

## Sitting Jonah with Job

### Resailing Intertextuality

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#### Abstract

In this article i<sup>1</sup> read the sitting of two biblical characters—Jonah and Job—together, two textual events that most sensible historical and literary critics would keep apart. Job and Jonah sit under the same covers, of the one book, so what's keeping readers from seeing and hearing them together? Might the positions of Jonah and Job have changed if they saw and heard one another? Would they have understood one another? I circle around those questions, and imagine myself re-sailing (re-selling?) the crafts of intertextuality. Intertextuality requires the moving of characters and texts around, and this article brings Jonah and Job out of the pages of the bible into the talanoa (story, telling, conversation) of West Papua, by way of Palestine.

#### Keywords

Intertextuality; Job; Jonah; Palestine; talanoa; West Papua

They sat—Jonah and Job—and they raved. Each of them, in different sitting positions, would have been fuming, screaming, in frustration, and deeply angry. Fishy and disgusted Jonah sat in the open hinterland outside of Nineveh, while traumatized and boil-stricken Job sat on an ash-heap outside his home away from his grieving wife. Unlike the popular images of a well-rounded Buddha sitting in calm meditation, these two biblical characters were not at peace.

They sat, but they were not pinned down. They moved as they raved, for raving is a moving act. I cannot be certain if their raving was in despair, but i suspect that there was something relieving and releasing in their raving.

Their biblical accounts sit them down, but their stories move around within the covers of the Bible. Jonah moves in the company of The Twelve insofar as his

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<sup>1</sup> I use the lowercase “i” because i also use the lowercase with “you,” “she,” “they,” “it,” and “others.” I do not see the point in capitalizing the first person when s/he is in relation to, and because of, everyone/everything else.

story is placed fifth in the Hebrew Bible but sixth in the Septuagint and second in some of the ancient manuscripts (Dyck 1990, 71), and one reads Jonah in the Nevi'im (the middle section) of the Hebrew Bible but towards the end of English Old Testaments. Jonah sits at several places in the Bible, inviting the reshuffling of the so-called minor prophets. As for Job, his story moves from between Proverbs and Song of Songs in the Kethuvim of the Hebrew Bible to in front of the Psalms and the beginning of the poetic books in Protestant Old Testaments. Job moves from the company of optimistic sages and a candid lover of a dark body to the gathering of worshippers, who give praise and thanksgiving, as well as cry, grieve, mourn, petition and lament. It feels as if the raving of these two sitting biblical characters dislodge them so that they drift into the hearing of other texts, other stories and other books, like Ezekiel (see Conrad 2003, 161-81) and Malachi (see Muldoon 2010, 87-91, 95-97), and into the company of one another. They sit, but they are not stationary (nor stationery).

In their postbiblical afterlife (to borrow from Sherwood), these sitting characters move even further. They sit, a respectful posture in Pasifika cultures (see Havea 2004), yet they move, as if they are seeking to couple up with other ravers, other characters, other voices, other stories. The articles in this special issue of *Bible and Critical Theory* testify to Jonah's moving afterlife, and in this article i invite (so i say, when i am in fact pushing) Jonah to sit with Job. This article brings these sitting and moving ravers into each other's mount. What might they have said to one another? How might they have reacted to one another's struggle?

## Intertextuality

Things were meant to flow  
one from another.  
They were meant to grow  
into one another; to know  
the taste and feel of  
being part of one vast whole.

All that stopped  
when words found mouths,  
when tongues wagged their way  
into minds,  
and each object shrank, suddenly,  
to fit its own precise outline. (Dharker 2014, 53-54)

One of the gifts that critical theory, exhibiting diverse stripes and many shades,<sup>2</sup> has provided for biblical critics is the encouragement to read two or more independent texts (from different places and times) together. This encouragement

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<sup>2</sup> "Critical theory allows us to explore the cultural production and communication of meanings in precise and nuanced ways, and from a range of different perspectives. It questions the ways in which we might be used to making sense of artistic, historical or cultural artefacts and prompts us to reconsider our beliefs and expectations about the ways individuals interact with material things and with each other. Put very simply, critical theory aims to promote self-reflexive explorations of the experiences we have and the ways in which we make sense of ourselves, our cultures and the world" (Malpas and Wake 2006, ix).

comes in different forms and under many labels. Most popular is intertextuality—inspired by Julia Kristeva (1980) and made attractive in the eyes of scriptural interpreters by Daniel Boyarin (1990), Danna Nolan Fewell (1992) and many others—which maintains that a text derives its meanings through overt and/or covert allusions, references and borrowings, from other text(s). In the footsteps of literary criticism and under the shadows of Ferdinand de Saussure and the gatekeepers of structuralism, for whom meanings are relational, intertextual biblical scholars read multiple texts in juxtaposition (for a sample of intertextual reading, see Fewell 1992). For several years now, intertextuality has reincarnated into many forms and under many labels—inner-, intra-, extra-, trans- and cross-textuality—depending on the location and relation of the texts that one reads together.

Biblical critics who read multiple texts in juxtaposition do so for diverse purposes ranging from seeking to complement, supplement, and enlighten one or all texts being read, on the one hand, to seeking to recover in order to embrace repressed or suppressed subjects in those texts, on the second hand, to seeking to problematize, subvert and deconstruct one text or another, on the third hand. There are more other hands, but these three serve my sailing just fine on this occasion.

In light of the growing awareness that cultures outside of the mainstream have their texts and scriptures also, intertextuality has been the wind that blows on the sail of what Edward Said called (borrowing from the music world) contrapuntal reading (Said 1993). R. S. Sugirtharajah and others favor this contrapuntal approach within the walls of biblical criticism (see e.g., Sugirtharajah 2003 and Dube 2006), opening up the window for the juxtaposition of Judeo-Christian scriptural texts with texts from other religious and cultural traditions. The postcolonial spirit of the contrapuntal exercise however makes many of its adherents suspicious of those who read in the interests of interreligious dialogue and interfaith relations. Those postcolonial critics are open to reading the scriptures from different religious traditions, but they do not warm to doing so in the interest of faith relations.<sup>3</sup> It is ironic that postcolonial theory has something to offer international relations (see Chowdhry 2007) but there are suspicions when it comes to interreligious relations. I say that this suspiciousness is ironic insofar as contrapuntal readers tend to deal with scriptures, which are products of and mandates for religious bodies.

Step back from the shadows of critical theory and one can see the tentacles of intertextuality holding together, in fact gripping, the structures of the Bible. The Bible is, in the first place, a book of books, with each book being a composite (of voices, sources, traditions, cultures, etc.) that is different from the other books. Source criticism helps show how, for instance, the books of the Pentateuch and of the Gospels compose of multiple voices from different locations and times. And form criticism helps show different genres and literary types from a variety of settings in Exodus, the Psalter and the Epistles, for instance. The Bible, as scripture, has many voices. With regards to the Hebrew Bible in particular, it is a

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<sup>3</sup> My colleagues Matthew Wilson and Seforosa Carroll, who appeal to postcolonial modes of thinking in their work on interfaith dialogues, shared this observation on several occasions. Their critics assume that if they are postcolonial in their way of thinking than they should not be involved in faith-related activities, as if postcolonial thinking is only for “secular people” but not for people of faith. On this matter, see the article by Rebecca Lindsay in this *BCT* issue.

concoction of narratives, histories, legends, myths, oracles, laws, parables, historiographies, wisdom sayings, dramas, proverbs, laments, love poetries, accounts of violence, sex, apocalypse, seasoned with irony and humor, satire and fantasy, and more . . . and these are to be read together. Borrowing the words of Dharker, the books of the Hebrew Bible “were meant to flow one from another” and “to grow into one another; to know the taste and feel of being part of one vast whole” (Dharker 2014, 53). This “vast whole” is however not systematic (so Penchansky 2012). The Bible is a concoction, a mixture, that is pleasant and intoxicating, but the same can also be repelling and disgusting, depending on one’s matter of taste. Readers who prefer a systematic Bible have to “shrink” the Bible “to fit [their] own precise outline” (Dharker 2014, 54).

The Bible is in itself an invitation to wild, untamed intertextual reading. It invites reading a host of different texts/books/voices, with their differences, together. Put differently, the Bible is already doing what critical theory and intertextuality encourage. The Bible invites the reading of diverse books in order, from one to the next, as well as, in light of Jonah and Job shuffling to different places in different versions of the Bible, reading books at different places within the covers of the Bible. This article accordingly reads the stories and characters of Jonah and Job together. I do so not because they refer to or borrow from one another, but because they sit and rave. I am here pushing the limits of intertextuality. My intertextual reading does not depend on following the conventions of intertextuality. I am not interested in doing intertextual reading correctly, in the right way(s) (according to whom?), but in enabling the raving of two sitting characters to hear each other out. I am not troubled if i end up saying the wrong things (no matter who decides) with regard to Jonah and Job, whom i appreciate for their courage to be unorthodox (on Jonah, see Havea 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b). I find it appropriate to be unorthodox when reading unorthodox books.

Recently, the ripples of intertextual reading have entered the mainstream, as it were, of biblical criticism (Kim 2007). Intertextuality is no longer seen as another experimental mode of reading in the wakes of critical theory, but affirmed and practiced (even if not named thusly) in the hallowed halls of biblical scholarship (see Aernie 2014). Intertextuality appears to have lost its sting, so to speak, since the days when critical theory troubled the waters of biblical criticism. Instead of the early projection (mainly on the conference floors and in the corridors of traditional and mainline biblical societies) that intertextuality was a passing fad, like historical criticism in the dawn of modernity and postmodern criticism more recently, intertextual reading has been endorsed and tamed, shrunk to fit someone’s precise outline.

Intertextual biblical critics however have not taken full advantage of the possibilities that intertextuality and the bible provide. Our intertextual biblical readings have not been unorthodox enough. This article is an attempt to rekindle the raving wildness of intertextuality.

## **Jonah ↔ Job**

The books of Jonah and Job contain a mixture of prose and poetry, but from different times and contexts. They would make strange bedfellows. Jonah is

already an awkward squeeze into The Twelve, for it does not exhibit the poetic artistry and demands for justice usually associated with prophetic books, and Job is the thorn on the side of traditional religions and their principles of retribution. Both books are restless where they are and, as the saying goes, they contain the kind of stuff with which legends are made.

The framing narratives to the book of Job (chapters 1-2 and 42) were most likely added later to the poetic exchange in between, and the role of Ha-Satan in the opening narrative points to postexilic sources like Zechariah (Collins 2004, 507). The language of the debate between Job and his three comforters is archaic, and the critical questions that Job raised against God and the religious teachings of his days locate the book alongside Koheleth (the preacher, and gatherer) in the wisdom literature. But Job is out of place with the prosperity gospels of the book of Proverbs. Job as character and book is the “in your face” type, up to the point of wanting to be in the face of God, the most powerful of all biblical judges.

Jonah on the other hand is a novella probably from after the fall of the Assyrian empire in 612 BCE (Collins 2004, 536), the capital of which is the “great city” of Nineveh. The storyline is the stuff of fantasies and myths, but the subject is realistic: for which prophet(ess) in her/his right mind would want to address and possibly deliver the capital city of the enemy? In the book of Jonah, Yhwh God is repentant and changes his mind about destroying one of the empires of the ancient near east. This is a different picture from the God character in the book of Job, who is the vicious protagonist (so Negri 2009) that hides during the unraveling of Job’s case.

In proposing to read the two books and characters together, i draw them out of their socio-political and psycho-cultural settings. Many biblical critics would consider this maneuver irresponsible, but doing so, i maintain, is what the Bible invites readers to do by putting books from different times and contexts, with different concerns and drives, under the same covers. The bigger challenge for me is with whether to read Job in light of Jonah or to read Jonah in light of Job. Which book or character will serve as the base text for this intertextual reading? Which book or character will i privilege?

The direction in which one reads these two books and characters, whether from Jonah to Job or from Job to Jonah, has something to do with the canon one honors. If i was a devout Old Testament critic, i would read from Job to Jonah in so far as the Wisdom Literature precedes the Prophets in the order of Old Testament books. But if i was a faithful Hebrew Bible critic, i would read from Jonah to Job, because the Nevi'im precedes the Kethuvim in the order of books in the Hebrew Bible. To be fair to the Bible in both scriptures, i will read in both directions. I will seek to both sit Jonah at Job’s heap and sit Job under Jonah’s booth.

### **Jonah demands death**

I focus this reading on the Jonah character in chapters 3-4 who received the second ultimatum from Yhwh to “Get up, go call to Nineveh, the great city, the call that I am telling (to) you” (3:2). Jonah is of course more than what one might construct

on the basis of chapters 3-4, so this reading offers only a partial view of this biblical character.<sup>4</sup>

The text does not reveal the content of the words that Jonah is meant to “call to” (or “proclaim to”) Nineveh (3:2), and it is impossible to tell if they were the same content as at the first time (1:2). The text does not disclose much in 3:2 but Jonah seems to know what Yhwh’s words entail and he did not approve, as suggested by his fuming in 4:2–3. There are however shifts between Jon. 1:2 and 3:2 which are suggestive:

Jonah 1:2	Jonah 3:2
Get up, go call against Nineveh, the great city, for their evil has come up before me.	Get up, go call to Nineveh, the great city, the call (fem) that I am telling (to) you.

There are double shifts here, from calling “against Nineveh” to calling “to Nineveh” and from the cause being the “evil” of Nineveh to God simply wanting to give Nineveh a call. Between 1:2 and 3:2, Yhwh’s tone mellows down. The tossing of wind and sea has ended, and so the casting (pun intended) of Jonah. The revulsion and fear that the “evil” of Nineveh invites in 1:2 subside when we get to 3:2, and one can almost hear Stevie Wonder’s 1984 song, “I just called to say I love you . . . and I mean it from the bottom of my heart.”

Yhwh mellows down, but Jonah’s temper heats up. In 4:2, Jonah fumes against Yhwh for being forgiving and repentant toward Nineveh. Jonah is upset because Yhwh is “a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment” (4:2). Jonah did not approve of God being nice and flexible, loving and caring. Jonah would rather die than live to face this repentant and mind-changing distant yet divine being.

There are several explanations for Jonah’s grief: Jonah fumes because his message of destruction did not come true, thus making him look like a false prophet; Jonah fumes because he wanted Nineveh, the seat of authority for the Assyrian empire, destroyed; Jonah fumes because he wanted Yhwh to be firm and determined; and so forth (cf. Gaines 2003, 105-33). These modern readings seek to explain why Jonah was fuming, but do not address how he wants his grief to materialize: Jonah would rather die than live. He was so grieved, so traumatized (see article by Elizabeth Boase and Sarah Agnew in this *BCT* issue), that he wanted to die.

The people of Nineveh wanted to live rather than die so they fasted and put on sackcloth, and Yhwh gave them what they wanted. Yhwh changed his mind and let them live, thus sparing the great city of Nineveh. The sailors experienced similar outcome in 1:14. They cried to Yhwh before casting Jonah into the sea, and the sea stopped from its raging and so they and the boat were spared. In both instances, Yhwh allows those who want to live to have their wish. One might therefore conclude that, as far as the book of Jonah is concerned, Yhwh grants life.

Jonah presents the opposite case, challenging Yhwh concerning what to do with those who want to die rather than live. Judging from what happened earlier, i expect that Yhwh would not let Jonah have his way. This was not the first time

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that i believe that there was a historical Jonah behind the biblical account. I am satisfied with the literary character, and it makes no difference to my reading if Jonah was real or not.

Jonah did something that suggested that he wanted to die. In 1:12, he told the sailors to cast him into the sea because the storm was coming after him. He opted to die so that the boat and the sailors might live. And Yhwh did not let him die that time, for he appointed a big fish to devour him then spew him onto dry land three days and three nights later (cp. Eagleton 2001, 178). Then twice when he was under his booth, Jonah asked for death. Both these later times also, Yhwh refused to grant Jonah's demand for death. One could conclude here that, as far as the book of Jonah is concerned, Yhwh does not grant death.

The Jonah that i bring to sit with Job is that one who begs for death but Yhwh refused to grant his wish. This refusal begs the question of the graciousness of Yhwh, which Jonah affirms: How gracious and repentant (in the sense that he changes his mind) is Yhwh in refusing to let Jonah die? "God's mercy is indeed a kind of absurdity." Yhwh doesn't seem to be such a "nice chap" after all (Eagleton 2001, 182).

The closing words in the Jonah novella has Yhwh declaring his pity for "Nineveh the huge city in which are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons (*'adam*) who do not know their right hand from their left, and many beasts." Yhwh is pity-full. But Yhwh does not declare pity for Jonah, who was to make the call against/to Nineveh on Yhwh's behalf. Could Yhwh be more cruel by letting Jonah live? Seeing that God sets Jonah "on his feet one moment only to kick his legs from under him the next, God isn't perhaps quite the patsy Jonah thought he was" (Eagleton 2001, 182).

## **Job curses the day of his birth**

For the purpose of this reading, my attention is directed to the character of Job from after the departure of Ha-Satan, up to his opening lament in the presence of his three friends (Job 2:7-3:26). I am curious about the unfairly stricken Job, a person whose wealth has been destroyed, whose children has been killed, and the boils on whose body i assume to be still raw and oozing with all kinds of pain and unpleasantness. His loss and suffering, as generations of interpreters have understood, in agreement with the two exchanges between Yhwh and Ha-Satan, are those of an innocent person.

When Ha-Satan departed, Job "took a potsherd to scratch himself as he sat in ashes" (2:8). The reference to ashes gives readers the impression that Job was sitting on an ash heap, a small mount of ashes, but there is no reference to one in the story. When the three friends arrived, they "sat with him on the ground" (2:13) but there is no mention if they too sat on ashes. Since the use of ashes is associated with grief, mourning (Holbert 1999, 12) and repentance, as the king of Nineveh did in Jonah 3:6, i assume something along that line for Job. Since Yhwh believes that Job is blameless and upright (Job 1:8; 2:3), and in light of his practices concerning the welfare of his sons (1:5), i expect Job to observe restorative and curative rituals closely. It would thus be for the purpose of finding comfort and resolve that he sat on ashes. I am not ruling out here that the ashes might have been soothing over his boils. I however can't say the same for the three friends, who came to Job but did not join him in the act of sitting on ashes.

Then there is his wife, whom the narrator kept away from the ashes. Seeing Job's suffering, which she shares for she too lost her children, his nameless wife gives him permission to die: "Curse (*barak*) God and die!" The Hebrew phrase is

playful, for one can also translate it as “Bless God and die!” (cf. Melancthon 2004, 79-80). Whether the wife intends for Job to curse or bless God is not as important for me as noticing that she gives him permission to die. There is no ambiguity about this: it is time to let go of God, and so to move on. In light of Jonah’s demand, she is reasonable. She too has lost much, for no apparent good reasons, and i imagine that she would have several good reasons for wanting someone to curse God.

Job’s response matches the rawness of her suggestion: “You talk as any shameless woman might talk. Should we accept only good from God and not accept evil?” Job finds his wife shameless in assuming that only good come from God. I imagine that Job would also say that anyone who expects only evil from God is also shameless. For Job, as i understand the feeling of someone in his kind of situation, one should expect both good and evil from God. Such a position, the narrator quickly adds, will not make one sinful (Job 2:10). According to this reading, Job did not reject the permission to die. On the contrary, he only rejects dualistic views on God. At the same time, i do not at this point rule out that Job was hurt because his wife wants him dead. And i can’t conclude from the text how she thinks of God, whether she expects only good or only evil from God. She might be the one who expects both good and evil from God, so Job’s “irate” is misdirected.

Nonetheless, the exchange between the wife and Job sets the stage for what follows: i expect Job to argue that both good and evil come from God. If another character sees only good or only evil, i expect Job to find that one shameless and will accordingly give counterargument. This is the atmosphere into which the three friends arrived. They came because they heard of “the evil” that has befallen Job, and this literary allusion points the reader toward God as the one responsible. The three friends did not sit with Job on ashes, but they wept, tore their outer garments, and “do something not easy to understand. ‘They scattered dust upon their heads heavenward’” (Holbert 1999, 12). Holbert sees this as a reminder of the sixth plague of Egypt, the boils that resulted from Moses “scattering dust heavenward.” When the dust came down on the bodies of humans and animals, boils erupted (see Exod 9:8-10). What did Job’s three friends have in mind when they threw dust heavenward?

It is strange that the three friends came to “console and comfort” Job (Job 2:11), but they sat in silence for seven days and seven nights. “None spoke a word to him for they saw how very great was his suffering” (2:13). While i believe that silence is good medicine, it would be very painful to sit in silence for seven days with a person who has suffered so much. I could cope with sitting in silence for one or two days, but if i was in distress, i would prefer a conversation (talanoa) after two or three days. So why did the friends sit in silence with Job? Were they treating him as one who is already dead (so Holbert), who is not to be disturbed but allowed to rest in peace? In this regard, the friends are on the same wavelength as Job’s wife.

To their surprise, therefore, Job spoke up in Chapter 3. Job wished that he would have never been born: “What Job demands is the disappearance of his birthday along with the night when he was conceived by his parents; what he requests is that the day and night that saw his joyous birth and his rapturous conception drop out of the pages of history, slip from the calendar of the years” (Holbert 1999, 18).



Job's troubles are unbearable, and he cursed the day when he was born because it did not block his mother's womb, and hide trouble from his eyes (Job 3:10). If he was not born, or had he died at birth, he would not have seen trouble. In death, all are at peace, whether king or slave (3:11-19). The last two stanzas are powerful, and i quote from the Tanakh (3:20-23 and 3:24-26; with italics added):

Why does He give light to the sufferer  
And life to the bitter in spirit;  
*To those who wait for death but it does not come,*  
*Who search for it more than for treasure,*  
*Who rejoice to exultation,*  
*And are glad to reach the grave;*  
To the man who has lost his way,  
Whom God has hedged about?

My groaning serves as my bread;  
My roaring pours forth as water.  
*For what I feared has overtaken me;*  
*What I dreaded has come upon me.*  
I had no repose, no quiet, no rest,  
And trouble came.

The Job that i seek to sit with Jonah is the one who wished he was never born, and who has been overtaken by fear and dread. This is no patient person of faith, but a disquiet sufferer after seven days and seven nights of sitting in silence with friends who acted as if he was already dead.

### **Sitting Jonah at Job's heap**

If Jonah came with his demand for death to Job's heap, i suspect that the two of them would have had a lot to unpack and to share. I imagine also that Jonah would have given the three friends an earful because they sat in silence for such a long time, almost like vultures waiting for their prey to stumble, without giving Job words of solidarity, if not words of counsel and comfort as well.

In oral preferring cultures, talanoa<sup>5</sup> (story, telling, conversation) is necessary for healing. Silence may be golden, but talanoa requires engagement and offers opportunities to listen (talanoa/conversation is meaningful when people listen to one another). In the ensuing exchange between Job and his three friends (chapters 4 and following), the three friends appear to not have heard Job clearly. Nor did Elihu or God. They would have annoyed Jonah, with whom God did not engage in talanoa.

Both Job and Jonah attributed their sufferings and struggles to something that God has done, including *not* doing something that they expected of God—

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<sup>5</sup> Talanoa is a native Pasifika word that connotes three events—story, telling, conversation—at once (see Havea 2013c). There is no story if there is no accompanying telling and conversation; telling is empty without story and conversation; and conversation is dry without story and telling. In oral-prefering cultures, talanoa (story, telling, conversation) has the capacity to make hopes and desires come alive. Talanoa (three-in-one) makes hopes and desires, and more, “real,” in oralizing ways.

God is the enemy in both of their eyes. Job would have given Jonah a heads up, seeing that Job lamented that God prevents those who “are glad to reach the grave” (Job 3:21-22). Insofar as Job sympathized with “those who wait for death but it does not come,” Job would have become Jonah’s number one supporter. Notwithstanding, Jonah would learn at Job’s heap to expect both good and evil from God. In this regard, Job would have straightened Jonah out, telling him to stop raving about God being only good.

Moreover, at Job’s heap Jonah would have realized that his case was not as desperate as that of Job’s. Jonah has lost no property, wealth, or beloved family members. So why was he complaining? At Job’s heap, Jonah looked like a whining baby. Job’s heap could therefore have made Jonah change his mind about his demand for death.

Alternatively, Jonah could demand death for those who are more deserving of death. I have in mind here characters like Job, rather than Nineveh, as Nahum would want us to think (see Davies 2004, 91-95).

Put simply, to sit Jonah at Job’s heap could have made Jonah change his attitude and his mind. Doing so would have helped move his eyes away from Nineveh, and away from his self-centered interests, in order that he may embrace the talanoa (story, telling, conversation) of others.

### **Sitting Job under Jonah’s booth**

If Job came under Jonah’s booth, i imagine that Jonah would have welcomed him. Jonah would not have hesitated to embrace Job and fan his complaints. I imagine also that Jonah would have welcomed and affirmed Job’s wife, who i suggested was on the same wavelength with Job’s three friends insofar as they hoped for death to take Job. In this reading, Job’s cursing the day of his birth did not contradict the opinion of his wife, or that of Jonah. So i imagine that Jonah would have spoken up on behalf of Job’s wife, the consequences for which would be manifold.

I imagine at the same time that coming under Jonah’s booth could be an opportunity for Job to reconsider the self-centeredness of his own complaint. In light of Jonah’s complaint on account of Yhwh’s treatment of a multitude of people and their king, Job sounds like someone who is full of himself. Even though the personal and the communal (or public) intertwine, Job’s lament drew attention only to himself.<sup>6</sup> His children, animals, servants, animals and homes were destroyed, but they don’t figure in Job’s rave. His laments called attention to his own pain. Job is all about Job. He did not even seem to care for what his wife had gone through. If Job came under Jonah’s booth, he would have been reminded that the world is more than his personal interests (cf. Jon. 4:11).

Furthermore, under Jonah’s booth Job would have learned that God can repent and change his mind. Yet, God will grant the wish of those who want to live but not the wish of those who want to die. There is a limit to changing God’s mind. Job would also have learned from Jonah that it is a waste of time arguing with God. God does not always listen, and would have therefore failed the talanoa test. So Job would have learned, as Eagleton puts it, that “God is simply using him

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<sup>6</sup> I quickly clarify that i am not making a value judgment here for or against Job, for individualism or communalism, but simply calling attention to Job’s self-absorption.

as a fall guy to let himself off the hook of his own soft-bellied liberalism” (2001, 179).

Put simply, to sit Job under Jonah’s booth would have made Job too change his attitude and his mind. Doing so would have made Job get up from his heap, as Jonah did by going outside of Nineveh, and look for talanoa with someone else, somewhere else. Insofar as *changing contexts* lead to *shifting meanings* (cf. Hermann 2011), Job might have helped his three friends rethink their traditional religious teachings had they followed him away from his heap.

### **So what?**

Studying the book of Job on its own is an opportunity to explain how the text undermines itself, as one finds in Negri’s study. Likewise, studying the book of Jonah on its own is an opportunity to uncover how that text also unravels itself, as one finds in Eagleton’s study.

But to study Job and Jonah together offers an opportunity for one to imagine how and what the two books, and the two characters, can learn from one another. This process moves away from deconstruction toward the impossibility of deconstruction. This is one lesson that the Bible can teach critical theory.

The appeal of intertextuality to biblical critics has been due to the opportunity to read, for a multitude of reasons (excuses?), different texts and scriptures together. But not enough attention has been given to the ways in which intertextuality involves *moving* texts and characters around (see Havea 2008). In fact, intertextuality is not possible without moving, motioning, shuffling, texts and characters around. This study has taken advantage of this, moving Job to Jonah and Jonah to Job. I moved Jonah and Job toward one another, but within the covers of the Bible. What if they exit the Bible?<sup>7</sup> Where might they find engaging talanoa?

### **For West Papua, via Palestine**

The stories of Jonah and Job have been told and remembered in the interests of the *land* of Palestine, which is nowadays under occupation by the State of Israel. How might Jonah and Job respond to the displacement of the native peoples of Palestine, by Zionist Jews whose ancestors were not natives of Palestine?

... many of the Jewish emigrants to Palestine were actually not the descendants of those native people who were exiled but mainly the descendants of North African Berber tribes or Eastern Europeans “Khasar” tribes who converted to Judaism. For them Jerusalem was like Rome for Catholics. One should be careful when talking about the “return” of the Jews, as if they are experiencing something of a homecoming to their original land. (Raheb 2012, 16)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Learned exegetes speak of bringing meanings out of the text, but there tends to be a scholarly limit imposed regarding how far they take those meanings.

<sup>8</sup> Raheb draws on the work of Shlomo Sand, Professor of history at Tel Aviv University, who asserts: the “fact is: most of these European Jews were but descendants of European tribes that converted to rabbinic Judaism in the middle ages; so their ancestors were never ever in Palestine; they were never exiled; and their connection to Canaan was more like the connection of Catholics to Rome. This invented ‘mythistory’ became the foundation for Zionism that

The Jewish settlers, encouraged and pardoned by the world's guilt because of the Holocaust, and "set apart" (biblical figure of speech for "holiness") by walls of separation, are displacing native Palestinians. They are in fact seeking to remove more than the Palestinians (people) from Palestine, as Mitri Raheb painfully puts it:

... our [Palestinians'] history, roots, and presence in the Holy Land are overseen so that we become invisible; as if this land were "a land without a people" for "a people without a land." What happens here is a real "displacement theology": the Palestinians were theologically replaced by the modern State of Israel and politically displaced from the land of their ancestors. (Raheb 2011, 11)

Put more sharply, the Zionist Jewish settler project seeks the "ethnic cleansing of Palestine"<sup>9</sup> and this is "a crime against humanity, punishable by international law" (Pappe 2006, 1). Yet, the world turns a blind eye to Palestine (land), preferring to forget the Palestinian people (see Masalha 2012, 120-134).<sup>10</sup> And the majority of biblical scholars are deconscientized by hermeneutics that justify occupation and displacement.

How might Jonah respond to the cries of the *native people* of Palestine, "a people not fighting to destroy its neighbor, but a people fighting for the right to be a neighbor" (Ateek 1989, 47)? Could the talanoa of the *land* and of the *native people* of Palestine make Jonah rethink his disgust with Nineveh? Could the faces of Palestinians make Jonah appreciate the decisions of the people of Nineveh to repent?

Closer to home, for me, is the genocide of the native people of West Papua. The largest island (in terms of land, population and languages) in Pasifika is split into two nations—Papua New Guinea (PNG) to the east, and West Papua to the west. But West Papua is fenced off from PNG, and excluded from the rest of Pasifika.

West Papua was colonized by the Netherlands in 1898. When Indonesia received independence from the Netherlands in 1949, West Papua remained a Dutch colony. In 1961 West Papua received independence, but Indonesia shortly afterwards came to war for it (calling it Irian Jaya). In 1962 the United States of America stepped in and brought West Papua under the protection of the United Nations, which decided in 1963, without consulting the natives, to give control over West Papua to Indonesia. With the blessings of the USA and the UN, Indonesia occupied West Papua in 1963 and has refused to give independence because the black natives were seen to be too primitive to lead and decide national affairs. Since occupation in 1963, Indonesia has slaughtered over 500,000 native

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created the political ideology connecting 'the people' with 'the land' with the aim of creating there a 'Jewish State'" (cited in Raheb 2011, 13).

<sup>9</sup> Pappe (2006) refers to the 1948 occupation of Palestine and displacement of the Palestinians as "ethnic cleansing" rather than "Nakba" (catastrophe) because "ethnic cleansing" gives a human face to the atrocity (see also Masalha 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Loss of memory is a painful ailment for oral preferring peoples. While talanoa/orality may not always be historically precise, as far as record-keeping historians are concerned, talanoa/orality is always in the battle against memory loss.

Papuans and tortured, raped and imprisoned thousands more (see [freewestpapua.org](http://freewestpapua.org)). This number is staggering given the estimate of less than 900,000 natives of West Papua in 2014.

West Papua is geographically located in the waters of Pasifika but politically and economically controlled (by Indonesia) from Asia. The sovereignty of the natives of West Papua has been violated by neighboring Indonesia, with the full recognition of the USA and the UN. West Papua is a thorn in the side of the designation of our region as Asia-Pacific. How are we Asia-Pacific when islanders from Asia are dispossessing islanders from Pasifika?

Were Job and Jonah to arrive at West Papua and breathe in the scarred and rotting black bodies of the natives, might they change their fury? Would their “irate” give hope, joy and/or frustration to the natives of West Papua?

In imagining what talanoa might Job and Jonah find had they come to West Papua via Palestine, i raised questions that invite speculations and ruminations. My drive in this reading was not to find answers to those questions, but to continue riding the *motion* that intertextuality requires. In so doing i imagine myself re-sailing intertextuality with the awareness, and appreciation, that not all are aboard.

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