

Reflecting The Sea Back on Itself: Understanding the Sea in Revelation 21:1 through  
John's usage of Satire and Parody in Revelation 18

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this work is not to give a new meaning for the phrase ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι (“the sea was no more”) in Revelation 21:1, for some scholars have argued that the sea is referring to Rome, but rather to give a different approach on how we reach that conclusion. This approach consists of taking up a literary perspective to Revelation 21:1 when it comes to understanding “the sea was no more” as opposed to prioritizing the image of the sea as seen in previous scholarship. Such a study suggests that literary analysis ought to be used in understanding the images within Revelation, for Revelation is a literary work that utilizes rhetorical devices to give these images a particular meaning. In the case of Revelation 21:1 with the sea, through the author’s usage of “no more” points his readers back to Revelation 18:21, which has the ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι (“sea was no more”) align with Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις, καὶ οὐ μὴ εὑρεθῆ ἔτι (“the great city Babylon will be found no more”). This approach leads to the conclusion that these two chapters are connected through the author setting up Revelation 17-22 as a parody to mourning customs through his usage of satire.

## Introduction

What do you think of when you think about the sea in the Bible? Your answer would probably consist of the parting of the Red Sea, the Flood, and Jonah when he falls into the sea. These images of the sea would lead you to think of the sea as being chaos, evil, and even the place of Death itself. It is no wonder then that when it comes to the Book of Revelation, a book about the end times written within the Ancient Near Eastern world in the first century CE, the author and his audience would want the sea to be gone. The author exclaims in Revelation 21:1 that he “saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.” How do we understand the sea in Revelation 21 and how does it fit into the larger image of end times in the Book of Revelation? Previous scholarship has largely focused on the image of the sea from a more eschatological point of view. This way of understanding the sea not only leaves us with a relatively vague answer of chaos and evil, but it leads to Revelation being encumbered by the other sources used to explain the sea’s role in Revelation 21:1. This work seeks to take a different route to understand the sea by taking a literary approach, which Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza goes on to define as one focusing “on the compositional activity of the author and the aesthetic power of the work.”<sup>1</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza continues by highlighting how this approach “does not discard the results of historical-critical research but integrates them into the overall understanding of Rev. as a literary work. The language and overall composition of Rev. are literary and not descriptive-factual.”<sup>2</sup> This work will focus on a literary approach, it will still utilize a historical approach to understanding the rhetorical devices the author of Revelation employs. These rhetorical devices, such as the use of

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<sup>1</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985; pg. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

parallels between Revelation 18 and Revelation 21 and the use of repetition, are seen in the Hebrew Bible, particularly when it pertains to Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah.

Unlike Revelation 21, Revelation 18 has much more historical and literary research which will be utilized to understand Revelation 21, in particular the role of the sea in 21:1. This work will also utilize the rhetorical research done on Isaiah 23 and Isaiah 47 which both contain various elements of Hebrew rhetoric used in Revelation 18. This work will look at the elements of satire found in these Isaiah chapters and compare these findings to Revelation 18 to get a better understanding of the literary structure of the chapter. When we understand the rhetorical devices employed in Revelation 18, we see how they align with Revelation 21, which leads to Revelation 17-22 being a parody of mourning customs and explains why “the sea was no more” in Rev. 21:1 comes up when it does and how it ties back to Revelation 18. Due to it being a satirical city lament which is inspired by Isaiah, Revelation 21 serves as a humiliation of Babylon with the celebration of New Jerusalem which continues to mock Babylon in the ending of Revelation.

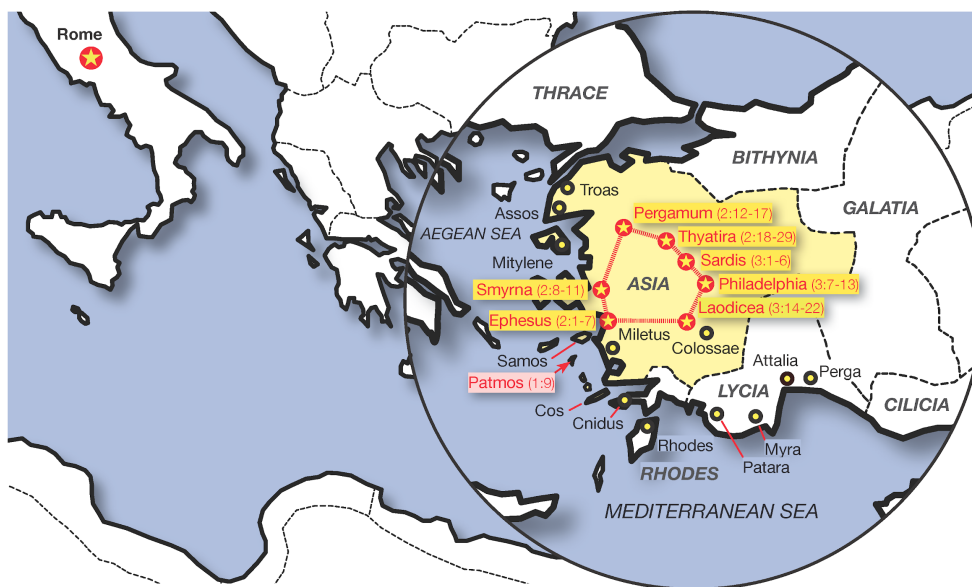
Although understanding what the “sea” in “the sea was no more” in Revelation 21:1 may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of understanding the oppression of the author and his audience. In the beginning of the Book of Revelation, the author was told to “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”<sup>3</sup> All of these churches are located in Asia Minor and are also near the sea.

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<sup>3</sup> Revelation 1:11

## REVELATION: ROME & THE SEVEN CHURCHES

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A map of the Seven Churches that the Book of Revelation are addressed to<sup>4</sup>

I highlight the location of the churches in port cities because Rome used these cities for their sea commerce. Due to that some of the people in these cities prospered from Rome's economic commerce, but this also meant that many had also suffered from this commerce as well. Richard Bauckham, for example, notes how "Asia Minor was evidently the most important source of those slaves who were not taken in war. Ephesus, one of the seven cities of Revelation, must have played a major role in exporting slaves from Asia Minor to Rome."<sup>5</sup> This shows how the cities in Revelation consisted of a mixture of the mariners who were profiting from Rome's economic commerce and those who were disadvantaged by Rome's economic commerce. The author is addressing those suffering because of the sea commerce. He seeks to give hope to them,

<sup>4</sup> [https://visualunit.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/rev\\_map.png](https://visualunit.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/rev_map.png)

<sup>5</sup> Richard Bauckham *Economic Critique of Rome in Revelation 18* in Loveday, A. (Alexander). *Images of Empire*. 1991; 75.

which is often not noticed because the various images such as the sea tend to get mythologized, thus silencing the intended audience and their suffering.

### **Previous Studies on “the sea was no more”**

When it comes to Revelation 21:1c, ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι “the sea was no more,” tends to get little to no recognition in favor of καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν· ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν (“and I saw new heaven and new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.”). Most commentaries on Revelation spend little to no time with 21:1c and there are fewer works on 21:1c alone. Of the works that do cover 21:1c, they all heavily rely on outside texts to find out what the author meant by ἡ θάλασσα (“the sea”) with all of them looking to the Hebrew Bible in its usage of the sea, some looking at other first century apocalyptic texts that uses the term “sea,” and some looking at the other times the author uses the term θάλασσα within the text with the majority of them agreeing that the sea in 21:1 means chaos/evil. Though I do not disagree with their conclusions, I do believe that their methods of going about it leaves the meaning of θάλασσα in 21:1 incomplete, which stems from their outlook of Revelation 20-22 as solely encompassing eschatological meaning due to them covering the new creation. Though it is a new creation, it does not mean that the old creation, the current earth, is not in the mind of the author and his audience.

#### *The Sea as the Heavenly Sea*

J. Webb Mealy is one of the few scholars that does not link the sea to chaos/evil. He argues that the sea in Revelation 21:1 is not referring to the earthly sea. He makes the point that because the verse begins with “new heaven and new earth then the sea was no more,” it must be referring to the sea mentioned back in Revelation 4:6, καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνῃ ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ (“And before the throne, there is a sea of glass, like crystal”). Mealy goes on to solidify this argument by highlighting how some instances of the term θάλασσα refer

to the earthly sea such as Revelation 5:13, 7:1-2, 10:2, just to name a few, and other instances refer to the heavenly sea such as, Revelation 4:6 and 15:2. This raises the question of how the readers would know whether the term *θάλασσα* is referring to the earthly or heavenly sea? In reading “new heaven and new earth,” readers could not only assume that the old heaven and earth needed to be replaced due to the wretched state they were in, but that the sea would also be renewed. Mealy further argues that

The sea appears to be described as a structure of awesome beauty that is naturally associated with the heavenly theophany as a symbol of God’s holiness. Thus it seems much safer to assume that the obsolescence of the sea of glass in the new creation is dictated by the separation that it creates between God and humanity, rather than by its supposed chaotic or evil character<sup>6</sup>

There are a number of issues that stem from this. For one, Mealy gives precedence to the few times the sea in the throne room is mentioned which comes from Revelation 4:6 and 15:2, in which both times the sea was mentioned, it was specifically described as *θάλασσα ὑαλίνη*, “sea of glass (*θάλασσαν ὑαλίνην* in 15:2)” which is not present in 21:1. This is also the last time the term *θάλασσα* is used, for when it came to describing bodies of waters John instead used terms such as *πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος*, “spring of water” and *ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς*, “the river of the water of life.” Looking closely at *ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς*, the entire verse reads “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Two key things to note here is that, one, *ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς* is stated to be *λαμπρὸν ὡς κρύσταλλον*, “bright as crystal,” which is the same description given about *θάλασσα ὑαλίνη* in Revelation 4:6 in stating that *ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνη ὅμοια κρυστάλλῳ*, “sea of glass like crystal.” The second thing to note here is that *ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς* is coming *ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ*, “from the throne of God” which the *θάλασσα ὑαλίνη* is also *ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου*, “before the throne.” By connecting verses 4:6 and 22:1 with both the sea of glass and the river of the water

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<sup>6</sup> Mealy, J. Webb. *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20*. JSOT Press, 1992, pg. 203.

of life as being like crystal and both of them being within the throne room, one could argue that the sea of glass is the river of the water of life in 22:1. This not only highlights that the sea of glass cannot be the sea in 21:1 because it is present in 22:1, but it also raises the question of why John would no longer refer to the sea of glass as such. Even if the river of the water of life is not the sea of glass, it still raises the question of why John would not use *θάλασσα* after 21:1. The answer to these questions is that the sea in the later chapters in Revelation were used to serve a different purpose that John did not want to tie the sea of glass and/or the water of life to, which are the negative connotations of the sea. The issue with Mealy's understanding of the sea stems from his outlook of the book of Revelation, especially when it comes to Revelation 20 to 22. He imagines a new world along with 21:1 beginning with new heaven and new earth. Mealy assumed that the sea in the same verse must be referring to a heavenly sea.

#### *The Sea as New Exodus*

Many scholars believe that the use of the sea as a metaphor to chaos and evil is latent throughout the Hebrew Bible, looking mostly to the Prophetic books such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah given that they also give visions of the end times. There are some scholars that believe that this usage of the sea can go as far back to the book of Exodus, which has been coined the "New Exodus Motif" which scholars such as Dave Mathewson and J. Massyngberde Ford adopt. They both argue that through *ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι*, John is stating in Revelation 21:1 that the absence of the sea indicates entryway to the new promise land, the new Jerusalem which is talked about later on in this chapter. Ford exclaims that "One could say the sea was no more when the Israelites walked on dry land through the Red Sea [in Exodus 14]."<sup>7</sup> Through this Ford is saying that *ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι* is equivalent to the dry land the Israelites walked on in

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<sup>7</sup>Ford, J. Massyngberde (Josephine Massyngberde). *Revelation*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975; 361.



Exodus 14 when Moses had split the sea. The important thing to note here is that the Israelites are not affected by the sea. Not only that but it is solely the Egyptian troops that go after the Israelites that ends up drowning, for Exodus 14:27-28 highlights Pharaoh's army and their vehicles as being caught up in the sea when it goes on to state that,

“So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.”<sup>8</sup>

Through this verse, one can see how those that pursued the Israelites were Pharaoh and his army, not Pharaoh along with the Egyptian citizens. Eliezer Barany goes on to explain that the splitting of the sea in Exodus 14 then was God’s way of instilling his glory.<sup>9</sup> The splitting of the sea was beneficial to the Israelites and God and it is this passage that leads to the sea being used to signify a barrier between God’s people and the world to come in later texts. It is through God’s usage of the sea in Exodus 14, particularly with the drowning of Pharaoh and his army, it not only ended the suffering of God’s people under the Egyptians but it also made way for them to reach the promise land. Just as the elimination of the sea in Revelation 21:1 is beneficial for both God and those in the Book of Life.<sup>10</sup>

This approach can be seen by Mathewson who goes on to state how,

As an additional aspect of John's employment of the new Exodus model, the removal of the sea functions to highlight the removal of the threatening barrier (affliction of the old creation) which stands between the people and their enjoyment of eschatological blessing of the new creation... Thus, the sea exemplifies the judgment of God on his enemies and on the old created order (Rev 21:1b; Jer 51:36). The sea is clearly linked chiasmatically with 21:4a-b, suggesting that the sea metaphorically exemplifies above all the affliction and trouble, and the powers of evil which engender them, all experienced by the people of God as participating in the old created order (Isa 51:9-10; Zech 10:10-11).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Exodus 14:27-28

<sup>9</sup> Barany, Eliezer. “Glorification of God at the Sea.” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (April 2019): 121

<sup>10</sup> A book in Revelation that contains the names of those who are spared from the final judgments because they are God’s people

<sup>11</sup> Mathewson, Dave, “New Exodus as a background for ‘the sea was no more’ in Revelation 21:1C,” *Trinity Journal* 24 (2): 243–58.

Though I agree that the view of the sea embodying old creation is shared amongst Exodus, the Prophets, and the book of Revelation, I believe this is the wrong way to understand why ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι is mentioned in Revelation 21:1. We are already told that heaven and earth had passed away; is not the sea a part of the earth?<sup>12</sup> On top of that, 21:4 reiterates this with τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν, “because the first things had passed away” which Mathewson does not address. Instead Mathewson spends the majority of this piece highlighting how the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah’s usage of the sea are “references to God rebuking and drying up the sea have their antecedent in the Exodus event of the drying of the Red Sea (Exod 14:21-22, 26-29; 15:8).”<sup>13</sup> Mathewson is right to connect some of the usages of the sea in the Prophetic and Psalms text to Exodus, but he over determines the presence of Exodus when it comes to understanding the sea not only in the Prophetic books but also in Revelation, especially when it pertains to 21:1. This overdetermination of Exodus’ role in these texts falls short of specifying what the sea means beyond it just meaning old creation. He not only over determines what the sea means for the book of Revelation but also over determines what former things and old creation means for the Prophetic books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah.

Although I grant that Revelation is indeed influenced by Isaiah and Jeremiah, I believe that Mathewson is assuming John's meaning of old creation and former things the same way they did in that context. In explaining why the sea in 21:1 means chaos, all of his reasons are directly tied to the Prophetic and Psalmic texts,

1) The disappearance of the sea in both Rev 21:1c and Isa 51:9-10; Zech 10:10-11 is an eschatological event.

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<sup>12</sup> Especially given that Rev. 21:1 is based off of Isaiah 65:17 which states that “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.” For Isaiah these former things most likely include the sea, so there was no need for him to include “the sea was no more” like Rev. 21:1 does.

<sup>13</sup> Mathewson, 250.

- 2) Furthermore, just as in Isa 51:9-10 (cf. Zech 10:6) the victory over the sea is a prelude to entrance into Zion/Jerusalem, the disappearance of the sea in Rev 21:1c functions as a prelude to the descent of the New Jerusalem to the renewed cosmos (21:2).
- 3) The vanquishing of the sea in Rev 21:1c and Isa 51:9-10; Zech 10:10-11; Ps 74:13 is overtly linked with notions of chaos and evil (cf. Rev 13:1; Ezek 32:2).<sup>37</sup> Thus, the removal of the sea is prerequisite to the establishment of the Isaianic new creation (Rev 21:1a-b; Isa 65:17).
- 4) The disappearance of the sea in Rev 21:1c and Isa 51:9-10; Zech 10:10-11 is linked metaphorically with the removal of distress and sorrow caused by the bestial adversary (cf. Rev 13:1). Significantly, this corresponds to John's chiasmic pairing of ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι (21:1c) with ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὐτε κραυγή οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι (21:4b).
- 5) Similar to Jer 51:36, the sea in Rev 21:1c suggests God's judgment on the evil world (cf. 21:1b). Of further relevance is the fact that Jeremiah provides a structural model for the judgment of Babylon in Revelation 17-18, which is structurally paired with Rev 21:1-22:5. As emblematic of the old order, Babylon has been judged (17-18; 21:1b) in order to make room for a new creation centering around a new Jerusalem.
- 6) Finally, similar to Isa 51:9-10 and Zech 10:10-11, Rev 21:1c should be read conceptually in relation to the new Exodus motif, which is often associated with notions of chaos; the removal of the "Red Sea" of evil and affliction, as an act of God's sovereignty over the sea, is a prelude to enjoyment of the land.<sup>14</sup>

Mathewson ends this by stating how “Consequently, the metaphorical function of the sea in Rev 21:1c intersects with the function of the sea as articulated in the above scriptural texts.”<sup>15</sup>

Throughout his arguments Mathewson never mentions the specific issues the authors of both the Prophetic books or Revelation were facing and instead over-determines it to old creation, old order, and the evil powers. It is this overdetermination that paints Revelation less so as its own work and more so as a commentary on Psalms, Isaiah, Zechariah, and Jeremiah which leads to the author and his world being swallowed up by these other texts. Mathewson takes this further by also having the Prophetic and Psalmic texts be swallowed up by Exodus, thus their voices and world are also drowned out. Instead of shining light on ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι, “the sea was no more” in Revelation 21:1, which is verily talked about, he instead makes it the supporting role mostly for Exodus but also for Psalms and the Prophetic books.

Mathewson furthers his argument of ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι being a New Exodus Motif by highlighting how the author clearly alludes to Exodus throughout the text such as

- 1) the Passover lamb imagery used to depict Christ (1:5-6; 5:9-10)

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 253-254

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 254

- 2) the trumpet and bowl judgments, modeled on the plagues poured out on Egypt in judgment—blood, frogs, darkness, sores, etc. (8:6-11:19; 15:5-16:21);
- 3) the vocation of God's people as "kings and priests" (1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 22:3-5; cf. Exod 19:5-6);
- 4) the sequence narrated in 15:1-5—the followers of the Lamb stand by the sea and sing a new song of Moses (cf. Exodus 15); and
- 5) the Sinai theophany as an image of future judgment (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18-21; cf. Exod 19:16).

Though I do not deny that the author was influenced by Exodus and indeed implement it within Revelation, the same issue seen with Mealy is that the author would make clear when he was alluding to Exodus such as 15:3 where the people sing the song of Moses as mentioned in point 4 above and through the use of plagues as mentioned in point 2 above. Though the author employs Exodus within Revelation there is no indication that the sea ties back to the uses of Exodus, just as there was no indication that ἡ θάλασσα tied back to θάλασσα ὑαλίνη, “sea of glass.” Though I grant the New Exodus Motif’s view that the sea embodying chaos is shared amongst Exodus, the Prophets, and the book of Revelation, I cannot accept this overall conclusion that when it comes to understanding why “the sea was no more” is placed in Revelation 21:1, we must assume that this is the author alluding to Exodus.

### *The Sea as Chaos and Evil*

The majority of scholars who speaks on ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι, “the sea was no more” in Revelation 21:1 led them to the conclusion that the sea means chaos/evil, which came through their usage of the Hebrew Bible and apocalyptic texts from the first century CE. Commentators such as David Aune, Adela Collins, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Thomas Schmidt align with this conclusion. Schmidt goes on to look closer at ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι in his work entitled *Water as People, Not Place*. Schmidt begins by highlighting how he will “maintain that Babylon and cosmological imagery pertaining to the sea are linked as representations of unredeemed humanity, and I will briefly explore the implications of this conclusion for New

Testament eschatology in general.”<sup>16</sup> Here Schmidt connects the ἡ θάλασσα to Babylon but views Babylon as not only representing Rome but unredeemed humanity overall which over determines both the depiction of the sea and Babylon in Revelation. The other thing to note here is that Schmidt is relying on imagery to make his argument, for example, he connects Revelation 17-18 with Revelation 21 through the usage of images, especially when he exerts that “John incorporates material from prophetic denunciations of Egypt (Ezek. 29-30) and especially of Tyre (Isa. 23; Ezek. 26-28), but the imagery of Isaiah 47 and especially Jeremiah 51, where Babylon is personified as a lascivious female pleasure-seeker, provides the framework for Revelation 18.”<sup>17</sup> Through this Schmidt acknowledges that it is influenced by other denunciations from the Prophetic texts that influence Revelation 18 but favors the imagery from Jeremiah 51 to make the connection between Revelation 17-18 to Revelation 21. I do not deny that imagery plays a role in understanding Revelation but there is an ongoing pattern in apocalyptic literature scholarship that focuses so heavily on the use of images in texts, such as Revelation that the rhetoric being deployed in these texts are often overlooked or not given enough attention. For example, Schmidt continues by noting that due to Tyre not being the city mentioned in Revelation, the texts that cover Tyre, such as Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 26-28, do not play as much of a role in Revelation 18 as the texts that cover Babylon such as Jeremiah 51 and Isaiah 47.

In regards to why Schmidt align Babylon to unredeemed humanity overall and not just Rome, he argues that

The historical approach suffers not only from intrinsic implausibility but from inattention to clues of John's broader vision in Revelation. We have observed the generalization of judgment to include not only Babylon

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Schmidt, “And the Sea was No More: Water as People Not Place,” in idem and Moises Silva, eds., *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry* (JSNTSup 100; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) 233-49: 233

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 235

but all of humanity in rebellion against God. Attention to the interconnectedness of sea imagery in Revelation confirms this generalization and places the judgment scenes in their proper focus as antonymous, and prerequisite, to the New Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup>

Schmidt exerts here that the historical approach, which would have ἡ θάλασσα be confined to just Rome leaves open the various mentions of the sea in the book of Revelation. Schmidt later on says how the sea's associations with chaos, evil, death, sin, and demonic forces are linked to the sea's association with enemy nations. This conclusion suffers the same issues as the New Exodus Motif suffers from, which is that there are too many meanings placed onto the sea, thus drowning out the voice of the author. It raises the same question that was raised with Mathewson, which is what does evil mean to the author? Evil is too vague of a word to just stop at that meaning to understand ἡ θάλασσα in Revelation 21:1. Schmidt stated earlier in regards to Babylon's characterization how consistency is not necessary,<sup>19</sup> yet he does not apply this when it comes to the characterization of the sea by tying in all the associations of it to Revelation 21:1 to have it be consistent with certain usages of the sea in Revelation.

#### *The Sea as Babylon in Revelation 18*

There are few scholars that connect “the sea was no more” in Revelation 21:1 with Babylon from Revelation 18 which consists of scholars such as Craig Koester and Barbara Rossing in their commentaries on Revelation. Rossing delves deeper into what connects 18 with 21 in her work entitled *The Choice Between Two Cities* where she dives into the images of the whore and bride in Revelation. When it came to understanding “the sea was no more” in Revelation 21:1, it is through these images that she made the connection between Revelation 18 which speaks of the whore and Revelation 21 which speaks of the bride. Rossing would also highlight literary connections to the two chapters as well by highlighting how “no more” (οὐκ

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 247

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 234

ἔτι) in the new city, no more sea (Rev 21:1), no more death, mourning, weeping or pain (Rev. 21:4) underscore this strong sense of contrast. Together with three more proclamations of ‘no more’ of Revelation 21-22, these contrasts highlight New Jerusalem’s newness in relation to evil Babylon and all that has gone before.”<sup>20</sup> Rossing argues that the usage of οὐκ ἔτι is meant to serve as a callback to Revelation 18, but more importantly it serves as an antithesis to the repeated οὐκ ἔτι within Revelation 18. Rossing continues by arguing that “Revelation portrays the sea politically and economically as well as mythologically as a location of evil (Rev 13:1) as a place of evil and where commercial ships sail...the eschatological end to the sea in Rev 21:1 must be read as more economic than mythological, hailing the end of Rome’s cargo ships and trade.”<sup>21</sup> Rossing agrees that the sea does mean evil, but in the case of Revelation 21:1, the sea specifically refers back to Babylon in Revelation 18 and should be understood more so economically than eschatologically. It is important to highlight that Rossing did not come to this conclusion through a historical approach of Revelation 21, but through a literary approach which led her, the reader, back to Revelation 18. It is this approach that I will be taking, though I will focus more on the literary function of “no more” employed in Revelation 21 and 18 and not on the literary function of the two women topos.

### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this work is not to give a new meaning behind “the sea was no more” in Revelation 21:1, for some scholars have argued that the sea is referring to Rome, but rather to give a different approach on how we reach that conclusion. Looking at the scholars mentioned earlier, they rely heavily on a theological approach such as Mealy, Mathewson and Schmidt.

Though these approaches do help us understand what the sea meant overall in Revelation and in

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<sup>20</sup> Rossing, Barbara R.. *The Choice Between Two Cities: Whore, Bride, and Empire In the Apocalypse*. Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press International, 1999; 144-145.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 146

its world, it should not be the stopping point in understanding this verse. If we stop there, we are then left with the question of what does death, chaos, and/or evil look like for John and his audience. These concepts are too vague to end there, so we must dive deeper into the text to find clues on what the sea is doing in this verse. It is also important to not place many meanings onto one image. As seen with Mathewson and Schmidt, they place various identities onto the sea not only in Revelation but also in the Prophetic texts, Exodus and other apocalyptic texts, which has the sea play one function throughout these works. As we will see later on, the sea can and has meant different things within these books including Revelation. In some places the sea represents a nation or death or evil or an earthly or spiritual sea, the sea isn't just a one trick pony. The scholarship on understanding Revelation, especially the New Jerusalem in Revelation 20-22 has relied heavily on outside sources such as the Hebrew Bible and/or other apocalyptic texts, though that is a good way to start understanding how the sea was used and understood, they should not be the only tools used to understand the text. In doing so, we lose John's voice when applying the voices of Exodus, Isaiah, Zechariah, and the apocalyptic text authors. When we should be listening to John which can be achieved by looking at the rhetoric the author employs in Revelation 21 which takes the reader back to Revelation 18.

*Revelation 18 and the Phrase "no more"*

Surrounding ἡ θάλασσα, "the sea" is the next phrase οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι, "was no more" and soon after "the sea was no more" verse in 21:1, John exclaims in Revelation 21:4 how καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι· οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, "and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor crying nor pain be no more."

<b>Revelation 21:1;4(English)</b>	<b>Revelation 21:1;4(Greek)</b>
21:1 - and the sea was <b>no more</b>	καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι



21:4 - death will be <b>no more</b> , <b>neither</b> will mourning, <b>nor</b> crying, <b>nor</b> pain be <b>no more</b> .	καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι
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This is not the first time the readers are introduced to this repetition of “no more,” for this usage of “no more” can also be found in Revelation 18:21-24:

Revelation 18:21-23(English)	Revelation 18:21-23(Greek)
“So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found <b>no more</b> ;	Οὕτως ὁρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις, καὶ οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔτι.
and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you <b>no more</b> ,	καὶ φωνὴ κιθαρωδῶν καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι
and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you <b>no more</b> ,	καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι
and the sound of the mill will be heard in you <b>no more</b> ,	καὶ φωνὴ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι
and the light of a lamp will shine in you <b>no more</b> ,	καὶ φῶς λύχνου οὐ μὴ φάνη ἐν σοὶ ἔτι
and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you <b>no more</b> , <sup>22</sup>	καὶ φωνὴ νυμφίου καὶ νύμφης οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι <sup>23</sup>

The key thing to note here with these two passages is the negation used in both Revelation 18 and 21 with ου(κ) μη/τε... ετι, the other thing to note here is the repetition of “no

<sup>22</sup> Revelation 18:21-23

<sup>23</sup> Newman, 682-683.

more” in both of these passages. The question arises, why would the author reuse the repetition of “no more” in Revelation 21:1;4? Lukasz Popko, in looking at the repetition of *Hammerspruch* in Jeremiah 51:20-24<sup>24</sup> argues how the Hammerspruch “guide the reader through precise and not fortuitous paths. This is precisely their aim: to set the reader in motion, compelling him to reread, reinterpret, and re-contextualise the poem.”<sup>25</sup> and ends by noting how this use of Hammerspruch has a “reversal take place in the head of the reader, who is forced to revise his first understanding.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, the use of repetition in the case of Jeremiah 51:20-24 has its readers not only look back at the text but to apply the information from their first reading of the text. I believe that is the same thing Revelation 21 is asking of its readers when it utilizes the repetition of ου(κ) μη/τε... ετι, “no more.” In order to gain the meaning behind ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι, “the sea was no more,” we must look back at Revelation 18 where this repetition is first employed.

### **Revelation 18 and City Lament Genre**

In order to understand Revelation 18:21-23, we must first understand how it functions in the chapter. Revelation 18 speaks on the Fall of Babylon, which many scholars argue falls into the city lament genre given that it shares the same functions present in city lament texts. It is important to know what rhetorical devices are at play here because it is those devices the author uses to clue in to his readers what function the words play within Revelation. This, in turn, will

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<sup>24</sup> Popkos translation of Jer. 51:20-24: “A club you were to me, 10 an instrument of war! With you I clubbed 𐤒 𐤓 𐤓 nations and with you destroyed kingdoms. With you I clubbed horse and its rider, With you I clubbed chariot and its charioteer. With you I clubbed man and woman, With you I clubbed old and young, With you I clubbed lad and maiden. With you I clubbed shepherd and his flock, With you I clubbed farmer and his team, With you I clubbed governors and prefects.” Popko, *Reading as Re-reading*, 162.

<sup>25</sup> Popko, *Reading as Re-reading*,” 161.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

give us a better understanding of why the author utilized some functions such as repetition, negation, and personification.

### *The Genre of City Lament*

The city lament genre is a literary genre that has “these city laments vividly depict and mournfully lament the destruction of the most important cities.” In the past few decades scholars have come to realize that the use of this genre can be seen in the Hebrew Bible, especially passages dealing with oracles against nations. One scholar prominent in showing how this genre, which stems from Mesopotamia, was known and utilized by the Israelites is F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp. Dobbs-Allsopp, in his work entitled *Weep; O Daughter of Zion*, goes on to compare city laments from Mesopotamia to Lamentations to show how the Israelites adapted this genre by arguing how Lamentation has the nine characteristics that makes up a city lament. Those features consist of subject and mood, subject and poetic technique, divine abandonment, assignment of responsibility, the divine agent of destruction, destruction, the weeping goddess, lamentation, and the restoration of the city and return of the gods. This section will see if these functions are present within Revelation 18 to see if it is a city lament.

#### *1. Subject and Mood*

In regards to subject and mood, Dobbs-Allsopp goes on to explain how “The Mesopotamian laments and Lamentations treat a common subject matter, the destruction of cities, and their mood is generally mournful and somber.”<sup>27</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp acknowledges that this evidence is not much to link prophetic texts with the genre of city lament, but argues how it is this aspect of the genre that makes it a city lament. Revelation 18 not only goes on to describe

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<sup>27</sup>Dobbs-Allsopp, F. W.. *Weep, o Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-lament Genre In the Hebrew Bible*. Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993; 31.

Babylon as a πόλις, “city,” but it captures the destruction of Babylon and records the lamentations of various people.

## 2. *Structure and Poetic Technique*

Dobbs-Allsopp notes how though laments have their differences, they share some structure and poetic devices such as authorial point of view, contrast and reversal, focus, external and metrical system, and lists. Beginning with the authorial point of view, Dobbs-Allsopp highlights how city laments “contains an interchange of speakers involving first, second, and third person. This ability to shift points of view gives the city laments depth, an ability to express a variety of views and feelings without seeming contradictory. It also results in a certain amount of repetition.”<sup>28</sup> The purpose of this is to give different thoughts on the current destruction of the city. This interchange can be seen in Revelation 18, for it begins with εἶδον, “I saw” but then shifts to the angel, ἔκραξεν, “he called out,” thus shifting from the first person singular to the third person singular. We get this again at 18:4 with ἤκουσα, “I heard,” and shifts again to a voice from heaven with λέγουσαν, “he said.”

There are other transitions like this throughout the chapter. In regards to contrast and reversal, Dobbs-Allsopp highlights how in the contrast motif the poet “compares the glorious past to the desolate present”<sup>29</sup> which can be found in a number of Mesopotamian city laments. This contrast motif is riddled throughout Revelation 18, with mostly those who profited from Babylon using this contrast motif. For example, in 18:14 the merchants of the earth exclaimed “καὶ ἡ ὀπώρα σου τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπὸ σοῦ, καὶ πάντα τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ τὰ λαμπρὰ ἀπώλετο ἀπὸ σοῦ, καὶ οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ αὐτὰ εὐρήσουσιν (“the fruit for which your soul

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 39.

longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again”). The city that was once fruitful has now become fruitless.

The second manner within this motif is the reversal of the usual order of things. Dobbs-Allsopp lists some of these as consisting of “people no longer fulfilling their assigned tasks, the transportation system is not functioning normally, song and singing are turned into weeping and lamentation.”<sup>30</sup> We see all three of these in Revelation 18, beginning with people not fulfilling their roles, it is Babylon that ceases to aid the kings, seafarers, sailors, and merchants in their economic endeavors and it is also them that weeps and mourns over this fact.

In regards to the ceasing of transportation, Revelation 18:17 exclaims “Καὶ πᾶς κυβερνήτης καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων, καὶ ναῦται καὶ ὅσοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται, ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν (“and all the ship captains and all the seafarers and sailors and all those who trade on the sea stood far off”). The key phrase to note here is μακρόθεν ἔστησαν, “stood far off,” indicates that the ship captains and all the seafarers and sailors and all those who trade on the sea are not on the sea. Thus the author is indicating that the transportation system is not functioning normally and thus falls into the second category of how these reversal images would be used in city laments. The author may especially be highlighting this given that when it came to the kings and merchants, it was followed by τῆς γῆς, “of the earth” yet we do not get that here with the sailors. Given that Rossing goes on to highlight how the author has the kings, merchants, and sailors stand off to remain safe, that would then mean that the sailors were indeed not on the sea given that in 18:21 the angel throws a great millstone into the sea.

### *3. Divine Abandonment*

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 41.

The destruction of a city in the Ancient Near Eastern world was usually attributed to the god or goddess abandoning the city. From the perspective of the victor “these themes (divine anger) would be recast to tell how his ‘gods were instrumental in predetermining the outcome of the battle.’”<sup>31</sup> This is very much apparent in Revelation 18 where God’s judgment upon Babylon is noted three times, the first by the angel who states in 18:8 ὅτι ἰσχυρὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ κρίνας αὐτήν (“that mighty is the Lord God judges her”). The second time it shows up is through the kings of the earth who exclaim in 18:10 ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἦλθεν ἡ κρίσις σου (“for in one hour your judgment had come”). Thirdly, we see this in 18:20 through the seafarers, sailors, and sea captains when they exclaim ὅτι ἔκρινεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς (“for God has given judgment for you against her”). The author makes it clear that Babylon’s fall was due to God’s judgment.

Another feature of the divine abandonment, as noted by Dobbs-Allsopp is the carrying off of the divine image which is present in Mesopotamian city laments. The example Dobbs-Allsopp gives comes from *The Lament Over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* 408-410 which tells that: “The statues that filled the treasure house were cut down, Niniagara, the great stewardess, ran away from the storehouse, Its throne was cast down before it, she sat down in the dust.”<sup>32</sup> This can be seen in other laments where the god or goddess and image becomes one. This aspect is riddled throughout Revelation 18 with Babylon and her treasures with the kings, merchants, and sailors mourning over her possessions. An example of this is found in Revelation 18:19, where the sailors laments that those who had ships in her sea grew rich ἐκ τῆς τιμότητος αὐτῆς, ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη (“out of her wealth, but she was laid waste in one hour”). The

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 47.

sailors mourn over Babylon in this instance due to her fall also being the fall of the riches since they profited off her wealth.

#### *4. Assignment of Responsibility*

In Mesopotamian city laments, those responsible for the destruction of the city are usually placed on the god(s), when it comes to the destruction of Sumer and Ur, for example, responsibility for its destruction is placed on Enlil.<sup>33</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp further highlights how Mesopotamian laments tended to paint the citizens as guiltless when it comes to these judgments, which is not the case for Lamentations which attributes the destruction to human transgressions. Applying this to Revelation 18, the one responsible for Babylon's fall is Babylon herself, given that 18:5 highlights how it was αὐτῆς αἱ ἁμαρτίαι, "her sins" and how ἐμνημόνευσεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ἀδικήματα αὐτῆς, "God remembered her crimes." It is important to remember that Babylon represents the city, though when it comes to those that partook in her, the kings, the merchants, and the sailors, they seem to be spared from this judgment given that they all stood off from her. Following Lamentations adaptation of this aspect, where it has the people, in particular the leaders, list their transgressions. This can be seen throughout Revelation 18 with the kings, merchants, and sailors not only listing Babylon's transgressions but also their own transgressions. The biggest transgression for the author seems to be the vast amount of prophets, apostles, and saints she had killed. It is first noted by the ship captains, seafarers, and sailors in 18:20 when they exclaimed Εὐφραίνου ἐπ' αὐτῆ, οὐρανέ, καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται, "Rejoice over her, heaven and saints and apostles and prophets" and continues with ὅτι ἔκρινεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς, "for God has given judgment for you against her." They are highlighting how this judgment was specifically for the saints, apostles, and prophets

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 52

which we later learn that her biggest crime was her slaying the saints, prophets, and those on the earth in 18:24, for ἐν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, “in her were found the blood of prophets and saints and everyone who has been killed on the earth.”

### *5. The Divine Agent of Destruction*

In regards to the divine agent in Mesopotamian city laments, the agent is the storm utilized by the god Enlil. Dobbs-Allsopp equates this to Yahweh and his use of fire, in which he exclaims that “both deities are storm gods of sorts. He [Lamentations] did not have to import Enlil imagery into his work, because he could make use of his own traditional stock of imagery about Yahweh. Thus, the divine agent of destruction constitutes a fifth generic feature linking Lamentations to the Mesopotamian laments.”<sup>34</sup> Given that Revelation 18 also uses fire and Yahweh to enact destruction, I will also apply this fifth feature to Revelation 18. It is in 18:8 where the angel states that ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται, “she [Babylon] will be burned with fire.” The verse also mentions her suffering from death, famine, and mourning, but it is highlighted by two of the groups lamenting over Babylon how they see the smoke of her burning. This is first exclaimed by the kings in 18:9 with ὅταν βλέπωσιν τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς, “they see the smoke of her burning,” and the second time by the sailors in 18:18 with καὶ ἔκραξαν βλέποντες τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς, “and they cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning.” A question that arises from this is why the author does not have the merchants see the smoke of her burning? The merchants' complaints are focused on the many items the merchants would trade, as seen in 18:12, and also Babylon's clothing and jewelry as seen in 18:16. Rossing goes on to highlight how “The bridal woman's clothing of fine linen (βυσσίνος) is the same fine linen whose loss is mourned by Babylon's merchants in the cargo list of Rev. 18:12 (see also

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 56.



18:16).<sup>35</sup> The clothes worn by Babylon are not destroyed but are given to the New Jerusalem, which is probably why the author excludes the merchants from seeing the burning of her.

### 6. Destruction

This feature is the most recognizable in a city lament, which is that of “a detailed description of the city and surrounding area, the city’s buildings and roads, inhabitants, economy, and political, social, and religious customs.”<sup>36</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp highlights how in Mesopotamian laments, the city becomes a haunt for ghosts and wild animals to highlight the complete destruction of the city.<sup>37</sup> In Revelation 18, we get these haunts in 18:2 when the mighty angel exclaims *καὶ ἔκραξεν ἐν ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ λέγων· Ἔπεσεν, ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, καὶ ἐγένετο κατοικητήριον δαιμονίων καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς ὀρνέου ἀκαθάρτου καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου καὶ μεμισημένου*, “and she became a place for demons and a haunt for all unclean spirits and a haunt for all unclean birds and beasts.” We see with the repetition of *φυλακὴ*, “haunt,” along with the unclean spirits and beasts that Babylon is desolate.

Another aspect of this feature is the social, religious, and political customs becoming unraveled by this destruction. Dobbs-Allsopp highlights how it is “here the reversal motif predominates...People cannot pursue their jobs, indicating the disruption of normative social function.”<sup>38</sup> The social aspect can be seen in *The Lament Over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* 293 which tells that: “In Ur no one went for firewood<sup>39</sup>, no one went for water, the one who went

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<sup>35</sup> Rossing, 143.

<sup>36</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp, 66

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 66

<sup>38</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp, 73

<sup>39</sup> Interestingly enough, Dobbs-Allsopp goes on to highlight how firewood could also translate to food thus highlighting the famine the citizens of the destroyed city are facing. This could be compared to the famine the angel states that Babylon will go through in 18:8.

for firewood went away from the firewood, and will not return, the one who went for water went away from the water, and will not return.”<sup>40</sup> This reversal can be seen in Revelation 18:22-23, for the mighty angel exclaims:

Revelation 18:21-23(English)	Revelation 18:21-23(Greek)
<p>and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more,</p>	<p>καὶ φωνὴ κιθαρῳδῶν καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι</p>
<p>and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more,</p>	<p>καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης οὐ μὴ εὑρεθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι</p>
<p>and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more,</p>	<p>καὶ φωνὴ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι</p>
<p>and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more,</p>	<p>καὶ φῶς λύχνου οὐ μὴ φάνη ἔν σοι ἔτι</p>
<p>and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more,<sup>41</sup></p>	<p>καὶ φωνὴ νυμφίου καὶ νύμφης οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι<sup>42</sup></p>

We see how similar to the Sumer and Ur lament repeats “will not return,” Revelation 18 also implements this repetition with οὐ μὴ...ἔτι, “no more.” We also see within Revelation 18 how this is highlighting the disruption of Babylon’s social function, especially those of celebratory functions. As Rossing goes on to highlight “Such repetition of the phrase “no longer” with only the verb changed (‘found,’ ‘heard,’ ‘seen’) is a characteristic of poetic technique of

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 73

<sup>41</sup> Revelation 18:21-23

<sup>42</sup> Newman, 682-683.

city laments. Repetition of lines with only a few words changed accentuates the enormity of contrast between the city's present ruin and its once bustling life."<sup>43</sup>

In regards to the political aspect, Dobbs-Allsopp highlights how Mesopotamian laments would portray the disruption of political systems by indicating that the current power must be destroyed in order for the new and just power to ascend.<sup>44</sup> In the case of Revelation 18, we see the powers breakdown through the laments of the kings, merchants, and sailors, who the author highlights in 18:3 of having ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στρήνουσ αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν, "grown rich from the power of her luxury." The chapter also has them ἐστηκότες διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασιανισμοῦ αὐτῆς, "stand far off in fear of her torment." The powers that partook in Babylon will abandon her and not take part in her torment, which lessens Babylon's power given that her power lied in having the kings, merchants, and sailors at her stead.

### *7. Weeping Goddess*

The weeping goddess, another prominent feature of city laments, is the motif that "portrays the city goddess grieving over the destruction of her city and temple and the killing, suffering, and disbursement of her people."<sup>45</sup> Though Babylon is stated to suffer mourning in 18:8, this aspect of the weeping goddess are the kings, merchants, and sailors due to Babylon being the city itself. It is through these groups of people that the author signifies that they κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν ἐπ' αὐτήν, "weep and mourn for her." Dobbs-Allsopp also highlights how Ningal, a Mesopotamian goddess, is famously known for her wail, "'Alas, my city,' 'Alas, my house' along with the tearing out of her hair. Looking at Revelation 18, not only are the kings, merchants, and sailors weeping but they also utter Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, "Alas,

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<sup>43</sup> Rossing, 105

<sup>44</sup> Dobbs-Allsopp, 74

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 75

Alas, the great city." In regards to the pulling of hair and beating of chest, In 18:19 the ship captains, seafarers, and sailors ἔβαλον χοῦν ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν, "threw dust over their heads." Dobbs-Allsopp points out how one placing dust over their head is typical for mourning one's death in Syria-Palestine.<sup>46</sup> In the case of the kings of the earth κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται ἐπ' αὐτήν, "they will weep and beat their chests in mourning over her."

### 8. Lamentations

Where there is the destruction of the city, there are bound to be those lamenting over its destruction. Dobbs-Allsopp highlights how "these laments consist of short refrains typical of expressions found in funeral dirges." We have already come across some of these refrains from the previous feature, the weeping goddess motif with "Alas, Alas, my city!" Which we see in Revelation 18 with "Alas, Alas, the great city!" Dobbs-Allsopp goes on to further highlight how "phrases like these surely lie behind the weeping goddess' most common plaint. This becomes especially clear in passages like *ersemma* 79:31 where the plaint 'Alas, my destroyed city!' parallels the phrase 'Alas, my men.'"<sup>47</sup> This parallelism can be seen in Revelation 18 in the merchant and sailors laments. Beginning with the merchants, they exclaim in 18:16 "Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ," "Alas, Alas, the great city! Clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls." Here the author highlights that what the merchants are wailing over is not necessarily Babylon but her clothing and jewels which the merchants profited off from. The same can be seen with the ship captains, seafarers, and sailors in 18:19, Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἐν ἣ ἔπλούτησαν πάντες οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἐκ τῆς τιμιότητος αὐτῆς, "Alas, Alas, the great city! All who had ships at sea

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 79

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 91.

grew rich by her wealth.” In the case of the sailors, they too are not necessarily mourning over Babylon but of her wealth. In both of these laments, the great city parallels merchandise and wealth.

Another aspect of this feature is the question of how long?<sup>48</sup> This question is not raised in Revelation 18 but it seems to be a question that was asked given that in Revelation 18:8, the angel states that Babylon will be destroyed ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ, “in one day.” Revelation 18 also has the kings, merchants, and sailors state how ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη, “she was laid waste in one hour.” Though the question is not raised in Revelation 18, it is a question that the author is well aware of as seen through the repetition of one hour/day.

### 9. *Restoration of the City and Return of the Gods*

The last feature of the Mesopotamian city lament is the restoration of the city and return of the gods which appears in most city laments.<sup>49</sup> Revelation 18 clearly does not want the restoration of Babylon, so wouldn't that mean this feature is absent from it? Dobbs-Allsopp continues by noting how the Mesopotamian city lament, *The Curse of Agade* “emphasizes the exact opposite, that Agade will not be restored. The poem's last line makes this interpretation very explicit... 'Agade is destroyed! Praise Inanna'. The force of the curse section and the haunting doxology is all the more powerful when read/heard with the expectations of the city lament genre.”<sup>50</sup> Not every Mesopotamian city lament uses this feature to appeal for restoration but uses this feature to further highlight the curse(s) placed upon the city, thus making this poem a satirical lament. The question then arises if Revelation 18 is a satirical lament, and in order to answer that we would have to see if the author would have used such a literary style.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 91

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 92

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 93

### Satire in Revelation 18

Though there are Mesopotamian satirical city laments, in regards to where the author of Revelation gained the influence of using such a rhetorical style, it is important to look at the way the prophets used satire because it is the prophets that the author is mostly alluding to throughout Revelation. It is important to also highlight how though satire is defined and linked to the Romans, Thomas Jemielly points out that “Hebrew Prophecy displays a full range of satiric technique, theme, and victim. However unwittingly and unconsciously, provides abundant evidence of the satiric, or atleast the proto-satiric, long before the usually cited and familiar appearance of this evidence among the classical Greeks and Romans.”<sup>51</sup> Though satire has not been defined yet, it is very much present in the Hebrew Bible, especially within the prophetic texts. John McKenzie states it best to “Let us not think that wit and irony, profundity and wisdom were beyond the reach of the ancient Hebrew story-tellers; there was genius before Homer.”<sup>52</sup>

#### *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*

Revelation is riddled with allusions from the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets. Similar to Revelation 18, the prophets also utilized the city lament genre in their works and the rhetorical technique satire, for Thomas Jemielly highlights how satire was “a most useful handle on the techniques of ridiculing criticism that pervaded Hebrew prophecy.”<sup>53</sup> In regards to why the prophets used ridicule to get their message across, not only was this ridicule a form of shame, which served a large part in the Ancient Near Eastern world’s honor and shame code, but Jemielly also points out how “the entertainment value of the Hebrew Scriptures for its audience should not be dismissed: they may please as well as teach, and in

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<sup>51</sup>Jemielly, Thomas. *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992; pg. 23

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 23

<sup>53</sup> Jemielly, 24

delighting, show a concern, however unconscious, with the pedagogical insinuation achieved by the craft which is art.”<sup>54</sup> Jemielity highlights how the prophets sought to not only enlighten their audience but to give it in a way that would also keep their attention, which satire does. I argue that this is the same goal of Revelation 18, to not only enlighten his audience about the economic atrocities that Rome conspires in but to also give it in a way that would keep their attention.

The power of satire lies in its power to shame and offend with David B. Morris highlighting how satire is “an art which relies on its power to offend.”<sup>55</sup> Morris further highlights how a major concern for satire is power and how it is utilized to bring into light the “reality of their [the wicked] unhappy state and the unhappiness they cause others.”<sup>56</sup> Satire allows the writers to voice their disdain with the wicked in a way that uplifts those that suffer from their wicked deeds, while also offending the wicked in how not only their deeds harm others but also themselves, which most times leads to their downfall. This can be seen in the various oracles against the nations in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, along with Revelation 18 with the Fall of Babylon. In having an understanding on why the prophets utilized satire, we shall now turn to how we can discern satire within these texts.

Many scholars such as Reed Lessing, D.C. Muecke, H.J. Jensen, and Ze’ev Weisman have sought to define satire, but many have emphasized how due to the many kinds of satirical works, it is quite difficult to define. Though there is no solid definition of satire there are still elements that every satirical text consist of, which according to Reed Lessing are “(1) a double-layered or two-storied phenomenon, (2) presents some kind of opposition between the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 41

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 42

two levels, and (3) contains elements of ‘innocence’ or awareness.”<sup>57</sup> All of which the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel utilizes throughout their works and can be seen in Revelation 18.

### *Revelation 18 and Isaiah*

In regards to which prophet uses satire most extensively, Lessing in quoting A. Preminger and E.L. Greenstein exclaims “‘The greatest satirist among them was undoubtedly the prophet Isaiah, whose orations combine the pungency of satire with the charm of an exquisite poetical style.’”<sup>58</sup> It is the prophet Isaiah that I will argue that the author of Revelation takes his literary form of Revelation 18 from, especially when we compare them to Isaiah 23 and 47. Lessing goes on to give three signals that satirists use to alert their readers that they are using satire, those three signals are textual context, verbal markers, and “the presence of ‘some form of perceptible contradiction, disparity, incongruity or anomaly.’”<sup>59</sup> It is these three signals that I will use to show how Revelation 18 satirical rhetoric was inspired by Isaiah 23 and 47.

### *Textual Context*

Beginning with the first signal, textual context, Lessing highlights the importance of this signal for “the interpretation of the text’s satire is driven in large part by textual context.”<sup>60</sup> In the case of Isaiah 23, Isaiah is giving an oracle against Tyre and Sidon, and in Isaiah 47, Isaiah humiliates Babylon over their eventual demise. In arguing how Isaiah 23 is a satirical city lament, Lessing goes on to give these parallels between Isaiah 23 and 47:

1. The use of [O oppressed daughter] (23.12) and [O virgin daughter] (47.1).

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<sup>57</sup>Lessing, R Reed (Robert Reed). “The Redactional Interpretation of Discontinuity in Prophetic Texts: Isaiah 23 as a Test Case.” *Concordia Journal* 30, no. 4 (October 2004): 294–315; 91

<sup>58</sup> Lessing, 90

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 94

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 103



2. The use of shame ([be ashamed], 23.4) and the lifting up of skirts (47.2-3).
3. The theme of losing symbols of power (23.10;47.1).
4. The use of the term [no more/will not be] (23.12; 47.1,5)
5. The idea of losing children (23.4; 47.8)
6. The idea of mighty leaders in 23.8-9 and 47.13
7. Throughout both sections the cities are addressed in the 2 fem. sing. In the form either of imperatives or of verbs in the perfect and imperfect<sup>61</sup>

We can see these parallels within Revelation 18 as well, the chapter is latent with shame especially with the stripping of Babylon in 18:16 when the merchants exclaimed “Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ,” “Alas, Alas, the great city! Clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls.” This verse can be compared to Isaiah 47:2-3 where the Israel remnant taunts Babylon telling her to “put off your veil, strip off your robe, uncover your legs, pass through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen.”<sup>62</sup> In both of these verses, Babylon is stripped of her clothes. Rossing highlights how both Isaiah 47 and Revelation 18’s usage of Babylon as “the grieving or widowed city,”<sup>63</sup> which can be seen in Revelation 18:7 with δότε αὐτῇ βασανισμὸν καὶ πένθος, “give her torment and mourning,”<sup>64</sup> is an important city-lament function, given that in laments a grieving woman, especially a mother, would bring sympathy to the audience.

In regards to being depicted as a widowed city, the angel continues in Revelation 18:7 by stating how Babylon claimed that χήρα οὐκ εἰμί, “I am no widow” which many scholars state that the author got from Isaiah 47:8, where Babylon exclaims “I shall not sit as a widow.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 104

<sup>62</sup> Isaiah 47:2-3

<sup>63</sup> Rossing, 109

<sup>64</sup> Chayim Cohen in his work entitled “The Widowed City,” states that cities referred to as widow could also mean an independent city that was turned into a vassal to another state.

<sup>65</sup> Isaiah 47:7

Lessing also highlights the loss of symbols and power within these satirical texts. In regards to the losing of symbols, Revelation 18 has the angel in the beginning highlight how “ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέπτωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ’ αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν, καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στρήνου αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν,”

“Because all of the nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality and the kings of the earth committed immorality with her and the merchants of the earth grew rich out of the power of her luxury living." One can see how Babylon’s symbols were the wine she gave to the nations and her luxurious living, which are both taken from her as seen in the laments of the kings of the earth, merchants, and sailors.

The final point that I want to highlight from Lessing’s list is that of the usage of “no more/will not be,” which can also be seen in Revelation 18 with the repetition of οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔτι when it comes to Babylon and most of all in Revelation 18:22-23 where the angel exclaims

Revelation 18:21-23(English)	Revelation 18:21-23(Greek)
<p>“So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found <b>no more</b>;</p> <p>and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you <b>no more</b>,</p> <p>and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you <b>no more</b>,</p> <p>and the sound of the mill will be heard in you <b>no more</b>,</p>	<p>Οὕτως ὁρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις, καὶ οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔτι.</p> <p>καὶ φωνὴ κιθαρωδῶν καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔτι ἐν σοὶ ἔτι</p> <p>καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔτι ἐν σοὶ ἔτι</p> <p>καὶ φωνὴ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔτι ἐν σοὶ ἔτι</p>

and the light of a lamp will shine in you <b>no more</b> ,	καὶ φῶς λύχνου <b>οὐ μὴ</b> φάνη ἐν σοὶ ἔτι
and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you <b>no more</b> ,” <sup>66</sup>	καὶ φωνὴ νυμφίου καὶ νύμφης <b>οὐ μὴ</b> ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι <sup>67</sup>

We can see the repetition of ου μη...ετι, which will become important later on given that we see this use of negation again in Revelation 21.

### *Verbal Markers*

Beginning with Isaiah 23, Lessing highlights the most important word in the chapter which is defined as “howl, lament” and is usually associated with the word defined as “cried out.”<sup>68</sup> We can actually see a similar usage of these terms in Revelation 18 with κλαίω, “weep” which is mostly associated with πενθέω, “mourn.” κλαίω has also been associated with κάπτω, “to beat one’s chest in mourning” and κράζω, “cry out.” This can be seen beginning in 18:9 where the kings of the earth κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται, “will weep and beat their chest in mourning,” in 18:11 with the merchants κλαίουσιν καὶ πενθοῦσιν, “weep and mourn,” which they do again in 18:15, lastly, the ship captains and sailors ἔκραξαν κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες, “wept and mourned crying out.” The key thing to notice here is how all three parties, the kings, merchants, and sailors are weeping and mourning. Lessing went on to further highlight how “howl” when associated with “cry out” can “denote either a cry of grief or a shout of mockery, somewhat analogous to the English word ‘howl’ which denotes expressions of both pain and hilarity.”<sup>69</sup> This is the case with Revelation 18, in regards to the verb κράζω, it is first attributed

<sup>66</sup> Revelation 18:21-23

<sup>67</sup> Newman, 682-683.

<sup>68</sup> Lessing, 104

<sup>69</sup> Lessing, 104

to the angel, for 18:2 exclaims, “καὶ ἔκραξεν ἐν ἰσχυρᾷ φωνῇ λέγων· Ἔπεσεν, ἔπεσεν Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη,” “and the angel cried out in a mighty voice, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great city’.” We know that the angel is not upset over the fall of Babylon, so the usage of the verb κράζω, is most likely denoting κλαίω when it came to the sailors' lament in 18:18 and 18:19.

In the case of Isaiah 47, Chris Franke in his work entitled *The Function of the Satiric Lament over Babylon in Second Isaiah (47)*, in looking closely at Isaiah 47 highlights how “one of the most important unifying elements is the placement of several key roots: *ysb*, *bw*, *yd*.”<sup>70</sup> Franke particularly highlights the usage of *ysb* which translates to “sit,” which is first seen in Isaiah 47:1 where Babylon is commanded to “sit in the dust” and “sit on the ground,” and again in 47:5 where she is commanded to “sit in silence.” Franke highlights that when *ysb* appears again in 47:8 with “who sit securely and say in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow,’” but in 47:18, *ysb* is used to indicate how Babylon will have “no coal for warming, no fire to sit before!”<sup>71</sup> Isaiah's usage of *ysb* is “used in a negative and foreboding sense.”<sup>72</sup>

Interestingly enough, Revelation 18 rarely uses the imperative, one of the few times it uses it is in Revelation 18:4 with the angel saying Ἐξέλθατε, ὁ λαός μου, ἐξ αὐτῆς, “Come out of her my people,” but as we can see this is towards the angel's people and not Babylon.<sup>73</sup> I will argue that Revelation 18 also goes on to use an adjective in the same way Isaiah 47 used *ysb*, for

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<sup>70</sup>Franke, Chris. “The Function of the Satiric Lament over Babylon in Second Isaiah (47).” *Vetus Testamentum* 41, no. 4 (October 1991): 408–18; pg. 412

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 412

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 412

<sup>73</sup> The other instance that the imperative is used is in 18:6-7, which once again is referring to a people and not Babylon, though it has been debated on whether it is the same people from 18:4. Many scholars, including Susan M Elliot in her work entitled “Who is the Audience” addressed in Revelation 18:6-7” goes into great detail about this.

in regards to what word marker is the most important to the author of Revelation 18, it is the adjective μεγάλη “great,” which appears in Revelation 18 several times:

18:1 - ἔχοντα ἐξουσίαν <b>μεγάλην</b>	He [the angel] having <b>great</b> authority
18:2 - καὶ ἔκραξεν ἐν <b>ἰσχυρᾷ</b> φωνῇ λέγων· Ἔπεσεν, ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ <b>μεγάλη</b> ,	And the angel cried out in a <b>mighty</b> voice saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the <b>great</b> ’
18:8 - ὅτι <b>ἰσχυρὸς</b> κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ κρίνας αὐτήν.	For <b>mighty</b> is the Lord God who has judged her.
18:10 - Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ <b>μεγάλη</b> , Βαβυλῶν ἡ πόλις ἡ <b>ἰσχυρά</b> ,	Alas, alas, the <b>great</b> city Babylon, the <b>mighty</b> city
18:16 - Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ <b>μεγάλη</b>	Alas, alas, the <b>great</b> city
18:18 - Τίς ὁμοία τῇ πόλει τῇ <b>μεγάλῃ</b> ;	What city was like the <b>great</b> city?
18:19 - Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ <b>μεγάλη</b>	Alas, alas, the <b>great</b> city
18:21 - Καὶ ἤρεν εἷς ἄγγελος <b>ἰσχυρὸς</b> λίθον ὡς μύλινον <b>μέγαν</b> , καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν λέγων· Οὕτως ὀρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλῶν ἡ <b>μεγάλη</b> πόλις,	Then a <b>mighty</b> angel lifted up a stone like a <b>great</b> millstone and threw it into the sea saying, ‘So with violence will the <b>great</b> city Babylon be thrown down’

Though μεγάλη is not a verb, I argue that the author of Revelation uses the adjective similarly to how Isaiah 47 uses *ysb*, especially given that in most of the usages of μεγάλη with Babylon comes after the double exclamation of οὐαὶ. Similar to Isaiah 47, μεγάλη along with ισχυρᾷ, when its modifying Babylon is used in a negative sense, especially since in all of the instances where Babylon is called great she experiences suffering. Revelation 18, in keeping with its usage of μεγάλη, uses it in a negative sense at the end in verse 21 when it compares the great city Babylon to “a great millstone which is thrown into the sea.” Franke later on goes on to exclaim how Babylon’s claim of being mistress to all the kingdoms and would never experience widowhood was not just false but proved to be her downfall, which Isaiah 47 showed through its usage of *ysb*. Revelation 18 does the same with the author’s usage of μεγάλη, for Revelation also

has her state that she will not experience widowhood due to her greatness, which brought about her fall.

I further argue that this usage of *μεγάλη* can be applied to what Lessing define as a “sarcastic imperative, a device found most often in prophetic satire of the foreign nations...there is often a ‘gloating’ quality in passages using sarcastic imperatives; the speaker’s real audience is invited to join him in mocking the fate of another nation.”<sup>74</sup> In the case of Revelation 18 with *μεγάλη* the readers are invited to mock Babylon through the laments of the kings, merchants, and sailors, whose lament is mocking Babylon, which the author alerts to by having the angel be the first to cry, Ἔπεσεν, ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, which is also uttered in the laments.

*Presence of a perceptible Contradiction or Anomaly or Disparity*

In regards to the third element to detect satire, Lessing highlights the importance of disparity, which raises the question of why the author would encourage his readers to lament at Babylon or Tyre’s downfall.<sup>75</sup> Lessing explores other mentionings of Tyre within the Hebrew Bible in regards to Isaiah 23, but in the case of Revelation 18, we do not need to look beyond Revelation or even the chapter to understand why the author encouraged laments towards Babylon. As mentioned earlier, Babylon represents Rome in the book of Revelation. Specifically looking at Revelation 18, the author is highlighting Rome’s economic ventures. Just as Bauckham exclaims how “it is important to notice that Ezekiel’s oracle against Tyre contributes as much to John’s account of the fall of Babylon as Jeremiah’s and Isaiah’s oracles against Babylon do. If Rome was the heir of Babylon in political and religious activity, she was also the heir of Tyre in economic activity.”<sup>76</sup> Bauckham is stating how even though Ezekiel along with

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<sup>74</sup> Lessing, 105

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 107

<sup>76</sup> Bauckham, 54.

Isaiah 23 does not give a prophecy on the Fall of Babylon, the internal issue that John is addressing in Revelation 18 is the same internal issue Ezekiel and Isaiah addresses in their prophecy on the Fall of Tyre, which is economic activity.

It is this economic activity that Rome prided itself on and was renowned for, which can be seen throughout Revelation 18, especially verse 3 where the angel exclaimed “καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ’ αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν, καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στρήνου αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν,” “and the merchants of the earth had grown rich from her luxury.” The question still stands as to why the author is against Rome’s economic venture in particular, and the answer lies in the lament of the merchants in 18:12-13 where they go on to list the merchandise purchased from her, which consisted of καὶ κτήνη καὶ πρόβατα, καὶ ἵππων καὶ ῥεδῶν καὶ σωμάτων, καὶ ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων, “and cattle and sheep and horses and carriages and slaves and human lives.”<sup>77</sup> The key item to note here are the slaves and/or human lives which Rome had indeed thrived off of through their involvement with the slave trade.

Given that the book of Revelation is addressed to churches in Asia Minor, Bauckham highlights how “Asia Minor was evidently the most important source of those slaves who were not taken in war. Ephesus, one of the seven cities of Revelation, must have played a major role in exporting slaves from Asia Minor to Rome.”<sup>78</sup> This shows how the cities in Revelation consisted of a mixture of the mariners who were profiting from Rome’s economic commerce and those who were disadvantaged by Rome’s economic commerce. We can further see John’s disdain for Rome’s slave trade when he ends Revelation 18 with ἐν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, “in her were found the blood of prophets and saints and everyone who has been killed on the earth.” The author, in adding everyone who has been killed

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<sup>77</sup> slaves and human bodies could also be translated as “human bodies and souls”

<sup>78</sup> Bauckham, 75.

on the earth, was most likely referring to the many slaves that died in order to maintain Rome's economic success. Similar to Isaiah 23, Revelation 18 creates a disparity with their oracles where they encourage weeping and mourning over the city's demise which Lessing goes on to explain this anomaly as being satire. This especially can be applied to Revelation 18 given that the following chapter consists of celebrating the judgments of God and avenging the saints, which Babylon had persecuted.

### *Conclusion*

Not only do we see how Revelation 18 is satirical but we also see how much Isaiah's rhetoric usage of satire inspired the author of Revelation. Though there are many verses and passages that come from Isaiah within Revelation, Isaiah's rhetorical style and functions contributes just as much as seen in Revelation 18. We also see how satire's main function was to call out the current powers and their injustices in an entertaining way, for as Lessing exclaims, "satire is a powerful means of persuasion."<sup>79</sup> Similar to Isaiah and the other prophets that utilized satire, Revelation 18 also sought to convey to its readers, who were also partaking in the economic ventures of Rome or were in awe of the empire, to not be fooled by its success for it will be its eventual demise. This leads us to conclude that Revelation 18 is indeed a satirical city lament, thus fulfilling the ninth element of the genre through the exclamation of the angel in 18:21, "Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις, καὶ οὐ μὴ εὕρεθῆ ἔτι," "the great city Babylon will be found no more," which can be compared to the *Curse of Agade's* "Agade is destroyed!" In regards to the *Curse of Agade* "Praise Inanna," this can be compared to Revelation 19:1, which immediately follows after 18:24 where John writes how Μετὰ ταῦτα ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λεγόντων· Ἀλληλουϊά, "After this I heard like loud voices of a great

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<sup>79</sup> Lessing, 110



multitude from heaven saying ‘Hallelujah’." The author of Revelation usage of Isaiah and satire though does not end in Revelation 18.

### **Revelation 17-22 as a Parody to Mourning Customs**

Many scholars such as Collins and Rossing agree that Revelation 18 is a satirical city lament and few scholars connect Revelation 18 with Revelation 21. One scholar that looks at this connection is Rossing who connects the two chapters through the literary function of the two women topos, with Babylon being portrayed as a wealthy prostitute and New Jerusalem portrayed as a virgin bride. Though I agree that the two chapters are indeed connected through this function, I believe there is more to the verse that requires us to look at Revelation 17-22 from another literary perspective. Though the two women topos literary function solves how the two chapters connect, the readers are still left wondering why the author would wait two chapters to do this. The answer lies in looking at Revelation 17-22 as a parody of mourning customs which will answer both of these questions along with what role the sea in Revelation 21:1 plays in the book of Revelation.

#### *Parody and Isaiah 14*

Parody, according to Gale A. Yee is “the literary imitation of an established form or style...parody has no literary anatomy or form, in and of itself, but assumes the shape of that which it imitates. It is by this impersonation that parody conducts its deadly satirical business.”<sup>80</sup> Parody does not have a form for its main function is to imitate. In her work entitled *The Anatomy of Biblical Parody: The Dirge Form in 2 Samuel 1 and Isaiah 14*, Yee argues how Isaiah 14, which is a dirge over the Babylonian king, is a parody of David’s lament in 2 Samuel 1. I argue that it is from Isaiah 14 that the author of Revelation got inspiration to use parody in the later

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<sup>80</sup> Yee, Gale A. 1988. “The Anatomy of Biblical Parody: The Dirge Form in 2 Samuel 1 and Isaiah 14.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (4): 565–86; pg. 565.

chapters of Revelation, but unlike Isaiah 14, the author parodies a custom and not a literary form. The customs that he parodies are mourning customs, which consist of the description of the person's life, the nature of their death, weeping, the dirge, the treatment of the body, and the second procession.

*Description of the Person's Life and the Nature of their Death*

Though this work does not delve into Revelation 17, it is notable to point out how the chapter introduces Babylon and notes her power which even John exclaimed καὶ ἐθαύμασα ἰδὼν αὐτὴν θαῦμα μέγα, “when I saw her, I was greatly amazed.” The angel goes on to describe Babylon as such in 17:4-5,

“Ἦν περιβεβλημένη πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον, καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίταις, ἔχουσα ποτήριον χρυσοῦν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς γέμον βδελυγμάτων καὶ τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῆς ὄνομα γεγραμμένον, μυστήριον, Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς.” “She was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, holding a gold cup in her hand full of abominations and the impurities of her prostitution. And on her forehead was inscribed a name, a mystery: ‘the great Babylon, the mother of whores and of earth’s abominations.’”

This, coupled with John’s latter amazement paints to the readers what Babylon did in her lifetime, which was committing abominations on the earth and using it to fund her lavish lifestyle which attracted many people to her, even John. After this the angel explains to John in 17:16 the prostitute's demise, καὶ ἡρημωμένην ποιήσουσιν αὐτὴν καὶ γυμνήν, καὶ τὰς σάρκας αὐτῆς φάγονται, καὶ αὐτὴν κατακαύσουσιν ἐν πυρὶ· “and they [the beast and the nations] will make her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh and they will burn her up with fire.” We can see how the angel first goes on to note Babylon’s tools, which are her luxury and the wine she drinks, he then goes on to explain her demise which will come at the hands of the nations and the beast. This same order can be seen in Revelation 18 where the angel first states how Babylon used her tools in 18:3, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,...καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στρήνους αὐτῆς ἐπλούτησαν (“for all of the

nations drunk out of the wine of the wrath of her fornication...and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury”). Revelation 18 expands on Revelation 17:4-5 by exclaiming how her wine made the nations drunk in her fornication and how her luxury attracted the merchants.

Revelation 18 then goes on to describe the nature of her demise in 18:8, διὰ τοῦτο ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ ἤξουσιν αἱ πληγαὶ αὐτῆς, θάνατος καὶ πένθος καὶ λιμός, καὶ ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται· (“because of these things her plagues will come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up in fire”). Similar to Revelation 17, Revelation 18 first describes what Babylon had done, which was make the other nations drunk then tells the nature of her death which is death, mourning, and famine. These descriptions are important to point out because this is the same thing Isaiah 14 does with 2 Samuel 1.

Yee explains how “The poet exercises freedom in rearranging the typical features of the dirge. Whereas in 2 Sam 1:22-23 the description of the person’s life follows the description of nature at the person’s death, in Isa 14:5-6 it falls before it.”<sup>81</sup> Yee further highlights how this motif of mentioning one’s weapons in the dirge is prominent in heroic laments to describe the hero’s life, but Isaiah 14 uses the Babylonian tools as a symbol of abuse of power and oppression.<sup>82</sup> This usage of weapons can be seen in both Revelation 17 and 18; similar to Isaiah 14, Babylon’s weapons, which are her wine and luxury are not glorified and are portrayed as a symbol of abuse of power and oppression. When we revisit Revelation 18:24, which once again states “καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,” “And in her were found the blood of prophets and saints and all those slain on the earth.” Her

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<sup>81</sup> Yee, 575

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 575

tools not only cost the nations to get drunk with fornication but these tools came at the cost of lives.

*Rev. 18: Weeping and the Burial of the Body*

Given that we have already covered Revelation 18 as being a satirical city lament, there are still a few things that should be revisited and expanded upon. Eileen de Ward in her work entitled *Mourning Customs in 1, 2 Samuel* explains how ““Death was followed by weeping and mourning, whether they liked the deceased or not. It was a force in itself, and the right ceremonies had to be performed.””<sup>83</sup> This can be seen in 2 Samuel 1 where de Ward highlights how ““after the burial of Abner, the mourners wept at the grave; following the dirge, they wept again.””<sup>84</sup> In Revelation 18 we see how the kings, merchants, and the sailors give dirges and also weep for Babylon. Particularly looking at the merchants, we can see how they wept in 18:11, gave a dirge, and then wept again in 18:15. De Ward continues by highlighting how ““tears may have been for the anticipated disaster, but more probably to reinforce their appeal to the Lord (1 Sam. 11:4).””<sup>85</sup> In the case of David when it came to the death of Bathsheba’s child, de Ward highlighted how David ““was also performing a penance and making a petition (2 Sam. 12:16-22).””<sup>86</sup> In both of these instances, the people are weeping to God for mercy and not over the dead, we see this be the case for the kings, merchants, and sailors. In Revelation 18:4 the angel exclaims Ἐξέλθατε, ὁ λαός μου, ἐξ αὐτῆς, ““Come out of her my people,”” which is actually one of the few times the author uses the imperative. If we are to understand that the author has the kings, merchants, and sailors stand off in order to convince the readers that do partake in

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<sup>83</sup>Ward, Eileen F de. “Mourning Customs in 1,2 Samuel.” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 2 (Aut 1972): 145–66; 153.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 153

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 153

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 153

Rome's economy to stop doing business with her, as suggested by Rossing, plus also seeing how they were in fear of Babylon's judgment, it is very much possible that they are weeping and mourning to gain penance from God. This is solidified given that de Ward continues by highlighting how cultic weeping consisted of “long-drawn wails with yells in between them,” which we do get through the verb κράζω, “cry out” in 18:19 in the sailors lament.

Regarding the physical state of Babylon, we are told both in Revelation 17 and in Revelation 18 how Babylon ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται, “will be burned in fire.” When it comes to the treatment of bodies, de Ward highlights how “in Israel cremation was only for the bodies of the socially-unacceptable.”<sup>87</sup> Connecting this with Babylon being burned by fire which is repeated multiple times in Revelation 18, this was meant to add on to the humiliation of Babylon.

Following the laments of the kings, merchants, and sailors, Revelation 18 shifts back to the angel in 18:21 which states Καὶ ἤρην εἷς ἄγγελος ἰσχυρὸς λίθον ὡς μύλινον μέγαν, καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν λέγων· ‘Οὕτως ὀρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις,’ “Then a mighty angel lifted up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea saying, ‘So with violence will the great city Babylon be thrown down.’” This verse indicates that Babylon's body will be thrown into the sea, but interestingly enough, 18:21 continues with the angel stating that Babylon οὐ μὴ εὑρεθῆ ἔτι, “will be found no more.” Though I agree with most scholars that this is the death of Babylon, there is more happening with the author's usage of εὐρίσκω, “to find.” Looking back at 18:16 where the merchants exclaimed Οὐαὶ οὐαί, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον, καὶ κεχρυσωμένη [ἐν] χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ, ὅτι μιᾶ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη ὁ τοσοῦτος πλοῦτος. “Alas, Alas the great city, clothed in fine linen and purple and gold, and adorned in gold and precious stones and pearls, for

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<sup>87</sup> Ward, 147

in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.” Through this we can see how Babylon is stripped of her clothes.

This is important because in mourning customs “corpses in Israel were buried in their ordinary clothes is suggested by the discovery of clasps and pins in tombs; in few Old Testament passages which give any information, the dead are visualized as dressed normally.”<sup>88</sup> de Ward goes on to give an example from 1 Sam. 28:14 where Saul recognized Samuel through the witch’s description of his clothes.<sup>89</sup> Tying this information regarding Babylon being stripped of her clothes and the dead usually being buried with their clothes, I argue that the stripping of Babylon’s clothes was a way to make Babylon’s corpse unrecognizable to anyone, hence why the author uses the verb εὐρίσκω in 18:24. When we recall 17:5, where we are told that on her forehead there is an inscription with “Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη<sup>90</sup>, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς,” “the great Babylon, the mother of whores and earth’s abominations.” Coupling this, with the fact that Babylon is burned multiple times plus is stripped of her clothes and jewels, it is safe to say that the inscription that was on her forehead cannot be seen, which would explain why she is no longer referred to as Babylon for the rest of the book of Revelation. Thus, Babylon is buried naked with no clothes and no inscription into the sea as noted in 18:21.

In 18:24 it is stated how “καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,” “And in her were found the blood of Prophets and saints and all those slain on the earth.” This verse is indicating that in her corpse were found the blood of all those slain on the earth, which must mean that Babylon’s corpse was tampered with. According to

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 149

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>90</sup> This inscription from 17:5 may explain why the author used the term “great” as opposed to a verb when utilizing the sarcastic imperative even though “μεγαλη” is not a verb.

Israelite mourning customs, “to leave the corpse unburied, or to disturb it after burial, was to condemn the [person] to an existence inferior to that of others in Sheol.”<sup>91</sup> Not only has Babylon been burned in fire and stripped, but her body has also been disturbed which condemns her to a worse fate than others in Sheol.

*Rev. 19: The Second Weeping and the Feast*

After 18:24, in Revelation 19 the readers are met with the great multitude in heaven which sang “Ἀλληλουϊά· ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαια αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ· ὅτι ἔκρινεν τὴν πόρνην τὴν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔφθειρεν τὴν γῆν ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐξεδίκησεν τὸ αἷμα τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ ἐκ χειρὸς αὐτῆς.” “Hallelujah, salvation and glory and power to our God, for his judgment is true and just; for he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and he avenged the blood of his servants out of her hand.” Given that the angels in Revelation 18 were in heaven when they gave Babylon’s judgment and the chapter ends with Babylon being thrown down into the sea, the great multitude are most likely at Babylon’s grave, which is the sea. As we have seen earlier, de Ward had noted how at Abner's burial there would be weeping at the grave and following the dirge there would be a second weeping. As seen in Revelation 19:1-2, the great multitude are clearly not weeping but are in fact singing, this response to one’s death can be seen in Isaiah 14:7-11 when it came to the Babylonian king’s funeral.

Yee highlights how the king’s death “becomes an occasion of exuberant singing.”<sup>92</sup> This mock lament can be seen again in Isaiah 14:16-17 where the attendees ‘rudely stare at the body and raise their mock lament.’<sup>93</sup> Yee further highlights how the lament “is not the enemy who

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 146

<sup>92</sup> Yee, 576

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 579

sings this taunt but those who lived under the terrorist regime of the tyrant. Such a taunt-question expresses not sympathy but relief that this tyrant and his oppressive rule are now no more and that he is suffering the humiliating fate that he deserves.”<sup>94</sup> These qualities of the lament present in Isaiah 14 are present in Revelation 19:1-2 where the great multitude are on the side of the saints and rejoice over God’s judgment. Similar to the attendees in Isaiah 14, they too suffered under Babylon’s oppressive rule and show relief over her demise.

After this, Revelation 19 shifts over into the marriage supper of the lamb, where an angel tells John to write in 19:9 “Καὶ λέγει μοι, Γράψον· Μακάριοι οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι.” “And the angel said to me, Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” The angel later on commands the birds in 19:17-18, “Δεῦτε συνάχθητε εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα φάγητε σάρκας βασιλέων καὶ σάρκας χιλιάρχων καὶ σάρκας ἰσχυρῶν καὶ σάρκας ἵππων καὶ τῶν καθημένων ἐπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ σάρκας πάντων ἐλευθέρων τε καὶ δούλων καὶ μικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων.” “Come gather towards the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and of their riders and the flesh of all both free and slave, small and great.” The key thing to note here is that there is a feast held after the death of Babylon, regarding the mourning customs during this time de Ward highlights that

a sacrificial feast was held after a death... Gray supposes a feast of this kind was part of the later Canaanite rites for Baal, perhaps marking the end of the mourning period, a rite of aggregation to show that the dead was now in the underworld and that the survivors, whose activities had been suspended, could return to normal living.<sup>95</sup>

Through this quote, we can see how it was customary to have a feast after the dead were buried, which is the case in Revelation 19. The first thing to notice is that the feast marked the end of mourning and the dead being in the underworld. Through the complete death of Babylon, the

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 580

<sup>95</sup> Ward, 162



marriage between the Lamb and the bride can proceed, which many scholars such as Rossing have highlighted how Babylon needed to be gone in order for the marriage to take place. This halting of the marriage can also be tied to de Ward highlighting how activities were suspended due to the person's death.

The other key detail to note is that this is a sacrificial meal, we see in 19:17-18 how those sacrificed are the kings, captains, mighty, horses, and all free and slave, de Ward notes how the sacrificial feast would be held in a father's honor, but Revelation 19 does the opposite of that. Instead of the feast being held in honor of the dead, which is Babylon, it is instead held in honor of the Lamb and the Bride. On top of that, they have the birds feast on the kings, captain, mighty, and etc. They have the birds feast on Babylon's children which will become important when we reach Revelation 21. De Ward further notes how "it is unclear whether the feast is for the comfort of the mourners or of the dead."<sup>96</sup> Clearly from Revelation 19, the feast is for the mourners who have anticipated the marriage feast, but the funeral is not yet over.

*Rev. 20: The Second Procession*

Though Babylon and her children are dead, the author introduces a second death in 20:14, και ὁ θάνατος και ὁ ἄδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δευτερός ἐστίν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός. "Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." Before this, in 20:13 it states how "καὶ ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ἔδωκαν τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν." "And the sea gave up the dead within her, and Death and Hades gave up the dead within them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to their works." Many scholars, even those who view the sea in Revelation 21:1 as being Babylon from

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<sup>96</sup> Ward, 163

Revelation 18, would conclude that the sea in this instance is referring to the sea's role as being the place the dead reside. Though I do not disagree with this assessment, I do believe that the sea also represents Babylon. Recalling Revelation 18:24, it states “καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,” “And in her were found the blood of Prophets and saints and all those slain on the earth.” This verse indicates that Babylon housed the dead and that they were found in her, there is no indication that the dead within her were freed. Revelation 20 does go on to note in 20:4 how those who died for Jesus or did not have the mark of the beast were brought back to life, but highlights in 20:5 how “οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔζησαν ἄχρι τελεσθῆ τὰ χίλια ἔτη. αὕτη ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη.” “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.” Looking at these two verses along with 18:24, the prophets and saints found within Babylon would have been a part of the first resurrection, but given that all those who were slain by Babylon are also found within her, they were most likely not a part of this first resurrection. When we return to 20:13 where the sea gives up the dead, Babylon would be giving up the slain ones within her.

Revelation 20 ends with Death, Hades, and those not in the book of life being thrown into “ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός,” “the lake of fire.” It is important to note that up to this point, those that have experienced this second death in the order given by Revelation 20 are thus: The beast, the false prophet, Satan, Death, Hades, and those not found in the book of life. The main character missing from this list is the sea, who we get in Revelation 21.

*Revelation 21: “The sea is no more”*

When it comes to understanding Revelation 21:1, which states “ Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν· ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν, καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι.” “Then I saw a new heaven and new earth; For the first heaven and first earth had passed away, and the sea is no more.” As noted earlier, most scholars translate the sea as being

chaos, these scholars would include those such as Collins who argues that “the sea was no more” is “analogous to the remark that ‘Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire’ (20:14). The sea, like the dragon and the beast, symbolizes chaos.”<sup>97</sup> If the sea was to be thrown into the lake of fire like the others, why would the author just say that the sea is no more? As we can see in Collins translation, she along with the majority of scholars translation “οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι” as “was no more,” even though “ἔστιν” is in the present tense and not the imperfect. These scholars that adhere to this translation most likely give it the past tense because they agree with Collins that it is referring back to 20:14. I disagree that this is pointing back to 20:14 and is actually pointing forward to 21:8, hence why the author uses the present tense and not the past tense of “εἰμι.” Before we delves deeper into 21:8, I believe it is important to revisit 21:4 which states:

<b>Revelation 21:4(English)</b>	<b>Revelation 21:4(Greek)</b>
21:4 - death will be <b>no more</b> , <b>neither</b> will mourning, <b>nor</b> crying, <b>nor</b> pain <b>be no more</b> .	καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι <b>οὔτε</b> πένθος <b>οὔτε</b> κραυγὴ <b>οὔτε</b> πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι

The important thing to note here is that 21:4 uses ἔσται, which is the future tense of εἰμί, “to be.” Many scholars, including myself, would link 21:4 with 21:1 in that because the sea is no more, death, mourning, crying, and pain will be no more. The other key thing to note is the author's usage of negations in 21:1 and 21:4. Revelation 21:1-4 hails from Isaiah 65:17 which states that “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.”<sup>98</sup> The key difference between these two verses is that John adds

<sup>97</sup> Collins, Adela Yarbro. The Apocalypse. Wilmington, Delaware: M. Glazier, 1979; pg. 144

<sup>98</sup> Isaiah 65:17

“the sea is no more” in the place of “the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind,” though he does go on to end 21:4 with “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”<sup>99</sup> This raises the question on why the author would add these verses? Wouldn’t the readers assume that former things were referring to the sea, death, mourning, crying, and pain? This is where Revelation 18 comes into the fold to answer such questions.

As mentioned earlier in this work, Revelation 18:21-23 also uses the negation multiple times:

Revelation 18:21-23(English)	Revelation 18:21-23(Greek)
<p>“So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found <b>no more</b>;</p> <p>and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you <b>no more</b>,</p> <p>and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you <b>no more</b>,</p> <p>and the sound of the mill will be heard in you <b>no more</b>,</p> <p>and the light of a lamp will shine in you <b>no more</b>,</p>	<p>Οὕτως ὁρμήματι βληθήσεται Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη πόλις, καὶ οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔτι.</p> <p>καὶ φωνὴ κιθαρῳδῶν καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι</p> <p>καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης πάσης τέχνης οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι</p> <p>καὶ φωνὴ μύλου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι ἔτι</p> <p>καὶ φῶς λύχνου οὐ μὴ φάνη ἔν σοι ἔτι</p>

<sup>99</sup> Revelation 21:4

and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you <b>no more</b> , <sup>100</sup>	καὶ φωνὴ νυμφίου καὶ νύμφης <b>οὐ μὴ</b> ἀκουσθῆ ἔν σοι <b>ἔτι</b> <sup>101</sup>
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I believe that the author inserted “the sea is no more” including 21:4 to have the readers recall the negations used in reference to Babylon. Rossing, who also makes this connection, argues how no more death, mourning, and pain are in reference to the death, mourning, and pain Babylon is made to suffer in 18:8. Other scholars would argue how 21:4 is referring to those that suffered under Babylon which would include the saints and prophets. I agree with the latter that 21:4 is referring to those that were under Babylon, especially given that in the second death, as noted in Revelation 20:10 “καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου, ὅπου καὶ τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.” “And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tortured day and night forever and ever.” Given that the sea is in the same lake of fire as the devil, beast, and false prophet, if the sea is Babylon then she will still suffer pain and death. Also given the author’s treatment of Babylon, it is unlikely that the author would end Babylon’s torment.

This still raises the question of why the author does not state that the sea was thrown into the lake of fire? The answer to that question is that the sea, which is Babylon, is still alive but through her children. Recalling 17:5, which states “Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς,” “the great Babylon, the mother of whores and earth’s abominations.” Babylon being a mother is very important, for when it comes to women and children Lessing exclaims how “shame is to take place through childlessness. Throughout the ancient world, a woman’s value depended directly on how many children she provided for her husband... that was

<sup>100</sup> Revelation 18:21-23

<sup>101</sup> Newman, 682-683.

the greatest shame a wife could suffer.”<sup>102</sup> In eliminating Babylon’s children, there is more shame being placed upon her. Additionally, especially when it comes to mourning customs of a parent, as seen in Isaiah 14 in verses 20-21 where the Lord exclaims “May the offspring of evildoers nevermore be named! Prepare slaughter for his sons because of the guilt of their fathers, lest they rise and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities.” Yee goes on to comment how “the tyrant is denied not only a decent burial but also the hope of a life and name beyond the grave through his surviving children. The poet enjoins that the tyrant’s children be annihilated, lest they continue the oppressive regime of their father.”<sup>103</sup> Placing this understanding of how children were viewed with Revelation 17:5, in order for Babylon to truly be no more, her children must die for they would continue her oppression. This then leads to the question of who are Babylon’s children?

Looking back on Revelation 18, it is the kings, merchants, and captains that are giving their laments towards Babylon. De Ward highlights how “the mourners called to perform were evidently men, but in Daniel’s court those who made vocal mourning were women, and when Keret forbade his son to weep for him, he called for his daughter to do it instead.”<sup>104</sup> Through this quote we can see that both men and women would wail and sing dirges, though not often, sons would weep but it was something that was traditionally the role of the women.<sup>105</sup> Keeping this in mind, that would then place the kings, merchants, and sailors as Babylon’s children, more specifically, the kings, merchants, and sailors were most likely the “whores” mentioned in her

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<sup>102</sup> Lessing, 105-106

<sup>103</sup> Yee, 580

<sup>104</sup> Ward, 158

<sup>105</sup> The author choosing to have the kings, merchants, and sailors weep may have been another form of satire given that it was a woman’s role.

inscription, especially given that their fornication with Babylon is heavily focused on in Revelation 17 and 18.

Later on, as we had seen earlier, in 19:18, the great supper consists of the birds eating the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, and all both slaves and free, great and small. Thus spelling the death of Babylon's children. In 20:15, we are told that those not found in the book of life suffered the second death as well. Surely this verse must then explain 21:1 in regards to the sea being no more? Once again, though scholars translate ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι as "the sea was no more," which would allow the past tense to point back to 20:15, the author mentions the lake of fire again later on in the chapter.

M. Wilcox in their work entitled *Tradition and Redaction of Rev 21, 9-22, 5* argues how Revelation 21:9-22 "does not really follow the thought of Rev 21,8 but that of 21,2."<sup>106</sup> In Revelation 21:8, we get the last mentioning of the lake of fire, for it states, "τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένην πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος." "But the cowardly and the unbelievers and the detested and murderers and fornicators and magicians and idol worshippers and all the liars portion will be in the lake that burns fire and sulfur, this is the second death." Instead of having the sea be burned in the lake of fire, it is Babylon's children, who committed earth's abominations, that will suffer the second death, thus killing her hope of life and leaving her to be no more. This was most likely the author's attention to equate 21:8 as Babylon's children given that right before this verse, the Lord exclaims in 21:7, "ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει ταῦτα, καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός." "Those who are

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<sup>106</sup> M. Wilcox, "Tradition and Redaction of Rev 21,9-22,5," in idem and Lambrecht, Jan, George Raymond Beasley-Murray and Journées bibliques de Louvain ]. L'Apocalypse Johannique Et l'Apocalyptique Dans Le Nouveau Testament. Gembloux, Belgique: J. Duculot, 1980; 205

victorious will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” Right before 21:8 we get the parental language with υἱός, “son,” which Babylon will not have soon.

It is through Babylon’s children second death that death, mourning, and pain will be no more, in regards to the use of “no more” which can be seen in Isaiah 14:20-21, Yee highlights “The melancholy ‘nevermore’ and ‘no longer’ that so often occur in true laments highlights the utter tragedy of the death for those who remain alive... In Isa. 14:20-21, however, these negations elicit a sense of relief that such suffering will never happen again.”<sup>107</sup> This usage of the negation can be seen in both Revelation 18:21-23 and Revelation 21:1,4 with both of these negations eliciting relief for the author, especially given that all of these negations are followed by the celebration and entry of the New Jerusalem.

In order for the marriage between the Lamb of God and the bride to take place in Revelation 19, Babylon the city had to be killed. In order for the bride, the new city to come, Babylon had to be no more, which could only happen with the second death of her children as seen in Revelation 21:8. Rossing highlights how “the bridal figure of Revelation 19 is transformed into a city (πόλις) coming down from heaven, with God in its midst. Her identity as a city is accentuated as the first word of the visual description of what the author sees... the new city is defined in contrasting parallelism to evil Babylon.”<sup>108</sup> Rossing highlights the transformation of the bride from representing a woman dressed in fine linen to the holy city Jerusalem which begins Revelation 21 and serves to contrast the city Babylon. This contrast can especially be seen after 21:8 where the author goes on to describe the holy city.

Rossing also points out how the sea is no longer mentioned but instead “the spring of the water of life” or “the river of the water of life,” which is followed by the term δωρεάν, “gift or

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<sup>107</sup> Yee, 581

<sup>108</sup> Rossing, 144



without money,” which is meant to contrast the sea which costs lives.<sup>109</sup> I agree with Rossing’s assessment and would take it further by highlighting how the churches Revelation is addressed to are water people; the absence of the sea would displace them; with the inclusion of these waters, the inhabitants would not be displaced. This view can be seen in Lessing’s work where he highlights how “the Israelites, who had no love for the sea, were sold to sea-peoples. On the other hand, the Phoenicians and Philistines, seasoned sea-goers, will be sold to the Sabians, desert-dwellers.”<sup>110</sup> This shows how enslavement is made worse when a people is forced out of their environment, which is something the author does not want to do. The rest of Revelation also goes on to highlight how the new holy city has no need for lamps in both 21:23 and 22:4 which is meant to contrast the lamps mentioned in 18:23.

### **Conclusion**

When it comes to both the usage of parody and satire, these literary devices become a vehicle for social criticism, though this usage of satire has been recognized in Revelation 18, it has been neglected in Revelation 21 due to the images being overdetermined by the introduction of the millennium in Revelation 20. Even though Revelation 20 enters into a new world, that does not mean that the old world has been forgotten which the author of Revelation makes clear through his continual usage of satire and parody in both Revelation 20 and 21. Allowing his readers to harken back to the satirical city lament in Revelation 18 where his satire is inspired heavily by Isaiah. In having his readers reread Revelation 21 in light of Revelation 18, one comes to see how the author not only continues to use satire but is also still using the rhetorical style of Isaiah, but this time through the usage of parody which can be seen in Revelation 17 to Revelation 22.

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<sup>109</sup> Rossing, 144

<sup>110</sup> Lessing, 109

It is important to keep in mind the injustices the author brought up in Revelation 18 which largely dealt with the cost of Babylon's economic activities. As Rossing goes on to conclude how "Revelation portrays the sea politically and economically, as well as mythologically, as a location of evil and a place where commercial ships sail... The eschatological end to the sea in Revelation 21:1 must be read as more economic than mythological, hailing the end of Rome's cargo ships and trade."<sup>111</sup> Rossing highlights how though the sea is still portraying the place the dead reside, that aspect of it should not trump its overall role in Revelation 21:1, which is the economic ventures of Rome, which were utilized by other nations which came at the cost of many human lives. The author does this through his extensive use of satire, which once again "constitutes a form of literary discourse uniquely concerned with power and with directing power against the foolish, corrupt, greedy, stupid, and dangerous,"<sup>112</sup> who were all the children of Babylon.

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<sup>111</sup> Rossing, 146

<sup>112</sup> Jemielity, 45

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