

A BIBLICAL TEXT AND ITS  
AFTERLIVES

*The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture*

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## CHAPTER I

### *The Mainstream*

Then Jonah stepped into the book of himself – and into the world of sermons, literature, historical anachronism, tall tales and fables, Christian fulminations against the Jews, and cautionary tales for Victorian children . . .<sup>1</sup>

As the American poet Hart Crane indecorously puts it, interpreters have ‘widely ruminated’ on Jonah’s ‘travels in the snare’:

how he was stuck there, was reformed,  
forgiven also –  
and belched back as a word to grace us all.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter is an attempt to navigate the breadth and scope of Mainstream Christian and scholarly ruminations/navigations, and to construct what Foucault might term an archaeology/genealogy of interpretation.<sup>3</sup> New interpretations in biblical studies have always involved some kind of excavation of the past, which tend to be respectful to venerated scholarly figures, even while their purpose is to critique their readings, reduce them to rubble, and so clear the ground for a new construction. Archaeologies/genealogies of inter-

<sup>1</sup> N. Rosen, ‘Justice for Jonah, or a Bible Bartleby’, in D. Rosenberg (ed.), *Congregation: Contemporary Writers Read the Jewish Bible* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), pp. 222–31 (223).

<sup>2</sup> H. Crane, ‘After Jonah’, in D. Curzon (ed.), *Modern Poems on the Bible: An Anthology* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), p. 336. The poem was not published by Crane but can be found in M. Simon (ed.), *The Poems of Hart Crane* (New York: Liveright, 1987), pp. 19–20. An editorial note alongside the poem reads ‘Composed c. 1922–26’.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault borrows the term ‘genealogy’ from Nietzsche, and ‘archaeology’ from Kant. His archaeologies/genealogies are concerned with tracing how our current conceptual universe – comprised of givens such as punishment, ‘madness’, sexuality, man – comes to congeal in the way it does. To sample the most famous examples of Foucault’s histories, or de-compositions of the present, see, for example, M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Tavistock, 1971) or *The History of Sexuality 1: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

pretation, in contrast, take the spotlight off the autonomous subject, the transcendent scholar-hero, and occupy themselves with exposing how knowledge is sociologically situated and ideologically constructed, and how the traces of the dead make themselves heard in the voices of the living.<sup>4</sup> My purpose here is to show how the book of Jonah (as a sample of a biblical text) has been skewed by so much more than independent acts of genius, and to probe the sources, contexts, voices, and hauntings that converge in the solid tangible norm of Jonah commentaries. It's an attempt to decompose, and critique, contemporary critical 'knowledge'; to construct what Foucault might term a 'history of the (interpretative) present'.<sup>5</sup>

The story told will paradoxically be a story both of radical deviation and of endless repetition. On one level, the body of the text of Jonah undergoes bizarre and unpredictable mutations to form four very different meta-stories. Indeed, if it were possible somehow to scrutinise the book of Jonah in a cultureless, timeless zone of objectivity (to get into that ideal textual lab that scholars still yearn to inhabit), it would be impossible to predict the curious pathways that interpretation would take, and the strange chemical reactions between text and culture that would ensue. Looking at the text cold, for example, one might expect the man-eating fish to function as the book's 'monster' – not that Jonah would become, in a phrase that J. J. Cohen coins in his book *Monster Theory*, 'monsterised'.<sup>6</sup> Yet the site of monstrosity shifts dramatically in the history of reading, locating itself variously in the body of the fish, the interiorised monster within, the dangerous populace and, most persistently, the (national) body of the Jew. Yet even as readings undergo such dramatic shifts and mutations, they also show an equal and opposite tendency towards preserving themselves, cloning themselves, repeating themselves *ad nauseam*. The body of interpretation is both dramatically evolutionary and rather prone to sclerosis, as readings wear out a groove in the critical imagination.

Fortunately, at least from the perspective of information management, Mainstream Christian and scholarly readings seem to oblig-

<sup>4</sup> S. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (trans. A. Sheridan; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> J. J. Cohen (ed.), *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).



ingly collect themselves into four main clusters, meta-stories, or heaps. The four roughly hewn, and roughly chronological, piles are:

*Jonah and the Fathers: Jonah and Jesus as typological twins* (a study of the early Christian analogy between the exit from the fish and the resurrection – or the ‘belching’ and the ‘grace’, as Crane might put it);

*Jonah the Jew: the evolution of a biblical character* (tracing a negative Jonah stereotype, from Augustine and Luther through to the Enlightenment);

*Divine disciplinary devices – or the book of Jonah as a tractate on producing docile disciple-bodies* (a study of the dire red-letter warnings of the book of Jonah, as expounded in the sonorous, Reformation sermons of John Calvin and John Hooper);

*Cataloguing the monstrous: Jonah and the ‘cani cacharis’* (an investigation of what happens when the book of Jonah begins to sense the *Origin of Species* creeping up behind it and threatening its credibility).

For the moment (at least for the first half of this chapter), I will let the four stories remain in their four discrete heaps. But in the second half I plan to abandon the purely academic decorum that keeps them apart, and to permit these segregated words to infiltrate, attack and deconstruct one another.

#### I. JONAH AND THE FATHERS: JONAH AND JESUS AS TYPOLOGICAL TWINS

The strong reader, whose readings will matter to others as well as himself, is thus placed in the dilemmas of the revisionist, who wishes to find his own original relation to truth, whether in texts or reality (which he treats as texts anyway), but also wishes to open received texts to his own sufferings . . . [Harold Bloom]<sup>7</sup>

To the healthy and pure internal eye [Christ] is everywhere. [Augustine]<sup>8</sup>

If the strong reader is the reader whose ‘readings will matter to others as well as himself’ and who wishes to open received texts to

<sup>7</sup> H. Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 3–4.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr.; New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), p. 13.

his own 'truth' and his own 'sufferings', then the ultimate strong reader in the Christian tradition is the Jesus figure himself. And it is Jesus (or, that is, 'Jesus' as constructed by the narrators Matthew and Luke) who begins the book of Jonah's strange semiotic journey by posing a seductive and enigmatic riddle about the 'sign of Jonah'. In essence the saying, given in reply to the Pharisees' and Sadducees' request for a sign, is: 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah' – but the metaphorical connection between Jesus and the sign of Jonah seems to require some solid 'ground' or rationale to stand on. Matthew 12 and Luke 11 unravel the puzzle in different interpretative glosses: Luke 11.29–30 explains: 'for as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation', while Matthew 12.38–40 adds: 'For as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and nights in the heart of the earth.' Matthew takes the analogy in the direction of the whale-tomb and (fiddling the maths a bit) equates Jonah's 'three days' in the fish to Christ's 'three days' in the grave; Luke sees Jonah as a (proto)type of Jesus on the basis that both are teachers of the truth. The syn-opsis blurs, the glosses deviate, the significance of Jonah bifurcates, becomes fuzzy. Then focus is restored, the two diffractory gospel lenses reconverge in Jesus's declaration: 'The men of Nineveh shall rise upon the judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, one greater than Jonah is here' (Matthew 12.41; Luke 11.32).

Two points can be noted about this, the first (unscheduled) stop on the Jonah narrative's long interpretative journey through Christian history. Firstly, the interpretation given by the Christ-figure is an unexpected detour, a tantalising, riddling, circuitous explanation. As a marginal comment in the *Douai Old Testament* (1610) puts it: 'who could have thought that Jonas had been a figure of our saviour's death and resurrection unless himself had so expounded it?'<sup>9</sup> The reading, which seems so over-creative and audacious, is legitimated by its origin in the mouth of Christ, at the source and guarantee of Christian orthodoxy. Secondly, from its very earliest inception, the interpretation splits, bifurcates, multiplies, and mutates. The eye that sees Christ everywhere actually sends the text out of focus, splits it –

<sup>9</sup> Cited in R. H. Bowers, *The Legend of Jonah* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 39.

by seeing two Jesuses, two different connections to Jesus's life. Paradoxically it is the very riddling, tangential quality of the logion that ensures its generative capacity, its potential for spawning com-metaphors and enlisting readers in the obsessive hunt to run the elusive sign to ground. (Contemporary scholars remain obsessed with tracing the point of the sign – the point of origin, and the conceptual point. They track it down to the sayings source Q, but Q is quizzical, questioning, about which meaning is original (Matthew's, Luke's, or neither?); finally despairing, they officially label the saying a 'riddle' or a *Rätselspruch*,<sup>10</sup> and put it in that drawer of cryptic, biblical texts, for the special use of supervisors and doctoral students.)<sup>11</sup>

The split between Matthew and Luke is like the initial splitting of a cell, that leads to infinite multiplication and the production of a whole body of texts. Between the Church Fathers and the medieval period, typology expands exponentially, and the interpretative lens that sees double in the gospels begins to see a kaleidoscope of Christs – little Jesuses everywhere. If it was, as the author of Galatians claims, for freedom that Christ set us free (Galatians 5.1) then Jesus's own strong reading of the book of Jonah sets the early Christian reader loose in interpretative freedom. The Jesus-Jonah New-Old analogy provides plenty of room for manoeuvre and plenty of space in which the book of Jonah can re-live, move, and have its (marvellously expansive) being. The whole text, under Christ's authority, becomes a proof-text for the New Testament, and the constituent elements – Ninevites, whales, storms, prophets, sailors – are re-sorted to form a version of the gospel narrative. And yet Jonah is not, like Isaiah, a grandiose 'fifth gospel' (whose lines and

<sup>10</sup> J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck and Ruprecht, 1950), p. 162. Similar statements of (official) bewilderment include W. G. Kümmel's declaration that 'it is hardly possible to discover a certain interpretation' (W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment* (London: SCM, 1957), p. 68) and Norman Perrin's statement that 'we do not know what Jesus and his contemporaries would have understood by the phrase "the sign of Jonah"' (N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), p. 194).

<sup>11</sup> Famous suggested solutions include: the sign of Jonah is a pun on *Johanon* and an allusion to John the Baptist (B. W. Bacon); it is a sign of the dove and the Holy Spirit (Pierre Bonnard); Jonah is a symbol of the messenger authorised by deliverance from death (Joachim Jeremias); and Jonah is a sign of one who comes to Nineveh to preach from a distant country, just as the Son of Man comes down from heaven (Bultmann). For a discussion of these solutions, and others, see A. K. M. Adam, 'The Sign of Jonah: A Fish-Eye View', *Semeia* 51 (1990), pp. 177–91 (185). For a recent discussion of the alternatives and a new solution see S. Chow, *The Sign of Jonah Reconsidered: A Study of its Meaning in the Gospel Traditions* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1995).

images have long ago been integrated into the body of the New Testament),<sup>12</sup> but a strange, cartoonish little proto-gospel, attached to the gospels by one strange little thread of analogy, reflecting the New Testament as in a cracked little mirror, very cryptically and darkly. Like Danny de Vito and Arnold Schwarzenegger in the Hollywood movie *Twins*, Jonah and Jesus show little overt resemblance. Indeed, the sign of Jonah logion can be seen as a kind of interpretative dare – defying the reader to compare the careers and significance of Jesus on the one hand and this most quirky of Old Testament prophets on the other.

The challenge gives rise to a multiplicity of answers – a sprawling web of interpretations, a ‘space full of stories’ as Italo Calvino might put it, where ‘you can move in all [mutually irreconcilable] directions’.<sup>13</sup> The Jesus–Jonah equation spawns a saturation of stories, ‘like a forest that extends in all directions and is so thick that it does not allow light to pass’,<sup>14</sup> a rich dense welter of material that grounds the analogy ten fathoms deep and that elaborates it in every conceivable, and inconceivable, direction. As the Patristic specialist Yves-Marie Duval puts it (in the introduction to his 748-page digest of this material), the texts ‘multiply and fragment’, resist academic cataloguing and rationalisation, and dissolve into ‘a dust of disparate opinions’, as interpreters subvert one another and a single author chases the analogy in mutually exclusive directions.<sup>15</sup> As the text-wheat is ground, it produces handfuls of flour, or handfuls of dust, that slip through the fingers when you try and hold them in your hand.

So that is what I’m gathering here – just some strands of the web, or handfuls of dust, to give a sense of how significances ricochet across a potentially infinite interpretative space. For if the gospels, looking at the significance of Jonah, see double, producing an image of Jesus in the tomb, and Jesus standing up and teaching, looking at the text through the cumulative readings of the Fathers is like putting on thick bi- or tri-focal spectacles. For Jerome, for example, Jonah is like Christ because Christ fled the heavens to come to Tarshish, that is, ‘the sea of this world’, and Jonah in flight is a sign

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of Isaiah as fifth gospel, see J. F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> I. Calvino, *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller* (London: Picador, 1982), p. 88.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>15</sup> Y.-M. Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas dans la littérature chrétienne grecque et latine: sources et influence du commentaire sur Jonas de saint Jérôme* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1973), p. 608.

of the incarnate Christ, who ‘abandons his father’s house and country, and becomes flesh’.<sup>16</sup> Jerome looks at Jonah sleeping in the hold of the ship and sees Jesus asleep on the storm-tossed lake (thus Jonah 1.5 mutates into Mark 4.35–41, Matthew 8.23–17, and Luke 8.22–5).<sup>17</sup> Pseudo-Chrysostom, looking at the same sleeping prophet, sees the Christ-foetus curled in the womb of the virgin,<sup>18</sup> and Ambrose of Milan and Cyril of Alexandria see the sleeping Jonah as a laid-out Christ-corpse, a sign of Jesus in a death-stupor in the tomb.<sup>19</sup> The semiotic twinning of Jonah and Jesus acts as a huge magnet that realigns all the actors, like so many iron filings, around it, subordinating them to the climatic drama of the passion and resurrection. As Old Testament images and words are hooked up to the New Testament Word, interpretation forms a fabulously tangled network, in which bit-part actors such as ships, sailors, waves, and fish, play numerous (mutually deconstructing) parts. In this huge proto-Passion Play, the ship functions as the Church, *or* Humanity, *or* the Synagogue, snatched from ruin by Jonah’s vicarious sacrifice.<sup>20</sup> The sailors become variously the Apostles, steering the ship of the church (and sleeping in Christ’s hour of need), *or* the Roman authorities who condemn Christ to death, *or* the Jews who oppose Christ, *or* Pontius Pilate, washing his hands of Jesus-Jonah’s death, and asking (in so many words): ‘Let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not on us innocent blood’ (thus Jonah 1.14 mutates into Matthew 27.24, and the water sloshing around the sailors becomes the water in which Pilate washes his hands).<sup>21</sup> The storm, meanwhile, becomes the affliction of humanity, *or* the turbulence caused by sin, *or* a sign of the storms that shipwreck Peter and Paul,<sup>22</sup> *or* the malevolent works of the devil who infiltrated the heart of Judas (a

<sup>16</sup> Jerome, *In Ionam* 1.3a, in J. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina* (221 vols., Paris 1844–1963; henceforth *PL*), xxv, 1122 B–D, cited in Duval, *Le livre de Jonas*, p. 342. For a similar reading of flight as incarnation, see Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestio 64 ad Thalassium* in *Patrologia Graeca* (161 vols., Paris, 1857–1945, henceforth *PG*), xc, 697 D, cited in Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 604.

<sup>17</sup> Jerome, *In Mattheum* 9, 24–5 (*PL* xxvi, 53 C–D), cited in Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, pp. 350–1. A similar reading can be found in Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 12, 6–7, see Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 606.

<sup>18</sup> Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Quod Mari* c. 22, cited in Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 464.

<sup>19</sup> Both readings are discussed by Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 606.

<sup>20</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 604.

<sup>21</sup> Jerome *In Ionam* 1.14 in *PL* xxv, 1129 D, cited in Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Hilaire de Poitiers, *Tractatus in Psalmum* 68.5, in A. Zingerlé (ed.), *Corpus Christianorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*; Vienna, xxii, pp. 316–17, cited in Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 462.

figure here played by one of the sailors)<sup>23</sup> and made him throw his 'Jesus's overboard. The 'healthy' eye that looks to Christ, in the process, sends a single image skidding across the retina, splits infinitely malleable signifiers into lots and lots of tiny Jesuses, blurs the text as through a cataract or stigmatism. And as the book is fashioned into a roughly hewn New Testament template, the 'Ninevites' become, indelibly, 'the gentiles', or as St Bede put it, 'the splendid; the Church ornate with the glory of all virtue' ('Ecclesiam decore virtutem ornatam')<sup>24</sup> and polemical capital is made out of the fact that the 120,000 Ninevites exceed the number of the twelve tribes of Israel<sup>25</sup> or that gentile repentance shames the Jews by showing how 'creditit praepitium et circumcisio permanet infidelis' ('the foreskin believes; but circumcision remains faithless').<sup>26</sup> This is the first time, of many, that we will see this text entangled with anti-Judaism and the polemic of supersession, of the rhetoric of size and the dwarfing of the Jew. But crucially, at this stage of the interpretative game (a game which will have very sinister consequences), Jonah himself is not Jewish, though anti-Semitic asides insinuate themselves between every line.

Though interpretation splays out in multiple directions, the lines intersect at the (compulsively repeated) point of the cross: X marks the spot. Indeed, adapting the rabbis' statement about Torah, it seems as if Old Testament words proffer themselves as so much raw material, from which the resourceful interpreter can make endless replicas of the tomb and the cross. Demonstrating the ingenuity of this DIY, recycling exegesis, Augustine breaks down the wood of Noah's ark to make a crucifix, then re-uses the ark as the body of Christ (with doors in the side where the soldier's spear goes through), and then refashions the same wood into a tomb from which the resurrected Christ exits.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, in Jonah, the resourceful cross and tomb replicate themselves throughout the text, hook themselves onto any loophole, insert themselves audaciously into

<sup>23</sup> Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon 37* (PL LVII, 304 C), cited in Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 606.

<sup>24</sup> Bede, *In Matt. Evangelium Expositio* IV (PL XCII, 64), cited in Bowers, *The Legend*, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> Jerome *In Ionam* 4.10–11 in PL XXV, 1152, cited in Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 463.

<sup>26</sup> Jerome, *In Ionam*, in P. Antin (ed.), *St Jerome's In Ionam* (Sources Chrétiennes 43; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1956), p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* xv. 24, trans. D. B. Zema and G. G. Walsh, *The City of God* II (The Fathers of the Church; Washington, 1952), pp. 447–9. For a fascinating discussion of the changing shape of the ark in early Christian writings, see N. Cohn, *Noah's Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 23–31.

every gap and every word. Christ's death and resurrection are inscribed in Jonah's sleep and waking, in his self-sacrifice and descent overboard, and even, in one interpretation, in the lines of his psalm. According to Hesychius of Jerusalem, every line of Jonah's psalm can be paired up with a moment in the passion narrative. Jonah's appeal to God to hear his cry (2.2) trembles with Jesus's cry from the cross; Jonah's testimony 'When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord' (2.7) anticipates the line 'Into your hands I commit my spirit'; Jonah's pledge to carry out what he has vowed (2.9) is pregnant with Jesus's commitment to universal salvation; and his reference to those who (in a rather loose translation) 'keep vain lies and thus forfeit mercy' (2.8) is an allusion to the Jews who guarded 'his' corpse in vain and who then lied that it had been stolen (another fragment of anti-Jewish rhetoric that has not yet assumed monstrous proportions).<sup>28</sup>

As the text becomes a gigantic and accommodating receptacle for Christ's truth and Christ's sufferings, Jonah's outline begins to melt; he loses his own voice and script and outline and becomes a ventriloquist for Christ. And as the Old Testament narrative is chomped and consumed by the New, emphasis is redistributed, and elements of the Old Testament text are lost. What disappears, specifically, is any sense of Jonah's resistance to God. As his 'flight' slides into 'incarnation', a gesture of rebellion is converted to one of submission; as the storm scene is engulfed by the gospel version, we lose any sense of the storm as an act of divine discipline and punishment. The narrative is drained of all residual friction between the prophet and deity because, as Jesus-twin, Jonah becomes a mere extension of the father's will, and the showdown between God and prophet is replaced with the more conventional showdown of dualistic theology – the battle between Christ and the devil, alias hell, alias the fish. Rather like the snake in Eden, the fish is swelled and fattened by theology until it assumes monstrous, devilish proportions. Pulling open the jaws of the Matthean whale-tomb analogy as far as it will go, interpretation turns the fish into a monstrous conglomerate of all the enemies, swallows and consumers of humankind. The fish is the Devil 'the author of all

<sup>28</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Capita Ioniae prophetarum* (PG XCIII, c. 1353 B–C), cited in Duval, *Le livre de Jonas*, pp. 449–50. Compare the ingenuity with which the rabbinic midrash the *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* takes Jonah's psalm in a different direction and matches each line to an element from Israel's history. See chapter 2, p. 110.

transgression',<sup>29</sup> Time (that consumes all things), the Carnal Nature, that destroyed the First Adam, and, of course, a huge bodily incarnation of Death and Hell. As hell's jaws, in religious iconography, expand outwards, and develop a monstrous body to match (see fig. 1), so Jonah's fish, conversely, contracts into the jaws of hell.<sup>30</sup> Inside are not intestines, debris, half-digested ships (as in later, more fabulous reconstructions) but languishing lost souls, held in the clutches of death. Strengthened by New Testament associations, empowered by Christian theology, the muscular Jonah-Jesus hybrid defeats the Devil, conquers Time, overcomes the Carnal Nature, triumphs over Death and so becomes, as one early poem puts it, a triumphant

sign hereafter of the Lord –  
A witness . . .  
Not of destruction but of death's repulse<sup>31</sup>

On early Christian sarcophagi, Jonah features as the ultimate icon of death's defeat, far outflanking other (lesser) heroes, such as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace.<sup>32</sup> The heroic pairing of an emergent Jonah and an emergent Christ can still be seen – as it were frozen in stained glass – for example at Lincoln College Oxford, or Cologne Cathedral. A sixteenth-century window at St Janskerk, Gouda (designed at the behest of the Gouda fishmongers) depicts Jonah stepping from a virtually inanimate, cave-like fish as cleanly as if stepping from a car ferry, while his speech-bubble banner proclaims 'Behold one greater than Jonah is here!' (fig. 2). The cleanness of the exit signifies another significant loss from the Old Testament original: a loss of earthiness, for according to the Hebrew, Jonah is not simply 'cast out', as the

<sup>29</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III.xx.i in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), *The Anti-Nicene Fathers* 1 (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), pp. 315–567 (450), cited in Adam, 'The Sign of Jonah', p. 183.

<sup>30</sup> For a description of hell's evolution, and of the monstrous bodies and faces attached to the 'jaws of hell' in the middle ages, see A. K. Turner, *The History of Hell* (London: Robert Hale, 1993).

<sup>31</sup> Anon., 'A Strain of Jonah the Prophet', in Roberts and Donaldson (eds.), *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, III, pp. 150–2, cited in Adam, 'The Sign of Jonah', p. 183.

<sup>32</sup> In this case the visual leads the verbal, and iconography sets the agenda for the written interpretations that follow. For a discussion of the close relationship between Jonah iconography and contemporary literary interpretations, see L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*. II. *Iconographie de la Bible. Ancien Testament* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956).



Septuagint hygienically puts it, but is vomited, regurgitated, or as the *Good News Bible* puts it, 'spewed'.

In the strange interpretative alchemy that converts the book of Jonah into a mini proto-gospel, much is lost, but something is gained. What is lost is a sense of the messiness/untidiness of the text – both the literal messiness (the embodied, grotesque nature of the book) and the conceptual messiness (the clash between Yhwh and his prophet, which leads to all kinds of disjunctions and paradoxes). But what is gained, at least from Jonah's perspective, is an exemplary character, an immaculate prophetic c.v., for Jonah comes off rather well from his association with the Christ-figure. Hanging out in such superlative company has a good influence on the prophet, and adjectives and gestures seen as typical of Jesus rub off typologically on him. In a gesture that is repeated even in contemporary Christian readings, Jonah's name, meaning 'dove', effects a smooth conceptual flight path between the Old and New Testaments; Jerome muses: 'Jonah signifies our Lord, that is to say a dove', or the 'sad one . . . since the Holy Ghost descends in the form of a dove, or since He sorrows for our sins, and weeps for Jerusalem so that we might be cleansed'.<sup>33</sup> As Old Testament dove, or compassionate one, Jonah evolves into precisely the kind of character that early Christian leaders want to associate themselves with. The Irish abbot Columba, who was expelled from Burgundy in 610 by Theodoric II for having been over-critical of the king's penchant for concubines, exploited the fact that his name also fortuitously meant 'dove' in Latin, and extrapolated a whole rhetoric of self-promotion from the connection. 'Thus', he wrote, 'I am cast into the sea in the manner of Jonah' and entreated his followers to 'Pray that the rowing of the blessed whale recall me, so that the safe concealor may restore me, *your Jonah*, to his wished-for home.'<sup>34</sup> The same nexus of Jesus and Jonah and ecclesiastical office is enshrined in a stained glass window in Cologne cathedral, where Jonah slides effortlessly from the jaws of a kind of fish-serpent-dragon hybrid and raises his hands in a sign of blessing

<sup>33</sup> Jerome, cited in Bowers, *The Legend*, p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Bowers, *ibid.*, p. 42; my italics. If subsequent legends are to be believed, the analogy between Columba and Jonah did not stop there. Adomnán of Iona reports how, when living on Iona, the 'great saint' warned a brother who was sailing to Tiree about the danger of a 'great whale'. The brother ignored his advice and encountered, and narrowly escaped from, 'a whale of extraordinary size, which rose up like a mountain above the water, its jaws open to show an array of teeth' (R. Sharpe (trans.), *Adomnán's Life of St Columba* (London: 1995), pp. 125–6).

while on a neighbouring panel a prelate-like Christ figure makes the sign of peace (fig. 3). (This tendency to associate oneself with Jonah, to have one's photograph taken with the prophet, is in stark contrast to later interpretation, which only invokes Jonah as comic Other, the antithesis to true obedience, and the butt of sermon jokes.)

What is fascinating about early Christian interpretation, particularly in the light of readings that will be uncoiled later in this chapter, is the force of resistance to recalcitrant elements in Jonah the text, and Jonah the character, that would potentially subvert Jonah hagiography. When Jonah's deviance from God's command to go to Nineveh is acknowledged, it is instantly remedied with strong drafts of apologetic: Jerome describes how 'Jonah acts thus as a patriot, not so much that he hates the Ninevites, as that he does not want to destroy his own people' – poignantly, Jonah avoids his mission because he 'despairs of the safety of Israel'.<sup>35</sup> Jerome, peering into the mechanisms of Jonah's psyche, sees a man who feels that speaking a word to the Ninevites would be like speaking a word against the Israelites, a man who justifiably refuses to curse the people of God (just like Balaam in Numbers 22–4). Thus Jonah becomes a nationalist in a *positive* sense, and stands among the noblest heroes in the biblical hall of fame. In his passion for his people he is like Moses, who pleads for the builders of the golden calf, and argues that if they die then he dies also (Exodus 32.32). And, as the New Testament continues to spill into and cross-fertilise the Old, he is like Paul in his zeal for 'his brethren, his kinsmen by race', whom he considers to be the rightful owners of 'the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises' (Romans 9.4). Most dramatically, he is like Jesus – but Jesus in moments where he slips into nationalism, or is plagued by doubt. Jonah is equated with a Christ who briefly feels his confidence in the divine plan waning ('Father take this cup of suffering away from me') and who, in certain fervently nationalistic (and repressed) moments, advises his disciples not to preach in pagan cities, and refuses to give the children's bread to 'the dogs' (Mark 7.27). Radically, in the strong readings of Cyril of Alexandria and Jerome, Jonah and Jesus are joined not only by compassion and sacrifice but by nationalism, a passionate zeal for Israel, and a sense of alienation from the Father's plan.

<sup>35</sup> Jerome, cited in Bowers, *The Legend*, p. 27.

If watertight categories were abandoned, and this reading were allowed to seep into the reading below, it would pollute it, muddy it, destroy its clarity. For the reading that follows is absolutely dependent on maintaining clear and well-defined boundaries between universalist Christianity and separatist Judaism.

## 2. JONAH THE JEW: THE EVOLUTION OF A BIBLICAL CHARACTER<sup>36</sup>

The modern construction of the Jew and the establishing of a coherent Jewish identity may be said to have begun with the construction of modernity. . . . [Nochlin]<sup>37</sup>

No vital force comes into the figure unless a man breathes into it all the hate or all of the love of which he is capable. The stronger the love, or the stronger the hate, the more life-like is the figure produced. For hate as well as love can write a life of Jesus [or Jonah] . . . . [Schweitzer]<sup>38</sup>

It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive manifestations of their aggressiveness. [Freud]<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> For other critiques of anti-Semitism in Jonah studies see E. Bickerman, 'Les deux erreurs du prophète Jonas', *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 45 (1965), pp. 232–64; and F. W. Golka, 'Jonaexegese und Antijudaismus', *Kirche und Israel* 1 (1986), pp. 51–61. André and Pierre-Emmanuel Lacocque criticise the 'cheap theological anti-Semitism' that casts Jonah as a 'petty stiff-necked Jew' but at the same time do not exactly disentangle themselves from Jewish and Christian stereotypes: one of their conclusions is that 'Voicing doubt as to God's justice and equanimity may appear more "Jewish" and pleading for it more "Christian"' and that 'perhaps the book of Jonah takes us to the very heart of the Jewish-Christian problem' (A. Lacocque and P.-E. Lacocque, *The Jonah Complex* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), pp. xv, 99). The view that the book reports a showdown between Jews and gentiles is also discussed by R. E. Clements, *The Purpose of the Book of Jonah* (Vetus Testamentum Supplement 28; 1975), pp. 16–28 and by S. D. F. Goitein, 'Some Observations on Jonah', *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 17 (1937), pp. 63–77, and the negative characterisation of Jonah the Jew has been questioned by A. D. Cohen, 'The Tragedy of Jonah', *Judaism* 21 (1972), pp. 164–75, and, in passing, by Ezekiel Kaufmann, who resists the characterisation of Jonah as a 'narrow-minded zealot' (*The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. and abridged M. Greenberg; London: Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 285). The fact that the myth is still very much intact despite these critiques (many of which are journals that are considered peripheral to Mainstream biblical scholarship) testifies to the durability of the motif of 'Jonah the Jew'.

<sup>37</sup> L. Nochlin, 'Starting with the Self: Jewish Identity and Its Representation', in L. Nochlin and T. Garb (eds.), *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), pp. 7–19 (10).

<sup>38</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (trans. W. Montgomery; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> S. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (trans. J. Strachey; New York: Norton, 1961), p. 61.

As early Christian interpreters join together in panegyric to the Jonah-Christ, a single dissident voice pipes up. For Augustine, Jonah is a sign of Jesus *and* the embodiment of ‘carnal’ fleshy Israel, a staunch *opponent* of the divine universalistic campaign, going counter-flow to the spirit of the Christian gospel. Schizophrenically, for Augustine Jonah remains a Christ-figure, overwhelmed by the Jew-waves that crash over him, frothing ‘Crucify Him, Crucify Him’ – and yet he is also, himself, the embodiment of the Jew. At this point, the emphatically Jewish Jonah is still a foetus, struggling to emerge from a strong reading current that pulls in entirely the opposite direction, trying to shake off the idea of the Jonah-Christ – but eventually, he will become strong enough to militate against, and topple, his nicer better half.<sup>40</sup>

Jonah the Jew has a long incubation period: he does not appear again until Luther goes to Augustine to prepare his lectures on Jonah. But by now Jonah the Jew has had several centuries to grow, and, while the tensions are still apparent, Jekyll-Jonah is beginning to be overwhelmed by Jonah-Hyde. In Luther, Jonah is the dove who is ‘a prototype of the Holy Spirit and his office, the Gospel’<sup>41</sup> *and* an embodiment of the begrudging Jewish spirit summed up in Psalm 79.6: ‘Pour out your anger on the nations who do not know you and on the kingdoms that do not call on your name’.<sup>42</sup> In the belly of the fish he is a symbol of Christ in the tomb *but* he also retains ‘a Jewish, carnal, idea of God’ as the ‘exclusive’ property of Israel.<sup>43</sup> Jonah’s characterisation pulls in two directions, which for Luther are self-consciously pulled together in the paradox ‘in death we are in life’. In Luther’s sermon this oft-repeated phrase means both:

(a) in the depths of the tomb/fish, we discover resurrection through Christ;

and

(b) in the midst of dying Judaism, a new Christian organism springs forth.

As the weak Jonah is reborn in the whale’s belly (as a sign of Jesus and the sinner who depends on him) so Christianity emerges from the murky Jewish depths of the Old Testament tradition. And by

<sup>40</sup> Augustine’s reading of Jonah can be found in *Epistulae* 102, 6 (35), and is discussed by Duval, *Le Livre de Jonas*, p. 515.

<sup>41</sup> M. Luther, ‘Lectures on Jonah’, in H. C. Oswald (ed.), *Minor Prophets II: Jonah, Habakkuk* (Luther’s Works 19; Saint Louis: Concordia, 1974), p. 97.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93. <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

preaching to the gentiles, Jonah becomes a kind of twisted pioneer – ‘the first to make Judaism contemptible and superfluous’.<sup>44</sup>

In Luther’s reading Jonah no longer orbits the realm of christological superlatives but is emphatically grounded in the realm of the ‘weakness of the flesh’.<sup>45</sup> The Reformer has no patience with the Church Fathers’ ‘silly deference’ to the prophets, which, he snaps, they took to ‘such extremes that they even preferred to violate Holy Scripture, to force it and stretch it, before they would admit that the saints were sinners’.<sup>46</sup> As defender of the text, Luther rebukes those who have manipulated and forced the poor defenceless words against their will – and then stretches those same beautifully elastic words and letters into equally magnificent shapes. The meaning he replicates across the text (with an equally creative use of New Testament intertexts as the Fathers) is not the cross, nor the drama of Christ’s defeat of the devil, but the drama of the anachronisation and invalidation of Judaism by the advent of Christ. This meaning, once discovered, is found under every stone and in every textual crevice. The supersessionist drama of the humiliation of the Jew is performed in the exchange between the ungodly Hebrew and the godly sailors in which (to borrow a pinch of New Testament rhetoric) ‘the most pious becomes the basest and the first becomes last’. The superiority of the gentiles is illuminated, in Bede-like hyperbole, by the Ninevites, who act like ‘saints’ and shine forth as ‘pure angels’ of God. Allegedly, as Jonah unwittingly invalidates his own tradition, so he condemns his own race – who are quite clearly the referent for the psalm’s cryptic allusion to ‘those who observe lying vanities and forsake mercy’ (Jonah 2.7). Thus just as earlier he began to ventriloquise the voice of Christ on the cross, so he now slips into the voice of the author of *The Jews and Their Lies*.

The interpretative move that scripts Jonah the Jew with a harsh denunciation of Judaism may lack a certain psychological plausibility, but yet more creative interpolations are to come. For at the end of the text, in a rather surprising denouement, Luther flips over the leaves of the *qiqayon* plant to reveal a ‘poor crucified [Christ] Worm’ crawling underneath. The *qiqayon* is a hybrid, or grafting of two other plants: Judaism, ‘a real wild plant’,<sup>47</sup> and the fruitless fig tree of Mark 11.12–14, 20–5 and Matthew 21.18–22 replanted in Old Testament soil, and the fertile soil of Luther’s imagination. And the

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

absence of fruit on the *qiqayon* is significant: it shows that the *qiqayon*, which is the fig-tree, which is Judaism, is fruitless, and therefore entirely deserving of God's curse. Luther gets abundant exegetical fruit out of the plant's fruitlessness, and the 'Worm' becomes 'Christ and his Gospel' (for does not Christ himself declare in Psalm 22.6 that he is a worm and no man?). The climax of the book becomes a surreal drama of supersession in which the wild and fruitless plant of Judaism is assiduously nibbled away at by the angry, hungry Christ-worm.<sup>48</sup>

Like the Fathers, Luther finds his single interpretative schema (the withering of Judaism) and in promoting it tends to flatten out or ignore all recalcitrant elements in the text. But lest I do the same and make my reading of Luther too univocal, I want to point out a strange counter-current in his sermons – an acknowledgement of the curiousness and cruelty of the Old Testament text. Even as he maligns the prophet, Luther notes how 'poor Jonah has to suffer many deaths',<sup>49</sup> and how God 'plays' with life and death as if they were 'trivial playthings'<sup>50</sup> and 'toys with Jonah' in the episode of the plant and the worm.<sup>51</sup> Thus he suggests – despite and indeed contrary to his own polemic – that Jonah, rather like the poor text abused by early Christian readings, is somehow a victim of over-manipulative handling by the Father. As he disrupts his diatribe with empathy for Jonah, the divine plaything, so he muses on the seeming absurdities of the book. Scratching his chin, sucking his pen, he observes that 'Sackcloth is a strange clothing for beasts of burden'<sup>52</sup> and reasons that since a five-word sermon would have been a ludicrous thing, the taciturn 'forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown' must be a sermon summary – something like 'He preached on sin' or 'He preached on the mass'. Having not yet learnt the demure reticence of later (more professional) commentators, the Reformers quite freely express their befuddlement and dissatisfaction with biblical texts: they class epistles as 'strawy', confess that the prophets often have a queer way of talking, and protest that the book of Revelation should be prosecuted under the trade descrip-

<sup>48</sup> In yet another interpretation of the *qiqayon* episode (this tree is inexhaustible) the sequence mingles with Acts 10.11ff. In this New-Old mangled drama, Jonah-Peter is exhorted to avoid preaching to Cornelius/the gentiles/the Ninevites, but Peter accepts and Jonah resists, and so is dwarfed by the pious Ninevites.

<sup>49</sup> Luther, 'Lectures', p. 40.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

tions act, for are not revelations meant to be *revealing*?<sup>53</sup> Although in this case Luther displaces his uneasiness about the book of Jonah onto a doubting alter-ego, or questioner, whom he then promptly squashes, he does release a niggling set of questions into the interpretative arena – where later, unsupervised, they will cause much mischief.

In a key shift, or mutation, in interpretation, Luther establishes a spirit of antagonism between Jonah the book and Jonah the character: while Jonah represents the envy and jealousy of Jewishness, the book, speaking in a different idiom, inveighs against those who ‘rely on law’ and ‘snub the gospel of grace’.<sup>54</sup> And this sense of a text militating against its central protagonist extends into the so-called modern period, where it is academicised, translated into the idioms of rationalism, stripped of bizarre life-forms like the Christ-worm, or the *qiqayon*-fig-tree, and set up as the most muscular of strong readings. If Jonah the Jew is conceived by Augustine, and begins to toddle in Luther, in the Enlightenment he becomes a fully grown, fully delineated persona. And now he is a man, the Jewish Jonah has the power to floor – indeed fatally wound – his older, more saintly brother: in an appropriately biblical twist of fortune, the younger brother usurps the birthright of the elder, the elder disappears from the page, and we hear not another squeak from the Jonah-Christ.

Scanning scholarly tomes on Jonah from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, we can see the character of Jonah materialise right before our eyes. (In this brief survey the film will be run at super-high speed, the page of history turned quickly as in a Victorian/Edwardian ‘flick-book’, where the quick flick of the pages creates the impression of a living character or image.) In 1782, the biblical scholar J. D. Michaelis muses that ‘Der Sinn der Fabel fällt genug in die Augen’ (‘the meaning of the fable hits you right between the eyes’) and concludes that the book is written as an attack upon ‘the Israelite people’s hate and envy towards all the other nations of the earth’.<sup>55</sup> One year later, virtually the same meaning hits his student Eichhorn right between the eyes: the book

<sup>53</sup> Luther’s complaint that the prophets have a queer way of talking is cited by G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 11: *The Theology of Israel’s Prophetic Traditions* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; London: SCM Press, 1975), p. 33. His complaint that Revelation ‘should be revealing’ is cited by F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Glasgow: Chapter House, 1988), p. 244.

<sup>54</sup> Luther, ‘Lectures’, p. 81.

<sup>55</sup> J. D. Michaelis, *Deutsche Übersetzung des Alten Testaments mit Anmerkungen für Ungelehrte* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck and Ruprecht, 1782), p. 106.

is obviously a 'didactic fable' designed to teach the Jews that the 'despised heathen' excel them in 'generosity and goodness of heart'.<sup>56</sup> (Later, reflecting fawningly on these giants of interpretation in 1841, P. Friedrichsen sees the fortuitous agreement as vindication of the reading, as well as a testimony to Eichhorn and Michaelis's 'great sagacity' and 'excellent learning': awed, he also concurs that the book is transparently about the 'naked exposure of Jewish prejudice'.)<sup>57</sup> In 1866 C. F. Keil sees Jonah as a typical prophet in that he embodies in his speech and actions the crimes of a people – in this case 'die fleischlichen Juden' – just as Jeremiah and Ezekiel make themselves and their clothing into visual aids.<sup>58</sup> Keil sees the repentance of Nineveh as the advent of *das messianische Reich*; Bruno Bauer describes how the book dramatises the ancient struggle between 'der particularen, verstockten Gesinnung' ('the stubborn, particularist, principle') and the emergent 'question of universalism'.<sup>59</sup> In 1860 Otto Bleek defines the central question of the book of Jonah as 'ob es recht sei gegen alle anderen Völker schon als solche eine feindselige Gesinnung zu hegen' ('whether it is right for the Jews to entertain such a hostile mindset towards all other nations')<sup>60</sup> – so locating the so-called *Judenfrage* at the heart of the Old Testament text.

By the mid-nineteenth century the interpretative paradigm has firmly shifted – and set. The iconic moment of the text has moved from Jonah's emergence from the fish-tomb to Jonah looking out over Nineveh and glowering over God's act of forgiveness; the dominant paradigm has become (Christian) universalism versus (Jewish) particularism; the dominant intertext has become Romans 3.29, proclaiming that God is not the God of the Jews only but of the gentiles also. The site of monstrosity has shifted from the fish (as

<sup>56</sup> J. G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte Testament* (Leipzig: 1783), p. 334.

<sup>57</sup> P. Friedrichsen, *Kritische Übersicht der Verschiedenen Ansichten von dem Buch Jonas* (Leipzig: 1841), p. 113.

<sup>58</sup> Keil's reading is quoted (without referencing) by Friedrichsen, *Kritische Übersicht*, p. 172. Addressing the question why Jonah is placed with the Prophets, rather than with the Writings, Keil writes: 'Die Geschichte des Jonas stellt das Betragen der Juden in Gegensatz gegen die heidnischen Völker dar. Jonas vertritt durch seine Person das jüdische Volk, und bildet in seinen Reden und Handlungen die Gesinnung und Handlungsweise desselben ab. So wird oft in der Person der Propheten das Volk angebildet, z.B. Jer. 13, Eze. 4.12.'

<sup>59</sup> B. Bauer, *Die Religion des Alt Testament in der geschichtlichen Entwicklung ihrer Principien dargestellt* (Berlin: 1838), p. 301.

<sup>60</sup> O. Bleek, *Einleitung in das Alt Testament* (1860), p. 574. Bleek is cited in Bickerman, 'Les deux erreurs', p. 248, n. 61.



devil, hell, death incarnate) to the body of the Jew, the monstrous Other in whom the boundaries between the personal and national bodies blur. It is no coincidence that, as the modern European novel begins to emerge (with its detailed inventories of ‘character’), Jonah is typified by a whole range of adjectives, becoming, among other things, proud, vicious, superstitious, and brimful of hate and envy (a sprawling chain of negatives that go well beyond the adjectives used by the taciturn biblical narrator). And, rather like the figure of the historical Jesus, famously exposed by Albert Schweitzer, the figure of the historical Jonah reflects back – as it were in negative – an epoch’s image of itself. As ‘Jesus’, according to Schweitzer, becomes the scholar’s idealised self-reflection and ‘ally in the struggle against the tyranny of dogma’,<sup>61</sup> so the Jewish ‘historical Jonah’ becomes iconic of all the tyrannical dogma and narrowness that the Enlightened scholar must by definition resist. Just as the ‘yawning gaps’<sup>62</sup> in the gospels’ portrayal of Jesus are filled by love- and hate-inspired portraits, so Jonah is fleshed out (in a very un-lifelike way) and overwritten with all the passion of hate. If you look up Voltaire’s entry for *juifs* in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique* you find that they are ‘an ignorant and barbarous people, who have long united the most sordid avarice with the most detestable superstition and the most invincible hatred for every people by whom they are tolerated and enriched’;<sup>63</sup> if you look in the *Grosses Vollständiges Universal Lexicon* of 1735, you find Jews described as ‘slaughterers of Christian children’, crucifiers of Christ, who have been rightly rejected by civilised society for ‘almost 1,700 years’; and if you look at emergent Bible dictionary entries you find that a bemused Jonah attracts to himself precisely the same litany of characteristics, as he passes through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Jonah is clearly created in the image of the stigmatised European shtetl Jew: conversely, the Author separates out as his compassionate, benevolent, and rational alter-ego. The unnamed (hence universalised?) Author is praised for his visionary qualities and his capacity to read the signs of the times – qualities that allow him to usurp Jonah (the anti-prophet) as the true prophetic voice of the text. A. Kraemer talks of ‘unser Verfasser und anderer *aufgeklärter*

<sup>61</sup> Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>63</sup> Voltaire, ‘Juifs’, *Dictionnaire Philosophique* xli, cited in R. S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (London: Methuen, 1991), p. 45.

Juden' ('our author and other *Enlightened Jews*');<sup>64</sup> Tom Paine takes the logic one stage further and reasons that the book is a satire on Jewish institutions written not by a singularly advanced Jew, but by a gentile.<sup>65</sup> As Michaelis, elsewhere, styled Moses as an enlightened liberator in the Montesquieu mould,<sup>66</sup> so the author of Jonah is styled as a liberal intellectual and biblical scholar. Thus 'our author', unnamed, effectively becomes a universalised displacement of a universalistic 'us', our ambassador, or our representative, in the recalcitrant and foreign world of the Old Testament text.

Thus Enlightenment interpretation of the book of Jonah becomes a textbook example of how the Other becomes monsterised, dehumanised, and how the 'normative categories of . . . national identity, and ethnicity slide together like the imbricated circles of a Venn diagram, abjecting from the centre that which becomes the monster'.<sup>67</sup> At the centre is the singularly enlightened author (liberal, benevolent, and flatteringly before his time) – a displacement of the Enlightenment critic – at best literally a gentile *Aufklärer* and, at the very worst, a kind of biblical Nathan the Wise. And on the periphery lies Jonah the retrogressive Jew, with his xenophobic tendencies and monstrous psyche. The assured, Hegelian dialectic subjects one cultural body to another, naturalises the subjugation of slave-Jew to master-gentile. And in the process it seems that the gentile obtains the natural right to manage Jewish scriptural territory, to appropriate the Jew's cultural body, in ways that will be explored more fully at the end of this chapter (the book is 'our book', says Friedrichsen, *unser Buch*).<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> A. W. Kraemer, *Historische-kritische Untersuchung über das Buch Jonas* (Cassel: 1839), p. 13, cited in Friedrichsen, p. 181; my italics.

<sup>65</sup> Paine reasons 'as the book of Jonah, so far from treating of the affairs of the Jews, says nothing upon [the book's authorship], but treats altogether of the Gentiles, it is more probable that it is a book of the Gentiles than of the Jews; and that it has been written as a fable, to expose the nonsense and satirise the vicious and malignant character of a Bible prophet, or a predicting priest' (T. Paine, *The Theological Works of Thomas Paine* (Boston: The Advocates of Common Sense, 1834), p. 119).

<sup>66</sup> Following the spirit of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Michaelis cast Moses as 'proposing moderate reforms of an Enlightenment cast, aimed towards leniency of punishment, alleviation of the conditions of slavery, defence of the rights of women, protection of the status of strangers, magnanimity to the conquered' (cited in E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff: Judaism Through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 259).

<sup>67</sup> J. J. Cohen, *Monster Theory*, p. 11.

<sup>68</sup> Friedrichsen, *Kritische Übersicht*, p. 39.