Introduction

In the Hebrew canon, the nine-chapter book of Amos is third in the Book of the Twelve Prophets; in the Greek translation, it is in second place. Thus, at the head of the collection of the Twelve, in Hosea and Amos we have two prophets who, according to the superscriptions, were active at the time of the Israelite king Jeroboam, son of Joash—whom historians call Jeroboam II—who ruled from 786 to 746 BCE. These two prophets are the only ones whose words are almost exclusively addressed to the northern state of Israel, which came to an end with the Assyrian conquest of Samaria in 722 BCE. With Hosea and Amos, the Book of the Twelve, arranged in principle in chronological order, marks the end of a historical epoch. After this, further prophecy is restricted to Judah.

The Judean perspective is already evident in the superscriptions to Hosea and Amos, which synchronize their work with the reigns of Judean kings. In Amos, this is Uzziah (786–736), while in Hosea, Uzziah is followed by Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Since Hezekiah ruled until 697 BCE, it turns out that Hosea is more recent than Amos, which is confirmed by the historical background of the two writings. At the same time, according to the superscription, Hosea's ministry coincides with those of both Amos and Micah (cf. the mention of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Mic 1:1).[1]

> Why the more recent Hosea precedes the older Amos, contradicting the assumed chronological order, can only be surmised. Probably, the basic text of Hosea was composed earlier than that of Amos.[2] The two books may even have already existed on a scroll of the two prophets, constituting a collection of prophetic critiques of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.[3] In addition, there may be indications in the text itself that show why Hosea's message was interpreted as the more comprehensive of the two.[4] It will be difficult to go beyond Franz Xaver Sedlmeier's comment: "The question why the book of Hosea opens the Book of the Twelve Prophets is a *quaestio disputata* and will remain so."[5]

Synchronic View

1. The Nature of the Book of Amos as a Whole

The superscription of the book of Amos presents the prophet, his origin, and the location and time of his ministry. No author is mentioned, either in the superscrip-

1 Cf. Schart, Entstehung 36.
2 Cf. Jeremias, Anfänge.
3 Cf. Schart, Entstehung 133–155.
4 See the comments in Wöhrle, Sammlungen 254.
5 Sedlmeier, Franz Xaver, Hosea als Anfang des Zwölfprophetenbuches. Überlegungen zu einer Quaestio disputata: Heinz-Josef Fabry (ed.), The Books of the Twelve Prophets. Minor Prophets—Major Theologies (BETL 295), Leuven: Peeters 2018, 425–440, 439.

tion or the rest of the text. The superscription does not claim that Amos himself wrote the text. What it does claim is simply that what follow are "the words of Amos." So this is an anonymous writing presenting itself as a collection of words of Amos.[6]

The book named after Amos is indeed a collection of prophetic sayings—with few exceptions. These exceptions, however, are of considerable importance. In fact, the very first verse following the superscription begins with a narrative: "He said: ..." (1:2). This is the anonymous author's way of letting the prophet himself do the talking. He keeps it up until 7:9; we shall come back in a moment to the fact that he often hides behind the authority of his God by introducing his words with the formula "Thus says YHWH."

It is not until 7:10 that the narrator speaks again by presenting a narrative (7:10–17) within which the words of Amos's adversary Amaziah as well as his own are separately introduced (for Amos in 7:14). After this, the prophet continues to speak, until the end of the book.

A text in which one or more characters generally speak is customarily called a drama. Thus the book of Amos can indeed be described as "a kind of drama."[7] Since the speech of the characters Amos (and Amaziah) is introduced narratively—and not as a paratext that is not read or spoken, as in modern drama—it is more accurate to speak of an "epic narrative in dramatic mode";[8] the speech of the characters dominates ("the words of Amos"), but this is set within a narrative framework.

> Taking exegesis of Deutero-Isaiah as his starting point, Klaus Baltzer has presented the theory that dramatic texts like this one may also have been performed. Helmut Utzschneider and Stefan Ark Nitsche have taken this line further, considering the possibility that when reading (or reciting) a prophetic text aloud, the presenter used elements of performance.[9] This is an important argument against the notion that books of prophets are "a kind of literature for closed circles,"[10] perhaps "created from the start for study of the Scriptures in learned and pious circles."[11] Another question is the extent to which references to the "performance" can be found in the texts themselves. But even if this produces meager results and one has to depend on one's creative imagination, it goes without saying that any good reading contains performa-

6 See the approach taken by MÖLLER, Karl, "Hear this word against you": A Fresh Look at the Arrangement and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Book of Amos: VT 50 (2000), 499–518, according to which "the editors or redactors of the book" (510) "intend to present to their readers an account of the prophet Amos" (517). SWEENEY, Twelve Prophets 195f., also acknowledges that in 1:1 an anonymous author is presenting the words of Amos, found in 1:2–9:15 (and all of which Sweeney attributes to Amos himself).

7 Thus EIDEVALL, Amos 98, cf. 13–15.

8 CASAGRANDE, "A Little Drama" 208 and passim.

9 See UTZSCHNEIDER, Helmut, Micha (ZBK 24.1), Zurich: TVZ 2005; NITSCHE, Stefan Ark, Jesaja 24–27: ein dramatischer Text. Die Frage nach den Genres prophetischer Literatur des Alten Testaments und die Textgraphik der großen Jesajarolle aus Qumran (BWANT 166), Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2006.

10 KRATZ, Worte des Amos 341.

11 KRATZ, Reinhard Gregor, Probleme der Prophetenforschung: IDEM, Prophetenstudien. Kleine Schriften II (FAT 74), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011, 3–17, 10.

tive elements (voice modulation, volume variation, facial expressions, gesticulations).[12]

2. The Structure of the Book

The book of Amos can be set out in four parts.[13] Amos 1–2 contains oracles against the nations in the form of an evenly structured poem in eight strophes. The first six strophes address foreign nations. These are followed by a strophe about Judah, which is about the same length as the six strophes about foreign nations. The goal of the composition is the eighth strophe, the Israel strophe. It is much longer and also differs in form from the preceding strophes.

Chapters 3–6, a collection of sayings of varying length, form the second part of the book of Amos. These sayings are addressed almost exclusively to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and its inhabitants, whom they threaten with destruction, banishment, and foreign rule. The introductions to the discourses, with "Hear this word that YHWH has spoken concerning you" (3:1) and "Hear this word that I raise concerning you" (5:1), divide the collection into two parts.

In the third part, 7:1–9:6, the character of the texts changes, although to begin with it is still Amos who speaks. We are given a first-person account by the prophet of five visions that he has received. Included is a further account of how Amos is expelled from the Northern Kingdom and sent to Judah (7:10–17), in which the narrator speaks again for the first time since 1:2. After the brief narrative, as in chs. 3–6, we again find words of Amos (8:4–14).

The book of Amos concludes with the passage 9:7–15. While most of what we have read up to this point relates to the fall of Israel, the closing verses look forward to a future full of hope. The intention of these verses is not, as is often suggested by interpreters, to correct Amos's message, but to take it on to its conclusion. Questions arising during the reading of Amos are answered here in the conclusion.[14]

The four sections of the book of Amos describe a dramatic movement. It comes from YHWH, who raises his voice from Jerusalem (1:2). In the oracles against the nations he documents his universal claim, but it is immediately clear that the real targets of the accusations and threats are Judah and, especially, Israel. Israel, almost exclusively, is the focus of interest in the words of chs. 3–6 and 7:1–9:6. The threat of banishment (5:27; 6:7) and foreign rule (6:14) and the announcement of the end that will come "to my people Israel" (8:2) mark the point to which the

12 We should also mention the study by RILETT WOOD , Joyce, Amos in Song and Book Culture (JSOT.S 337), London: Sheffield Academic 2002. She takes the book of Amos as the written edition of a cycle that was originally performed orally; cf. her summary on 95: "Amos composed a song cycle he could perform before a live audience, but his editor changed it into a historical and biographical piece of archival interest."

13 After a detailed discussion of numerous proposed sections of the book, BRAMER, Stephan J., Analysis of the Structure of Amos: Bibliotheca Sacra 156 (1999), 160–174, also arrives at the fourfold structure represented here. A comprehensive history of research on the structure of the book of Amos can be found in KOLANI, Amos, 43–118.

14 Cf. R. KESSLER, Von hinten gelesen.

oracles lead. But the movement that started with 1:2 has not yet reached its goal. Expecting that the words of Amos will continue to work in Judah, where the chief priest of Beth-El has sent him, there is a hope that comes from the restored tabernacle of David (9:11) and will include both the survivors of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who are to be freed from their oppressive structures, and the remnant of the nations. It is only at this point that the book of Amos reaches its goal.

3. The Prophet Speaks on the Authority of YHWH.

Almost everything Amos says he ascribes to the authority of God, in whose name he speaks. The book is permeated with phrases that indicate this: "Thus says YHWH" (1:3, 6, 9, etc., in total fourteen times), "says (the Lord) YHWH" (1:5, 8, 15, etc., in total nine times), "saying of YHWH" (with expansions of the divine name) (2:16; 3:10, 13, etc., in total eighteen times), and "YHWH has sworn" (4:2; 6:8; 8:7). And the actual words of God are usually recognizable by the fact that YHWH speaks in the first person.

In a communication diagram focusing purely on form, divine speech has to be assigned to a separate communication level below the level of prophetic speech. This may be illustrated on the basis of Amos 1:1–3 (C = communication level):

C1 the real author (unknown)
C2 the implicit narrator (v. 1 + "He said" from v. 2)
C3 the prophet (v. 2)
C4 God (v. 3 after "Thus says YHWH")

In individual cases, the distinction between prophetic and divine speech is generally possible and meaningful. Within the visions narrated by the prophet in first-person form, it has to be said that when letting YHWH speak, the prophetic narrator quotes him verbatim: "It should not be, said YHWH" (7:3; cf. v. 6); "Then YHWH said to me, 'What do you see, Amos?'" (7:8; cf. 8:2).

But some passages are striking. Either the prophetic speech transitions imperceptibly into divine speech; in 3:1 the prophet begins: "Hear this word that YHWH has spoken concerning you, you children of Israel," and then continues, without a transition, with divine speech: "concerning the whole tribe of people that *I* brought up out of the land of Egypt." Or else it is difficult to decide at any point whether it is God himself or the prophet that is speaking (e.g., 5:1–2). This is an indication that it would be too easy to interpret the transition from C3 to C4 in principle in such a way that the prophet is now *quoting* YHWH.

Interpreters long regarded it as a matter of course to call the "Thus says YHWH" formula a "messenger formula." Against the background of a divine-word theology, the prophet was understood as a messenger conveying the divine message to people, stepping entirely behind the one who sent him. Essentially, the prophet would be quoting what God has told him to say.

If, on the other hand, one tries to see the formula in its context as a speech act, as Andreas Wagner does in his important study of the *kōh ʾāmar-YHWH* formula, this picture crumbles. Wagner shows that the formula is not a quotation of a word

of YHWH, to be translated as a preterit, but is a declarative speech act, to be rendered in the present tense: As he speaks, the prophet is placing himself under the absolute authority of the God in whose name he speaks. The formula indicates—in Wagner's words—"that the speaker is converting what is said after the formula into a speech by the sender (*so that N.N. speaks via the speaker*)."[15] Amos is not an oral "mailman" who passes on something in a prepared format but behaves like an ambassador, a diplomat speaking on the authority of his government.

As the prophet "is converting what is said after the formula into a speech by the sender," it is appropriate to differentiate between levels C3 and C4. But it must be seen that they mean something different in content than if the prophet were to quote a divine saying; the prophet himself is claiming to speak on the authority of God.

4. The Self-Declared Setting of the Book

The book of Amos is situated clearly in time and space. The superscription cites the reigns of kings Jeroboam II of Israel (786–746 BCE) and Uzziah of Judah (786–736) as the time of Amos's ministry. Jeroboam is then mentioned in 7:10, and the house of Jeroboam in 7:9.[16] Other references to historical events in the book can be situated in this period, such as the incursions of the Aramaeans of Damascus into Gilead (1:3) or the references to the (probably Assyrian) conquests of Calneh, Hamath-Rabbah, and Gath (6:2) or their own conquests of Lo-debar and Karnaim (6:13). However, without the time frame of reference in the superscription, none of these events would be securely datable. This specification by the information given in the superscription is all the stronger for the striking fact that the great power that held sway from the middle of the eighth century onward is not mentioned in the book of Amos. This fits the first half of the eighth century, but without the indication given in the superscription it would tell us nothing.[17]

The closer dating in 1:1, "two years before the earthquake," indicates a precise point in time. However, since the time of this earthquake is never fixed within the text, this point in time is strangely left up in the air.

From the perspective of the time of the reign of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, the text is looking back into the past. The statements about YHWH as Creator in the hymnic sections (4:13; 5:8–9; 9:5–6), however, are not historically relevant. They are expressed almost exclusively in participial form and do not have a *creatio prima* in mind but speak of the divine *creatio continua*. Thus the furthest back the perspective extends is when the text speaks of Israel's being brought up out of Egypt (2:10; 3:1; 9:7); in 9:7 this repatriation is set alongside those of the Philistines

15 WAGNER, Prophetie 42.

16 LEVIN, Christoph, Amos und Jerobeam I.: VT 45 (1995), 307–317, assumes that Amos 7:9 and 7:10–17 originally referred to Jeroboam I and that it was only the superscription, 1:1, that manufactured a reference to Jeroboam II. That remains a matter of speculation. In the present book of Amos, at any rate, Jeroboam II is meant.

17 STRIJDOM, Amos 235–249, deals comprehensively with the various interpretive options relating to the silence about Assyria in Amos.

from Caphtor and the Aramaeans from Kir, which we know nothing further about. Also mentioned in the now canonical picture of history are the forty-year time in the wilderness that follows the repatriation and the settlement (2:10; 5:25). The attacks on consecrated persons and prophets mentioned in 2:12 are presumably understood to take place after the settlement. Then we come to the time of the kings, which is evoked by the two mentions of David (6:5; 9:11); in 9:11 the epoch of David is called "the days of old." The accusations made against the neighboring peoples in the poem of the nations come closest to the present, but the text does not fix the time any more precisely. The same applies to the blows that YHWH inflicted upon Israel in the past according to the refrain in 4:6–11. The historical events to which 6:2, 13 allude clearly also lie in the recent past, although no more precise dating is given.

From the (fictional) present point of view, the perspective then turns to the future. In most of the prophetic threats, there is no determination of the time. This does not change even when there is talk of a Day (3:14; 8:9, 13) or coming Days (4:2; 8:11). And although the "day of YHWH" lies in the future, it is not fixed in time (5:18–20). From indications in the content, however, it may be assumed that the days of salvation in the concluding verses (9:11, 13) are even further away than the previously announced days of disaster.

The focus on Israel's history between the exodus from Egypt and the future erection of David's tabernacle is reflected in the geographical situation of the book. According to the superscription, the addressee of the words of Amos, who himself comes from Judean Tekoa, is Israel; because immediately afterward the king of Judah and the king of Israel are distinguished, here Israel must mean the Northern Kingdom. The vast majority of Amos's words from 1:3 to 9:6 speak of the Northern Kingdom. This is quite clear when Samaria (3:9, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 8:14), Beth-El (3:14; 4:4; 5:5f.; 7:10–17), Gilgal (4:4; 5:5), and Dan (8:14) are mentioned, places in the north.

Two exceptions stand out. One is the occasional mention of Judah, as in the Judah strophe of the poem of the nations (2:4–5) and in the indication of the addressees in 6:1 (Zion). In view of the dominant focus on the north, it is clearly worth bearing in mind what the motto in 1:2 already says, namely that the word of YHWH originates from Zion and Jerusalem and therefore Judah is at least affected. After the prophet is expelled to Judah (7:10–17), the south always remains in view, even if it is only explicitly mentioned in the concluding verses (9:11) in the "tabernacle of David."[18]

The second exception to the concentration on the Northern Kingdom of Israel are the passages where "Israel" has a further meaning. According to the biblical view of history, it was not only the northern tribes that were involved in exodus, wilderness wanderings, and settlement. Even though, as far as the announcement

18 DAVIES, Philip R., Why Do We Know about Amos?: Diana Vikander EDELMAN and Ehud BEN ZVI (eds.), The Production of Prophecy. Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud, Oakville: Equinox 2009, 55–72, 55, is right to say, "The book is about Judah as much as about Israel." His further comment, "the book must be more about Judah than about Israel," is surely not correct in quantitative terms; nonetheless the corner position of 1:1–2 and 9:11–15 indicates that in its transmitted form the book is aimed at a Judean readership.

of the end for "my people Israel" (8:2), the book of Amos can be read against the background of the dualism of Israel and Judah that is already set out in the superscription, it must always be borne in mind that "Israel" also has a broader meaning than simply the name of the state to the north. The conclusion is that although the state structures of the Northern Kingdom are being destroyed, the "House of Jacob," that is, the population of the north, survives (9:8) and has a future under the protection of David's tabernacle (9:11).

Geographically, the book of Amos is focused on Israel in both the narrower and the broader sense. But it is so against the background of an image of a God whose influence is universal. In the poem of the nations he holds six of Israel's and Judah's neighboring peoples to account. And in the final verses he reminds us that he has his own history with the Cushites, Philistines, and Aramaeans (9:7) and wants to place the survivors of the coming catastrophe from the nations under the protection of David's tabernacle, proclaiming his name over them (9:12).

5. Theme and Theology of the Book

The fact that the book of Amos is characterized by sharp criticism of all sorts of evils is already evident from a cursory reading. Right at the beginning, the poem of the nations accuses the neighboring states of war crimes. The social criticism that dominates the book begins in the Israel strophe.[19] The oppression and exploitation of the poor and the opulence of the rich are the focus of the accusations. Often religious misconduct is also included in the criticism. Such criticism is partisan. It does not contain any objective description of social and religious conditions but sees itself as committed to those it identifies as victims of the development.[20]

The dark announcements of the future are derived from the criticism. Their first focus is on the fate of the perpetrators (e.g., 4:1–3). But it is clear from the outset that the judgment will not distinguish with surgical precision between perpetrators and victims but will affect everyone in the form of earthquakes and military defeat, banishment, and foreign rule. The goal of this line is to announce the fourth vision: "The end has come upon my people Israel" (8:2).

What is the purpose of such criticism and announcement of judgment? What theology does it display?

Herald of the end or preacher of repentance?

19 On the social criticism of Amos, cf. the fundamental research of Fendler, Marlene, Zur Sozialkritik des Amos: EvTh 33 (1973), 32–53; Schottroff, Willy, Der Prophet Amos. Versuch der Würdigung seines Auftretens unter sozialgeschichtlichem Aspekt: idem and Stegemann, Wolfgang (ed.), Der Gott der kleinen Leute. Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen. Band 1 Altes Testament, Munich: Kaiser / Gelnhausen: Burckhardthaus-Laetare 1979, 39–66; Coote, Robert B., Amos among the Prophets. Composition and Theology, Philadelphia: Fortress 1981, 24–39; Fleischer, Sozialkritik; Jaruzelska, Amos.

20 Hence, the warning of Clines, David J. A., Interested Parties. The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible (JSOT.S 205), Sheffield: Sheffield Academic 1995, 76–93, should certainly be taken on board, that as a reader or commentator one should be careful not to simply (without due consideration) identify with the position of the prophet.

> A long-standing view, dominant especially in German-speaking research, sees the announcement of the end in 8:2 as the hermeneutical key to the understanding of Amos. According to this interpretation, this is to be understood first of all in the sense that "all that is said by Amos about Israel's future … interprets this hardest sentence."[21] The "No of Amos"—according to Rudolf Smend's widely adopted title—is therefore not only "the No to the social behavior of the people, to their understanding of history and to the cult" but "ultimately, as a consequence, the No to the very existence of Israel."[22] Werner H. Schmidt goes even further. The (alleged) No to the existence of Israel is not a "consequence" of the other No, but conversely, the "anticipation of the inevitable threat of disaster to Israel" is the only knowledge revealed to the prophet, while the "demonstration of guilt is—unavoidably—the task of the prophet himself." The aim of all this is, "by revealing the guilt, to make the announcement of disaster … 'affirmable.'"[23]
>
> This interpretation reminds Marvin Sweeney of the caricature of a long-haired man in sandals standing on a street corner with a cardboard sign reading, "The end has come."[24] What are passersby to do with this information? When the man points to their guilt, are they supposed to be enabled to affirm the "inevitable threat of disaster"? To ask the question is to point out the problems with the assumed answer.

Criticism of the positions that see Amos as the announcer of the inevitable impending end for Israel runs in two directions. First of all, Erich Zenger has noted that the judgment Amos announces is not a judgment upon each and every person but judgment "upon those who in clear conscience accept, and indeed perpetrate, the increasing impoverishment of small farmers and the structural impediment to humanity," but that such a message of judgment can also "create hope"—"in the first place for the exploited and disadvantaged."[25] Haroldo Reimer has made an exegetical attempt to provide a broad basis for this; he concludes, "Amos's predictions of disaster are addressed to particular social groups and classes; they do not affect the whole population."[26]

If the attempt made here is to "highlight the real message of the (historical) Amos"—compare the title of Zenger's article—and to nuance it socially, a further criticism asks about the rhetorical and theological function of such announcements of disaster as are found in Amos. If that were to consist in an affirmation of the announcement of inevitable imminent disaster, it would necessarily lead to paralysis and apathy. So what was the point of all this rhetorical effort? It shows that there is more at stake for the prophet and those who pass on his words.

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21 Wolff, Dodekapropheton 124; cf. in almost identical words Markert, Amos 472.

22 Smend, Rudolf, Das Nein des Amos: idem, Die Mitte des Alten Testaments. Gesammelte Studien Band 1 (BEvTh 99), Munich: Chr. Kaiser 1986, 85–103 (85).

23 Quotations in Schmidt, Werner H., Die prophetische "Grundgewißheit". Erwägungen zur Einheit prophetischer Verkündigung: Peter H. A. Neumann, Das Prophetenverständnis in der deutschsprachigen Forschung seit Heinrich Ewald (WdF 307), Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1979, 537–564, 544, 554.

24 Sweeney, Dystopianization 254.

25 Zenger, Erich, Die eigentliche Botschaft des Amos. Von der Relevanz der politischen Theologie in einer exegetischen Kontroverse: Edward Schillebeeckx (ed.), Mystik und Politik. Theologie im Ringen um Geschichte und Gesellschaft, FS. J. B. Metz, Mainz 1988, 394–406, 405.

26 Reimer, Studien 229.

Christof Hardmeier uses the well-judged phrase, "ultimate warning."[27] The justification for the coming of the end is not intended to make the latter "affirmable." Rather, the end is paraded as a consequence, which is inevitable if the behavior does not change.

This does not make Amos a preacher of repentance of the sort given rather more prominence in Deuteronomistic theology (2 Kgs 17:13; Neh 9:26, 30; Dan 9:6). The admonitions of Amos 5:4–6, 14–15 are no more used as a hermeneutical key to the book of Amos than 8:2 is with its announcement of the end. The two belong together. The God whom the book of Amos preaches does not accept the injustice of the world. He threatens the end for the perpetrators; he threatens the end for Israel. At the same time, he issues a call to life ("Seek me, and you will live," 5:4). If the ultimate warning is not heeded, the end will be inevitable. The self-revelation of God in the visions is directed toward the intercession of the prophet and God's regret for the disaster;[28] it is only when the prophet is expelled from the kingdom of Israel (7:10–17) that the fall is inevitable. But that is not what God wants. Hence his story is not yet over. The elimination of those responsible for the wrongdoing (9:8–10) makes a new future possible.

There is something else. Even before any diachronic investigation of the book of Amos, it may be observed that it presents the prophet's message in retrospect. The superscription itself, with its situation in Israel's history, signals this. Ancient readers already know that the Northern Kingdom has fallen, as Amos predicted.[29] From the prophet's accusations they understand that this end was justified. To this extent, the book justifies God, who did not fail at the fall of the state of Israel but rather did everything to save his people.[30]

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27 Hardmeier, Christof, Die Redekomposition Jer 2–6. Eine ultimative Verwarnung Jerusalems im Kontext des Zidkijaaufstandes: idem, Geschichtsdivinatorik in der spätvorexilischen Schriftprophetie. Studien zu den Primärschriften in Jesaja, Zefanja und Jeremia, Zurich: TVZ 2013, 179–207. The term "ultimate warning" can also be found in Scherer, Gerichtsverkündigung 6. See also the deliberations of Keel, Othmar, Rechttun oder Annahme des drohenden Gerichts? (Erwägungen zu Amos, dem frühen Jesaja und Micha): BZ 21 (1977), 200–218. The expression "ultimate warning" reflects the harshness of Amos's accusations and threats better than their designation as "rhetoric of persuasion"; cf. the subtitle of Möller, Prophet.

28 For the function of intercession in prophetic texts cf. Rossi, Benedetta, L'intercessione nel tempo della fine. Studio dell'intercessione profetica nel libro di Geremia (AnBib 204), Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2013, 31–44.

29 Whether this was accompanied by compassion or ridicule will have to remain unclear; see the comments of Radine, Jason H., "Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation" (Amos 5:1). Lamentation Themes in the Book of Amos: LeAnn Snow Flesher et al. (eds.), Why? ... How Long? Studies on Voice(s) of Lamentation Rooted in Biblical Hebrew Poetry (LHB/OTS 552), New York: Bloomsbury 2014, 1–19, 19.

30 As the purpose of the book of Amos, Lang, God 59, identifies the *processing* of guilt, *coming to terms* with guilt, and *confession* of guilt, which assumes that God bears no blame for "*both* disasters of the years 722 and 587." According to Radine, Book 212, the earliest version of the book of Amos was written already after the fall of Samaria, "for explaining and justifying the fall of the Northern Kingdom and averting a similar fate from happening to Judah."

The fact that attempts to grasp the message of Amos vary so widely is also due to the fact that the respective authors relate to different literary levels. The basis for the last image sketched is the text of Amos as a whole. However much their description differs, however, authors like Wolff and Zenger are referring to the historical Amos, as reconstructed by them from the texts. This brings us to the task of looking at the book from a diachronic point of view.

Diachronic View

Starting with the superscription, there are various indications in the text that the coming into being of the book of Amos has a lengthy history. In the book as a whole, major units can be discerned that display a relatively clear unity: the oracles against the nations in 1:3–2:16, the collection of oracles in chs. 3–6, and the final part 7:1–9:4 (6), which is held together by five visions. Within the chs. 3–6 collection, thematically or structurally linked partial collections can be distinguished (3:9–4:5 with its concentration on locations in the Northern Kingdom, 5:1–17 as a ring composition). Larger poems (3:3–8 and 4:6–13) stand out from shorter sayings. This literary diversity can be understood as an indication of a shorter or longer history of development. A few historical references point to different epochs. In addition, there are theological peculiarities of some texts—for example, a deuteronomically/deuteronomistically influenced world of language and thought—which point to different times of origin. All this will be dealt with in the detailed interpretation.

1. Textual Archaeology and Its Limits

In Amos exegesis, if it is done diachronically at all, positions at two extremes can be identified.

According to Reinhard Gregor Kratz, only a few words go back to the historical Amos: "The imagery in 3:12abα; 5:2, 3, 19, and the participles (woes) in 3:12bβ; 4:1aα^{2}b; 5:7; 5:18a, 20 (or 5:18aßb, 13b), perhaps some elements from 6:1a, 3–6a, 20." They are preserved only in fragments, and their meaning is often difficult to discern.[31] Nevertheless, Kratz sees the possibility (and necessity) of "advancing to the historical Amos" by "gently removing the individual layers" in a quasi-archaeological process; to use a mathematical metaphor, one might also speak of "a literary-critical subtraction process."[32] The prerequisite for this procedure is the development of criteria that allow the distinction between the different layers of text.

Georg Steins sets out the opposite position with an image from the study of caves. He, too, assumes that there are older texts, possibly dating back to Amos himself, as well as more recent updates based on these texts. He compares this scenario to a cave at the entrance of which we stand. Steins does not doubt the depth of this cave but

31 Kratz, Worte des Amos 334.

32 Kratz, Worte des Amos 325, 328.