

ANDRZEJ PANUFNIK AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF JONAH: ICONS, MUSIC AND LITERARY ART

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For its "Hundredth Birthday Season" in 1981 the Boston Symphony Orchestra commissioned twelve works, including the *Sinfonia Votiva* (*Symphony No. 8*) by Andrzej Panufnik. Born in Warsaw in 1914, Panufnik experienced first-hand the trauma of Nazi occupation followed by the repressive Stalin era in Poland. The catastrophic Warsaw uprising in 1944 was a personal catastrophe, as Steven Ledbetter has noted: "Every note of [Panufnik's] music composed up to that time was destroyed in the fires, and his only brother, a member of the Polish Underground, died in the fighting."¹ Ten years later Panufnik was granted political asylum in England where he resides today as a "self-exiled expatriate Pole."² His description of the structure of the *Sinfonia Votiva*, as appended to the musical score on August 15, 1981, provides a useful point of departure for a structural analysis of the book of Jonah, which curiously shares a somewhat similar structure as a great work of literary art arising perhaps from another period of national trauma in ancient Israel.

Panufnik's symphony is dedicated to a famous icon of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, which according to legend was painted by Luke on a piece of cypress wood used as a table top by the holy family in Nazareth. It came to Poland by way of Byzantium and is preserved at the monastery of Jasna Gora, which celebrated its six hundredth anniversary in 1982. As is so often the case among medieval icons, the dominant geometric motif is that of the circle. The larger nimbus of the madonna is intersected by the smaller one around the head of the infant. But of greater importance, from a structural point of view, is the left arm of the babe, which together with the flow of the garment of the madonna forms another circle of equal size and tangent to the larger nimbus to form a figure eight. This motif inspired Panufnik, who likes to work with geometrical forms in musical composition. See Figure 1, and note his description of his symphony:

As regards the structure and musical language, again with the ikon painters in mind, I designed the symphony by fitting it into a simple geometric figure, the circle, and I chose the number 8 (this being my 8th Symphony) as a guiding principle for its internal geometry. The construction of this "mother-diagram" . . . is based on two large circles combined into a figure 8. Each large circle contains two medium-

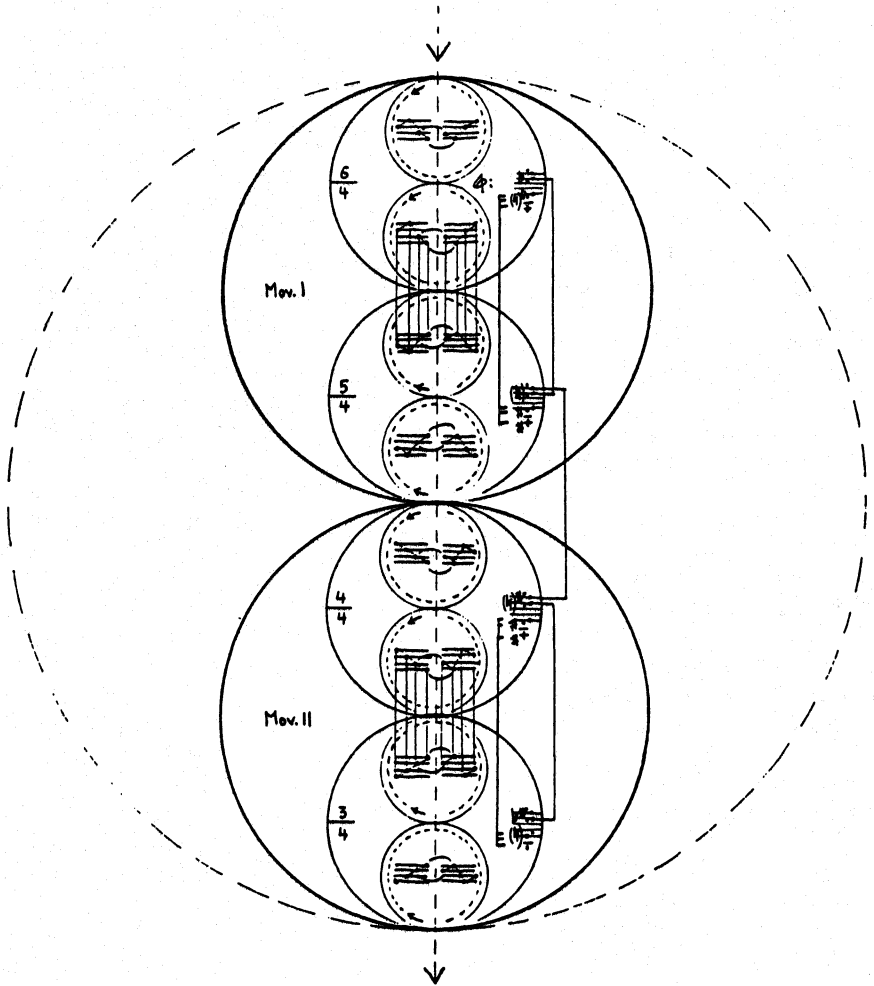
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¹I am grateful to Ray Hardin of the Boston Symphony Orchestra for providing me with a copy of the January 28, 1982, program in which Panufnik's *Sinfonia Votiva* was first performed in Boston. Steven Ledbetter wrote the biographical note from which this quotation is taken (p. 21).

²Ibid., p. 25—this is Panufnik's self-description.

sized circles, which also form a figure 8. These medium circles contain a total of 8 small circles, which can also be seen as four figures of 8.³

Figure 1⁴



³Ibid., p. 31.

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Concentric structures within the book of Jonah have been noted by numerous scholars.⁵ But to my knowledge this is the first attempt to present a verbal form of the circle as the overriding motif for understanding the structure of the book as a whole, a structure curiously similar to that of Panufnik's *Sinfonia Votiva*. It should be noted that the structures described here are based on a careful analysis of the content of the book of Jonah. In a related study I have argued that the book of Jonah displays a concentric structure in terms of metrical patterns as well.⁶ But from a prosodic point of view the work is in five parts rather than four, a situation somewhat different from that reflected in the four-chapter divisions of Masoretic tradition, which parallel the structure of Panufnik's eighth symphony. Curiously, each of those five metrical divisions of the book of Jonah was found to be concentric in nature.

The largest "circle," which embraces the book as a whole, may be outlined as follows:

- 1:1-2 A — Jonah's commission
- 1:3-4 B — Jonah vs. YHWH: Jonah's flight and YHWH's storm ("anger")
- 1:5-13 C — Dialogue between sailors and Jonah: "fear" motif
- 1:14a D — The sailors' prayer: "Hold us not responsible for this man's death"
- 1:14b E — YHWH's sovereign freedom: "What pleases you is what you have done"
- 1:15 F — The sea ceased its raging ("anger")
- 1:16 G — The men feared YHWH with a great fear
- 2:1-2 H — YHWH appointed a great fish to change Jonah's mind
- 2:3-10 I — Song of Jonah: a "proclamation" (*qārā 'tī*) of deliverance
- 2:11 J — Jonah's deliverance
- 3:1-2 K — Jonah's commission renewed
- 3:3-4 K' — Jonah's response: an oracle of doom to Nineveh
- 3:5-7a J' — Nineveh's repentance
- 3:7b-9 I' — Decree of king of Nineveh: a proclamation (*wēyiqrē'ū*) to turn from evil
- 3:10 H' — God changed his mind
- 4:1a G' — A great evil came to Jonah
- 4:1b F' — Jonah became angry
- 4:2 E' — YHWH's sovereign freedom: "I knew you would repent from the evil"
- 4:3 D' — Jonah's prayer: "I am better off dead than alive"
- 4:4-9 C' — Dialogue between YHWH/God and Jonah: "anger" motif
- 4:10-11 B' — YHWH vs. Jonah: YHWH's justification of his compassion
- A' — Jonah/Israel's response: an oracle of salvation (implied)

⁵Cf. R. Pesch, "Zur konzentrischen Struktur von Jona 1," *Bib* 47 (1966) 577-581; N. Lohfink, "Jona ging zur Stadt hinaus (Jona 4:5)," *BZ* (N.F.) 5 (1961) 185-203; T. E. Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977); D. L. Christensen, "The Song of Jonah: A Metrical Analysis," *JBL* 104 (1985) 217-231.

⁶To appear in a forthcoming issue of *JSOT Supplement* under the title "Narrative Poetics and the Interpretation of the Book of Jonah."

Within this larger "circle" one can find two "medium-sized circles" that divide the story into parallel "movements," as follows:

Chaps. 1-2

- 1:1-2 A — YHWH told Jonah to enter the "House of the Fish"⁷
 1:3 B — Jonah fled from YHWH (instead of "fearing" him)
 1:4 C — YHWH hurled a great wind to(ward) the sea, and a great storm
 threatened to destroy the ship
 1:5a D — In fear the sailors prayed to their gods
 1:5b E — The sailors hurled the ship's cargo into the sea, but Jonah went
 down inside the ship and fell asleep
 1:6 F — The captain ordered Jonah to pray for salvation
 1:7 G — Jonah is found out by lot
 1:8 H — The sailors asked: "Who are you?"
 1:9 I — Jonah's confession: "I am a Hebrew, and I fear YHWH"
 1:10a I' — It is the men who feared—with a great fear
 1:10b H' — The men asked: "What have you done?"
 1:10c G' — Jonah's flight is revealed
 1:11-12a F' — The men asked Jonah what they must do
 1:12b-13 E' — Jonah told them to hurl him into the sea, but the men rowed for
 shore
 1:14-15a D' — The men prayed to YHWH: "Hold us not responsible for 'innocent
 blood' "
 1:15b C' — The men hurled Jonah to(ward) the sea, which "ceased its raging"
 1:16 B' — The men feared YHWH—with a great fear
 2:1-11 A' — YHWH appointed a great fish to house Jonah

Chaps. 3-4

- 3:1-2 A — YHWH renewed Jonah's commission to enter Nineveh
 3:3-4 B — Jonah's repentance: He proclaimed a message of doom
 3:5-6a C — Nineveh's repentance
 3:6b-7a D — The king's repentance
 3:7b-8 E — Decree of king of Nineveh: "Turn from evil"
 3:9 D' — The king's hope (that God may repent)
 3:10 C' — God's repentance
 4:1-11 B' — Jonah's great evil—his anger (*vs.* YHWH's compassion)
 — A' — Jonah/Israel's response: oracle of salvation (implied)

In terms of these two major "movements," the concentric structures highlight the concept of "fear" on the one hand and the meaning of "repentance" on the other. It is Jonah who confesses that he fears YHWH (1:9). But it is the sailors who fear the great fear (1:10), which eventually is expressed in worship (1:16). The structure explores the transformation of fear from "terror" (1:5) to

⁷On reading the pseudo-logographic NINA (AB + 𐎠𐎢 = "enclosure + fish"), used occasionally for Nineveh, as "House of Fish" see E. Speiser, "Nineveh," *IDB*, 3: 552; earlier F. C. Baur, "Der Prophet Jonas, ein assyrisch-babylonisches Symbol," *ZHT* 7 (1837) 88-114.

“awe” (1:16). In short, the first movement is a midrash of sorts on Deut 10:12-13:

And now, Israel, what does YHWH our God require of you, but to fear YHWH your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of YHWH, which I command you this day for your good?

At all points Jonah demonstrates in his actions that he does not truly “fear” YHWH. It is the pagan sailors who “fear” YHWH according to the Torah of Moses.

The structure of the second movement focuses on the decree of the king of Nineveh, who in fact has taken the place of the prophet Jonah. At the level of literary pun the pagan king delivers the “Torah” to Jonah himself in the command to turn from evil. The meaning of this evil is explored in the fourth of the smaller circles, which correspond roughly to the MT chapter divisions. The content may be outlined as follows:

- 4:1-2b A — A great evil came upon Jonah (his anger)
 4:2cd B — YHWH’s compassion (reported by Jonah): “You are a compassionate and gracious God”
 4:3 C — Jonah’s response: “I am better off dead”
 4:4 D — YHWH’s question: “Do you do well to be angry?”
 4:5 E — Jonah built a booth to wait for God’s “anger”
 4:6 F — YHWH-God appointed a *qīqāyôn*, which brought great joy
 4:7 F’ — The God appointed a worm, which destroyed the *qīqāyôn*
 4:8 E’ — God appointed the *rūah qādīm*, which brought anguish
 4:9a D’ — God’s question: “Do you do well to be angry?”
 4:9b C’ — Jonah’s response: “I do well to be angry—unto death”
 4:10 B’ — Jonah’s “compassion” (reported by YHWH): “You showed pity for the *qīqāyôn*”
 4:11 A’ — YHWH justifies his compassion for Nineveh

The concentric structure here focuses on the mysterious *qīqāyôn*, a plant “which came up in a night and perished in a night” (4:11). Halpern and Friedman have suggested that the term is a pun that contains the name of Jonah.⁸ There are perhaps other levels of reading as well. The familiar “kiki,” or castor oil plant, captures one such meaning—but what an unusual plant, unlike any other instance of the species *Recinus communis* before or since. The *qīqāyôn* may be a riddle designed, in part, to explain the meaning of the greatness of the city of Nineveh, which was “a great city to God, a journey of three days” (3:3). Jonah began his mission “by going into the city, a journey of one day” (3:4). He then went east of the city where “he built for himself a booth” (4:5) and went to sleep. God caused the *qīqāyôn* to grow up during that night, and Jonah’s “second day” was one of great joy (4:6). But the *qīqāyôn* “perished in a night” (4:11), such that Jonah’s “third day” was one of great anguish (4:8-9). The book ends before the “third night” so that the reader does not know whether Jonah overcame his anger—the central theme of the second “movement” in the book.

⁸B. Halpern and R. Friedman, “Composition and Paronomasia in the Book of Jonah,” *HAR* 4 (1980) 79-92.

The meaning of the *qīqāyōn* may also be found in relation to the first “movement” of the book. The prayer of the sailors before they hurled Jonah overboard in 1:14 ended as follows: “Do not put to our account ‘innocent blood’ (*dām nāqī*’).” The misspelling of the term *nāqī*’ is usually explained as an Aramaism since the expression would normally be rendered *dām nāqī* (without the *aleph*). It seems more likely that the presence of the *aleph* is to call attention to the term *wayyāqē*’ in 2:11, where the great fish vomited out Jonah. The *qīqāyōn* may thus be a term coined for this particular book, perhaps as follows: *qī*’ + *niqqāyōn* = *qīqāyōn*, with the *nun* assimilating according to normal phonetic rules. The term *qī*’ means “to vomit or spew out,” whereas the term *niqqāyōn* carries the meaning “probationary exemption from punishment due” (cf. Hos 8:5). The riddle may thus point to a specific moment in time when Israel was enjoying the “booth” she had built (i.e., the temple) from which she was looking for the imminent judgment of God on wicked Nineveh. God then raised up “a protective plant” of his own, perhaps in the person of Hezekiah (*hīzqīyā*, cf. 2 Kgs 18:1), who was a source of great joy. But what God raised up in a night perished in a night, and the probationary exemption from punishment due came to an end.⁸ The resultant anger on the part of Jonah/Israel is the primary concern of the second “movement” in the book of Jonah. Though Jonah is convinced that his anger is just and fitting, that very anger unchecked will destroy him. His survival is dependent on his sharing God’s compassion for wicked Nineveh.

Another “smaller circle” in the structure of the book of Jonah is found in chap. 2, as follows:

- | | |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2:1-2 | A — YHWH appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah |
| 2:3 | B — Jonah’s prayer from Sheol: a lament |
| 2:4-5 | C — Though driven from YHWH’s presence, Jonah continued to look to his holy temple |
| 2:6-7b | D — Jonah’s descent “to the foundations of the mountains” |
| 2:7c | D’ — Jonah’s ascent “from the pit” |
| 2:8 | C’ — Though his “soul-life had expired,” Jonah continued to turn to YHWH in his holy temple |
| 2:9-10 | B’ — Jonah’s prayer in YHWH’s “temple”: a thanksgiving |
| 2:11 | A’ — At YHWH’s word the fish vomited out Jonah |

Here the structure highlights the dramatic turn of the narrative taken as a whole, the end of Jonah’s flight downward away from the presence of YHWH and the beginning of his ascent. I have tried to show elsewhere that this point in the story is also the structural center of the entire book of Jonah from a prosodic point of view.⁹ A further point of interest is the two contrasting references to the

⁸In a private communication Ronald Youngblood has suggested an alternate possibility to explain the “riddle of the *qīqāyōn*”—namely, that of an athbash, a Hebrew cryptographic device in which the letters of the alphabet were substituted for each other in reverse order. There are three demonstrable instances of this phenomenon in Jeremiah: in 51:1 where *lḇ qmy* (“the heart of those who rise up against me”) is substituted for *kšdyḿ* (“Chaldeans”), and in 25:26; 51:41 where *ššk* (“Sheshach”) is substituted for *bbḷ* (“Babylon”). The athbash of *dḿ* (“blood”) is *qy*. The term *dḿ nqy* (“innocent blood”) could then have produced *qīqāyōn* as follows by means of an athbash coupled with a simple transposition: *dḿ* + *nqy* > *qyqyḿ* + *nqy* > *qyqyḿ*.

⁹See n.6 above.

temple of YHWH. In 2:4-5 Jonah is wistfully looking to the actual temple in Jerusalem as he utters his lament. But in 2:9-10 Jonah's prayer of thanksgiving is uttered from the belly of the great fish, which has become a new "temple" of YHWH for Jonah—the place where the prophet once again encounters YHWH, who raises him up from the pit alive (2:7).

At two points the concept of the concentric structure appears in even smaller units, at the level of individual verses. In 1:3 Jonah's flight is portrayed as follows:

But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish away from YHWH;
 And he went down to Joppa.
 And he found a ship plying the Tarshish route;
 And he paid the passage money;
 And he went down in it—
 To go with them to Tarshish away from YHWH.

A two-part center focuses on the fact that the ship is going to and from Tarshish, the place to which Jonah is fleeing from the presence of YHWH. This center is framed by the first two occurrences of the key verbal root *wayyēred*, "and he went down."¹⁰

The decree of the king of Nineveh in 3:7-8a presents a somewhat similar structure:

Human beings and beasts, cattle and sheep;
 Let them not taste anything.
 Let them not graze (be evil),
 And water let them not drink;
 Let them don sackcloth, human beings and beasts.

The center here presents a pun. So far as the beasts are concerned, they are forbidden to graze. The fast that the people of Nineveh have already declared is now extended to include the animals as well. But since human beings do not graze, another meaning is carried by the wordplay: *'al yērē'û* in place of *'al yir'û*. The human beings are told to turn from their evil (cf. 3:8).¹¹

Another concentric structure may be contained in the very distribution of the adjective "great," particularly within the first "movement" of the book of Jonah. Though the root *gd* ("to be great") appears fifteen times in the book, twelve of these occurrences are in the form of the adjective, which appears to be distributed for rhetorical effect. The phrase "great city" appears four times, framing each of the two "movements" of the composition as a whole. Eight occurrences of "great" appear in the first "movement" and four in the second, distributed as follows:

¹⁰The root *yrd* appears four times in the book of Jonah, each time at the center of a concentric configuration. The fourth occurrence (2:7) is at the structural center of the book of Jonah, where the prophet reaches hell itself in his flight from the presence of YHWH that began in 1:3.

¹¹See my article, "Anticipatory Paronomasia in Jonah 3:7-8 and Genesis 37:2," *RB* 90 (1983) 261-263.

1:2	Great city
1:4	Great wind
1:4-9	Great storm—great fear
1:12-16	Great storm—great fear
2:1	Great fish
3:2	Great city
3:3	Great city
4:1	Great evil (Jonah's anger)
4:6	Great joy (over the <i>qīqāyôn</i>)
4:11	Great city

Though concentric structures were the dominant motif in Panufnik's composition of his *Sinfonia Votiva*, he used other structures as well. Few works of art can be reduced to a single structural pattern. A glance at Figure 1 will reveal a gradation as one moves through the four medium-sized circles, from top to bottom. As Panufnik put it: "Each medium-sized circle will be seen to contain its own harmonic climate, which is further emphasized by the progressive reduction of the number of beats in each measure (6/4, 5/4, 4/4, 3/4)."¹² The author of the book of Jonah seems to be developing a linear structure in the choice of divine names used with the four occurrences of the term *wayēman* ("and he appointed"). In 2:1 YHWH appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah. In 4:6 it is YHWH-God (*YHWH-ʿēlohīm*) who appointed the *qīqāyôn*. It should be noted in passing that this is the only time outside the Pentateuch where this combined name for God is used in the Hebrew Bible. In 4:7 it is "the God" (*hāʿēlohīm*) who appointed at the dawn of the third day the worm that smote the *qīqāyôn*. And finally in 4:8 it is God (*ʿēlohīm*) who appointed the *rūah qādīm ḥārīšit* ("the sultry east wind") that beat upon the head of Jonah, driving him to despair.

Artists working in medieval icons, modern music and ancient Hebrew literature have apparently followed somewhat similar conventions to achieve a sense of balance and symmetry in their work. The circle as a convenient structuring principle is sometimes divided into two equal parts that are mirror images of each other in terms of the structure of the work of art as a whole. For both the book of Jonah and Panufnik's eighth symphony, these two major divisions are in turn divided into equal parts that are concentric in nature, such that the end result is remarkable structural symmetry from almost any point of view. The concentric structure of any one of the four chapters of Jonah is similar to the structure of each half of the book, which in turn is but a smaller version of the structure of the whole. In short, Panufnik's diagram (Figure 1) of the conceptual structure of his eighth symphony is a useful description of the structural detail in the book of Jonah as well.

¹²Program notes from Boston Symphony Orchestra (January 28, 1982) 31 (see n. 1 above).