specifically psychoanalytical sense. However, in order to truly understand Freud's version of melancholia one has to contextualize it. Moreover, I do not intend to adhere religiously to Freud's definition and understanding of melancholia, but rather I will look to authors who—though they follow Freudian tradition in many ways—go beyond it, particularly Julia Kristeva (ch. 2) and Nicholas Abraham, Maria Torok and Jacques Derrida (ch. 3). Melancholia has such a rich history in the western tradition that it is helpful to look at a brief history of it before finding Freud's place in it.

[12] Adele Berlin, "On Writing a Commentary on Lamentations," in *Lamentations in Ancient and Contemporary Cultural Contexts* (eds. Nancy C. Lee and Carleen Mandolfo; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 3-13.

[13] See Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, and Hugh Pyper "Reading Lamentations." In *An Unsuitable Book: The Bible as Scandalous Text* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005): 89-101.

Melancholia: A Brief History

In her book that traces melancholia from Aristotle to Kristeva Jennifer Radden notes that "for most of western European history, melancholia was a central cultural idea, focusing, explaining, and organizing the way people saw the world and one another and framing social, medical, and epistemological norms."[14] In contemporary western society, in contrast, it plays a rather insignificant role, no longer a term of great interest in medicine or mainline psychology. The term comes from two Greek words, *melas* (black) and *khole* (bile). The idea stems from Greek science which taught that there were four elements (earth, air, fire, and water) and, thus, conceived of health as a balanced relationship between the four humors present in the human body: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile.[15] Variations in these humors were considered to be an explanation for states of disorder in any given person; melancholia was the disease with excessive black bile, stemming from a malfunction in the spleen or other organs that produced the thick acrid fluid known as black bile. Articulated first by Hippocrates, and affirmed by Aristotle (and/or pseudo Aristotle), this concept was maintained, at least in some form, well into the eighteenth century.[16] Of course, the link between melancholy and black bile gradually weakened in the European tradition in light of modern theories in medicine and science.

This is not to say that all writing about melancholia concentrated specifically on how it came about. On the contrary, because of the inclusivity of the term, most writing commented on its features or symptoms. That is, because the term covered several quite different characteristics authors could seemingly go in any direction when writing about it.[17] There is no better evidence

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[14] Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), vii.

[15] Ibid., ix.

[16] Ibid., x.

[17] These characteristics included: fleeting moods, mental disorders ranging from severe to very mild, normal reactions, and also long term character traits.

of this than Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The book was written throughout Burton's life; the first edition (a mere 900 pages) was written in 1621, but later editions, always with expanded material, were published in 1624, 1628, 1632, 1638, and 1651. Definitively not a textbook, but neither a novel nor essay, Burton's *Anatomy* is a "compendium of human failing, folly, anxiety, suffering, and variation, written in a style that is so eccentric yet so acute and vital that it is one of the most beloved of English books."[18] The length of the book itself shows the variety of forms which melancholia had during this time, something best summarized in Burton's own lament:

> The Tower of Babel never yielded such confusion of tongues as this Chaos of Melancholy doth variety of symptoms.[19]

Writing at around the same time, Shakespeare himself even took notice of this endless variety of melancholies as the "melancholic Jacques" utters one of his famous enumerations in *As You Like It*:

> I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all of these; but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects (IV.i.).

Despite this lack of ability to find a shared form in a verbal definition of melancholia in these early writings, one can glean at least a few common denominators in what melancholia was thought to be and some of the symptoms and features of the term that were almost universally recognized. Radden points out that "fear and sadness are conspicuously central features of melancholic states in the long tradition of writing about melancholy."[20] Sadness, gloom, a sense

[18] Ibid., 129.
[19] As quoted in Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 5.
[20] Ibid., 12.

of futility, despair, doubt, and distrust or some variants of these words are used in nearly every text on melancholia.

A second feature—almost completely lost in current discussions on the subject—is melancholy's alleged link with genius, intellectual brilliance and refinement, or creative energy. As far as scholars are able to tell, this idea has its roots in (pseudo)Aristotle's *Problems* which pointedly ask:

> Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic, or are infected by the diseases arising from black bile?[21]

The question echoes in writings about melancholia throughout the centuries for almost as long as the disease was associated with black bile. Indeed, even as late as the nineteenth century there was an obvious emphasis on the compensations and positive attributes of melancholia. It is best to be careful with one's choice of words here, for it is in the nineteenth century also that one can trace the conscious pulling apart of association between melancholy itself, from melancholia, the clinical disease.[22] Radden looks at the depiction of melancholia in artwork in Renaissance Italy as evidence of the theme of associating melancholia with genius or intellectual refinement: the cheek resting on the hand, the shadowed or darkened faces, etc., are features combined usually with a person or persons at work; either a scholar or a poet. And in English writing too this theme is found, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Burton's *Anatomy* for example), and sharply etched out by Milton in his poem "Il Penseroso" in which after a description of the intellectual and spiritual satisfactions he anticipates in his mature years, he follows by striking a deal with their originator, Melancholy:

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[21] As quoted in Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 12.

[22] Radden notes that some follow this tradition of distinguishing between the terms *melancholic state*, *melancholy*, and *melancholia*, though the terms were not distinguished for the vast majority of past discourse. I will follow her advice and refrain from this unnecessary distinction.

These pleasures, Melancholy, give, /And I with thee will choose to live.[23]

It was clear that, during this time, given the right description, melancholia was something sought out. So, for example, Johnson offers three definitions for melancholy: 1.) a disease resulting from an imbalance of black bile, 2.) a kind of madness with the mind always fixed on one object, and 3.) a gloomy, pensive temper, or habitual disposition.[24] This third definition is the type of melancholy from which one did not mind suffering, for it almost always promised to be followed or accompanied with enlivened mood, energy, and creativity. It also points to another aspect that certain writers touch upon, which is the link between melancholia and mania. Often there were allusions to mania (or as it was sometimes referred to in English, "madness") as a part or aspect of melancholia, though this could sometimes be confusing considering the broad use of melancholia. In any case, the cyclical aspect of melancholia was a definitive feature of texts on the subject, and has been noticed by some authors to be the pre-modern attempts at describing what is now referred to as bi-polar disorder (or sometimes as manic depression).

Freud and Melancholia

In a brief essay entitled "On Transience" (1915-1916) Freud remarks: "To the psychologist, mourning is a great riddle...But why it is that this detachment of libido from its objects should be such a painful process is a mystery to us and we have not hitherto been able to frame any hypothesis to account for it."[25] Later on in "Mourning and Melancholia" he offered an explanation. Freud's work on melancholia in this essay can be viewed as a type of turning point, in many ways the completion of the traditional writings surrounding melancholia, but also as a segue into both neo-psychoanalytical writings and to a lesser extent modern psychological and

[23] As quoted in Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 15.
[24] Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 5.
[25] As quoted in Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 98.

medical theories. The period leading up to the publication of "Mourning and Melancholia"—which was written in 1915 but not published until 1917—was a particularly fruitful one in Freud's corpus and is highly associated with his so-called metapsychological essays.[26]

"Mourning and Melancholia" stands out though, as it is considered by many to be one of his masterpieces. Indeed, even a brief overview of the psychoanalytical writing on the topic of melancholia shows that this essay functions as *the* psychoanalytic "meta-text" on melancholia. And of course, for the purposes of this paper, "Mourning and Melancholia" likewise is a central text.

In the essay he compares normal sadness associated with grieving a lost loved one, designated as mourning, to the disturbance of self that results in dispirited mood states and self hatred, associated with the clinical state of melancholia. Radden notes that three aspects of "Mourning and Melancholia" distinguish it from earlier writing: 1.) the theme of loss, 2.) the emphasis on self-accusation and the self-loathing in melancholic subjectivity, and 3.) the elaborate theory of narcissism, identification, and introjection it introduces.[27]

To properly understand Freud one must take the idea of *loss* in the very specific sense of the loss of a person, or personified other, once possessed. This is to be differentiated from later thinkers like Melanie Klein, W.R.D. Fairbairn, and Donald Winnicott who emphasize lack as the original cause of melancholia, meaning that the subject never needed to possess the so-called lost object of love. But Freud did not necessarily mean that the object had to have died in a literal sense; a metaphorical loss could be just as likely, and thus cases like abandonment, or to use

[26] These metapsychological essays include: "Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning," and "On the Mechanisms of Paranoia," in 1911; "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis," in 1912; "On Narcissism," in 1914; "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," Repression," and "The Unconscious," in 1915; and "Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams in 1916.

[27] Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 282.

Freud's specific example, the case of a deserted bride, are to be understood not as lack, but loss.[28] So for Freud, melancholia is, in some way, related to an unconscious loss of a love object (in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing unconscious about the loss). This represents a significant stage in writings on melancholia, for the self-accusation and self-hatred of the melancholic applies not only to the melancholic subject, but also to the loved object of the self, something not focused on hitherto. This occurs because the self is deeply identified with the other. This identification with the other is so strong that the lost love object is incorporated by the self ("introjection" is Freud's technical term for this process, but, as we will see later, the terminology of introjection and incorporation varies widely, even in Freud's time). Freud elaborates on this by drawing on developmental terms. Melancholia represents the loss of the object, which is perceived, from the infant's perspective, as the steady withdrawal of love from the beloved parent. That is, the infant's first love is directed exclusively in the ego, and then later this love turns to the other, a loved person with whom the infant is intimately identified. This identification is always portrayed in language, metaphorically for Freud and in cannibalistic terms (if it is expressed at all). This strong identification allows the fantasy that the ego has incorporated the mother, or the "object." To the adult melancholic sufferer, the loss of another love-object reignites those infantile experiences, along with the characteristic ambivalence of the oral phase, and the ego attacks the introjected love object through what appears to be self-accusations. This is not to say that all of these accusations are directed at the incorporated object, indeed Freud makes much of the fact that many of these self-accusations are true and he wonders why the patient must become ill before he or she can discover this truth.[29] Nonetheless, Freud

[28] See Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *General Psychological Theory: Theories on Paranoia, Masochism, Repression, Melancholia, the Unconscious, the Libido, and Other Aspects of the Human Psyche* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 164-79.

[29] Ibid., 167-8.

concludes that, "one cannot in the end avoid the impression that often the most violent of [self-accusations] are hardly at all applicable to the patient himself, but that with insignificant modifications they do fit someone else, some person whom the patient loves, has loved or ought to love."[30]

Freud's portrayal of melancholia as a narcissistic disorder of loss intrinsically directed toward the self is perhaps the most significant contribution of the essay (for it is found in neither writings stemming from the Greek humoral theories nor modern day biochemical models of present day medicine),.[31] Granted, the Renaissance ushered in a greater emphasis on the individual subject and "the self" is a theme given additional prominence in the Romantic movement, but it is only after Freud's essay that the themes of narcissistic concerns, loss, and self-loathing are emphasized and developed.[32]

Yet, despite the essay's novelty, it is clear that several features of earlier material find their way into it. So while Freud offers a very specific idea of what he believes melancholia to be in the main body of the text, he couches his material, uncharacteristically, in a very cautious manner, even admitting that "the definition of melancholia is uncertain; it takes on various clinical forms...that do not seem definitely to warrant reduction to a unity."[33] This hints that Freud, at least preliminarily, aligns himself with writers like Burton who recognize the difficulty of offering a conclusive definition of melancholia in words. Indeed, Freud begins his essay with a series of disclaimers, first warning against too great of expectations with the result and then finally ending the first paragraph with a sentence that, in some sense, deconstructs the entire essay:

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[30] Ibid., 169.
[31] Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 44.
[32] Ibid., 45.
[33] Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 164.

> Any claim to general validity for our conclusions shall be forgone at the outset, therefore, and we will console ourselves by reflecting that, with the means of investigation at our disposal today, we could hardly discover anything that was not typical, at least of a small group if not whole class of disorders.[34]

If one hopes that the end of the essay offers some sort of closure on the issue, in light of the beginning's lack of any firm thesis, then the reader is bound to be disappointed, as Freud ends on this note:

> It will be well to call a halt and postpone further investigations...for we know already that, owing to the interdependence of the complicated problems of the mind, we are forced to break off every investigation at some point until such a time as the results of another attempt elsewhere can come to its aid.[35]

Another parallel with earlier work is Freud's choice of Hamlet as an exemplar of melancholia, which occurs when he reveals that melancholics often have a keener eye for the truth than others who are not melancholic. There is at least the glimmer of a suggestion then that Freud seems to allow that melancholia may have a glamorous aspect, though one cannot push the parallel too far, for if Freud is adamant about anything in his discussion of melancholia it is that it is a pathological disorder, at least in comparison to the more normal process of mourning.

Post-Freudian Writing on Melancholia

After Freud's essay in 1917, melancholia slowly, but steadily, became an increasingly rare disorder category, at least in the English-language tradition. In its place there arose an increased emphasis on the condition today known as clinical depression.[36] Thus, the significant question of whether melancholia foreshadowed clinical depression is open to debate. On the one hand, there is no doubt that if there were a term that could be used synonymously with depression as used in the past, it would be melancholia. On the other, melancholia was so much

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 179.
[36] Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 49.

broader a concept that one cannot possibly view the two terms in an interchangeable way. And yet, these earlier conceptions of melancholia, particularly Freud's theory, continue to haunt modern theories of depression. One such example can be found in Freud's emphasis on loss in melancholia. One finds that depression is often referenced as a "loss of self-esteem, loss of self, loss of relationships, loss of agency, loss of opportunity, and even, rendering such accounts entirely tautologous, a loss."[37] But of course, these types of loss, are often best described as a lack of something desired or desirable, and not necessarily something once possessed, not necessarily a personified other. And so while Freud's ideas might be found in writings about clinical depression they often bear little resemblance to what Freud might have originally intended.

Methodology of Paper

Thus, melancholia remains a topic of research in psychoanalysis but has largely been grafted into the rhetoric surrounding clinical depression in other psychological, psychiatrical, and medicinal practices. Similarly, psychoanalysis itself survives, in medicine, as an isolated and highly disputed therapy, usually categorized as a particular variety of psychiatry. And though it remains international in scope, it can be said to have become a small sub-branch, almost a sect, within American psychiatric medicine. But as the role of psychoanalysis decreases within psychiatry and all other so-called scientific and medicinal disciplines, its role in literary studies has steadily increased. Of course, it is this aspect of writings on melancholia on which I focus in this paper. Thus, the interpretation of the text of Lamentations as a symptom of melancholia offered here is best described as a psychoanalytical-literary reading.

[37] Ibid., 47.

Freud himself might not have approved of such an endeavour, or, more likely, he would have *said* that he did not approve of it. That is, while Freud insisted that psychoanalysis was a science, akin to biology, it is clear that it has become (and perhaps always was) something quite different. One need only look to the modern day university as evidence that whether he wanted it or not Freud is studied much more frequently in literature departments than in the science lab. Freud's strong assertions that his work is a science can be, and often are, viewed as a case of protesting too much. Harold Bloom asserts:

> It may seem curious to regard Freud as the culmination of a literary and philosophical tradition that held no particular interest for him, but I would correct my own statement by the modification, no *conscious* interest for him. The Sublime, as I read Freud, is one of his major *repressed* concerns, and this literary repression on his part is a clue to what I take to be a gap in his theory of repression.[38]

Bloom puts the matter in a more succinct phrase elsewhere by claiming that Freud "became not the Darwin, but the Montaigne of his era."[39] Certainly, modern (neo)psychoanalysts are aware now more than ever of the close relationship psychoanalysis and literature have. The other authors whose work I use in this paper, namely Julia Kristeva, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, and even Jacques Derrida,[40] all read Freud in a particularly literary way. However, as many have noted, Bloom's aestheticization of Freud is nothing more than a reversal of what critics of psychoanalytical literary reading have already noticed, namely, the privileging of one term over another. That is, while psychoanalysis has traditionally been used to explain and justify a text of literature in the terms of a system and a discourse, Bloom uses literature to understand psychoanalysis calling not for Freudian readings of Shakespeare but for

[38] Harold Bloom, "Freud and the Sublime: A Catastrophe Theory of Creativity," in *Psychoanalytical Literary Criticism* (ed. Maud Ellmann; London: Longman, 1994), 182.

[39] Harold Bloom, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2004), 221.

[40] Granted, Derrida is not a psychoanalyst, but the influence of it on his work and his conscious interaction with it is undeniable.

Shakespearean readings of Freud.[41] But is there a way to view psychoanalysis and literature as playmates, rather than mismatched bedfellows in which one must always get the bigger side of the bed?[42] The answer to the question can perhaps be illuminated by another question: what is the difference between psychoanalysis and literature? For Freud himself was aware of the indebtedness of his new "science" to literature, when he remarked:

> The poets and the philosophers before me discovered the unconscious. What I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied.[43]

Freud was seemingly unaware that the quote subtly opens itself up to the notion that psychoanalysis is nothing but literature, and the relations between psychoanalysis and literature are nothing more than a play of intertextuality (or perhaps even a tautology).[44] While I am willing to concede this point, I would insist that the intertextual relation psychoanalysis has to literature is quite different from the intertextuality that occurs between two poems, for instance. Nicholas Royle observes that "the power of psychoanalysis consists in its uncanny character as a humble but invasive metadiscourse, providing forms of questioning and conceptual displacement, constantly capable of grafting itself on to, and thus transforming, other discourses."[45] Psychoanalysis is not a random intertext, but rather a particularly insistent and demanding one that examines how the mind constructs the necessary fictions by which we constitute ourselves as human subjects. It matters to literary critics because it

> ...forces the critic to respond to the erotics of form, that is to an engagement with the psychic investments of rhetoric, the dramas of desire played out in tropes...It stands as a constant reminder that the attention to form, properly conceived, is not a sterile

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[41] Peter Brooks, "The Idea of Psychoanalytical Literary Criticism," in *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature* (ed. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan; New York: Methuen, 1987), 1-18.

[42] Ibid., 1

[43] As quoted in David Aberbach, *Surviving Trauma: Loss Literature and Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), ix.

[44] Brooks, "The Idea of Psychoanalytical Literary Criticism," 16.

[45] Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 14.

> formalism but rather one more attempt to draw the symbolic and fictional map of our place in existence.[46]

Psychoanalytical Literary Criticism and Biblical Studies

Even after having offered up my apology for the validity and value of psychoanalytical reading of literature in general, I feel obliged to justify psychoanalytical reading of the Bible in particular. Why is this the case? One answer that immediately comes to mind is that it does appear, at times, that the field of biblical studies is "littered with cases of scholars who caught up late in the day with insights from various secular disciplines and then, understanding them only partially, proceeded to apply these insights confidently to the study of the Bible."[47] But even this quote implies that there is a foundational type of reading—largely the historical-critical perspective—and that any perspective that strays from this method must prove its validity. Indeed, biblical studies as an academic discipline has been so dominated by historical-critical study of the Bible that a paper is viewed as a failure if it does not in some way interact with commentaries and articles on the issue from this perspective. The idea is that literary, feminist, Marxist, etc., readings of the Bible can be embraced, but only after they display knowledge of the issues and questions that historical criticism deals with. There is no better evidence of this than the fact that the vast majority of biblical commentaries simply adopt a historical critical perspective and, moreover, feel no need to justify this approach.

In relation to the world of medicine, Foucault noted that it "is not enough to speak the truth—one must be 'within the truth' (*dans le vrai*)."[48] That is, if one does not pay reverence to the right people and the right doctrines one runs the risk of speaking truth in a void. The same

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[46] Brooks, *Psychoanalysis*, 17.

[47] Paul Joyce, "Lamentations and the Grief Process: A Psychological Reading," *BibInt* 1 no.3 (1993): 304-20.

[48] Quoted in Garry Watson, *Opening Doors : Thought From (and of) the Outside* (Aurora, Colorado: The Davies Group, 2008), 74.

could be applied to the world of biblical criticism. Take, for example, a book review on Ilana Pardes's *The Biography of Ancient Israel*, which offers a psychoanalytical reading of the conquest as recorded in the Hebrew Bible. After having praised certain features of the book and complimenting its overall clarity, the author remarks:

> Having said this, it is also clear that the book has a specific audience in mind: people sympathetic to Freudian literary analysis...It does not engage in any sustained way other methods of analysis, not even other literary approaches to the text. It does not explain why a Freudian reading constitutes a "better" interpretation of these texts than others available. The book contains typical Freudian associations without explanation.[49]

I agree with these observations, and yet I cannot imagine the same being said of a traditional historical critical work. It assumes that there are some readings that do not have a specific audience in mind, or that some methods do not need to prove their validity.

One should be cautious against the temptation to let one's theory dictate interpretation; however, in the same vein, it has been adequately demonstrated that every reading is dictated by theory. Deconstructive criticism over the past fifty years or so has exposed the absolute inability to read any text without imposing our ideologies and values upon it. Cheryl Exum elaborates on how psychoanalytical theory can be used as an interpretive tool: "By proposing a psychoanalytical-literary reading as an alternative, I am not claiming that this approach will 'solve' the problems posed by these chapters whereas other approaches do not. On the contrary, I maintain that posing questions and opening up new dimensions of a text are as fruitful an enterprise as the traditional critical approach of seeking answers as if answers were objectively verifiable."[50] Psychoanalytical criticism is neither externally verifiable nor falsifiable. Freud

[49] Corrine L. Pattin, review of Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel*, *JAOS* 4 (2003): 926-7.

[50] Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), 153.

himself points out that we can only follow it, to see where it will lead.[51] What such a reading does make explicit is the multiple levels on which texts function: foremost an unconscious level in addition to the conscious level. In a particularly enlightening passage in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, he compares dreams to texts and asserts:

> Just as every neurotic symptom, just as the dream itself, is capable of re-interpretation, and even requires it in order to be perfectly intelligible, so every genuine poetical creation must have proceeded from more than one motive, more than one impulse in the mind of the poet, and must admit of more than one interpretation.[52]

All too often biblical scholarship seems to assume that there must have been only one motive behind the text, and furthermore that this must have been conscious.[53] Some may construe this type of reading as a needless fragmentation of the text. Contrarily, I would propose that a psychoanalytical literary reading promotes a sense of wholeness to the text. The situation against which Freud reacted early in his career can serve as an example here, as he states mid-way through *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

> If the method of dream interpretation here indicated is followed, it will be found that the dream really has meaning, and is by no means the expression of fragmentary brain activity, which the authors would have us believe.[54]

To generalize, one could assert that biblical scholarship largely seems to work from the same presupposition as "the authors" Freud talks about. The plethora of emendations, the dividing of text into redactional layers, the inability to appreciate mixed metaphors, and so on, are all

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[51]Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (trans. James Strachey; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 1-9.

[52] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (trans. A.A. Brills; New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1995), 225.

[53] What Freud and psychoanalytical interpretation have shown is that there is always an unconscious world behind/in the text (as there is always an unconscious world behind/in the individual). From this perspective it is clear that psychoanalytical-literary readings of texts certainly lean toward deconstructionism, if one was to tentatively define deconstructionism as a method of reading done against the grain of a text. That is, what is said, written, and symbolized on a conscious level may sometimes "mean" the exact opposite on an unconscious level. The best example of this is probably found in Freud's concept of dream censorship in which dreams present information that is distorted by the conscious/pre-conscious and thus requires penetrative interpretation by the analyst to discover what that information actually says (though, of course, a deconstructionist reading need not necessarily assert that the information represents anything at all).

[54] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 102.

examples of the presupposition that the text is thought of first in historical or source critical terms. Moreover, Freud's statement above could be applied to scholarship on Lamentations in particular as much as it is to scholarship on the Bible as a whole. As Westermann notes in his exhaustive (exhausting?) review of scholarship on Lamentations from the late nineteenth century until recent times, the prevailing trend is "to start with the assumption that the book of Lamentations is a collection of originally independent texts that were joined at some later date."[55] There is nothing inherently wrong in this statement; indeed, if the question was posed on purely historical grounds there seems to be ample evidence of it. However, the problem occurs once scholars accept this presupposition and begin to emend/divide/distort the text at the slightest hint of contradiction or complexity. Robert Alter adequately summarizes this lack of careful attention to the final form of a text:

> Biblical critics frequently assume, out of some dim preconception about the transmission of texts in "primitive" cultures, that the redactors were in the grip of a kind of manic tribal compulsion, driven again and again to include units of traditional material that made no connective sense, for reasons they themselves could not have explained.[56]

To be sure, this is not to suggest that all contradiction could be happily harmonized if only the scholar paid more attention to the text. But it is, at the very least, to question what is meant by the term "contradiction," and even if a text does contradict itself does this mean that it was written by different people at different times? What would happen, to use an example from Robert Alter again, if a source-critical biblical scholar read James Joyce's *Ulysses* in the same way that he or she read the Bible?

One of psychoanalysis's greatest achievements is that it has helped us understand that the self is inevitably divided and multiple. There is, for example, the melancholic who may

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[55] Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretations* (trans. Charles Muenchow; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 58.

[56] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 20.

arbitrarily experience a temporary euphoric stage of mania only to sink back into melancholia. As a result though, it has also helped us to understand literature better. Indeed, do not the majority of emendations to a biblical text rely on a misconceived notion of literature? And does not this extend from the fact that many biblical scholars still have a problem with reading the Bible as literature? Perhaps, the best answer and exploration of this issue is found in Gabriel Josipovici's *The Book of God: A Response to the Bible*.[57] For Josipovici understands that reading the Bible "merely as literature" may mean something close to those who read "Burke with no interest in politics or reading the *Aeneid* with no interest in Rome."[58] And so there are scholars like James Kugel who fear that calling Joseph one of the most believable characters in Western literature puts the Bible on the wrong bookshelf.[59] But as Josipovici notes, those who argue most forcefully against reading the Bible as literature do not so much devalue the Bible as they do the concept of literature. For what would it mean to read Shakespeare only because he provides us with "literary satisfactions?" Josipovici astutely observes that those who speak of "the enjoyment of literature" in this way appear to make literature out to be something that provides nothing more than a pleasant way of passing an evening.[60] The point is that all good literature speaks with authority, and while the criticisms of Kugel and others may be true they do not discount what C.S. Lewis refers to as "the saner sense in which the Bible, since it is after all literature, cannot be properly read as literature."[61]

[57] Gabriel Josipovici, *The Book of God*: *A Response to the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988)
[58] As quoted in Josipovici, *The Book of God*, 23.
[59] See Josipovici, *The Book of Good*, 23.
[60] Ibid., 26.
[61] As quoted in *The Book of God*, 24.

CHAPTER 1: "DIAGNOSING" AND "CURING" LAMENTATIONS

Tod Linafelt was the first to suggest the idea of characterizing Lamentations as melancholic.[62] His understanding of melancholia follows Freud's essay on the topic and there is one aspect of the essay on which Linafelt focuses, which, for him, is evidence that Lamentations is a melancholic text: namely, the failure of the work of mourning.

After his initial cautionary paragraph, Freud begins by observing that the "correlation of melancholia and mourning seems justified by the general picture of the two conditions."[63] Furthermore, mourning and melancholia may be the product of the same influences; in fact, of the symptoms that Freud lists for melancholia only the fall of self-esteem is absent in grief.[64] Linafelt focuses in the fact that for Freud melancholia is unlike regular mourning in that it is considered a "pathological disposition."[65] That is, while regular mourning "involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life," in the end one may be rest assured that "after a lapse of time, it will be overcome."[66] In order to overcome mourning, according to Freud, one must work at it; this work of mourning proceeds by way of reality testing, which shows that the lost love object no longer exists, and, thus, demands that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachment to that object. Of course, there is resistance to this withdrawal of attachment and Freud admits its orders cannot be obeyed at once, but they are "carried out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathectic energy, and in the meantime the existence of the lost object is

[62] See Tod Linafelt, "Surviving Lamentations," *HBT* 17 (1995): 45-61, and his later book length elaboration of this same issue, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 2000).

[63] Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 164.

[64] Ibid., 165. These symptoms are: a profoundly painful rejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment.

[65] Ibid., 164.

[66] Ibid.,164-5

physically prolonged."[67] Despite this resistance, reality eventually gains the day and when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again. Contrarily, melancholia is precisely the failure of the work of mourning: "the inability of the ego to overcome the loss of the object, the inability to break off the tie, no matter how much reality is tested and found wanting."[68]

For Linafelt this central defining feature of melancholia is exactly how he sees the text of Lamentations. That is, it is a text forever in mourning. And yet, he makes an unorthodox case for the benefits of melancholia as opposed to mourning. In "Mourning and Melancholia" it is Freud's stern materialism which causes him to insist that reality demands that all attachment is withdrawn from the dead or lost object. Linafelt believes, on the other hand, that the unending nature of melancholia persists in hope for restoration of the beloved in that it is a "perpetual state of interruption and as such it preserves mourning as force, as virtuality."[69]

Another scholar who explicitly relates melancholia to Lamentations is Hugh Pyper. Pyper follows Linafelt's observations, reading the text "as a symptom of melancholia."[70] He bolsters Linafelt's argument by pointing out that the very nature of Lamentations as a *text* means that it inevitably represents only melancholia and not mourning: "fixed in its written form, it endlessly repeats the same words to its readers, frozen in the posture of abandonment."[71] However, the major "symptom" that Pyper chooses to dwell upon is the fact that the text fluctuates between compassion for Zion as a victim and then justification of the punishment for her lasciviousness. A further insight of Pyper's stems from Freud's later development of melancholia in "The Ego and the Id," in which Freud further emphasizes that melancholia can be represented as a revolt

[67] Ibid., 166.
[68] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 142.
[69] Ibid., 143.
[70] Hugh Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," 56.
[71] Ibid.

against the loved one which becomes an ambivalence turned on the self. Thus, the self chastisements of Zion found in Lamentations can also perhaps be interpreted as covert reproach of the other. In a sense, this is the inevitable rhetoric of what has been known as "survivor's guilt."

In this chapter, I hope to add to the work of Linafelt and Pyper by observing other "symptoms" or features of the text of Lamentations that endorse a melancholic reading of the text. Even the word "symptoms," though, suggests that Lamentations is in need of a cure, and I am not certain that it is. Indeed, what I mean by "symptoms" is most commonly referred to as "problems" of the text. That is, those features of the text that do not seem to make sense to scholars. Paul Joyce opens up his psychological reading of Lamentations in this way:

> This is an immensely powerful little book, but one that is full of puzzles and contradictions.[72]

Likewise, the history of scholarship on Lamentations has focused on these "contradictions" in the text, hoping to find some sort of rational explanation for them. The symptoms of the text that I will focus on in this chapter are: the attempt to find a coherent (theological) message; the ambivalence in hope for the future; the tendency to switch between chastising the people because of their sins or offering compassion and pathos to them as victim(s); and the lack of any conclusion. Regardless of interpretive method, the bulk of scholarly ink on Lamentations relates to at least one, if not all, of these features of the text. Traditionally, these features would be referred to as "problems" or "issues," as they are fundamentally matters of interpretation. Yet, when one interprets the text as a symptom of melancholia, many of these so-called "problems" melt away. Furthermore, as soon as one makes this observation, it begs the question whether

[72] Paul Joyce, "Lamentations and the Grief Process," 305.

these problems were present in the text all along. However, before explaining this argument we must first analyze in greater detail these so-called "symptoms" of Lamentations.

Section I: Finding the Symptoms

Coherence

One of the most interesting discussions concerning Lamentations is the search for a coherent (theological) message. Any interpreter is immediately confronted by its rigid literary structure. The first four chapters are alphabetical acrostics. Chs. 1 and 2 are made up of three-line stanzas, with the first stanza only following the acrostic pattern; ch. 3 is likewise made up of three-line stanzas but the discipline of the acrostic is imposed on each line of the stanza. Ch. 4 contains two-line stanzas and similar to chs. 1 and 2 only the first line follows the acrostic pattern. Ch. 5 abandons the alphabetic acrostic but maintains a twenty-two verse limit. This straight-forward and obvious literary structure is contrasted in Lamentations with a puzzling thematic structure that commentators continue to struggle to understand.[73] Brevard Childs observes: "The relation between the various chapters does not appear to establish any progression of thought."[74] Westermann, too, asserts that there is no unified train of thought, nor any discernable structure or arrangement; however, he does represent a more nuanced approach as he questions whether one should *actually expect* any clear train of thought, as if this lack is some sort of defect.[75] In the attempt to find a consistent structure scholars most often attempt to divide the text according to its different speakers, as change of speaker is supposed to serve as

[73] See Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretations* (trans. Charles Muenchow; (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 63-6.

[74] Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 594.

[75] He contrasts his own approach with that of Lohr whom he quotes: "The author advances his few ideas without any clear development." Lohr quoted in Westermann, *Lamentations*, 64. Of course, many scholars would point to the centrality of ch.3, but I follow Linafelt and others who see that this emphasis on ch.3 is usually driven by pre-conceived theology and does not come from the text itself.

the basic criterion for arranging the material.[76] However, the problem with this is that there is just as much ambiguity in clarifying who is speaking where, as there is in dividing the text on any other ground (e.g. development of thought).[77]

Indeed, a close reading of the text reveals that, beyond Childs' observation, not only is the relationship between the chapters puzzling, but often the logic of any given chapter works against itself and switches back and forth. The second chapter of the book offers a good example of this tension. God is portrayed "as an enemy" (2:4) who is pouring out his wrath and anger against Daughter Zion. However, what he destroys is his own: "his footstool" (2:1) and "his booth" (2:6). This tension becomes immediately obvious in the rhetorical question posed by Zion to God in 2:20: "Behold, O Lord, and consider: to whom have you done this?" And for a little while the question goes unanswered until the end of 2:21 states to God: "You have killed on your day of anger; you have slaughtered without mercy." But even here, we are not sure how much of an answer this is, for the object is unspecified.

Thus, the "central dilemma of the book" is that it draws on the ready-made explanations for the calamity which has been wrought without apparent question: "as if a bad explanation were better than no explanation."[78] So, for example, in Lam 3:59 God is clearly the one called upon to relieve suffering: "You have seen the wrong done to me, O Lord, judge my cause," and yet, in 1:5 God is the one who has brought about this suffering: "The Lord God has made her [Zion] suffer."

(The Absence of) Hope

[76] Westermann, *Issues and Interpretation*, 65.
[77] See below, ch. 3 on speaking voices for a further discussion of this issue.
[78] Francis Landy, "Lamentations," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. Frank Kermode and Robert Alter; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 329-34.

Another obvious example of tension in the book is the deep ambivalence about hope for the future. At points the suffering seems to be so great that the women are reduced to cannibalism as they eat their own offspring (2:20 and 4:10). Yet, there *is* hope in Lamentations, though it is far from sustained and often many of the verses that appear to be positive turn out to be less straightforward upon closer inspection. The earliest point at which any glimmer of hope has been discerned is 1:21-22, where Zion expresses expectation that her foes will face the same fate that has befallen her: "Let all their evil come before you, and deal with them, as you have dealt with me." However, it is a stretch to assert that this is anything more than a plea to God to deal with the enemies.[79] A more persuasive case is found in 4:21-22 where the narrator claims that the iniquity of Zion has been expiated and the time of exile has come to an end. Moreover, Edom will be punished and exiled/uncovered (גלה), as if the punishment of the close (br)other will at least direct the Lord's wrath elsewhere for a while.

There has been some effort to find hope at the end of ch. 5, or at least a turning away from utter despair.[80] The text appears to offer us this, as 5:19 reads: "You, O Lord, rule forever, your throne from generation to generation." But the next verse immediately questions: "Why do you forget us forever? Forsake us so long?" (5:20) And then the text switches mood again and offers a type of plea to God, as if hope is possible again: "Take us back, O Lord, to yourself, and

[79] Joyce, "Lamentations and the Grief Process," 306. The MT reads the affix הבאת and there seems to be no reason to emend to the imperative הבא as the RSV and other translations do.

[80] It is certain that despite the simplicity of its style and the familiarity of its language, Lam 5:22 remains a crux. The MT reads כי אם־מאס מאסתנו קצפת עלינו עד־מאד and several interpretations have been offered. The old JPSV inserted a negative into the verse: "Thou canst not have utterly rejected us, and be exceedingly wroth against us." As there is no support for this reading the new JPSV dropped the negative, along with אם rendering the verse "For truly thou hast rejected us..." The RSV turns the verse into a question: "Or hast thou rejected us? Art thou exceedingly angry with us?" Robert Gordis takes the verbs to be pluperfects and translates כי אם as "even though" and puts v. 22 in a subordinate relationship to v.21: "Turn us to yourself, O Lord, even though you had despised us greatly and were very angry with us." For a thorough summary of the proposed translations and an insightful solution see Tod Linafelt, "The Refusal of a Conclusion in the Book of Lamentations," *JBL* 120 no.2 (2001), 340-3. Linafelt argues that כי אם introduces a conditional statement in which only the first half is present. Thus, Lam 5:22 is to be understood as a *protasis* without an *apodosis*. Thus, he translates the verse as: "For if truly you have rejected us, raging bitterly against us..."

we will come back. Renew our days as of old" (5:21). The final verse tempers this though with an admission that indeed hope may not be possible after all and reaffirms 5:20 as it reads: "For if truly you have rejected us, bitterly raged against us…"[81] There is no conclusion to the book of Lamentations, there is a *protasis* without an *apodosis*. Thus, in these last verses we find the perfect oscillation of the tension of hope found in the entire book. On the one hand, there is a drive for survival and hope, and on the other there is a type of death drive or the acknowledgement that there can be no hope for the future. There seems to be two conflicting voices that alternate in the text: the predominant voice focuses on the suffering and despair of the tragedy and presents a bleak outlook while a second, more subtle, voice maintains certain glimmers of hope. However, as Linafelt observes, it appears as if the final verdict is one of death.[82]

Since hope is not found at either the end or the beginning of the book, many have looked toward ch. 3, which is both central in the outlay of the book and in its dominating acrostic pattern. Indeed, the clearest passages of hope *are* found in ch. 3. In Westermann's survey of material he notes that the thesis that ch. 3 forms the central core or pivot of the book of Lamentations is the opinion of Rudolph, Nötscher, Weiser, Kraus, Hillers, Plöger, Gottwald, Childs, Boecker, and Johnson; Brandscheidt goes the farthest as she maintains that the overall understanding of Lamentations depends on one's understanding of ch. 3.[83] This leads Westermann to conclude: "Such wide agreement regarding the central, indispensable

[81] Translation here follows Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 60. See footnote above.
[82] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 58.
[83] Westermann, *Issues and Interpretations*, 67.

significance of chapter 3 is little short of amazing. In fact, I have yet to come across a clearly contrasting opinion."[84]

Let me offer one here. The first passage of hope in the chapter, which has received an enormous amount of attention from those who study Lamentations, is also one of the clearest and is found in 3:24,

> This I turn to my mind, therefore I have hope; the *ḥesed* of Yahweh does not cease; his mercies never come to an end; every morning they are new. Great is your faithfulness, 'my portion is Yahweh' says my soul; therefore I have hope in him.[85]

The verses that follow in the middle of ch. 3 continue with this hopeful theme, claiming that Yahweh is good to those that wait for him (v. 25), that Yahweh will not reject forever (v. 31), that he will have compassion and has an abundance of *ḥesed* (v.32), that he does not torment or afflict anyone capriciously (v.33). Indeed, why should humans complain (v.39)? If only the people had examined their ways better, then the destruction might not have happened, and at least there is always a chance of returning to Yahweh (v. 40).

And yet, the language turns again in v. 42, for the people have transgressed and rebelled but Yahweh has not forgiven. In v. 43 Yahweh is accused of killing without pity; he has made the people become like refuse and enveloped himself in a cloud so that no prayer can penetrate (vv. 44-45). This leads any close reader of the text to ask: if Yahweh could/would not answer the

[84] Ibid. To be sure, he does cite Gunkel's position as a deviation from the norm, as Gunkel asserts: "The chapter does not give unity and focus to the whole book; rather, it stands apart and is to be judged on its own." Furthermore, while Westermann's assertion remains true to the time of his writing, the majority of scholarship in the past decade or so have in many ways been antithetical to the stance that ch. 3 is the central one of Lamentations, or even that the chapter is a particularly hopeful one. Indeed, much of this can be attributed to Westermann's own work in which he criticises the devaluing of lament language in not just Lamentations but throughout the Hebrew Bible.

[85] These verses are not without their textual problems. Perhaps most significant is that vv.22-24 are absent in the LXX. Most commentators attribute this to *homoioteleuton* because of the similarity between the conclusions of 21b and 24b. Most translations, including the one adopted here, also follow one Hebrew manuscript, the Syriac, and the Targum in translating תמנו (first person plural in the MT) as תמו (third person plural). Suffice it to say that while these text-critical problems are significant it cannot be doubted that there is hope for the future here.

people and had turned away from them, then why is this poem being written at all? If humans should not complain, then what exactly is Lamentations, if not a complaint?

Perhaps the poet does not believe his own words; for in the remainder of ch. 3 this hope noticeably weakens (and at times seems to have altogether disappeared). In vv. 44-66 the blame game is taken up again, though now it is the "enemies" to blame. The text laments: "They have furiously hunted me like a bird, those who are without cause, my enemies" (v.52). Surprisingly (or perhaps not), while Yahweh is the one who is acting out the torture to the גבר in the first half of ch. 3, he is called upon to come to the rescue of the גבר in the latter half of the chapter: "They [the enemies] have ended my life in a pit...I have called upon your name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit...You have drawn nigh when I called you; you have said 'Do not fear!' You have championed my cause, O Lord" (vv.53, 55, 57, and 58). Furthermore, Yahweh is also the one whom the גבר calls upon to inflict torture and punishment to the enemies in the latter half of chapter 3. "You have heard their taunts, O Lord...Give them their deserts, O Lord, according to their deeds; give them anguish of heart; your curse be upon them" (vv.61, 64, and 65).

So even within ch. 3 there is not a unified theme of hope or even one perspective on the role of Yahweh in this time of catastrophe; rather, the text switches back and forth displaying multiple perspectives. And so one wonders why so much attention has been paid to the fleeting verses of hope where Yahweh plays a positive role in the middle of ch.3?

The Blame Game: The People of Jerusalem: Sinners or Victims?

The ambivalence of emotions in relation to (the sin of) the people is also a peculiar feature of the text, which has often perplexed interpreters. Reminiscent of the work of Kafka, one could say of Lamentations that the punishment is dwelled upon, but the crime remains mysteriously hidden. Alan Mintz explains: "Although the voices of Lamentations know in vague

ways that their calamity must be a punishment, they cannot name their sins; they have no precise idea what acts could have warranted such massive retribution."[86] The first explicit mention of why this destruction has occurred in Lamentations asserts: "the Lord made her [Zion] suffer for her many transgressions" (1:5b). This is made even more explicit in 1:8: "Jerusalem has grievously sinned, therefore she has been banished." Even personified Zion admits: "the Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against his mouth" (1:18). The problem is that all of these lines do not mesh with the clear pathos directed to Zion. Much of the imagery associated with her (e.g. widow, daughter, and virgin) instills a sense of compassion and sympathy in the reader. One can point to 2:13 as perhaps the best example of this as the poet cries: "What can I compare to you so that I may console you Daughter Virgin Zion? For vast as the sea is your destruction. Who can heal you?" Berlin notes: "the image of the city as widow leads to the idea of mourning and abandonment, and it evokes pity."[87] There are no comforters for Zion, her former lovers have abandoned her, and though Zion spreads out her hands she is rejected. Then later on in 2:20 Zion asks: "Behold, O Lord, and consider: to whom have you done this?" The question implies that the punishment does not fit the crime (whatever the crime may be).

For Berlin, however, "these ideas are not contradictory;"[88] to her, the idea is clear: the woman/forefathers (i.e. the people of Jerusalem) had taken lovers, acted immorally, and deserved punishment; the pathos of the poem does not contradict this. But while the ideas are not necessarily contradictory, they are not perfectly in line with one another either. Berlin finishes her thought by acknowledging that these ideas "generate a cognitive and emotional tension that

[86] Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 52.
[87] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 49.
[88] Ibid., 49.

is in play throughout the chapter."[89] Indeed, beyond simple cognitive dissonances there appear, at least to me, to be outright inconsistencies. In 5:16 it is the people of Judah who proclaim: "woe to us for we have sinned." But in the same chapter the poet blames the ancestors for the present predicament: "our fathers sinned, and are no more; and we bear their iniquities" (5:7). Or are the prophets the ones to blame? Certainly, they did not fulfill their job: "Your prophets prophesied for you false and empty visions. They did not reveal your iniquity so as to restore your fortunes. They showed you false oracles and deceptions" (2:14). So were the people even aware of their own wrongdoings? How could they know to turn back to God if they never knew that they turned away? This leads nicely to Lam 2:17, which undermines all these positions, for it asserts that this destruction was divined by the Lord long ago:

> The Lord did what he planned; he carried out his word that he ordained from the days of old.

Is this not the most horrifying hypothesis of all? It implies that the destruction of the city and the temple was not contingent on the people's actions at all; whether they were sinners or saints, doers of good rather than evil, the outcome would be the same. At least with the other voices of the text, some sense of meaning and causation is given to the destruction. With this verse the plans of God are akin to a universe of blind chance and infinite randomness. The verse seems to suggest that, in the end, Yahweh may be nothing more than a name for the unfathomable mystery of the vicissitudes of life.

Section II: Previous Proposed "Treatments"

There have been a variety of responses to these "inconsistencies" in the book, but broadly speaking there have been two main kinds. One approach does not try to explain the

[89] Ibid.

inconsistencies by bringing the text together, but rather asserts that there are very serious questions concerning the historical unity of Lamentations. If Lamentations is the work of several authors writing at different times—as, for example, Brandscheidt asserts—then the inconsistencies are attributed to the multiple viewpoints of the different authors.[90] This fails as an explanation on many accounts. For one, it seems to assume that if Lamentations was the work of a single author then a single, coherent viewpoint would be offered. Furthermore, even if Lamentations is a patchwork composed by several different authors, the text reached its final form at some point, and if the purpose of the editor(s) was to present a coherent message out of the material, it belittles their collective intelligence. Additionally, the acrostic form, even if a later addition to the text shows the conscious effort of the author(s)/editor(s)/poet to bring about a sense of unity to the book. One would expect that if these chapters were written separately then at least the difference in viewpoints would be between the chapters and not internal to them.

Another type of response has been to assert that there actually is a theological unity to Lamentations, though there may be two or more theologies working in the text at the same time: Gottwald and Albrektson are examples of this type of approach. For Gottwald the key to understanding the book is found in the tension between the Deuteronomistic doctrine of reward and punishment and the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 586/7 B.C.E.[91] That is to say, the real life experience of the people did not correspond to the Deuteronomistic doctrine of retribution and thus there was a certain amount of cognitive dissonance. So a theology of judgment is present alongside a theology of hope and the two are juxtaposed to each other.[92]

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[90] R. Brandscheidt, *Das Buch der Klagelieder* (Geistliche Schriftlesung, Altes Testament, 10; Dusseldorf, 1988).

[91] N.K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* (Studies in Biblical Theology, 14; London: SCM, 1954).

[92] See Westermann, *Issues and Interpretations*, 32-33 for a summary of Gottwald's position as I have briefly outlined here.

Albrektson uses Gottwald's study as his starting point but believes that the theology of Lamentations is actually determined by another sort of tension, namely between the tradition of the inviolability of Zion on the one hand, and this brute fact of history on the other.[93]

While both of these responses present possible resolutions to these inconsistencies, I do not think that they do justice to the profound ambiguities of the work. As I have shown above, there are more than just two viewpoints as to why the catastrophe happened, what role Yahweh played in it, and whether there is any hope for restored fortunes in the future. Furthermore, both Gottwald and Albrektson focus on the passages of hope in a much more prominent way than the text actually calls for.[94] That is, "positive" passages—ones that display hope for the future and praise Yahweh—are by far the minority in the text, and while they serve an important function, they do not function as an equal voice to the one of complaint and lament in the book.

Section III: Lamentations: The Melancholic Text

Interpreting the text as a symptom of melancholia is perhaps the best explanation for these inconsistencies, for the melancholic exists outside the "linear" process of mourning and is never able to give up his or her lost object of love. Similarly, the book of Lamentations ends with a sigh, it remains incomplete. The completion is deferred and the pleas to Yahweh remain unanswered. Linafelt comments that the book evidences what Derrida calls a "structural unfinishedness."[95] Westermann was certainly correct to observe that the lack of a unified train of

[93] B. Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (Studia Theologica Lundendsia, 21, 1963). See Westermann, *Issues and Interpretations*, 33-34 as a summary of Albrektson's views.

[94] See Joyce, 307. He adequately summarizes: "Ultimately neither contribution carries conviction, because both present readings which are more homogenous and univocal than the evidence of the book will sustain." Linafelt also offers a critique of Gottwald's methodology, see *Surviving Lamentations*, 10-12.

[95] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 61. Of course, the point that Linafelt makes is that one must move beyond the borders of the text of Lamentations to find an adequate response to the unanswered pleas present in the text. The attempts by reader after reader to fill in the void that exists in the text are futile if one stays within the borders of the text. Thus, he goes on to find responses to the text in Second Isaiah, Midrash, and even modern

thought is not a defect, yet, one could go beyond that and assert that this unique characteristic of Lamentations informs one on how to approach the text. As Kristeva notes, the logical sequences of the melancholic do not progress but rather they re-occur and become exhausted.[96] Lamentations is a text frozen in time picturing one moment and moving to another, but never fully moving beyond the scene of destruction. To recall Pyper again, the very fact that Lamentations is a text inevitably means that it represents melancholia and not mourning.[97] A

Hebrew poetry. I remain agnostic on the issue of whether these texts actually do provide an answer to Lamentations and go beyond the book. Of course, this is a matter for a completely separate inquiry.

[96] This is where I find some problems with two articles that very much parallel what I am trying to do here and so are necessary to comment upon, namely Paul Joyce's, "“Lamentations and the Grief Process,” *BibInt* 1, no. 3 (1993): 304-20, and David J. Reimer's, “Good Grief? A Psychological Reading of Lamentations,” *ZAW* 114 no. 4 (2002): 542-59. Yorick Spiegel’s *The Grief Process* outlines four stages that the bereaved goes through: the stage of shock, the controlled stage, the stage of regression, and the stage of adaptation. Similarly, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s *On Death and Dying* discerns five stages: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Joyce finds evidence of all these stages of mourning in Lamentations. So for example, shock is found in Lam 1:1, “How lonely sits the city that was once so full of people?” Control is characterized in Lam 2:10 by social rituals of mourning, “The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have cast dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the maidens of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.” The third stage of regression, marked by a range of defence mechanisms, one of which is recalling happier times is found in Lam 1:7, “Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and bitterness all the precious things that were hers from days of old.” Spiegel’s last stage of adaptation, marked by a sense of moving on, can perhaps be discerned in Lam 3:32 where the tragedy is conceived of as justly deserved punishment at the hands of God, who now shows mercy: “though he cause grief, he will have compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.” Joyce finds parallels for all of Kubler-Ross’s stages of grief also.

This approach is particular helpful in that it highlights two aspects of the grief process commonly overlooked. The first is that there is much inconsistency of explanation, casting around for some meaning in the darkness, in the grieving process. The second is that hope is often found alongside what may seem to be incompatible emotions such as depression and anger.[96] However, there are some difficulties. One obvious example is that Joyce may seem to stretch the meaning of both Lamentations and the categories of the grieving process to parallel each other. Is adaptation really found anywhere in Lamentations? Joyce finds too much evidence in Lam 3:32; if there is any sense of moving on it is crushed eleven verses later, for in 3:43-44 the poet cries out against God, “thou hast wrapped thyself with anger and pursued us, slaying without pity; thou hast wrapped thyself with a cloud so that no prayer may pass through.” This leads to perhaps the greatest difficulty with this approach: namely that the stages of grief process as outlined by Spiegel and Kubler-Ross are linear and teleological in their movement while this is not the case at all in Lamentations. Thus, Joyce has adaptation occurring before anger (or depression, it is often difficult to differentiate between the two) in the text of Lamentations, though this would never occur in Kubler-Ross’s pattern of the grief process. For if adaptation is reached then the mourning process is supposed to be complete. So while traces of each stage may be found in different places in Lamentations one would need to re-order the chapters and verses in order for this reading to work.

Reimer argues that each of the poems displays a dominant perspective following the five stages of the grief process that Kubler-Ross outlines. While the first four poems fit nicely into the stages, the fifth, acceptance, does not and this results in a variety of theological questions that Reimer analyzes. And so while Reimer does not fall into the neat teleological trap that Joyce does, he still sticks to the idea that each chapter displays a dominant emotion which corresponds to one of the stages. Thus, similar to Joyce, he has to stretch the meaning of much of the material in order to make it fit a dominant emotion.

[97] Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," 56-7.

more specific example is evidenced by Lam 1:2 which reads: "Bitterly she weeps (literally "weeping she weeps" בָּכוֹ תִבְכֶּה) in the night and her tear is upon her cheek." As Francis Landy notes: "the repetition of the verb 'weep,' though a Hebrew emphatic idiom, suggests reiteration, an ever-replenished plaint: it could well be a model for the book."[98] He also observes that the image of single tear upon the cheek is one of arrested time, "as if she [Zion] will never escape this moment."[99] The melancholic does not look beyond the pain but focuses specifically on it, which is exactly what appears in Lamentations.

(The Absence of)Hope (Again)

Having said that, one must then search for an explanation as to why, at times, the text does seem to look beyond the pain, as it has some passages of hope, no matter how fleeting they may be. Again, an answer is offered from a melancholic interpretation. For one of the most consistent features of melancholia, extending from the time of Aristotle to Freud, and after, is the close relationship that it has to mania.[100] Freud comments that this close relationship between the two "diseases" is probably the result of both melancholia and mania dealing with the same "complex," only that in melancholia the ego has succumbed to the complex whereas in mania it has mastered it or pushed it aside. He also observes that all states such as joy, exultation or triumph, which provide the normal model for mania, depend on the same economic conditions as melancholia. What happens is that a large expenditure of anxiety and energy, long maintained or habitually occurring, becomes unnecessary so that it is available for numerous applications and possibilities of discharge (for example, when a poor person wins a large sum of money and is

[98] Landy, "Lamentations," 330.
[99] Ibid. 330.
[100] Indeed, psychiatrical/medicinal terminology makes an even more explicit link between the two: depression and manic depression. Of course, as I have stated above the link between these two terms and melancholia and mania is not an exact correspondence (and furthermore, the preferred term for what in the past was known as manic depression is now bi-polar disorder distancing even further the link between this disease and mania as Freud understood it).

relieved from chronic worry about food and living conditions). In melancholia it is only a temporary discharge of emotions that has not properly overcome the loss of the object. Freud's preferred example would be alcoholic intoxication, in which there is a suspension, produced by toxins, of expenditures of energy in repression, and yet this display of emotions clearly does not last in the long term. This temporary abandoning of the object will eventually draw back to the place in the ego from which it had proceeded.

This unique, and admittedly somewhat paradoxical, feature of melancholia can help explain the passages of hope which appear here and there in the text of Lamentations. From a psychoanalytical reading that focuses on reading the text as a symptom of melancholia are these passages not best explained as the tendency of melancholia to morph into mania? Admitting that the melancholic does not always present a unified perspective and experiences a wide range of emotions is particularly helpful in understanding ch. 3. Given that the ch. begins and ends with complaints of one type or another, it is indeed perplexing that scholars have so often pointed to the so-called hopeful passages in ch. 3 as the center or climax of the book, and thus seem to ignore the vast majority of the text which presents little to no hope. Kristeva observes: "Sadness is the fundamental mood of depression, and even if manic euphoria alternates with it in the bipolar forms of that ailment, sorrow is the major outward sign that gives away the desperate person."[101] On the surface, this seems obvious. However, one need only point to biblical scholarship's interpretation of Lamentations as evidence that the dominant mood is not always the point of focus.

The Blame Game (Again)

[101] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 21.

Humans are meaning-seeking creatures. When faced with catastrophe the most natural way to respond is to interpret the pain and search for an explanation. It is clear that the poet struggled to fit the catastrophe of Jerusalem within an ideological framework, but it is equally clear he could not find one. When the text flips between asserting that God is the cause of the present suffering (e.g. 1:5), to the priests and prophets (4:13), to the ancestors (5:7), or God's unknowable eternal plans (2:17), the image one gets is that of the poet casting around in the dark for some or any meaning. Indeed, it is better to assert that the disaster was the result of the people's sin and wrongdoings, or their ancestors, than to acknowledge it occurred from blind chance or because of some unknown force. However, the mere fact that the poet offers so many different explanations for the cause of destruction gives one the sense that all such assertions inevitably fall short as explanations.

One of the primary features of melancholia is a deep ambivalence, not only toward the lost object (or the "Thing" in Kristeva's terminology), but also toward the self. The survivor loaded with the memory of the loss is angry at the dead for imposing this burden, as if to assert "I am angry at you for inflicting on me the burden of memory and guilt I now bear for surviving your death."[102] Thus, complaints against the self are often to be interpreted by the analyst as complaints against the other. So it is no surprise that the text of Lamentations blames a variety of people/things for the cause of the destruction and the pain that followed. The dominant voice of Lamentations obviously blames the people themselves (e.g. 1:5, 8, and 18—granted the metaphors for the people at times become confusing); however, the presence of other voices that Yahweh is to blame, or that the punishment did not fit the crime, already suggest to the interpreter that perhaps these other confessions should not be taken at face value. To be sure, this is a very tricky part of the analysis, as it is clear some statements about the self refer only to the

[102] Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," 63.

self.[103] Freud himself notes that when the melancholic represents his or her ego as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable, it may be that they have quite accurately described themselves in this state. Yet still, Freud is equally strong in asserting that if one listens patiently to a melancholic's many and various self-accusations there is the impression that often the most violent of them are hardly at all applicable to the patient, but rather with insignificant modifications they fit someone else, "someone who the patient loves or has loved or should love."[104] In a particularly pertinent passage of "Mourning and Melancholia" in relation to this paper, Freud notes that the woman who loudly pities her husband for being tied to such an incapable wife as herself is actually accusing her husband of being incapable. Her self-reproach, in this case, is covert reproach of the other (her husband). Similarly, the self-portrait of Zion in ch. 1 as an inadequate wife to God may indeed be a covert reproach toward God as an inadequate husband. When she seemingly confesses in 1:18 that "Yahweh is in the right, for I have disobeyed him," one wonders just how literally the interpreter should take this statement. Indeed, interpreting these verses as accusations against Yahweh meshes better with the surrounding context of the chapter, which makes no apology whatsoever toward the Lord and expresses anger at him. In the same way, the passages of hope in ch. 3—spoken by the voice of the גבר—could be interpreted in an ironic manner, as if to call the Lord to action, rather than praise. That is, when the poet speaks of the abundance of Yahweh's *ḥesed*, and the Lord is "good to those who trust in him" (3:24-5) one wonders whether these are verses of genuine praise or ironic coercing of the Lord, implying that he has in fact not been good to those who trust in him and that he should act according to the characteristics attributed to him? The so-called prophetic

[103] Thus, I will not attempt to analyse each verse of Lamentations that offers an explanation for the destruction and deem whether that verse refers to the self (whoever that may be) or the other. Such a project would not only be impossible but unproductive. The point here is that the dominant voice which blames the people for the sin may not be all that dominant.

[104] Freud "Mourning and Melancholia," 169.

voice—which accepts the punishment of Yahweh as a direct cause of the people's sins—is also implicitly ironized. When the narrator states almost as a matter of fact that the Lord has afflicted Zion "because of her many transgressions," in Lam 1:5, it is surrounded by images of victimization of Zion and an implicit assertion that the punishment is not justified by the crime. So, the voice(s) of the text, like the melancholic subject, displays ambivalence toward itself, saying one thing but perhaps (unconsciously) meaning another.

Section IV: The Lacanian Scene of Psychoanalysis and Transference

William Blake spoke of that Idiot Questioner, curled up in the labyrinth of one's own being, "who is always questioning/ But never capable of answering; who sits with a sly grin/ silent plotting when to question, like a thief in a cave."[105] My own Idiot Questioner—whom I do not try to cast off as Blake attempted to—protests against the findings of this chapter: "Is not this interpretation of the text, which seeks out symptoms of melancholia, guilty of the exact same problems as the work before it, namely, that the so-called 'issues' it seeks to solve and interpret are not really present in the text at all? And furthermore, given the broad spectrum of emotions and symptoms of melancholia (even in Freud), is it not a relatively ineffectual interpretation of the text (if not merely tautological)?" Indeed, I acknowledge these critiques for what they are. In many respects, melancholia includes such a broad variety of symptoms[106] that it could be stretched to fit most prophetical books (as many lack a clear development of thought) and all psalms of lament (in their switching of attitudes toward Yahweh and hope).

Since the Idiot Questioner cannot provide an answer to his own critiques, it is my duty to attempt to address them. I would assert that his questions imply a very necessary realization:

[105] William Blake, *Selected Poems* (ed. Michael Mason; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 170.

[106] Indeed, some of these characteristics are inherently deconstructionist, for example, melancholia's relationship to mania or self-accusations that could be ironic or covert accusations of others.

every interpretation of the text creates its own "issues," it is inherent in the nature of interpretation. Regardless of how incoherent a text may be, and how many viewpoints it presents, what a reader does, and must do, is read the text over and over and try to make sense of it.[107] While Lamentations may not have a unified theology, we readers inevitably impose one upon the text. We, as readers of the text, must make the "meaning" of the text as clear as possible. Even viewing the text as a symptom of melancholia tries to fit the text into some sort of interpretive framework or mould. Thus, I am certain that interpreting the text as I have done above is not a final interpretation; I can only repeat the words of Freud, as he wisely notes:

> I do not wish to claim that I have revealed the meaning of the dream entirely, or that the interpretation is flawless...I am content with the discovery which has just been made.[108]

Yet, interpreting the text by looking for symptoms of melancholia opens up a passageway for not just a psychoanalytical reading of the text, but also of the scholarship interpreting the text (including myself). Thus, I would view the work of Linafelt and Pyper (and others also) who re-act against the idea that the suffering in Lamentations has any deep meaning or purpose as a very necessary stage in the interpretation of the text. The Lacanian scene of psychoanalysis may be particularly helpful here. For Lacan, the analyst is "the subject supposed to know" (*le sujet supposé savoir*), and thus, occupies a position of symbolic authority in relation to the analysand. He plays the part of the big Other, The Symbolic Order that the analysand believes holds the answers. Yet, Lacan declares this big Other does not exist (*Le grand Autre n'existe pas*). That is, the analyst does not really know anything, at least certainly nothing more than the analysand. As Žižek points out, Lacanian analysis is complete when the analysand has seen this imposter for what it is:

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[107] Miller, *Reading Narrative*, 39.
[108] Freud, *The Interpretations of Dreams*, 102.

> At the end of the psychoanalytical cure, the analysand has to suspend the urge to symbolize/internalize, to interpret, to search for a "deeper meaning": he has to accept that the traumatic encounters which traced out the itinerary of his life were utterly contingent and indifferent, that they bear no "deeper message"...at the moment of "exit from transference" which marks the end of the cure, the subject is able to perceive the events around which his life story is crystallized into a meaningful Whole in their senseless contingency...[109]

And so psychoanalysis is complete with the dissolution of transference, the fall of the "subject supposed to know." The patient accepts the absence of any guarantee from a Master-figure.[110] Interestingly, this realization usually needs to be accompanied by a violent act, which results in the dissolution of the Symbolic Order, if only for a brief moment. Could we not understand the text of Lamentations, as representation of this brief encounter with "the Void," the utter meaninglessness of existence that cannot be held for long and eventually results in death or another symbolic world? The text does not seem to have a problem with its "structural unfinishedness," its presentation of multiple viewpoints which conflict with each other, etc. Certainly, it seems that at least one of the many voices in Lamentations is willing to resist the "temptation" of meaning, as Žižek would phrase it. It admits that there is no "deeper meaning" to the destruction of Jerusalem, or the death of her infants (e.g. 2:17).

Žižek notes that there is a darker side to this insight though. By making the analyst the subject supposed to know, it also requires the analysand to believe that the analyst knows his secret. In other words, it means that the patient is *a priori* "guilty" of hiding a secret as soon as treatment (interpretation) begins.[111] Both the analyst and the analysand, consciously or unconsciously, accept that there is a secret meaning to be drawn from their acts, experience, (the text), etc.

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[109] Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (New York: Verso, 1996), 71.

[110] Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 170.

[111] Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 28.

Still though, this Lacanian analogy of transference that I have offered here adheres to the idea that we interpreters of the text are the analysts while the text is the analysand. But I am not sure though who or what the quote from Žižek above describes better: the text of Lamentations, or the scholarship on it. Scholarship, traditionally, has desperately attempted to attribute some deeper meaning to the catastrophe. How else could one explain the desire of almost all commentators to figure out the theology of the book of Lamentations, as if it presented a unified viewpoint? Even to assert that there are two viewpoints in dialogue with each other (e.g. Gottwald) is to offer an explanation or interpretation. Moreover, there is the undue emphasis on hope in the book? This is evidenced not only by the centrality given to certain verses in ch. 3, but also by the desire to make Lamentations end on a positive note, verified by the repetition of 5:21 after 5:22 in traditional readings, as at least the former holds out a glimmer of optimism. Could not the history of scholarship on Lamentations be viewed as an enactment of the repetition compulsion of the *analysand*, constantly interpreting his or her own story only to come to the eventual realization that there is no secret meaning to these "puzzles" in the text?

Indeed, it is only in the last decade or so that scholarship has followed the intention of the poet of Lamentations and concluded that any attempt to bring the mourning in the book to an end is a distortion of the text. This is why readings like those of Linafelt and Pyper represent what Lacan and Žižek might refer to as being very near to the end of the psychoanalytical scene.[112]

[112] It must be noted here that Linafelt still looks for an answer to the questions of Lamentations. He finds the answer in the text of Second Isaiah, the Targum, Midrash, and even modern texts like Cynthia Ozick's short story "The Shawl" (see Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 62-143).

I would like to focus specifically on the idea that Second Isaiah "heals" the text of Lamentations, as this observation is not unique to Linafelt and has produced quite a bit of secondary literature. While some scholars have questioned whether there is a close connection between the two texts, it seems to me that Linafelt and others are quite correct in their assertion (perhaps the best evidence of this is the similarity of language between the two texts). However, what this heap of secondary material on the issue shows is the *need* of scholarship to provide an answer to the questions of Lamentations, and the inability to let the text remain on its own (in a state of melancholia).

Accordingly, the lines between analysand and analyst become blurry here (which inevitably happens with all transference). In a way, Lacan's version of the scene of psychoanalysis was preceded by the satirist Karl Kraus, a Viennese contemporary of Freud's, who scathingly observed that psychoanalysis itself is the mental illness or spiritual disease of which it purports to be the cure.[113]

The same could be applied to biblical scholarship on Lamentations; it is creating the very problems which it seeks to solve. Scholars, like me, are under the impression that we are the ones who "know." Particularly, a psychoanalytical reading, such as the one I offer here, attempts to understand what lies in the unconsciousness of the poet/text. But when looking over past scholarship's work on these symptoms, one begins to wonder whether it is we, the readers of the text, who are the analysand, and the text that is analysing us? For, in the end, we come to realize that this inherent desire to make sense and meaning out of the text comes from the text itself. That is, the text obliges us to make the best reading we can, like the analyst does for the analysand.

And so the true value of invoking the Lacanian scene of psychoanalysis is to show that it does not matter whether there is a secret meaning behind the text, we all must assume that there is. The legacy of Freud and psychoanalysis in general, if nothing else, is precisely the desire to find sense in everything, to interpret and explain everything. This is why Harold Bloom admits that we are all Freudians whether we want to be or not. I have followed suit in this paper. While I

[113] Quoted in Harold Bloom, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found*, 223. I might add here that psychoanalysis has its roots in this paradox. For what is the Oedipus Complex? Contemporary scholarship on *Oedipus the King* asserts that Oedipus, in reality, is the one who creates the data and puts the pieces together in order to diagnose his "problem." But there is a chance that he is incorrect; he may have misread the data. And thus, it is Oedipus's curiosity, his desire to know, and interpret, that creates his horrible fate. Oedipus' crime is not that he does not think, but rather he thinks too well. If only Oedipus had listened to the advice of his mother/wife, Jocasta, as she warns him early in the play: "This marriage with your mother—don't fear it. / How many times have men in dreams, too, slept / with their mothers! Those who believe such things / mean nothing endure their lives most easily." (See J. Hillis Miller, *Reading Narrative*, 13-39).

am adamant that interpreting the text as a symptom of melancholia is a new stage in the interpretation of Lamentations, it is still an interpretation. Nonetheless, this is where I think psychoanalytical criticism can be helpful: when it is at its most dialectical. For while the interpreter—whether he or she is the analyst or analysand I cannot say—gives a meaning to everything, s/he knows that it is arbitrary. But we cannot accept that we know nothing; we must pretend to know, suppose that we know. It should not be viewed as a failure to attribute meaning to the text, or suffering. Just like the poet of Lamentations, we must accept that any meaning, any answer, however nonsensical it may be, is better than none at all.

CHAPTER 2: JULIA KRISTEVA AND LAMENTATIONS

Aspen tree, your leaves glint white into the dark.
My mother's hair was never white.

Dandelion, so green is the Ukraine.
My fairhaired mother did not come home.

Rain cloud, do you linger over the well?
My gentle mother weeps for all.[114]

I concluded in the last chapter that despite the tendency of Lamentations to resist the temptation of meaning through symbolization and interpretation it inevitably yields, as all readers also do. We must admit that there is no writing or reading without some degree of symbolization. Yet, at least in relation to Lamentations, how do we account for this resistance? Is there a third option between either symbolization of everything or no symbolization at all? Can a text both mean and not mean at the same time? I believe a possible explanation can be found in the work of Julia Kristeva, specifically her psychoanalytical theory of melancholia. In this next chapter I will look at a few of the ways in which Kristeva's theory on melancholia relates to the text of Lamentations.[115]

Kristeva's work has been described as a "journey through the Lacanian mirror, going behind/beyond it by virtue of its *mise en abîme* to a place where we confront the maternal

[114] From the poem *Aspen Tree* by Paul Celan, as quoted in Aberbach, *Surviving Trauma*, 15.

[115] Of course, I am aware that I am again using one text (the work of Kristeva) to explain another (Lamentations). But I might also point out again that Lamentations helps explain Kristeva as much as the other way around. In many ways, this chapter is merely a placing of Kristeva and Lamentations side by side and looking for connecting points. As in every intertextual reading, it is up to the reader to pull the threads of the texts together. And so, it is entirely possible that another reading of Kristeva and Lamentations could function on a completely different level.

In fact, there is an example of this: Alan Cooper's "The Message of Lamentations," *JANES* 28 (2001):1-18. Cooper uses Kristeva's theory of intertextuality to read Lamentations in two different ways in order to show that the task of the scholar is not to proclaim any single interpretation as the "real" meaning of a text, but rather it is to sustain multiple interpretations (something which the text of Lamentations does). He concludes that there is no "message" in Lamentations; or rather there is no *univocal* message, for ultimately, the message of the text resides in the hearts and minds of its devoted readers.

body."[116] That is, her writings are associated most closely with Lacan and his terminology of Imaginary, Real, and Symbolic. At the level of desire she agrees with Lacan's theories of the mirror stage, castration, the oedipal situation and sexual difference.[117] However, perhaps her most important concept, the semiotic, diverges from standard Lacanian theory. (Kristeva's use of semiotic is not to be confused with Ferdinand de Saussure's discipline of semiotics, though of course there are parallels).[118] The semiotic is associated with pre-Oedipal development, or what occurs before the mirror stage. It is characterized by pre-symbolic drives, impulses, bodily rhythms and movements, and perhaps its most important characteristic is that it represents the initial total identification with the mother's body. The semiotic is shattered by what Kristeva terms the "thetic phase," by which she means that point at which human subjects enter the social world. The thetic phase leads into the Symbolic, governed by social norms and monological notions of language (language that is presumed capable of presenting a thesis and a singular, unitary meaning).[119] Again, the influence of Lacan on the work of Kristeva is obvious here: the "Imaginary" according to Lacan, concerns the child's early fragmented (and yet heavily symbolized) map of the body, while "the Symbolic" concerns the state after the full acquisition of language which Lacan calls the "Symbolic order." The Symbolic order is associated by Lacan with the Father, the Law, and the idea of unitary language. For instance, academic writing and the attempt to be straightforward and precise is usually associated with the Symbolic order (such

[116] Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double Bind* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 18.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Unfortunately, the language of English cannot provide the distinction the Kristeva uses in French to differentiate between Saussure's use of semiotics, or the general science of signs (*la sémiotique*), and her own specific use of the semiotic (*le sémiotique*) which she sees as one of the two components of the signifying sequence, the other, of course, being "the Symbolic."

[119] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 48-9.

as I am trying to do here). The semiotic then, according to Kristeva, is what opposes the Symbolic order.[120]

A cry is heard in Ramah—
Wailing, bitter weeping—
Rachel weeping for her children.
She refuses to be comforted
For her children who are not (Jer 31:15).

Kristeva's theory of melancholia fits broadly under the loss theory in the tradition of Freud. Furthermore, her emphasis on self-identity follows Freud, specifically her connection between melancholia and narcissism. By connecting Freud's theory of the death wish with melancholia Kristeva formulates further the notion of a depression that is narcissistic. (I should note here that Kristeva usually uses depression and melancholia as synonyms, though she does note some distinguishing features to each).[121] She asserts that depression is the "hidden face of Narcissus, the face that is to bear him away into death, but of which he is unaware while he admires himself in mirage."[122] So while talking about depression leads us into the marshy land of the Narcissus myth we do not encounter "the bright and fragile amatory idealization; on the contrary, we shall see the shadow cast on the fragile self, hardly disassociated from the other, precisely by the loss of that essential other. The shadow of despair."[123] Thus, like Freud, Kristeva claims that melancholia is a disorder of self and self-identity and a condition of loss (not absence).

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[120] Of course, the distinction between "the Symbolic," and the "the Symbolic order," is often blurry (see Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*, 10-12, for one interpretation of this).

[121] Melancholia is distinguished from depression in the works of Kristeva in that the former is always accompanied by asymbolia in some way. At the same time though Kristeva points out the vast similarity between the two terms and writes: "I shall speak of depression and melancholia without always distinguishing the particularities of the two ailments but keeping in mind their common structure" (*Black Sun*, 10-11). Similarly, I will follow Kristeva's (for the most part) synonymous use of the terms. A secondary reason for this is that this broadens the meaning of the term *melancholia* once again making an explicit link with pre-modern writings on it.

[122] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 5.

[123] Ibid.

However, unlike Freud, she links melancholia with the mother in a much more explicit way. She asserts that early development and the necessary (healthy type of) narcissism that comes with it results from the dissolution of the infant-mother dyad, and therefore identifies the sadness of depression with a mourning for the lost other (that is the mother/breast) relinquished at weaning.[124] Furthering this idea Kristeva makes the claim that "matricide is our vital necessity, the sine-qua-non condition of our individuation."[125] The union of the child with the mother is prior to separation, prior to the entry into the symbolic—and thus it is, in effect, prior to life. From this arises Kristeva's concept of the semiotic as characterized by pre-symbolic drives, impulses, and the initial total identification with the mother's body. The semiotic, for Kristeva, also characterizes depressive discourse. That is, melancholia and depression are examples of the unsuccessful separation from the mother, and therefore of an unsuccessful emergence of primary narcissism and the concomitant Imaginary Father.[126]

Matricide as Exile

The mother of children
moans like a dove,
She mourns in her heart
and complains out loud,
She cries bitterly,
calls out desperately,
She sheds tears, is silent,
is stunned.[127]

[124] A similar metaphor, in connection to the weaning process, played upon in *Black Sun*, is the act of birth and the birthing process. In the book, the archaic mother of prehistory is the prenatal one, rather than the weaning one.

[125] Ibid., 27-8.

[126] John Lechte, "Art, Love, and Melancholy," in *Abjection, Melancholia, and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva* (eds. John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin; New York: Routledge, 1990), 24-41. Indeed, one parallel, perhaps the most obvious, to Lamentations is that God (the Father) never directly speaks in Lamentations, in contradistinction to Mother Zion whose voice (arguably) dominates chs. 1 and 2.

[127] From the Kinot "The Mother of Children," by Eleazar ben Kallir as quoted in Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 145.

Furthermore, for Kristeva—and this is of particular importance in connection with this paper—the origin of language is exile. She asserts: "How can one avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one's own country, language, sex, and identity? Writing is impossible without some kind of exile." Lamentations is written from an experience of exile, that is, the poet had been banished from his mother(land), and wrote as a foreigner. Does not this type of exile parallel Kristeva's own view of exile, namely the separation from the object of our first desire: the mother's body? Anna Smith, while exploring notions of foreignness in the writings of Kristeva, states:

> The experience of strangeness is, like abjection, the sign of incomplete separation from our first home—the mother's body—where the drives do not remain housed securely in the unconscious, but return in estranging bodily symptoms and affects...the condition of exile is a space that ruins our resting place. Exile deprives people of a sense of possessing an interior space from which to reflect.[128]

The task of the poet of Lamentations was to find adequate language for the horror, and so from a Kristevan perspective how else could the poet formulate his speech but to relate the tragedy of exile and separation from one's mother land to the original separation from the mother? The book itself seems to promote such a reading, as the city of Jerusalem is personified in the figure of *Bat-Zion*, among other metaphors, as a mother who mourns over the loss of her children. The narrator of Lam 1 points out that Zion's "infants have gone into captivity" (v. 5), and Zion, speaking for herself, laments: "because of these things I weep, my eyes, my eyes flow with tears: far from me is any comforter who might revive my spirit; my children are forlorn, for the foe had prevailed" (v.16). Furthermore, the repeated use of מחמדי "precious things" as in 1:7, "Jerusalem remembered in the days of her misery and her trouble, all her precious things of earlier days," could be understood as "treasured moments or possessions" but also as "children."[129] The

[128] Smith, *Julia Kristeva*, 23-4.
[129] The word occurs also in 1:10, 11 and 2:4.

parallel between motherhood and a city which the personification of Jerusalem in Lamentations employs is obvious on another level, for the basic functions of a city, namely to provide food, shelter, and secure habitation, overlap most expansively with common assumptions of motherhood. "Moreover, both the mother and the city may easily be associated with a vital body and a place of refuge."[130]

This personification of Jerusalem as a weeping and compassionate mother functions as a rhetorical device meant to evoke empathy from God and the reader.[131] Evidence of this can be found in the mixing of imperatives toward Yahweh in the text with descriptions of the dismal state of Zion, for example 1:11, which reads: "See, O Lord, and consider: how abject I have become!"[132] Similarly, in *petihta* 24 of *Eikhah Rabbah* it is only the weeping Rachel who eventually brings God to tears and compassion over the destruction, something that neither the Angels, nor Moses, nor Abraham, nor Jeremiah was able to do.[133] Tod Linafelt observes that "there can be no doubt that Rachel functions in this *petihta* in a role strikingly similar to that of Mother Zion in Lamentations,"[134] as both present the image of a weeping mother to elicit a response from God which stems mostly from the mother's threatened children.[135]

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[130] Christl Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space, and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 215.

[131] Of course, this is a common feature of lament literature in the Hebrew Bible, and the Ancient Near East in general (See Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep O Daughter Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*. Biblical et Orientalia 44. Rome: Editrice Pontifico Istituto Biblico, 1993).

[132] I translate זוללה as coming from the verb זלל here meaning "worthless" or "insignificant," others like Berlin prefer the root to be זול and translate the word as "beggar" or "tramp" (Berlin, *Lamentations*, 46). Both readings could be correct, I prefer the former as it explicitly brings to mind the idea of the abject mother, which follows the JPS translation "abject" (though it is near certain the translator(s) did not have a Kristevan point of view in mind as I do).

[133] For a much fuller exploration of this see ch. 5 of Tod Linafelt's *Surviving Lamentations*.

[134] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*,115.

[135] Another example found in *Eikhah Rabbah* (1:16, sec. 50) is the story of the mother of the seven martyrs (as first enumerated in 2 Maccabees 7). Here the mother compares the martyrdom of her sons to the sacrifice of Isaac and exclaims that her pain is worse than that of Abraham's, for his was only a test, but hers was in earnest. The pathos that only a mother can display for her children is evident in this passage.

Perhaps the climax of this empathy is reached with the rape imagery connected to Zion. In 1:10 the enemies are portrayed as stretching their hand over Zion's "precious things," and as "entering" (באו) into her sanctuary. While precious things in this context most likely refers to the temple treasure, it can carry sexual connotations as well (Cant 5:16), which seems to be the case here.[136] Furthermore, בא frequently serves as a graphic metonym for sexual intercourse in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Gen 6:4, 16:2, 19:31, 38:9; Judg 16:1). This idea of entering into a private place as a parallel to sexual intercourse is specifically linked in Ezek 23:39-44, as the passage asserts that men "entering" (בא) the temple is "like the entering to a prostitute" ויבוא אליה כבוא אל־אשה זונה.[137] Lam 1:8 could also be interpreted as a passage with latent rape imagery. Here we are informed that all who once respected Zion now revile her because they have seen her nakedness, ערותה. Some commentators see in this image the motif of the punishment of a harlot, as the line is situated between other verses which dwell on Zion's sin.[138] This represents then, in miniature, the tragic theme that runs throughout Lamentations: as Dobbs-Allsopp and Linafelt state, "Judah as a community has been guilty of sin, but the fact of that sin alone cannot justify

[136] Alan Mintz was the first to see sexual violation in this passage noting the correspondence between body/temple and genitals/Inner sanctuary (See *Hurban*, 25). And more recently this argument has been bolstered by Dobbs-Allsopp and Linafelt in their essay "The Rape of Zion in Thr 1,10," *ZAW* 113 (2001): 77-81.

[137] Dobbs-Allsopp and Linafelt, "The Rape of Zion," 78. A striking parallel is found in a Mesopotamian *balag* known as "Sighs in the Night" in which an enemy enters the boat of a queen and lays his hands on her, and tears off her garments. The first half begins:

The treasure was...in the prow of the boat
I, the queen, was riding in the stern of the boat
That enemy entered my dwelling place wearing his shoes
That enemy laid his unwashed hands on me

Dobbs-Allsopp, in particular, finds that these parallels exemplify a common genre shared between Lamentations and other city lament genres in Mesopotamia at that time (see his *Weep O Daughter Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*). Dobbs-Allsopp's study in these ancient laments points to the fact that much of the language in Lamentations is not necessarily unique, rather it is common to the laments of the surrounding cultures.

[138] Dobbs-Allsopp and Linafelt, "The Rape of Zion," 79. Hillers agrees that the punishment of a harlot motif is "the most obvious meaning of the line" (*Lamentations*, 86). Other imagery of this motif in the Hebrew Bible is found in Isa 47:3; Jer 13:22, 26; Ezek 16:37; Nah 3:5. The two also find that עלל carries rape connotations with it as well (see 1 Sam 31:4 or Judg 19:25).

the punishment that Yahweh inflicts upon the country."[139] That is, the rape imagery creates a certain sense of pathos for Zion, despite other passages which clearly place the blame for the punishment on her.

Can it be true that women
devour their offspring, infants
they have cared for?

Can it be true that compassionate
women boiled their children,
whom they have so carefully
nurtured?[140]

However, the destruction of the city and ensuing exile can be seen as a type of violent and immediate weaning process, and this violent rending from the mother(land) points to a secondary, much darker feature of motherhood in Lamentations. For as much as the text harps on the pains of the mother and her degradation it also lays before us the image of the mother who not only fails to give suck, but in the end devours her children. The image of a cannibalistic mother is explicitly mentioned twice in the book. The first occurrence in Lam 2:20 reads:

> Behold, O Lord, and consider: to whom have you done (עוללת) this? Shall women eat their own fruit, the little children (עללי) they care for?

The ambiguous use of עלל reaches its climax in this verse. At times the root is used to refer to children as in 1:5, 2:11 and 19, but at other times it is a verb used to describe Yahweh's treatment of Zion as in 1:12, 22 and 2:20, usually carrying a negative connotation. The implicit point of this pun on עלל is that while the Lord has (justifiably) carried out punishment against Jerusalem and her inhabitants, he has at the same time needlessly punished innocent children.

[139] Allsopp and Linafelt, "The Rape of Zion," 80.
[140] From the Kinot "Can it be True?" by Eleazar ben Kallir as quoted in Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 146.

A secondary, no less important feature of the verse is that it is the mother who is the instrument for punishment here. A clear parallel is found in the work of Karl Abraham who claimed that a key characteristic of melancholia is that it is the mother, not the father, who is the prime site of identification and thus is the focus of what he calls the "ambivalent cannibalistic impulse" to which the melancholic gives way.[141] This leads us to Lam 4:10, which is a little less subtle in its imagery:

> With their own hands caring women cooked their children: they became their sustenance in the collapse of my dear children.[142]

This ambivalence of emotions in motherly imagery over her role as the source of first nourishment is perfectly displayed in this verse. In order to become autonomous, it is necessary that one cut the instinctual dyad of the mother and the child and that one become something other.[143] Kristeva notes that the idea of an abject mother is "rooted in the combat that every human being carries on with the mother." The child feeds on the mother's body, but the inevitable withdrawal of this nourishment, whether it is from the natural process of weaning or the failure of the mother to produce milk makes the mother the target for a sense of betrayal and rage. In this sense, the mother becomes both the object of desire and frustration. Perhaps, the furthest this frustration can reach is that of the cannibalistic mother. Hugh Pyper notes that the woman who eats her child strikes at the fundamental anxiety of paternity and patriarchy, as he asks rhetorically, "If the woman to whom a man has entrusted his seed devours his children,

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[141] See Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," 57.

[142] Cannibalistic mothers appear at other times in the Hebrew Bible. The example that first comes to mind is 2 Kgs 6:24-32 where, in a grim parody of Solomon's wise judgment, the king in Samaria is called upon to judge between two women who have agreed to eat their sons when one revokes her promise. The possibility of mothers devouring their children is hinted upon in Lev 26:29 and made explicit in Deut 28:53-7. Other texts are Jer 19:9; Ezek 5:10, and Zech 11:9. For an interesting reading of 2 Kgs 6:24-32 see S. Lasine, "Jehoram and the Cannibal Mothers (2 Kings 6:24-33): Solomon's Judgment in an Inverted World," *JSOT* 50 (1991): 27-53..

[143] Julia Kristeva, *Interviews* (ed. Ross Mitchell Guberman; New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 118.

what hope for survival has he?"[144] Pyper furthers this observation by noticing that there is perhaps a transition of voices in the text between mother and child (son), for in these passages that bewail the cannibalistic mothers the text "cries out with the voice of the abandoned and resentful child clinging to the constancy of the wrathful father, in its despair at and repudiation of the powerless and abandoning mother."[145]

Lamentations 2:13 as an example of the Semiotic and Symbolic

This ambivalence of emotions toward the mother can be compared to the oscillation between the semiotic and symbolic, especially as it is found in melancholia. One verse from Lamentations, 2:13, which I see as a type of meta-text for the book as a whole, seems to summarize perfectly Kristeva's theory of melancholic literature. The verse will function as a frame for exploring the book of Lamentations as a whole in this chapter; each of its strophes seems to relate to a different aspect of Kristeva's version of melancholia.

The first part of the verse reads:

> מה־אעידך מה אדמה־לך הבת ירושלם
> מה אשוה־לך ואנחמך בתולת בת־ציון
> What can I say for you [lit. What can I bear witness for you]? What can I compare to you, O Daughter Jerusalem? What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you O Virgin, Daughter, Zion?[146]

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[144] Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," 61.

[145] Ibid. Pyper ties this observation to Exod 23:19 in which it is prohibited to seethe a kid in its mother's milk. Not only is it puzzling in itself, but it provoked a disproportionate afterlife in rabbinic legislation. He asserts that this could be an indication of a deep anxiety in later generations of the ambiguities between edible and inedible, the maternal and the infantile, inside and outside of the body, for the traditional source of nourishment becomes the agent of death.

It should be noted that Pyper is working off similar observations made by Kristeva in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), where she deals explicitly with this verse and other laws found in Exodus and Leviticus.

[146] Those who read Lamentations from a psychoanalytical framework must stop and ponder that Lam 2:13 refers to Daughter Zion as a virgin here: the word בתולת is explicit, a woman who has not yet had intercourse. In psychoanalytical terms the mixture of the metaphors of mother, virgin, and whore (all present in Lamentations) is sometimes referred to as the Madonna-Whore Complex as outlined in Freud's three essays on the matter all under the title of Contributions to the Psychology of Love: "A Special Type of Choice of Object made by Men," in 1910, "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life," in 1912, and "The Taboo of Virginity," in 1918. The question Freud deals with is why men often court or fall in love with women similar to their mothers and then, as a result, find themselves incapable of performing sexual intercourse with the women, for that would be considered

In times of crisis, when one witnesses the downfall of political and religious idols, as the poet of Lamentations does, the climate is particularly favourable for black moods.[147] In regard to the destruction of Jerusalem the poet acknowledges that metaphors are no longer adequate; metaphor is dead, so to speak. With this death of metaphor there are also the more literal deaths which permeate Lamentations: those of Jerusalem's inhabitants, her elders, her virgins, her young men, and her children. Kathleen O'Connor states that "the typical response to atrocity and trauma is to banish them from the consciousness."[148] Certain violations of the social contract are too terrible to allow them to come to consciousness or to be uttered aloud; they are, in a sense, unspeakable. Traumatic pain can become a silencer of words and a destroyer of self and overwhelming suffering can be language-destroying.[149] It can be language destroying based on the belief that all language is metaphorical, and thus one needs something to compare pain to. What these lines display is the poet's realization that his symbolic narrative has collapsed, his current worldview cannot contain this tragedy; common sense no longer makes sense.

From a Kristevan perspective this collapse of the symbolic is a tell-tale sign of melancholia, for it always "ends up in asymbolia, in loss of meaning: if I am no longer capable of translating or metaphorizing, I become silent and die."[150] A signifying sequence to people in despair will appear as heavily and violently arbitrary, they will think it to be absurd and meaningless. This arbitrary sequence, as perceived by depressive persons, is absurd because it is coextensive with a loss of reference. As a result, "no word, no object in reality will be likely to

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incest (at least, in their unconscious). The fantasy men have then is that of a "dirty" woman, or prostitute, during sexual intercourse, but then relate to this same woman as a virgin or a mother when looking for comfort or in emotional situations. In many ways, Zion is presented as such in the book of Lamentations. On the one hand she has acted like a prostitute, or at least been disgraced sexually (1:8, 10), on the other she is a virgin (2:13); moreover she is also a compassionate mother (1:5, 16).

[147] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 8.

[148] Kathleen, O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 87.

[149] Ibid., 101

[150] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 42.

have a coherent concatenation that will be suitable to a meaning or referent,"[151] for the collapse of meaning—and, at the limit, the meaning of life—necessarily entails a difficulty in integrating the universal signifying sequence.[152] Melancholy persons speak a dead language; they are foreigners to their "maternal" tongue." Kristeva boldly argues: "The depressed speak of nothing, they have nothing to speak of: glued to the Thing (*Res*), they are without objects. That total and unsignifiable Thing is insignificant—it is a mere Nothing, their Nothing, Death."[153]

And death is an important part of understanding melancholia for Kristeva. She asserts that Freud's definition of melancholia as a loss that is never worked through laid the foundation for the second portion of his research, which culminated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as he became increasingly aware that while life was dominated by the pleasure principle, the death drive was the purest drive. For her, *Eros* means the creation of bonds, while *Thanatos*, the death drive, signifies the "disintegration of bonds and the ceasing of circulation, communication, and social relationships."[154] Thus, melancholic literature is characterized by a divestment of social bonds and a devaluation of language, as the melancholic gives the impression that he or she neither believes in nor inhabits discourse and thus, exists outside of language.

And yet, if we are to embrace the paradox, a secondary and no less important point of Kristeva's is that the depressed do speak, and, often, in imaginary and creative ways. Art is frequently the product of melancholia. Indeed, immediately after lamenting that metaphor and symbolization is dead in the first half of the verse, the poet lapses right back and asserts to Zion:

> כי־גדול כים שברך
> For great as the sea is your destruction.

[151] Ibid., 51.
[152] Ibid., 53
[153] Ibid., 51.
[154] Kristeva, *Interviews*, 79.

Of course, there is no way to write without metaphor; one cannot write without symbolizing to some degree. So one could very legitimately ask: how is it then that Kristeva can argue that the discourses of the depressed exist outside language, outside the symbolic? But her argument is not that all symbolization stops, but rather that melancholic literature uses language to express its own unfamiliarity with it. "No text, however radical, is purely semiotic," but rather "the semiotic always *manifests* itself within the symbolic."[155]

In relation to the book of Lamentations then we may note that "its success, in a sense, depends on its failure," as Francis Landy puts it.[156] That is, the text attempts to explain, illustrate, and mitigate the catastrophe, but yet, at the same time it admits there is no explanation, and no illustration, that could sufficiently replace the lost love-object. No object can replace the mother and no sign can express the loss: despair is the only meaning life has for those afflicted. Thus, the task of the poet is to use language to express its own inadequacy. So the text leaves us at sea: the sea of doubt, chaos, and uncertainty. This is the metaphor used to describe the inability to use metaphors. It is a metaphor, to be sure, but it does not provide us any sense of certainty, certainly not any great hope. The sea is vast and overwhelming, its currents reach unfathomable depths, and thus the sorrow and pain is unbounded.

Indeed, the use of the sea as the tenor of this metaphor points to another connection with Kristeva: namely, that of the semiotic *chora,* χώρα. At the heart of Kristeva's concept of the semiotic is the *chora*, a term Kristeva borrows from Plato's *Timeaus* where he uses *chora* to designate an unnameable maternal receptacle.[157] The *chora*, according to Kristeva, is "unnameable, improbable, hybrid, anterior to naming, to the One, and to the father," and

[155] Allen, *Intertextuality*, 50. Italics mine.
[156] Landy, "Lamentations, "329.
[157] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (trans. Margaret Waller; New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 26.

furthermore it "designates that we are dealing with a disposition that is definitely heterogeneous to meaning but always in sight of it, in either a negative or surplus relationship to it."[158] So the semiotic *chora* is what disturbs the monologic order of the symbolic field, stable meaning, communication, and notions of unity, singularity, and order. In a lengthy footnote in "Le Sujet en Proces," Kristeva describes the *chora* as such:

> ...the *chora* is a womb or a nurse in which elements are without identity and without reason. The *chora* is a *place* of *chaos* which *is* and which becomes, preliminary to the constitution of the first measurable body...the *chora* plays with the body of the mother—of woman—, but in the signifying process.[159]

The *chora* is the maternal place underlying the symbolic. Like the metaphor of the chaotic sea to describe the inability to metaphorize, so the *chora* functions as a disturbing presence in the symbolic field, precisely what cannot be made to fit in the Law of the Father and symbolic unity.

To think the unthinkable, to speak the unspeakable: from the outset that has been Kristeva's project. Her book on melancholia, *Black Sun,* fits within this broader project, as she explores the nature of depressive discourse and the different means of giving it back its symbolic power. In an interview in which Kristeva was asked to summarize the book she responded by answering:

> I attempt to address the following problem: if the depressed person rejects language and finds it to be meaningless or false, how can we gain access to his pain *through speech*, since psychoanalysts work with speech?[160]

For unlike the true psychotic, the melancholic has not lost the use of signs altogether (indeed, such a project would be impossible). Metaphor, and all symbolic language, depends on one's ability to recognize it as metaphor, to contextualize language. Those who cannot do this, like some aphasics, construe metaphor literally. This is not what we have in Lamentations. Instead,

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[158] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (ed. Leon S. Roudiez; trans. Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine; New York: Columbia University, 1980), 133.

[159] As quoted in Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva*, 46.

[160] Kristeva, *Interviews*, 80.

the speech of the depressed is like an alien skin: "melancholy persons are foreigners [or exiles] in their maternal tongue."[161] To say the same thing in other words, they have lost the meaning and the value of their mother tongue for want of losing the mother. For Kristeva, language begins with a *dénégation* (in French the term, for Kristeva, carries a connotation of both negation and disavowal, that is, a negation which is also an implicit affirmation). However, the depressed person denies this *dénégation.* She explains:

> Signs are arbitrary because language begins with *dénégation* of loss, at the same time as depression occasioned by mourning. "I have lost an indispensable object which is found to be, in the last instance, my mother," the speaking object seems to say. "But no? I have found her again in signs, or rather because I accept to lose her, I have not lost her (here is the *dénégation*), I can get her back in language.[162]

Acknowledging this paradox of negating an absence can perhaps help illuminate the primary structural feature of Lamentations: namely, that the first four chapters are alphabetical acrostics. Certainly, one aspect of the acrostic structure is to show that the text of Lamentations is not simply unstudied effusions of natural emotion, but rather carefully elaborated poems; thus, it provides orderly and systematic expression of the emotions which fill the poet's heart.[163] The alphabet could represent the entire system of signs, in which all letters cooperate to generate meaning. In this way, the acrostic functions for the poet as a statement of control over language. However, this formal structure may work on another level, for the order of the alphabet is "both completely arbitrary and completely implacable."[164] And thus, it might be that the poet is attempting to view language as one outside of it, as if to recognize the arbitrariness of the meaning of these signs, for the alphabet could also represent the infinite possibility of signs but in itself is meaningless. It is certainly significant that in the fifth and final chapter of the book,

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[161] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 53.
[162] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 43.
[163] Samuel R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1913), 459.
[164] Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," 62.

the acrostic feature breaks down, though a ghost of a structure remains in that this chapter consists of twenty-two verses. Is this breakdown a sign of collapse, or does it represent a type of liberation from the chains that language imposes on the poet?[165] Either reading is possible, but both options reveal something lacking in language and at the same time the acknowledgement that language fills in for other absences.

This return to language in order to replace the mother leads us to the final question posed by the poet of Lamentations in 2:13, as he asks Daughter Zion:

> מי ירפא־לך
> Who can heal you?

Indeed, this is the fundamental question of Lamentations, and perhaps, the fundamental question posed to all melancholics. Who, or what, can heal the one who has lost an irreplaceable object of love? Kristeva reminds us:

> The melancholic who rejects life because he has lost touch with the meaning of life prompts us to search for ways to bring back meaning: for our sake, for his sake, but also for the sake of civilization itself.[166]

The answer, however, is not to be found in an actual response, that is, there is nothing further to elaborate on in regard to the question "who can heal you?" But rather, the answer, according to Kristeva, is in the words of the question itself. That is to say, after exile, after our separation from the mother, *language* compensates for what it takes away, by causing us to delight in its own pleasurable body. To compare it once again to the original separation of the infant mother dyad, one could assert "the maternal space englobing the infant is replaced by the nurturing space of language."[167] Kristeva argues: "rather than seek the meaning of despair (it is either obvious or metaphysical), let us acknowledge that there is meaning only in despair. The child

[165] Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," 63.
[166] Kristeva, *Interviews*, 81.
[167] Anna Smith, *Readings of Exile*, 13.

king becomes irredeemably sad before uttering his first words; this is because he has been irrevocably, desperately separated from the mother, a loss that causes him to find her again, along with other objects of love, first in the imagination, then in words."[168] To phrase it another way, once one has left one's mother(land) behind, s/he can be brought to life again in signs, in the mother(tongue). It is this assertion that remains unique to Kristeva's version of psychoanalysis, as it extends beyond both Freud and especially Lacan's narrative of loss. As Anna Smith puts it, "the semiotic visits language with a compensatory maternal presence, so that instead of incorporating food from my mother, I am sustained by language instead. My hunger is displaced to a psychic level so that I may experience the 'joys of chewing swallowing, nourishing' myself with words."[169] Language functions as the medicine, it is a resurrection of sorts, and offers a catharsis to the psyche. Kristeva summarizes this nicely as she asserts:

> Naming suffering, exalting it, dissecting it into its smallest components—that is doubtless one way to curb mourning.[170]

Yet, this needs to be explored a little further, for no literary critic of the past twenty years can assert that language works as a type of medicine without evoking Derrida's idea of *pharmakon* at the same time. The idea is that language is medicine and poison, both the cure and the sickness. Kristeva, too, is aware of this, acknowledging that the riches of language compensate, but imperfectly, for an original loss that occurs to human beings when they become subjects of speech. The mother(land), the mother(tongue): both of these are prosthetic. Jerusalem at her finest was only a surrogate, and likewise language has limits: to the extent that we are all strangers to ourselves (to evoke another aspect of Kristeva's work), our mother tongue opens a gap between being and representation, between language and the world of objects. Smith asserts:

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[168] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 5-6.
[169] Anna Smith, *Readings of Exile*, 47.
[170] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 97.

"language is at once our home and the agent of our homelessness, responsible for our separation from things."[171]

In this sense, the language of exile, which is the language of Lamentations, is uncanny: for on the one hand, it is literally "unhomely" or in Heidegger's terms a "not-at-home," but on the other to write about it is to bring a sense of home back, and both of these connotations of the term refer back to our first home, the mother's body. In his essay "The Uncanny" Freud explains:

> There is a joke saying that "Love is homesickness;" and whenever a man dreams of a place or country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: "this place is familiar to me, I've been here before," we may interpret that place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* [the unhomely or the uncanny] is what was once *heimisch* [home-like or canny], familiar; the prefix "un" is the token of repression.[172]

One would think that Freud would spend the majority of his time discussing the uncanny in relation to the mother's body, given the primary importance this particular passage asserts to it. However, the passage is only briefly commented upon as Freud returns to other aspects of the Uncanny that seem more worthy of discussion. Indeed, more than one author has noticed the spectral status of the mother in Freud's texts, as she is given primary importance but rarely if ever discussed at length. On the other hand, for Kristeva, the mother's body is the prototypical site of uncanniness, which presents both home and not home, presence and absence, the promise of plenitude and the certainty of loss.[173]

Lamentations as a Text of Beauty

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,

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[171] Anna Smith, *Readings of Exile*, 25.

[172] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *Papers on Metapsychology: Papers on Applied Psychoanalysis* (vol. 4 of *Sigmund Freud: Collected Papers*, ed. Ernest Jones; trans. Joan Riviere; New York: Basic Books, 1959), 368-407.

[173] Madelon Sprengnether, *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 232.

Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her Sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.[174]

There is one further aspect of Kristeva's theory of melancholia that is worth exploring in more depth: the connection between melancholia and beauty. In a passage from *Black Sun* Kristeva asks:

> Can the beautiful be sad? Is beauty inseparable from the ephemeral and hence from mourning? Or else is the beautiful object the one that tirelessly returns following destructions and wars in order to bear witness that there is survival after death, that immortality is possible?[175]

For me, it is as if Kristeva is speaking directly about the text of Lamentations at this point in her book. When describing Hans Holbein the Younger's painting *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* Kristeva notes that the painting reinforces the paradoxical painterly idea that "the truth is severe, sometimes sad, often melancholy."[176] But again she asks: "Can such a truth also constitute beauty?" to which she answers: "Holbein's wager, beyond melancholia, is to answer, yes it can."[177] Holbein does not offer any sense of resurrection in the painting and thus it can be described as a minimalist piece of art. It strips the story of the death of Christ down to its most fundamental features and does not attempt to look beyond it. Holbein himself, according to Kristeva, must have painted this piece while immersed in a melancholic moment (an actual or imaginary loss of meaning and symbolic values), which paradoxically summoned up his aesthetic activity. His painting proves that it is possible to paint, to write, to produce art when the bonds that tie us to body and meaning are severed. She concludes:

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[174] John Keats, "Ode on Melancholy," as quoted in Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 221.
[175] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 98.
[176] Ibid., 127
[177] Ibid.

> Between classicism and mannerism [Holbein's] minimalism is the metaphor of severance: between life and death, meaning and non-meaning, it is an intimate slender response of our melancholia.[178]

Indeed, Lamentations is just such a piece of art. It arose out of an experience of melancholia and it leaves us with that permanent suspension between death and life: it does not force us to choose meaning or non meaning but presents both. The poet asks specifically in 2:13 how he can "bear witness" to the war and the destruction, as if any object of survival is possible. Yet, if anything survives, if anything achieves immortality here, it is the text. It is the beautiful object that lives on and continues to speak.[179] To Kristeva, the one thing that is not affected by the universality of death is beauty. Beauty resists death, and yet it can only do this by enabling a kind of experience of death. That is, beauty is a form of ecstasy, a position outside of one's self (*ek-stasis*). The melancholic subject can then take joy in signs, in place of the lost joy which came from the lost-love object.

It is this ecstasy which provokes Kristeva to speak of melancholy jouissance.[180] The term *jouissance* can be used as a synonym of *plaisir* "pleasure" but also signifies an orgasm or sexual excitement. The prohibition of jouissance (as it relates to the pleasure principle) is inherent in the symbolic structure of language, and is forbidden to him who speaks, as such. But for the melancholic subject, who can write outside the symbolic structure, the experience of jouissance is possible. The influence of Lacan on Kristeva's writing is obvious, but it is the voice of Roland

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[178] Ibid., 137.

[179] Nobody knew this better than Shakespeare himself, affirming over and over in his sonnets that immortality represents his own power over the object of his poems – the power to create, influence, and preserve a loved one. Examples can be found in sonnets 16, 55, 81, and 107. So, for instance, sonnet 55 which begins: "not marble, nor the gilded monuments/ Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme; but you shall shine more bright in these contents/ Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time."

[180] This is where the concept of the semiotic can become confusing. On the one hand, Kristeva associates the semiotic with melancholia. Yet, on the other hand, the semiotic is linked explicitly with joy. To some, this might mean that the term semiotic is so broad that it really means nothing at all. I do not think this is the case; rather it follows the work before her in Freud and pre-modern texts on melancholia that show how mania is often a part of this "disease."

Barthes that is most present here. The connection of the semiotic and jouissance to Barthes is endorsed by Kristeva herself as she writes in one of her essays that Barthes's notions of the "sublanguage," the "flesh" of writing, "semanteme" and "semioclasm" were all vital in her concept of the semiotic.[181] A specific example can be found in Barthes's *The Pleasure of the Text* where he writes:

> No object is in constant relationship with pleasure...For the writer, however, this object exists: it is not the language, it is the *mother tongue*. The writer is someone who plays with his mother's body...in order to glorify it, to embellish it, or in order to dismember it, to take it to the limit of what can be known about the body: I would go so far as to take bliss in a disfiguration of the language, and opinion will strenuously object, since it opposes "disfiguring nature."[182]

In light of this, one can offer yet another hypothesis for the acrostic structure of Lamentations: it provides nothing more and nothing less, than pleasure; it exists purely for the enjoyment of signs, which functions as a temporary cure for melancholia. Moreover, this could be said of Lamentations as a whole, for why else is it a piece of poetry, full of puns, complex metaphors, parallelism, etc.? That is, Lamentations is not a history or a prose work, but above all it is poetry, a piece of art (and on its most basic level ought to be interpreted as such).[183] What purpose do these literary features serve apart from that of playing with the mother tongue? At some point, one must admit that the book, like all literature (according to Barthes), functions as a potlatch: "It is the text's very uselessness that is useful."[184] Literature is like the play of a child, completely superfluous on some level, but completely necessary on another.

Yet, while the *jouissance* of the text is in some ways nothing more than mere (child's)play, we must not forget its sexual overtones. In fact, this is best understood in the

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[181] Kristeva, "How Does One Speak to Literature," Pp. 92-123 in *Desire in Language* (ed. Leon S. Roudiez; trans. Thomas Gora and Alice Jardin; New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

[182] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (trans. Richard miller; New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 37.

[183] I am reminded also of Melanie Klein and her belief that all art-making is a form of reparation with the mother.

[184] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 24.

connection of the word to a sexual or textual coming—a textasy. In this sense, the text is about survival and reproduction, encouraging more play (interpretation, reading). Beauty resists death through sublimation.

Back to Death

But this beauty, this sublimation, is ephemeral and fleeting. And thus on the other hand, one could just as well observe that Lamentations, as a text which endlessly repeats (the nature of all writing) and alludes, is not a sign of life, but rather a sign of death. Writing, in a way, is pure repetition, dead repetition that might always be repeating nothing.[185] How can literature be a potlatch if one also admits, following Freud again, that nothing in life is gratuitous, except death?[186] Barthes admits: "For the text, nothing is gratuitous except its own destruction: not to write, not to write again, except to be eternally recuperated."[187] Similarly, the final verdict in Lamentations appears to be that of death.

Jouissance then brings together the concept of the relation between survival and death, between pain and pleasure, invoking the idea that at the extreme of one there is always the other. And so, one cannot be certain of this verdict of death, after all it may be nothing but an appearance. There could be a light at the end of the tunnel, only the melancholic subject does not know, rather all he or she can see is a Black Sun.

Je suis le ténébreux, le veuf, l'inconsolé
Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie;
Ma seule étoile est morte, et mon luth constellé
Porte le soleil noir de la mélancolie

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[185] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 135.

[186] Barthes, *The Pleasure of The Text*, 23-4. In this section of the book Barthes, who admits he is following Freud here, is playing with the very ideas of pleasure, luxury excess, and wealth on the one hand, and death on the other; how can these issues be resolved with each other? Barthes does not seem to provide an answer, and indeed, there does not seem to be one.

[187] Ibid., 24.

I am saturnine, bereft, disconsolate,
The Prince of Aquitaine whose tower has crumbled;
My lone star is dead, and my bespangled lute
Bears the black sun of melancholia.[188]

For Kristeva, the "Black Sun" metaphor fully "sums up the blinding force of the despondent mood—an excruciating, lucid affect asserts the inevitability of death, which is death of the loved one and of the self that identifies with the former."[189] She argues that the metaphor should be read as the borderline experience of the psyche struggling against dark asymbolia, rather than "a para-scientific description of physical or chemical reality."[190] So on the one hand, the metaphor is merely a description of melancholia, a light without representation. But on the other hand it represents the attempt of the sufferer to inhabit discourse meaningfully once again. "Nerval's introspection seems to indicate that *naming the sun* locates him on the threshold of a crucial experience, on the divide between appearance and disappearance, abolishment and song, nonmeaning and signs."[191] That is, it represents perfectly that melancholic writing is forever in a state of interruption: it represents a middle ground, both meaning and not meaning. Melancholia, in one extreme form, verges on psychosis, a total failure of the subject to form an identity in the symbolic (like the subject who can only construe metaphors literally and thus cannot properly play), though it must remain on the verge. Tod Linafelt applies this idea of melancholia to Lamentations noting that melancholia, as the perpetual state of interruption, preserves mourning as force; it impugns "both an optimism that imagines to have paid its debt to loss, as well as a

[188] First stanza of the poem *El Desdichado* (The Disinherited) by Gérard de Nerval as quoted and translated by Julia Kristeva in *Black Sun*, 140.
[189] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 151.
[190] Ibid., 152
[191] Ibid, 151.

nihilism that acknowledges no debt to begin with."[192] In terms of the metaphor of the Black Sun, we might note that it is the belief that, behind the darkness, the Sun exists at all.

The Positive Benefits of Melancholia

The Freudian definition of melancholia asserts that it can only be differentiated from mourning in that mourning is a healthier process that leads to an ending, while melancholia unhealthily persists. From this perspective, there is a demand that one give up the lost-love object and the pain of loss, and paradoxically this leads to the guilt, hatred, and ambivalence of emotions in the melancholic subject that classical accounts of psychoanalysis have given us. Generally speaking, this is the model of mourning that our culture seems to have adopted. Kristeva, however (like Linafelt), takes a rather unorthodox view that focuses on some of the positive benefits of melancholia. For her, melancholia is a discourse to be learned, rather than strictly a pathology to be treated. She asserts that as often as literature may flow out of the emotion of love (or *Eros,* the creation of bonds) it also flows out of depression and melancholia (that is, *Thanatos*, the disintegration of bonds). Kristeva elaborates further: "if there is no writing that is not amorous, there is no imagination that is not, overtly or secretly, melancholy."[193] Depression is at the threshold of creativity, and when it becomes creative and has been given a name it is already in the process of being overcome.

This is why exile, like matricide, is a vital necessity for writing. Kristeva believes that the imaginative capability of Western humanity is the ability to transfer meaning to the very place where it was lost in death and/or non-meaning. It is our imagination and our search to find words for our pain, and our estrangement, that gives us this ability. Just as much as we ask ourselves how we can survive death, we should ask how we can survive life. For, to some extent, survival

[192] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 143.
[193] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 6.

is the problem, bringing with it the burden of memory placed on us by the dead. The poet of Lamentations, laden with this burden, perhaps exemplifies the "one" that Kristeva speaks of when she asserts:

> This is a survival of idealization—the imaginary constitutes a miracle, but it is at the same time its shattering: a self-allusion, nothing but dreams and words, words, words...It affirms the almightiness of temporal subjectivity—the one that knows enough to speak until death comes.[194]

We can survive melancholia, Lamentations is evidence of this. But what type of a survival is it? For Linafelt the survival of Lamentations is a limited survival, a survival under threat, a survival that "is random and infinitely precarious."[195] Perhaps the best evidence that Lamentations survives is that it still speaks, in the full knowledge that its words may mean or not, for the day it ceases to speak it dies. But who speaks? And who listens? It is to this issue that I will turn my attention in the next and final chapter.

[194] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 103.
[195] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 145.

CHAPTER 3: THE SPEAKING VOICE(S)

"Writing's case is grave."
--Jacques Derrida

"I don't dream when I sleep, but when I am writing."
--Stig Dagerman

Derrida entitled his lecture "Specters of Marx" without at first realizing how many ghosts were haunting the texts of Marx, and without even remembering that the very first sentence of the *Communist Manifesto* reads: "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism."[196] Without consciously having done so, I too must have already suspected that there were ghosts waiting for me in Lamentations. This quote from Cixous keeps coming back to me (as if it is a *revenant* itself): "To begin (writing, living) we must have death." I would speculate that at least one way the phrase may be interpreted is that we must have death *present* in our literature in some way, either explicitly or implicitly (death in our literature or literature in our death). Of course, this is something that "we" may not be able to control at all. (Derrida notes that ghosts do not simply appear, rather they are always a *revenant*, a thing that returns, and one cannot control a specter's comings and goings, for it always begins by coming back).[197] I am reminded again of Cixous who tries to explain this mystery in this way: "We always have the belief and the illusion that we are the ones writing, that we are the ones dreaming. Clearly this isn't true. We are not having the dream, the dream has us..."[198] It is in the spirit of dreaming and secrets that Cixous also writes: "When choosing a text I am called: I obey the call of certain texts or I am rejected by others. The texts that call me have different voices. But they all have one voice in common, they

[196] Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (trans. Samuel Moore; London: Electric Book Co., 2001), 6.
[197] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (trans. Peggy Kamuf; New York: Routledge, 1994), 11.
[198] Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, 98.

all have, with their differences, a certain music that I am attuned to, and that's the secret."[199] The secret is unknowable, or all you need to know is that there is a secret, but that you will never know what it is about.

Similarly, I do not know exactly why I chose to write on Lamentations, and I still do not know, though there must have been something calling me to it. There must have been some sort of ghost to conjure, but to conjure *away* or to conjure *with*? What did the voices say to me and in whose voice did they speak, what tune were they playing? I cannot answer these questions either. All I know is that I keep *coming back* to the text (as if, for the first time), and the secret remains a secret. And now, more than ever, I am convinced that Lamentations is a text crawling with specters and ghosts, a crowd of revenants wait for us there: "shrouds, errant souls, clanking of chains in the night, groaning, chilling bursts of laughter, and all those heads, those invisible heads that look at us."[200] I will examine these ghosts in relation to the much debated issue of the speaking voices and other spectral aspects of Lamentations.

The Issue

City.
City.
How mourn a city
whose people are dead and whose dead are alive
in the heart.

I vow by you today.
We will not speak, for better or for worse,
of a world that went to ruin. Oh terror—
how will this passage of our lives
be told now?[201]

[199] Ibid., 5.
[200] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 133.
[201] Abba Kovner, *Selected Poems* (trans. S. Kaufman and N. Orchan; London: Penguin Modern European Poets, 1971), 40.

The issue of the speaking voices in Lamentations arises from several different features of the text. For one, there is the constant variation in the use of pronouns, both in gender and in number. A secondary aspect is the frequent shifts in perspective or attitude toward Jerusalem's Fate, the guilt of the people, etc. Finally, there are several places where others are quoted, for example Lam 2:12, in which the voice of the infants are said to cry out to their mothers asking "Where is bread and wine?"[202] These quotations not only add more viewpoints, they also pose a problem in that the reader can never be sure who is quoting whom.

Thus, the single largest difficulty concerning this issue is that different commentators find different voices, and identify these voices in different ways. For example, Wiesmann finds six voices: Zion (1:9c, 11c-15b, 16, 18-22; 2:11-12, 20-22; 3:48-51, 59-66; 4:3-6, 7-10), a narrator (1:1-6, 7-9b, 10-11b, 15c, 17; 2:1-10, 13-17; 4:1-2, 11-12; 5:11-14), the people (2:18-19; 3:34-38, 42-47; 4:17-20), Jeremiah (3:1-33, 39-41, 52-58; 4:13-16, 21-22), and two choirs (one in 5:1-5, 15-18 and the other in 5:6-10, 18-22).[203] Lanahan finds five: a reporter (1:1-11b, 15c, 17; 2:1-19), Zion (1:9c, 11c-22; 2:20-22), a defeated soldier (ch. 3), a bourgeois (ch. 4), and the community as a whole (ch. 5).[204] Provan, however, only finds evidence to warrant three: the main speaker (narrator who appears intermittently throughout the book), Zion (appearing in chs. 1 and 2), and the people of Zion (appearing in chs. 4 and 5 and perhaps briefly in ch. 3).[205] Finally, Lee finds four voices in Lamentations: the dominant voices of Jeremiah and "Jerusalem's poet," and two minor voices which work in dialogue but present a different viewpoint from the dominant voices.[206]

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[202] See Knut M. Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem and the Drama of Her Bereavement in Lamentations" Pp. 129-69 in *Zion, City of Our God* (eds. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

[203] Iain Provan, *Lamentations* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 6-7.

[204] William Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations," *JBL* 93 (1974): 41-9.

[205] Provan, *Lamentations*, 6-7

[206] C.W. Miller, "The Book of Lamentations in Recent Research." *CurBS* 1 (2002): 9-29 (18).

These examples show the impossibility of coming to any agreement concerning the exact number of speaking voices, along with the equally impossible task of identifying each of these speaking voices. Still, it is clear that there is not just one single voice in Lamentations. The voice of Daughter Zion in Lam 1:9c, 11c-22 compared to the reporter/narrator in Lam 1:1-11b is the most obvious example of this. Thus, in probably the most thorough work on the speaking voices in Lamentations, Knut M. Heim realizes that questions such as "Whose voice is the author's?" "Who is speaking in each particular section?" or "Which voice is the 'true' voice of the narrator?" are virtually impossible to answer.[207] He makes the important observation that the lack of scholarly consensus on how many speaking voices there are in Lamentations and who each speaking voice might be may not be caused by flaws in different analyses as such, but rather the problem may lie with the text itself.[208] I find myself in agreement with Heim here, as I intend to show in this chapter that this is not only a "problem" of Lamentations in particular but it is an issue found in all writing. However, Heim seems to fall into the same trap that he sees others in, as the latter half of his essay begins as such:

> Since a clear identification of speakers seems impossible, the different sections in this inventory refer to utterances rather than speakers. Each utterance will be discussed with regard to the textual features which are particularly relevant to its contribution to the dialogue, and thus the treatment of specific utterances may differ in length...The analyses take particular account of the grammatical number of the speakers, changes of addresses within specific utterances, changes of addressees from one utterance to another, and modifications of perspective and tone.[209]

Heim goes on to cite a total of nineteen different utterances in Lamentations! Furthermore, many of the utterances are divided into sub-units, sometimes as many as four.[210] It seems as if all Heim

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[207] Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem,"146.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid., 147.
[210] It is not necessary to summarize each utterance, but it might be beneficial to look at Heim's dissection of ch. 3 as an example. The first utterance in ch. 3, which is the twelfth utterance so far in Lamentations by Heim's count, is a male individual (possibly the narrator) who tells of his sufferings and the utterance lasts for the first thirty-nine verses. Utterance 12a (v. 18) is the individual quoting himself; utterance 12b (vv.22-3) is the individual

does is replace the term "speaking voices" with "utterances," as he goes on to attempt to differentiate between them and describe/identify who is speaking.

However, this is not to say that Heim and the others cited above have not contributed important insights into the issue of the speaking voices in Lamentations. Heim makes a strong case for the importance of personification as the most important literary device in the book of Lamentations. And Lanahan, especially, has provided the significant observation that the attempt to identify these speaking voices is a *stylistic* concern, and is not to be confused with the historical judgement of authorship.[211] Adele Berlin furthers this idea and states: "the voice in chapter 3 may sound like a survivor's, but there is no reason to conclude that an actual survivor wrote the chapter."[212] That is, even if (hypothetically) one was fully aware who the author of Lamentations was, each speaking voice is something separate from the author and to stipulate that only one of these voices (usually the reporter of Lam 1:1-11b or the survivor of Lam 3) is the "sincere mode" of expression used by the poet is a misreading of the text.[213] Indeed, it is a *grave* misreading of any text.

Prosopopeia and Paul de Man

Before diving into the main thesis of the chapter and explaining how I will interpret the speaking voices in Lamentations through the lens of the melancholic theories of Abraham and

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quoting what appears to be a fragment of hymnic praise; utterance 12c (v. 24) is when the individual reports his avowal of confidence; utterance 12d (vv. 25-39) is when the individual makes a number of instructional statements which are directed, presumably, at his community.[210] Utterance 13 (3:40-51) is a communal voice which can be separated into three sub-units: 13a (vv.40-1) is a first person plural (cohortative) addressing the community; 13b (vv.42-7) is the Jerusalem community (or a significant part of it) responding to the preceding call to prayer; 13c (vv.48-51) is the narrator (again) in the first person singular describing his pain at the plight of his community.[210] Utterance 14 (3:52-66) is a narrator, whose addresses the Lord in the fashion of a psalm of praise, it is separated into four different sections: 14a (vv.52-4) is the narrator in the first person singular describing his affliction at the hands of unspecified enemies; 14b (v. 54b) is a petitioner evaluating his desperate situation' 14c (v. 56) is the narrator reporting past prayers in which he had asked the Lord for relief from his sufferings; finally 14d (v. 57) is the narrator's report of the Lord's response to his prayers, "Fear not!"

[211] Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice,"41.

[212] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 6.

[213] Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice," 41.

Torok, and Derrida, I would like to add another literary term among those already offered that I think best describes the multiple voices in Lamentations: prosopopeia. For Paul de Man (and then later for Derrida) prosopopeia is not just one trope amongst others, but rather the "master trope of poetic discourse," or "the very figure of the reader and of reading."[214] It is the figure by which, for example, "poets address and lend their voice to something or someone inanimate, such as an ancestor or literary precursor, so that a sort of dialogue can be established with the dead."[215] The Roman rhetorician Quintilian has this to say of prosopopeia:

> This figure gives both variety and animation to eloquence, in a wonderful degree. By means of it, we display the thoughts of our opponents, as they themselves would do in a soliloquy, but our inventions of that sort will meet with credit only so far as we represent people saying what it is not unreasonable to suppose that they may have meditated; and so far as we introduce our own conversations with others, or those of others among themselves, with an air of plausibility; and when we invent persuasions, or reproaches, or complaints, or eulogies, or lamentations, and put them into the mouths of characters likely to utter them. In this kind of figure, it is allowable even to bring down the gods from heaven, evoke the dead, and give voices to cities and states.[216]

This quote from Quintilian shows just how much the text of Lamentations fits this description, whether it is the voice of Daughter Zion, the גבר of chapter 3, or the communal voice found in chs. 4 and 5. The main idea that the quote points to though, and what de Man chooses to focus on in his discussion of the trope, is that prosopopeia is a figure which evokes the dead and gives them voice; prosopopeia is "the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech."[217] De Man is adamant (or so it appears) that this figure is a *fiction*, for, of course, the dead cannot speak and he therefore refers to the trope as a "fiction of the voice-from-beyond-the-

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[214] Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 48 and 45.

[215] Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 112.

[216] Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* (Ed. Lee Honeycutt; Trans., John Selby Watson; 2006. Iowa State U. <http://honeyl.public.iastate.edu/quintilian/citing.html/> (6 August 2010).

[217] Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 75-6.

grave."[218] That is, he makes explicit that the words of the dead can only be provided by the living. And yet, at the same time de Man understands that all readers expose themselves to an insane cycle of intelligibility and therefore actually buy into this fiction that something or someone other than ourselves (the living) can speak. He explains:

> To read is to understand, to question, to know, to forget, to erase, to deface, to repeat—that is to say, the endless prosopopeia by which the dead are made to have a face and voice which tells the allegory of their demise and allows us to apostrophize them in our turn. No degree of knowledge can ever stop this madness, for it is the madness of words.[219]

Thus, de Man seems to be caught in a predicament, unable to find a way to embrace the fiction of prosopopeia.

If the subject matter of our material is not enough to leave the poet and the reader in a fit of melancholia, then, according to de Man, language will suffice. But what if one could move beyond de Man and assert that the dead actually can speak? "*Is it possible to envisage some sort of mediation between the worlds of the living and the dead without lapsing into mysticism and wish-fulfillment*?"[220] I would assert that the psychoanalytical work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, particularly their theory of phantoms and ghosts, answers this question in the affirmative. In keeping with the overall theme of this paper, which seeks to interpret Lamentations as a symptom of melancholia, I will analyse the speaking voices in light of the work of Abraham and Torok, particularly in the way that Jacques Derrida understood and used their work.

Abraham and Torok and the Phantom

Abraham and Torok's theory of ghosts is based on Freud's theory on mourning and melancholia. The depressed subject conceals an aggression toward the lost object, and

[218] Ibid., 77.
[219] De Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 122.
[220] Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects*, 111. Italics mine.

complaints against oneself, like the widow who complains of her former inadequacy as a wife, may actually be complaints against the other (the lost-object/husband). These activities are based on what Freud termed *identification*. In the "work of mourning," one accepts the dead and bit by bit each memory and hope that bound the libido to the lost love-object is brought up and hyper-cathected until the detachment of the libido from it is accomplished.[221] Abraham and Torok call this normal mourning process "introjection." The term introjection has a complex history in psychoanalysis and thus takes on a variety of roles in different authors, but to Abraham and Torok it has central importance. Nicholas Rand says this of Abraham and Torok's concept of introjection:

> A preliminary definition might be that it is a constant process of acquisition and assimilation, the active expansion of our potential to accommodate our own emerging desires and feelings as well as the events and influences of the external world.[222]

Introjection, then, is the psychic equivalent of growth, "of the passage from suckling to chewing, from crawling to walking and running, from baby talk to words and full-fledged speech."[223] But it is not introjection that I wish to focus on here, but rather the failure to introject, referred to by Abraham and Torok as "incorporation." Incorporation is when there is no internalisation (of the dead), that is the work of mourning has failed or is incomplete in some way. It occurs when a trauma is so great that one cannot possibly digest it. Thus, the dead (or the lost object(s) of love) are taken into us, but they are not assimilated; they are swallowed whole, so to speak. This traumatic experience results in the sense of harbouring a foreign entity, a "something" that gives rise to inexplicable feelings, and is something radically foreign to the ego. Abraham and Torok call this a "phantom": the presence of a dead (love) object in the living ego. The phantom is

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[221] See ch. 1 above "Freud and Melancholia."

[222] Nicholas Rand, introduction to *The Shell and the Kernel*, by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (trans. Nicholas Rand; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 9.

[223] Rand, "Introduction," 9.

enclosed in a crypt, which is the body of the melancholic subject; we become a sort of graveyard for ghosts. They explain: "inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject...the objectal correlative of the loss is buried alive in the crypt as a full-fledged person. A whole world of unconscious fantasy is created, one that leads its own separate and concealed existence."[224] The interred object unsettles the subject from "its hideaway in the imaginary crypt," and sometimes "in the dead of night...the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt."[225]

Specifically, for the purpose of this paper it is important to note that our speech (that is, the speech of the living) can often be ventriloquized by this other, inside us. It might be helpful to think of quotation marks then, as teeth, about to devour the speech that they encompass. Abraham and Torok offer this advice when speaking in terms of the phantom: "It takes some time to understand [that the analysand] speaks and lives someone else's words and affects."[226] For the only way to truly discover this incorporation is to understand that the object one incorporates is the *speech* of the other—precisely a non-object, a pattern, a model, and thus, in being able to receive the other's words, to assimilate, to repeat, and reproduce them is to become like the object.[227]

Recent trauma studies, such as Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*, assert that traumatic experiences are lived as if they were happening to someone else, so that they do not seem to belong to the traumatised subject.[228] Writers such as de Man would endorse such a view, though he would likely assert that the real trauma is language itself and thus one always needs to use prosopopeia as a type of distancing figure. However, as one can see from the argument

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[224] Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel* (trans. Nicholas Rand; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 130.

[225] Ibid., 131.

[226] Ibid., 150.

[227] Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 26.

[228] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

above, Abraham and Torok take this assertion even further arguing that the trauma that affects the melancholic subject may indeed literally be someone else's and thus expressed with their words, for it could very well arise from the unconscious re-activation of an other's experience:

> We tend to assimilate trauma to an orgasm-like experience originating in the rapid opening of the unconscious. Yet it is not certain that such an orgasm, even as an analogy, is involved in the trauma. On the contrary, what is more probable is that there is an opening, real or fictive, of the Unconscious during or after the trauma, with the power to awaken a phantom which is working away inside it.[229]

Abraham and Torok provide an answer to Freud's bewilderment as to why the melancholic subject often does not feel ashamed or guilty of the reproaches it makes, namely, that often *it is not the subject speaking*.

Derrida and Specters

This brings us to how Derrida understands the work of Abraham and Torok. Abraham and Torok believe melancholia and incorporation are pathological, a refusal of loss and an attempt to keep the dead alive within, sealed up in a type of psychic crypt.[230] They assert that incorporation is the refusal to mourn, it is "the refusal to reclaim as our own the part of ourselves that we placed in what we lost; incorporation is the refusal to acknowledge the full import of the loss, a loss that, if recognized as such, would effectively transform us."[231] In this sense Abraham and Torok follow Freud, who viewed melancholy as a type of mourning gone wrong, an aberration (see above ch. 1). Derrida, however, was dissatisfied with this view of mourning. In his recasting of Abraham and Torok's views on mourning, he privileges incorporation over introjection.[232] In his foreword to Abraham and Torok's book *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* he asserts: "everything is organized in order that he [the dead person] remain a missing person in

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[229] Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, *L'Ecore et le noyau* (Paris: Aubier Flammarion, 1978), 412.

[230] J. Kirkby, "'Remembrance of the Future': Derrida on Mourning," *Social Semiotics* 16, no. 3 (2006): 461-72.

[231] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, 127.

[232] J. Kirkby, "Remembrance of the Future," 467.

both cases, having vanished, as other, from the operation, whether it be mourning or melancholy. Departed, nowhere to be found, *atopique*."[233] Incorporation acknowledges the other as other, while the so-called normal process of mourning, introjection, merely assimilates the other into the self committing a second type of death, this time with memory and emotional attachment. Derrida's model of mourning adopts the concept of incorporation; he attempts to open the doors of the crypt and instantiates an ongoing conversation with the dead. The refusal to mourn (which in conventional psychoanalytical description is identified with "abnormal" mourning) is for Derrida an inseparable part of mourning. There is no such thing as normal mourning unless it is granted that the normal is impossible. For mourning to fully succeed, we should be able to get over the loss of the other in question. Yet, if we can get over the lost loved object, something seems to have failed in the mourning process. One need only recall how too easy a recovery from a death of a lost one feels like a betrayal of the person lost. From this perspective, a truly appropriate mourning would be a mourning we could not accomplish, one that continues until our death. Derrida's claim is that if mourning succeeds, it fails, and it must fail in order to succeed, and in this sense, mourning is impossible.[234] Derrida has this to say about the experience of melancholia:

> We can only live this experience in the form of an aporia: the aporia of mourning and of prosopopeia, where the possible remains impossible. Where *success fails*, where faithful interiorization bears the other and constitutes him in me (in us), at once living and dead...And inversely, the *failure succeeds*: an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us.[235]

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[233] Jacques Derrida, "Foreword: *Fors*: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok" in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (trans. Nicholas Rand; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), xi-lxxii.

[234] Penelope Deutscher, *How to Read Derrida* (London: Granta Books, 2005), 71.

[235] Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires for Paul de Man* (trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, and Eduardo Cadava; New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 35.

Thus, according to Derrida, *melancholia turns out to be a form of prosopopeia*. For in melancholia, in some sense, the dead speak, always through the trope of prosopopeia. The melancholic subject, unable (or unwilling, according to Derrida) to give up its attachment to what has been lost, must then make itself the forum where living and dead converse. (Of course, there may be a devastating price to be paid in terms of the subject's own stability, or, in the case of Lamentations, in terms of the unity and coherence of the text). Furthermore, in melancholia, speaking positions are unstable and unreliable, and thus the question of who is speaking and of how or whether the dead survive in the discourse of the living is a major concern of Derrida's corpus of writing.

Derrida concludes that it is an ethical call for the living, the subjects that have lost love-objects, to speak not only *of* and *as* the dead, but *with* the dead, in dialogue. He suggests that it is a sign of our fidelity with the dead to keep them alive, as long as we also acknowledge each time that they are gone forever outside of us, for it would be unfaithful to delude oneself into believing that the other living in us is living in him or herself.[236] Since they can only live in us, through our speech and our memory, they should be thought of instead as a living dead (which is what Derrida refers to as a ghost, similar to, but not identical with Abraham and Torok's concept of the phantom). Thus, the voice and the presence of the lost love object which is conjured up in melancholic symptomatology becomes the enactment of an ongoing

[236] An example of this could be found in Jorge Luis Borges assertion that after Socrates death, Plato invented the Platonic dialogue so as to hear his master's voice once again. Borges notes that perhaps Plato's main purpose of the dialogues was to have the illusion that, in spite of Socrates having taken the hemlock, he was still accompanying him, and speaking to him.

love story, which should not simply be triumphed over as Freud and others have suggested.

The Ghosts of Lamentations

I propose that one understand the multiple speaking voices in Lamentations as several "phantoms" who speak to and with each other. Incorporation has resulted from the tragedy of the exile. That is, the community/poet did not introject the work of mourning in relation to the devastation of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.[237] However, rather than analysing every speaking voice in the text, I will focus on a few examples and passages which display that such an undertaking is impossible.

As Lanahan remarks, the most obvious example of the existence of a persona in the book of Lamentations appears in the first two chapters during which Jerusalem speaks in her own (feminine) voice. However, Daughter Zion's voice does not appear (arguably) until 1.9 when the grammatical voice switches from third person description to first person experience. The verse reads:

> Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembers not her end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction: for the enemy has magnified himself.

The existence of this easily identified persona provokes in the reader a reflex awareness of the existence of the first voice found predominantly throughout the first two chapters of Lamentations, namely that of a reporter describing the state of Jerusalem from the perspective of an observer, himself tormented by the wreckage of the city. Of course, it is a mistake committed all too often to assume that this narrator is the voice of "the poet," rather than another voice among the many in the text. It is important to avoid a strict association between the speakers

[237] I mentioned earlier that when I use the term poet I refer collectively to the community that likely formed Lamentations together writing it in fragments that were eventually brought together. But to be more specific, I was referring then to only the *living* community, that is, the survivors of the destruction.

identified in the text with the authors, witnesses, or historical persons (another example being the traditional association of the prophet Jeremiah as the author of the book). However, precisely because it is impossible to distinguish between the real author and the implied author of the text, imagining the voice of the objective narrator as the voice of the poet makes as much sense as anything else. It is in this sense that commentators such as Berlin have arrived full circle to identify the voice of Jeremiah as the dominant one in Lamentations. Thus, Jeremiah is a poetic persona and one of the several voices of the text, the implied author in a literary sense. She elaborates: "If we hear a speaking voice in the book, and that voice uses the language and imagery of Jeremiah, who better to imagine uttering those words than Jeremiah, the same persona of the book of Jeremiah, the prophet of destruction and exile par excellence?"[238]

I find myself agreeing with Berlin but would point out that I see no difference in saying Jeremiah wrote the book in a historical sense or that the persona of Jeremiah created by the similarly title prophetic book became incorporated (in the sense of Abraham and Torok) by the poet of Lamentations. In any case, the whole distinction between implied author and "real" author inevitably becomes blurred, so much so that the difference between the two is often nothing at all.

Zion as a Ghost (Town)

Thus, when Jerusalem is supposedly said to interrupt the narrator in this passage we must ask: Who is speaking? Is it Zion speaking for herself? On the one hand we cannot accept this explanation, at least from the perspective that the city cannot be the author, and it must be an "invention" of the poet (conscious or not). However, if we accept that it is the so-called poet,

[238] Berlin, *Lamentations*, 32.

professing his "literary" ideas on Zion and what the poet imagined she might have said if she could speak, then we must, from a literary sense, wilfully suspend our disbelief and accept that it *is* Daughter Zion speaking for herself and giving voice to her suffering, in order that the text function properly as poetry.

The issue becomes a little more interesting when one looks into the form-critical analysis of these chapters. Biblical scholarship has had a difficult time deciding what genre Lam 1 and 2 actually are. The initial form-critical designation of these chs. along with ch. 4 is that they are dirges, or funeral songs (קינות); this is largely due to the work of Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, who designated the chapters as such.[239] However, the chapters have also been regarded as communal laments, individual laments, or a mix of both.[240] Hedwig Jahnow sets the chapters in the broad context of dirges as attested in folk literature, and recognizes the genre's close association with mourning practices.[241] Westermann notes the scarce amount of primary literature in the Hebrew Bible concerning the lament dirges, as only two have been preserved as they would actually have been spoken:

> Then the king intoned a dirge for Abner:
> "Must Abner die as a fool dies?
> Your hands were not bound,
> Your feet were not fettered
> As one falls because of scoundrels, you have fallen." (2 Sam 3:33-34)
>
> The people whom you have trusted have led you astray
> And have overcome you;
> Now your feet are stuck in the mire
> They leave you in the lurch! (Jer 38:22)[242]

[239] Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen de religiösen Lyrik Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 136.
[240] See Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 35-36, and Westermann, *Lamentations*, 1-9.
[241] Hedwig Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung* (BZAW 36; 1923).
[242] Westermann, *Lamentations*, 1.

Thus, what scholars know of dirges is based mostly on inference from their secondary usage in the Hebrew Bible.[243] Despite the scarcity of material, scholars have been able to glean some common motifs from these texts: "an announcement that a death has occurred, a summons to mourn, a thematic statement of finality, a contrast motif, a reference to the impact of the demise upon immediate bystanders, and some description of the general state of distress."[244] According to this line of thinking, the funeral songs in Lamentations do not refer to a dead individual, but rather to the death of a nation, or city, that is, Jerusalem. But if one is to assume this, then Lamentations is a strange dirge indeed, for in the very text that bewails the death of the city, the city speaks.

In light of this, many commentators—acknowledging that Lam 1 and 2 do not perfectly fit the genre of dirge—argue that most of the chapters present a mixing of genres. Jahnow, for her part, concludes that the poems are primarily dirges that have borrowed ideas from the psalms of lament in order to make a theological statement about the death they describe.[245] Westermann, on the other hand, asserts that chs. 1 and 2 are more adequately classified as communal laments; ch. 2, in fact, belongs nearly exclusively to the category as only the mournful cry at the beginning belongs to the dirge genre.[246] Provan agrees with Westermann that the chapters contain a mix of dirge of lament, but argues that the laments are individual and not communal.[247]

Interestingly, when scholars have attempted to separate the genres in chs. 1 and 2, they have tended to do so in relation to the change of speaking voices. Otto Eissfeldt argues that Lam 1:1-11 belong primarily to the genre of dirge, while 9c and 11c-16 are in the style of lament

[243] Some relevant texts are Amos 5:2, Jer 9:9; Isa 1:21-23; and Ezek 26:17-18. Westermann notes that 2 Sam 1:19-27 and Jer 9:16-20 are not genuine dirges, but rather artistic imitations of dirges.

[244] Westermann, *Lamentations*, 2.

[245] Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied*, 118 and 170. She asserts that chs. 1, 2, and 4 of Lamentations are a "modification of the dirge" and a "reshaping of a profane genre into religious verse...under the influence of the popular psalms of lamentation."

[246] Westermann, *Lamentations*,148.

[247] Provan, *Lamentations*, 34.

(whether it be communal or individual).[248] With Eissfeldt one gets the sense that this mixture of genres is not haphazard, but rather very purposeful. One such commentator that makes this explicit is Tod Linafelt, who asserts that this combination of genres expresses the fundamental dynamic of survival literature", "the paradox of life in death and death in life."[249] According to Linafelt, the primary element that grounds all dirges is missing in Lamentations: a death, or at least the announcement of a death. The scene of death implied by the dirge (specifically the opening cry איכה "Alas!") is undercut by the presence of Zion in the latter half of ch. 1, which opens out toward life, for while the genre of lament arises out of pain its primary aim is life and not death. Linafelt continues: "Not only is the one who should be dead alive, but she is speaking, and speaking vigorously."[250] He posits that even before the chapter switches voices, one is aware that Zion has in fact "survived."

But what does Linafelt mean when he says that Zion "survives" the dirge? Indeed, in the previous chapters of his book Linafelt goes to great lengths to show "that there are in fact different *versions* of survival."[251] Playing with the work of Derrida he notes that the prefix "sur" could be taken as "super," "hyper," "over," even "above," or "beyond." In this sense survival may take on the following diverse senses: "a reprieve or an afterlife, 'life after life,' or life after death, more life or more than life, and better."[252] I would suggest that this type of survival, which happens to be the very type of survival that Daughter Zion is described as exhibiting, is a very spectral type of survival. In other words, it is clear to me, contra Linafelt, that there is in fact a death in Lamentations, a very present corpse; in fact, there are many. However, building off the

[248] See Westermann, *Lamentations*, 117.
[249] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 37.
[250] Ibid., 38.
[251] Ibid., 22.
[252] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 31.

work of Abraham and Torok, I find no reason to assert that the dead cannot talk; indeed, they may even talk quite "vigorously."

Evidence that there is a corpse in Lamentations emerges as early as the opening section of ch. 1 in which Zion is described as being כאלמנה "like a widow." Of course, I am aware that this could be merely a metaphorical description of the lonely and abandoned state that Jerusalem is in. Nonetheless, it does imply a dead husband—but who is this dead husband then? The Dead Sea Scrolls appear to think that the dead husband is God, which is one viable option.[253] Hugh Pyper agrees that God is the dead husband but takes another approach as he reflects:

> Whose existence is most threatened in the book of Lamentations; whose survival is most in question? Zion survives, albeit as a raped and abandoned woman; the male voice of ch. 3 survives, imprisoned and abandoned though he is; the people of ch. 4 survive, though they find the condition intolerable. Surely what is at stake is whether God will survive, whether the people will follow their natural inclination to abandon the instrument of their own torture. God's survival is asserted, but what is asserted is often what is most questionable.[254]

Undeniably, God haunts the text of Lamentations. He is repeatedly called upon to intervene "see" (ראה) or to "pay attention to" (הביטה), though he never responds and remains silent, like the dead. Granted, the words of God are quoted once, by the narrator of ch. 3 who asserts that from the depths of the pit he called upon God and God responded: "Fear not!" But the point is that God is never fully present, never fully alive. God is the one voice that the poet cannot invoke, that he

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[253] 4Q179, a fragment of the first chapter of Lamentations begins:
[How] solitary [lies] the city,
...
The princess of all the peoples is desolate
Like a forsaken woman;
And all her [dau]ghters are forsak[en]
[like] a forsaken woman;
Like a woman hurt and forsaken
By her [husband].

[254] Pyper, "Reading Lamentations," 62

cannot "bring back" (to bear witness) in order to console or heal the other wounded voices of the text.[255]

The dead husband could also stand collectively for the people, or more adequately the absence of the people, perhaps in comparison to the crowds that the first speaker saw on some earlier visit.[256] Lanahan must have thought the same when he wonders: "the precise event which has turned the city into a *ghost town* is not identified here..."[257] By ghost town, I presume Lanahan refers to the idea that the city that once was full is now empty, empty of the people and things that once lived there, but full of their ghosts. Yet, the implication is just as strong (as far as I can tell) that the city too is a ghost. But really these two interpretations mean the same thing for Daughter Zion is nothing more than the personification of the inhabitants of the city. Nonetheless, if the metaphor is intended in this way, then it appears to have run out of control. Zion is a ghost. It seems like a simple enough statement, but a ghost that is a widow? A ghost that has lost her husband (God? the people?) who is a ghost himself? So who died first? Are there no more living people in Zion, just ghosts? But perhaps this is exactly what the metaphor is meant to convey, as the penultimate line of Daughter Zion asserts: "none survived or escaped" (2:22b).[258] But again, I must ask, what does it mean to "survive," and moreover, who precisely has survived?

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[255] To some commentators the silence of God is actually a relief. Carleen Mandolfo in her book *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (Semeia Studies 58. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) views Daughter Zion's voice in Lamentations as a reaction against the master narrative of the Hebrew Bible as displayed in other texts that employ the marriage metaphor between God and his people as collectively represented by feminine Zion. In these other texts (Jer 2-3 and Ezekiel 16 and 23, for example) Daughter Zion is rarely, if ever, given a voice, and she is always in a submissive position to her master Yahweh. So finally, here in Lamentations God is silent, so that there is room for the other/the poet/the feminine to speak. (The logic being that even the most abused of women, and in a patriarchal context also, has the right to mourn over her lost husband.)

[256] Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice," 42.

[257] Ibid. Italics mine.

[258] See Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 58.

From this perspective, the description of Daughter Zion in the opening chapters points to another corpse, and thus another ghost, namely, herself. Francis Landy, in his review of Linafelt's book, has this to say:

> The simile [that of Daughter Zion being 'like a widow"] poses as a poetic figure, but it does so only as a patent self-protection from the reality that her men have died. Zion is empty, "solitary" (1:1), *a ghost town, and like all ghost towns she is imbued with the uncanny. She is both dead and alive and grieving over herself.*[259]

This quote points to the crux of what I want to say in this chapter: that the dead can speak, and the so-called voice of Daughter Zion in Lamentations does not necessarily imply that she has not died. To be both dead and alive, to be both present and absent: this is a very spectral existence. So Daughter Zion may be a "survivor" in the sense of one who lives after life, but the term "survivor" remains ambiguous, suggesting that even ghosts are survivors too, ones who live beyond and after death.

Lamentations 3 and the ***גבר***

The predominant voice of chapter 3 offers another interesting example. The persona is that of a גבר, an "everyman," or a soldier/warrior, who has endured hard use. The voice protests that he was led into defeat by an officer (that is, God) who wished that he be defeated. He has

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[259] Francis Landy, review of Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book*, *JAAR* 71 (2003): 218-20. Italics mine. In the previous chapter I pointed out how Lamentations is an uncanny text in the sense that it is written from a perspective of exile. However, the quote from Landy refers to yet another sense of the uncanniness of this book: namely that the uncanny is ghostly. The sense of the uncanny that Freud evokes in his essay has to do with a coming back, a returning; in that the uncanny occurs when something is repressed and then later comes back to consciousness, much like a revenant. It is no coincidence that Derrida thought to subtitle his book on Marxism as "Marx—*das Unheimliche*" (see *SpecterSpecters of Marx*, 174).

Moreover, the uncanny is concerned with the strange, weird, and mysterious: it is a crisis of the proper (Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny*, 1). It evokes the feeling similar to that of the phantom that lives within the ego, both part of oneself and something completely other. Kristeva herself notes that the uncanny is the key concept in exploring this sense of foreignness:

> With Freud indeed, foreignness, an uncanny one, creeps into the tranquility of reason itself, and, without being restricted to madness, beauty, or faith anymore than to ethnicity or race, irrigates our very speaking-being, estranged by other logics, including the heterogeneity of biology...Henceforth, we know that we are foreigners to ourselves, and it is with this help of that sole support that we can attempt to live with others. (Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez; New York, Columbia University Press, 1991), 170).

suffered fatigue and hunger (v.2) and has become a laughing stock to the peoples (v.5), but somehow it is with his voice that one finds the most hopeful passages in Lamentations. It is as if even the implied voice of the text has a split personality. However, one must not unduly emphasize these hopeful verses. The dominant imagery throughout the chapter is that of encirclement, which the voice returns to in its final verses: the speaker has been imprisoned, trapped in a drowning pit, surrounded by his enemies. Lanahan comments: "the guilt-ridden" גבר can escape neither by prayer nor by the subterfuge of self-exoneration... No delusion can release him from the inescapable trap, his own memory."[260] He continues: "If a man's memory constitutes his identity, the pit from which the veteran cannot rescue himself, is himself."[261] The reader begins to identify the voice as that of a survivor. Yet, the voice portrays the idea that survival is a burden; the one who writes is the one who has survived, but our writing is traced with this burden of our memory of the dead that we carry with us. Upon further reflection we might note that the so-called "survivor" of ch. 3 is just another phantom, a crypt, living in the real-life poet (whoever that may be). So again we ask: "Is the voice of the survivor actually a survivor?" Or to use Abraham and Torok's terminology, "Who is the crypt here, and whose voice is being ventriloquized?"

The question becomes even more complicated when we have a speaking voice which utters the impossible, as in Lam 3:52-4 which reads:

> They hunted me like a bird, my enemies, without cause. They ended my life in a pit and they cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over my head; I said: "I am cut off/exterminated.

Are we to take these lines literally? Or are they just metaphors (as if something could be *just* a metaphor)? The last clause נגזרתי "I am cut off/exterminated" brings up the issue of quotation

[260] Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice," 46.
[261] Ibid.

marks. The so-called invented voice of the גבר quotes himself, and translators usually put this speech in quotation marks. But why are the words of the גבר himself not in quotation marks? If one is to think of quotation marks as teeth, as I have suggested above, then who is swallowing whose words here? For Derrida, quotation marks point out the inherent instability of any text. When a reader approaches a text he or she needs a border, an edge, or at least some lines of demarcation; quotation marks are on example of the reader and writers attempt to control the text. And yet, they are arbitrary. Derrida remarks: "When a text quotes and requotes, with or without quotation marks, when it is written on the brink, you start, or indeed have already started, to lose your footing. You lose sight of any line of demarcation between a text and what is outside of it."[262]

In any case, beyond just the form of the text, the content of this last clause is also worth pondering. When the voice proclaims it has said "I am exterminated," then it is the equivalent of a subject asserting "I am dead," which Barthes has pointed out is *the* example of the impossible utterance.[263] But Derrida, playing off Barthes, wonders whether the subject's self-assertive "I am" also implies "I am dead" as he asserts that there are always traces left behind by the subject, and every "I am" may also mean "I died."[264] The subject is always unbalanced and fragmented, and, thus, Derrida points out the unyielding truth that there is no subject untouched by alterity. It is as if, to a certain extent, we are all acting out the part of Lacan's obsessional neurotic who poses the troubling question: "Am I alive or dead?" So while the lines in Lam 3:52-4 may be an impossible utterance, they are no more impossible than any other lines. Barthes begins his seminal essay "The Death of the Author" thus:

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[262] Jacques Derrida, "Living On: Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (trans. James Hulbert; New York: Continuum, 1979), 81-2.

[263] See Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* (ed. Pascale Anne-Brault and Michael Naas; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 64.

[264] Ibid., 65.

> In his story *Sarrasine* Balzac, describing a castrato disguised as a woman, writes the following sentence: '*This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings and her delicate sensibility*.' Who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story bent on remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author professing 'literary' ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing.[265]

The reader of Lamentations can follow the lead of Barthes and acknowledge that the question of "Who is speaking thus?" is an impossible question to answer in any text (admitting that one cannot distinguish between the varied voices of the text and the actual real-life poet is another way of saying (near) the same thing). To tie the insights of Barthes and Derrida together, I would point out that as far as speaking voices are concerned it becomes irrelevant to ask whether the one who speaks, or the one who can only speak through rhetorical figures, is actually dead or alive. For in regard to the speaking other, death only highlights what the other already was: namely, infinitely other, that in us which is other than ourselves. But furthermore, the speaking subject, the "I", is also foreign to us, and thus, not only are we strangers to the other(s) and the dead, but, because the dead live in us and are part of us, we are, in the words of Kristeva, "strangers to ourselves."

Lamentations 2:13

Perhaps the most interesting passage in Lamentations from the perspective that the dead can ventriloquize the voice of the living is Lam 2:13.

> What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter Zion? For vast as the sea is your ruin; who can heal you?

[265] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text* (trans. Stephen Heath; New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-8.

Heim notes that the poet is entering into dialogue with Daughter Zion: "not only can he [the poet] *speak* to fair Zion *from outside*, as someone who has a wider perspective on the suffering endured by everybody, but, more importantly, he is someone who can *listen* to Fair Zion."[266] These questions are categorized as utterance 8 in Heim's view, where the narrative voice is speaking as an interlocutor and thus speaking "between" and with the several voices of the text. I agree with Heim that there is a dialogical nature in the text of Lamentations, though I would press the point even further.[267]

The first verb of the verse אעידך presents both textual and semantic difficulties. The parallel verbs אדמה ("I compare") and אשוה ("I make like," or "I resemble") both have to do with comparison, and thus some commentators emend the text to read ערך (אערך),[268] believing this verb to be the basis of the Vulgate's "I compare".[269] (Yet, I hardly see how ערך makes more sense in this context though, and the emendation is based almost exclusively on the attempt to explain the Vulgate's translation). There is also the matter of the Kethiv (אעודך) and Qere (אעידך), though it is almost certain that the Qere should be opted for. In this case, the most literal translation might be that of the KJV which reads "What thing shall I take to witness for thee?" which immediately evokes the idea of a court and trial. Other versions offer a more dynamic translation, such as the NRSV's "What can I say for you?" or the NASB's "How shall I admonish you?" Interestingly, the verb can also mean "to invoke" (see Deut 4:26, 30:19, and 31:28). I am tempted to go even further and suggest that the phrase could be translated as "what can I conjure

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[266] Heim, "The Personification of Jerusalem," 143.

[267] Indeed, the same issues surrounding the "everyman" of ch.3 can be asked of Lam 2:13. Who is speaking? Is it the same narrator of that in chs. 1 and 2? Is it mother Zion attempting to console her daughter? One could even assert it is Daughter Zion speaking to herself, or even one of the many specters living in Daughter Zion.

[268] The verb ערך literally means "to arrange" or "to set in order," so the phrase could mean "to arrange words in order" or "to recount," which is probably what those who emend the text take it to mean in this context.

[269] See Delbert R. Hillers, *Lamentations* (ABD: New York: Doubleday, 1972), 39. Hillers points out that ערך is in parallel with דמה in Isa 40:18 and Ps 89:6/7 as evidence for this emendation.

up for you?" Who, or what, can the poet bring back (from the dead?) in order to speak about the suffering?

The short answer to this question is nobody and nothing. There are no witnesses, and the only ones who can bear witness to the pain in its fullest are those who are already dead. Elie Wiesel, in reaction to the holocaust states: "Those who have lived through the experience will never know; those who have will never tell; not really, not completely...The past belongs to the dead."[270] The text of Lamentations seems to, at least implicitly agree that no witness and no words can ever speak for Daughter Zion, evidenced by the fact that these rhetorical questions go unanswered. However, it is also clear that while the questions go unanswered, the text remains, and it speaks, offering a plethora of voices and witnesses. The poet understands the impossibility of both the need to bear witness and to speak but also the necessity and duty to do so. Giorgio Agamben, recalling the *Muselmann* of the holocaust, states: "Whoever assumes the charge of bearing witness in their name [i.e. the Muselmann, the dead] knows that he or she must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness."[271] Thus, the idea that the voices in Lamentations are *merely* a literary trope employed by the poet becomes increasingly difficult to understand. The survivor (that is, the poet) who speaks in the name of the dead is not merely imposing his own words on those who cannot speak; he is speaking as them, because he himself is divided and cannot claim any stable speaking voice. Agamben further explains, in a manner which almost completely agrees with the work of Abraham, Torok, and Derrida:

> Testimony takes place where the speechless one makes the speaking one speak and where the one who speaks bears the impossibility of speaking in his own speech, such that the silent and the speaking, the inhuman and the human enter into a zone of indistinction in

[270] As quoted in Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects*, 118.

[271] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen; New York: Zone Books, 1999), 34.

> which it is impossible to establish the position of the subject, to identify the "imagined substance" of the "I" and, along with it, the true witness.[272]

From this perspective, the questions of Lam 2:13, provide an excellent example of how to speak *with*, or better yet, to speak *for*, the dead (whether it is the metaphorical or literal dead makes no difference whatsoever). Derrida's play upon the word "for" in his foreword to, and elaboration, of Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*, may help to illuminate what it means to speak *for* the dead. The foreword is entitled, *Fors*: *The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok*. In the French expression *le for intérieur*, *for* refers to the inner heart. While in the plural *fors* (derived from the Latin *foris*) is an archaic expression meaning "except for, barring, save."[273] Thus, Barbara Johnson notes, the word *fors* means both "interiority" and "exteriority." So when Derrida states, "I think one writes for the dead,"[274] he is asserting that we let the dead speak to us (from outside), but also that we let the dead inside us speak. Jodey Castricano elaborates this point further as she notes that the English word "for" suggests that "one writes not only as an agent for the dead, but also that the dead *write in our place*."[275] The poet of Lamentations calls for a witness, for a phantom, from outside, though a phantom is already speaking in the place of the poet. So, in the case of the proper name, "one writes as the (still living) dead, in their name or in their memory, which is what Derrida implies when he says, "every name is the name of someone dead or, of a living someone whom it can do without.'"[276]

Indeed, the very idea of the phantom, which Abraham and Torok assert speaks in the manner of a ventriloquist, calls into question the notion of the integrity of the "I" since it is "alien

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[272] Ibid., 120.

[273] Jodey Castricano, *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 20.

[274] Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, and Translation* (ed. Christie V. McDonald; trans. Peggy Kamuf; New York: Shocken, 1985), 53.

[275] Castricano, *Cryptomimesis*, 20.

[276] Ibid.

to the subject who harbours it."[277] That the ego is equivalent to a ghost, or it is impossible to tell the difference between the two, leads to another one of Derrida's re-writings of the Cartesian Cogito, "'I am,' would mean 'I am haunted': I am haunted by myself who am (haunted by myself who am...and so forth)."[278] And if we agree that the phantom carries the ego as its mask, then we are left to conclude that the "I" too is multiple, and when the poet of Lamentations asks "Who [or what] can I conjure up for you?" מה־אעידך the "I" is already a voice "conjured" up. That is, we must acknowledge that the narrative voice is itself an invention (conscious or unconscious) of the poet, and is one of the many voices that have already been "brought back" as a witness. In this sense, the "narrator" of the text is phantom too. The conjured up voice of the narrator speaks to the ghost of Zion, who has also been conjured up, and they work in tandem with each other speaking dialogically. To Derrida this precarious oscillation between "self" and "other," is what makes literature possible, it is what opens up the space for writing, as the writer of "Envois" admits to his "other,"

> I ask myself occasionally quite simply if you exist and if you have the slightest notion of it.
>
> No literature with this, not with you my love. Sometimes I tell myself that you are my love: then it is only my love, I tell myself interpellating myself thus. And then you no longer exist, you are dead, like the dead woman in my game, and my literature becomes impossible.[279]

Speculating on the Specters of Secondary Literature on the Speaking Voices of Lamentations

Or I shall live your epitaph to make,
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten;
From hence your memory death cannot take,
Although in me each part will be forgotten.
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
Though I, once gone, to all the world must die:

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[277] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, 180.
[278] Derrida, *SpecterSpecters of Marx,* 166.
[279] Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (trans. Alan Bass; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 39.

The earth can yield me but common grave,
When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie.
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;
And tongues to be, your young shall rehearse,
When all breathers of this world are dead;
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)
Where breath most breathes,--even in the mouths
of men.

Shakespeare, Sonnet LXXXI

I hear a voice in my head (again, the Idiot Questioner) telling me that this is supposed to be a scholarly work, and that scholars do not deal with ghosts. Derrida informs us: "A traditional scholar does not believe in ghosts or in all that could be called the virtual space of spectrality."[280] He remarks at the beginning of *Specters of Marx*:

> There has never been a scholar who really, as such, deals with phantoms...there has never been a scholar who, as such, does not believe in the sharp distinction between the real and the unreal, the actual and the inactual, the living and the non-living, being and non-being ('to be, or not to be,' in the conventional reading), in the opposition between what is present and what is not, for example in the form of objectivity. Beyond this opposition, there is, for the scholar, only the hypothesis of a school of thought, theatrical fiction, literature, and speculation. [281]

What I might be trying to do here in this chapter then is referred to by Derrida as the *Marcellus Complex*, for, in Hamlet, it is Marcellus who, after seeing the ghost of Hamlet's father, pleads with Horatio: "Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio." Derrida notes that Marcellus was asking Horatio to do more than just speak to the ghost, but rather to call it, to interrogate it, to question it; paradoxically, the traditional scholar speaks the language of kings or of the dead, but at the same time cannot believe in them. And so Horatio demands that the ghost speak: "By heaven, I charge thee speak," and then when his call goes unanswered he asserts more forcefully: "Stay. Speak, Speak. I charge thee speak!" And in many French translations of Hamlet, Derrida notes,

[280] Derrida, *SpecterSpecters of Marx*, 12.
[281] Ibid.

"I charge thee" is often translated as "*je t'en conjure*," as if Horatio was attempting to conjure up the ghost, but only in order to inspect, stabilize, and arrest the specter. The *Marcellus Complex* asks the scholar to conjure ghosts, to be sure, but only to conjure them away, in order to assure us that ghosts do not really exist. Thus, it was his best effort, but the ghost did not speak back and Horatio begins to doubt himself if it was ever there at all: "Before my God, I might not this believe without the sensible and true avouch of mine own eyes;" which confirms Derrida's suspicion that scholars are not always in the best position to speak to specters for they believe that looking is sufficient.[282]

However, Derrida offers another interpretation of the *Marcellus Complex*. Namely, that Marcellus was perhaps "anticipating the coming, one day, one night, several centuries later, of another 'scholar,'"[283] a scholar who would be able to look beyond the false dichotomies of presence and non presence, life and non-life, and who would know how to address himself or herself to spirits. This scholar would not conjure *away* ghosts, but rather would conjure *with* them. I hope to show below that many scholars on Lamentations have already attempted to conjure up ghosts, though more often than not they must not have been aware of it; possibly it was a repressed desire. After all, it makes little difference whether these ghosts actually exist or not. As Derrida makes clear, he is not talking about actual ghosts in any traditional sense, for when speaking of phantoms, he remarks: "Of course they do not exist." But then he adds a very significant clause to the sentence: "so what?" That is, regardless of whether phantoms exist or not, there are phantom effects. Derrida concludes *Specters of Marx* with this advice:

> If he loves justice, at least, the 'scholar' of the future, the 'intellectual' of tomorrow should learn it, and from the ghost. He should learn to live by learning not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him, with her, how to let them speak or how to give them speech back, even if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself:

[282] Ibid., 11.
[283] Ibid., 13

> they are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet.[284]

The specter is always there, and it has been there, in the way that scholars have talked about Lamentations and the speaking voices in Lamentations, though not always consciously I presume. And thus, even if the specter does not exist, we must search for it and attempt to give its speech back.

Conjuring (with) the Ghosts of Biblical Scholarship

What Derrida says of scholars in general, in some ways applies even more so to the biblical scholar in particular. There seems to be a fear of conjuring up ghosts from the text, letting the text speak for itself, as the other. That is, the traditional biblical scholar is only allowed to speculate so far on any given text and then he or she must stop at a certain point. And even when ghostly themes are touched upon, they are done so within a frame which assumes one can always distinguish between the real and the non-real. To me, a perfect example is the way in which scholars have historically spoken of the speaking voices in Lamentations, going to certain depths but never uncharted territory.

Since the time of Lanahan at least, almost all commentators note the existence of more than one speaking voice in Lamentations. However, their approach to the issue is almost as varied as the number given for how many voices are in the text. The task that perhaps remains to biblical scholars on this issue then, is to conjure with not only the ghost(s) of the text, but also with the secondary material. I would like to provide one brief example of what that might mean here by speculating further on Lanahan's essay "The Speaking Voice of Lamentations."

As I have already mentioned Lanahan refers to each separate speaking voice as a *persona* of the author. He explains that each persona is not to be thought of as a fiction, but rather as a

[284] Ibid., 221.

creative displacement of the poet's imagination "beyond the limitations of his single viewpoint so that he may gain a manifold insight into the human experience."[285] The use of multiple personae (five is the number of speaking voices that Lanahan finds) deepens and broadens the reader's grasp of the dynamic and spiritual experience embodied by the book, as each voice functions as a new and differing perspective on the destruction. While discussing the function of these different personae, Lanahan interestingly summarizes:

> Another man's consciousness of the world is available to us only through his statements, and only imperfectly at that; the richer his statement, the more rewarding our entrance into his experience.[286]

This statement is confusing: the poet of Lamentations *personifies* Zion and speaks for her, but Lanahan asserts we can only know a [hu]man's consciousness of the world through his or her statements. So it seems as if Lanahan is referring only to the process between the reader and the current text of Lamentations, but not to the initial issue of how the poet ever would know anything of what Zion might say and thus speak for Zion. She obviously could not have spoken anything to him (as she is an inanimate object), which begs the question he how could ever know what she might have thought? *Persona*, in literary terms, is used to describe the role one plays that is to be distinguished from the inner self. It was the Latin word for the mask worn by actors in the classical theatre, from which was derived the term *dramatis personae* for the list of characters who play a role in a drama; this further lead to the English word "person," a particular individual.[287] Thus, confusingly, we see that the terms "person" and "persona" may at times refer to the same thing. Schopenhauer can help illuminate this point: "There is an unconscious appositeness in the use of the term *person* to designate the human individual…for *persona* really means an actor's mask and it is true that no one reveals himself as he is; we all wear masks and

[285] Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice," 41.
[286] Ibid.
[287] M.H. Abram, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), 258.

play a role."[288] So could it be that when Lanahan asserts that each speaking voice of the text is one of the many *personae* of the poet, that he means each speaking voice is a different *person* of the poet? Moreover, Lanahan argues that each individual speaker is

> The mask or characterization assumed by the poet as the *medium* through which he perceives and gives expression to his world.[289]

I am assuming that Lanahan is using "medium" in the general sense of "intermediate agency," or "channel of communication," though "medium" also implies that of a "person who conveys spiritual messages," or more generally "the substance through which something is conveyed." In order for the poet to express multiple viewpoints of the world, (s)he must use different mediums and wear different masks, so to speak. I might add here that prosopopeia also carries connotations of the mask with it, as it etymologically means "to confer a mask." It is as if the only terms available to us used to describe the speaking voice(s) in Lamentations refer endlessly back to the concept of a mask, and the tricky thing about wearing masks is that it often becomes difficult to determine when one is wearing the mask and acting or when one is speaking as the "true inner self." Abraham and Torok have this to say about what happens if introjection fails and incorporation occurs:

> The 'shadow of the [love] object" strays endlessly about the crypt, until it is finally reincarnated in the person of the subject. Far from displaying itself, this kind of identification is destined to remain concealed...Clearly, an identifying empathy of this type could not say its name, let alone divulge its aim. Accordingly it hides behind a mask...The mechanism consists of exchanging one's own identity for a fantasmic identification with the 'life' –beyond the grave –of [a lost] object of love.[290]

To be reincarnated—literally "re-fleshed"—is to bring the soul of a person (or whatever part of that person which is not his or her flesh) into another body after death. To Abraham and Torok,

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[288] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms* (trans. R.J. Hollingdale; London: Penguin Books, 1970), 168-9.

[289] Lanahan, "The Speaking Voice," 41.

[290] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, 141-2.

the phantom (the lost love object) can be understood as the buried speech of another; it returns itself in the person, the flesh, of the subject, or, for that matter, the text.[291] The mask that Lanahan speaks of is something that the poet consciously puts on, as if he is an actor. Contrarily, for Abraham and Torok, the mask chooses us, or rather we are the mask, behind which the lost loved object lives. They assert that the "lost love object," "the phantom," "*carries the ego as its mask*, that is, either the ego itself or some other façade."[292] Lanahan, like a good traditional scholar, believes that the reader should be able to tell which speaker is wearing the mask, and which is the mask itself speaking. Abraham and Torok's discussion of Freud and the Wolf Man (that specter which Freud seemed to battle with his whole life) can illuminate this problem. They concluded that the Wolf Man "appeared to be two separate people in one, without either of them representing the basic identity of the Wolf Man."[293] What Nicholas Rand says of the Wolf Man can be applied to Lamentations (or any text for that matter): "the Wolf Man is a collection of poetic devices, a compendium of rhymes, puns, silent distortions, and secret verbal contortions."[294] Thus, a text is always, already, plurally occupied, in a word, haunted by the inhabitants of a crypt who speak through ventriloquism, a ventriloquism that is impossible to decrypt.

Conclusion of Sorts

Near the end of Freud's summary of one of his most perplexing patients, Little Hans, he notes:

[291] Castricano, *Cryptomimesis*, 11.
[292] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, 141.
[293] Ibid.,
[294] Nicholas Rand, translator's introduction to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (trans. Nicholas Rand; Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986), lvii.

> In an analysis, however, a thing which has not been understood inevitably reappears; like an unlaid ghost, it cannot rest until the mystery has been solved and the spell broken.[295]

And in the same way biblical scholarship has not solved the riddle of the speaking voice(s) in Lamentations, though this is not for lack of attempted exorcisms. However, as Derrida has shown through the Marcellus complex, there is hope not so much in the fact that we will be able to exorcise this ghost away, but rather there is a horizon in which scholars will be able to break free from a stern materialism, false dichotomies, etc. and conjure with ghosts, rather than conjure them away. To Freud, and to Abraham and Torok, the spell is a curse. To Derrida, the spell is all we will ever have. The refusal to mourn keeps the unlaid ghost present. Scholars will continue to read Lamentations and conjure up other ghosts, though some may be more cognizant of it than others.

The danger however of embracing Derrida's position can be found in the work of De Man as he strongly asserts that all of the ghosts which we conjure up are nothing more than literary figures. That is, in the end, there is no real way for us to address ghosts and the dead except through self-deluding rhetorical fictions, and there is no way for them to respond. Acknowledging De Man's critique Derrida nevertheless affirms that while the dead cannot speak to us in any "real" way, they are not simply to be lost, that is, lost as other in their otherness, and they therefore must retain some residual agency. The text of Lamentations offers one example of doing so, offering a dialogical text with multiple voices.

Similarly, scholars must continue to dialogue with the text, for it is certain that if this dialogue stops, the text will certainly die. To maintain a dialogue with the dead means keeping their texts alive, even if it is always in a spectral state. It results in preserving them from pre-mature closure, for the texts and the voices of the dead are still unread if their full resources have

[295] Sigmund Freud, "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five Year Old Boy," in *Case Histories*. Vol. 3 of Sigmund Freud: Collected Papers (ed. Ernest Jones ; trans. Joan Riviere; New York: Basic Books, 1959), 264.

not yet been brought to light. If their capacity to generate fresh insight is not yet exhausted, then there is still life in the text.

And, for me, this is evidence of how the scholar on Lamentations too must be embrace melancholia. Thus, Derrida, while attempting to conjure up the specters of Marx, reminds himself that "everyone reads, acts, writes, with *his* or *her* ghosts, even when one goes after the ghosts of the other."[296] Of course, this brings back the idea of transference which I covered at the end of ch. 1. It also reminds me again of Kristeva's statement at the beginning of *Black Sun* where she asserts: "For those who are racked by melancholia, writing about it would have meaning only if writing sprang out of that very melancholia."[297] Just as the poet of Lamentations kept the voices of the dead, of the other, alive in his text, the scholar on Lamentations must keep the voice(s) of Lamentations alive. Both of these parallel the melancholic subject who refuses to mourn completely, who keeps the lost-love object alive. For as Derrida reminds us, this dialogue is a dialogue of love, of fidelity to the other, and to the text. Indeed, the text is a phantom too, and what it says is entirely dependent on those who read it. J. Hillis Miller says much the same thing when he asserts:

> The text, whether of literature or of life, never unequivocally supports any reading we make of it. This means that reading is partly performative, rather than a purely cognitive act. The reader as a result must take responsibility for a reading that is always to some degree imposed on the text.[298]

The "text," in Miller's quote, could refer to Lamentations, but also to the issue of the speaking voice(s) in Lamentations. With this quotation, one realizes that indeed the riddles, the ghosts, of scholarship are also nothing more than the inventions of the very scholars who seek to rid themselves of these specters. But this is not something we did not already know. Similarly, when

[296] Derrida, *SpecterSpecters of Marx,* 174.
[297] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 3.
[298] Miller, *Reading Narrative*, 39.

Hamlet informed Horatio (the scholar) of the (secret) information that Claudius is a knave, Horatio responded:

> There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave to tell us this (I.v)

Of course, but what the quote points to is that it is not the content of these riddles, these secrets, which we are after anyway, but rather secrecy itself. The key issue in the survival of the dead and their hold over the living is the status of their secret(s). I have not solved the riddle of the speaking voice(s) in Lamentations and the text maintains more secrets to be sought out and uncovered. What I hope to have offered here is a new perspective on an enigma that will continue to haunt biblical scholars one way or another.

EPILOGUE

And so
with fear in my heart
I drag it out
and keep on talking
for I dare not stop.
Listen while I talk on
against time.[299]

Endings, like death, are plagued by paradoxical emotions: desire and fear. For on the one hand, there is a deep desire to end, or at the very least, have a *sense* of ending. There is no better example for this than the desires of almost all past commentators of Lamentations to try and bring the text to a close, as if all of its riddles have been solved in their work. Linafelt notes that this desire extends back to the fervent hope of traditional Jews that Lamentations will not survive at all.[300] Naomi Seidman offers a story that displays this desire:

> In a certain small town in Poland, right after they broke the fast, the Jews would light an enormous bonfire. They would throw the Tisha B'av liturgy with all its sad poems about the destruction of the Temple into the fire and dance and sing the midsummer night away.[301]

This is a quite literal, and perhaps extreme, example of what many would like to see happen. One might even call it a hope; a hope that perhaps, as Linafelt puts it, all "suffering will cease and there will no longer be any need for lamenting,"[302] for Lamentations is a reminder, a memorial so to speak, to bear in mind the catastrophe and keep it fresh and vivid.

And yet, what is this cessation of suffering if not death? All who speak and act and write do so under the shadow of death. Our poems are one way of coming to terms with death, but at

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[299] From the poem "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower" by William Carlos Williams, as quoted in Miller, *Reading Narrative*, 228.

[300] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 143.

[301] Naomi Seidman, "Burning the Book of Lamentations," in *Out of The Garden: Women Writers on the Bible* (ed. Christina Büchmann and Celina Spiegel; New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994), 278-88.

[302] Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, 144.

the same time they are thano-apotropaic, thus, the bizarre mixture of fear and desire.[303] Freud elaborated on this most thoroughly in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where he asserted that the stories we tell others and hear from others are nothing but more or less prolonged detours to death. So we all (secretly) desire to reach death, but we only want to do so in our own way, in our own good time.[304]

The result, of course, of these paradoxical emotions is that while we fervently try to bring a closure to these texts we, more often than not, do not succeed in these attempts, and instead keep putting off their closure. Again, the text of Lamentations exemplifies this. If God had listened, paid attention, or even stayed true to his attributes the poet would have no need to complain. The text desperately wants to be done with his mourning, and yet it is all too aware that under the present circumstances this is impossible. In other words the text, like the scholar who seeks to interpret it, is melancholic, for they both participate in a mourning that will never end: an impossible mourning.

[303] Miller, *Reading Narrative*, 228.
[304] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 71-4.

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