

“FETTLIED IN ON FORME”: READING *PATIENCE* AS A “POETIC IMITATION”

Rob King*

Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Bristol

ABSTRACT: This study offers a critical analysis of the Medieval poem *Patience* and its relation to the Vulgate Bible's version of The Book of Jonah. The poet's translation method is seen as being much closer to the Eighteenth-Century idea of 'poetic imitation', rather than 'paraphrase'. The article is in two sections, the first of which offers a detailed appraisal of the Latin text of the Vulgate, with the focus being on the system of parallelism which characterises the Biblical style; the second section explores the poet's response to this structural system and relates his significant transformation of the source to the poem's 'homiletic' theme. The critical method is that of close textual reading.

KEYWORDS: Imitation; *Patience* poem; Middle English; Translation

1. Introduction

The anonymous late fourteenth century English poem *Patience* is a 'homiletic' re-telling of the Old Testament Book of Jonah, written in the dialect of the North-West Midlands, and in the alliterative poetic style common to that region. Most critical studies of *Patience* have involved some analysis of the relationship which the poem has to the Vulgate Book of Jonah, terms including homily, paraphrase, sermon, translation; in the words of one of the most recent commentators, "much criticism on *Patience* begins from the premise that the work is at base vernacular paraphrase" (Gustafson, 2022, p. 1; Bowers, 1971, p.61). This study seeks to posit the term 'poetic imitation' as being the most appropriate to describe the relationship between 'source' and 'version', with particular attention given to the system of rhetorical internal parallelism which characterises each text.

The term 'imitation' has a complex history in literary criticism, and we can only touch on certain essential points here. Inevitably Aristotle's term "mimesis" is evoked; however, as one translator of the *Poetics* writes:

...'imitation' is the least adequate translation of 'mimesis'. Aristotle nowhere offers a definition of it ... I usually offer the translation 'representation...' (Halliwell, 1987, p. 71)

Aristotle's 'mimesis' has a much broader reference than our term 'imitation', which is specifically used to denote a certain kind of translation. The term *imitatio* became fundamental to the theory of translation during Augustan Roman times, as Rita Copeland has masterfully shown in her examination of Roman translation, and imitation, of Greek literature:

The ideal of imitation...is that of organic recreation from an earlier text, in the sense of formal or substantive adaptation. Translation, on the other hand, is recognised as necessarily replicative... (Copeland, 1991, p. 30)

* rk16506@bristol.ac.uk

The concept of “organic recreation from an earlier text” is essential when considering the relationship which *Patience* creates with its Vulgate source. The term used in this present study – “poetical imitation” - involves the poetical fusion of source and version; a method of translation which, developing from the Roman model, became perfected in the Eighteenth Century, notably by Samuel Johnson in his imitations of Juvenal. Dryden’s seminal definition of the act of translation into the three stages of ‘Metaphrase’, ‘Paraphrase’ and ‘Imitation’ is crucial here:

The Third way is that of Imitation, where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion: and taking only some general hints from the original, to run division on the ground-work, as he pleases. (Dryden, 1680, Preface)

Dryden's musical metaphor can be aptly applied to the approach which the *Patience* poet adopts in his ‘rendering’ of the Vulgate. We can regard the ‘ground’ as the Vulgate, and the ‘division’ as the Medieval poem, with both ‘musical lines’ having equal artistic stature, each one enhancing the other, and each being necessarily present. If we combine Dryden’s model with Copeland’s definition of imitation as the “organic recreation from an earlier text”, then I would argue that this is a far more accurate way of describing the *Patience* poet’s working relationship with the Vulgate source. I would add, crucially, that “organic recreation” must mean that the ‘source’ always remains present in the ‘version’ – as it does in Johnson’s method, which I would consider the epitome of the “poetical imitation” genre.

Regarding the poet's translation method, Anderson says:

The *Patience*-poet develops the biblical narrative not allegorically but realistically ... His technique of elaboration is consistently directed towards making the story illuminate a moral quality. (Anderson, 1977, p. 19)

The *Patience* poet in his imitation of the Book of Jonah, and in his re-creation of some aspects of its poetics, does create a tightly controlled moral structure; however, ‘elaboration’ in the case of *Patience* has also a poetic, as well as a theological purpose. It is important to recognise that the relationship between the Vulgate and the poem is not as simple as that between “source” and ‘version’. *Patience* in its dealing with the Vulgate could actually be regarded as not really a ‘translation’ at all – and here Dryden’s metaphor becomes even more telling – because the poet does *not* give us the story “as holy writ telles” – instead, the Vulgate poem acts as an accompanying, authoritative basis for a new, highly original, didactic poem. As Anderson and Bowers have stressed, the poem is unique in using the Vulgate Jonah story as an *exemplum* of patience (Anderson, 1977, p. 19; Bowers, 1971, p. 62); yet this ‘exemplum’ is not only significant in its theme, but also in its very rhetorical, poetic, stylistic form.

In order to appreciate the nature of this poetic imitation, we need first to examine the text of the Vulgate itself.

2. The Vulgate Book of Jonah

Erich Auerbach's study of the Book of Genesis provides us with a valuable point of departure here. In discussing the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis XIII), Auerbach stresses the absence of narrative detail in Biblical poetics, and the consequent freedom given to the reader's imagination:

God appears without bodily form ... the story unrolls with no episodes in few independent sentences whose syntactical connection is of the most rudimentary sort ... God gives his command in direct discourse, but he leaves his motives and his purpose unexpressed: Abraham, receiving his command, says nothing and does what he has been told to do. (Auerbach, 1953, pp. 9-11; quoted by Spearing, 1970, p. 56)

Auerbach's points here are most important for the Book of Jonah, which even by Biblical standards has a notable terseness of expression. As with the story of Abraham, in the opening phrase of the book 'God appears without bodily form':

*Et factum est verbum Domini ad Jonam [Caput I, 1]*¹

[Now the word of the Lord came to Jonas ...]²

This emphasis upon the 'word' of God is appropriate, since the line introduces a story about the fate of a man who disobeys God's command. The exact phrase is again used to begin Caput III, to mark Jonah's reconciliation with God after the experience of the whale. This has the effect of dividing the story into two parts: the opening of Caput III creates the sense of a 'second beginning', following the crisis of Caput II (presenting the whale scene and Jonah's prayer). There are strong bonds between the two main parts, one of which is created by further elaboration on this opening phrase, elaboration in which speech is crucial:

Caput II, 3: de ventre inferi clamavi, et exaudisti vocem meam.

[“... I cried out of the belly of hell: and thou hast heard my voice.”]

Caput IV, 2: obsecro, domini, numquid non hoc est verbum meum...?

[“... I beseech thee, O Lord, is not this what I said ...?”].

These verbal parallels present the two sides of Jonah presented in Capita II and IV: Caput II contains Jonah's hymn of reconciliation with God, and behind the phrase '*exaudisti vocem meam*' lies the confidence of the prophet in God's willingness to hear and succour him. In Caput IV, however, '*verbum meum*' reminds us of Jonah's rejection of God's command in Caput I:

¹ The Vulgate text referred to is that printed in Anderson's edition: Anderson (1977, pp. 70-72).

² All translations of the Vulgate are taken from the Douay Version, unless stated as my own.

Surge, et vade in Nineven civitatem grandem... [Caput I, 2]

["Arise, and go to Nineve the great city ..."]

Et surrexit Jonas, ut fugeret in Tharsis a facie Domini [Caput I, 3]

["And Jonas rose up to flee into Tharsis from the face of the Lord..."]

This passage has its contrasting parallel in Caput III, 2 and 3:

Surge, et vade in Nineven civitatem magnam.

Et surrexit Jonas, et abiit in Nineven juxta verbum Domini.

["And Jonas arose and went to Nineve, according to the word of the Lord."]

This parallel also tacitly relates '*Verbum Domini*' to '*Facie Domini*', with '*Verbum*' denoting Auerbach's sense of the insubstantial nature of God, but *facies* denoting a more concrete representation of God such as the storm (and, as will be suggested here, the woodbine) might be seen to signify.

The Vulgate rhetorical style creates in this parallel the thematic implication that '*Verbum*' (the 'word') and '*Facies*' (the 'countenance') of God have equal 'substance'. In Caput I, the passage '*surrexit ... ut fugeret ... a facie Domini*' – "he arose, in order to flee from the countenance of God" – conveys the sense of guilt which Jonah is feeling in that very act of disobedience. A subtle irony is created here in the very grammar of the Vulgate, with God's direct, *spoken* imperatives '*Surge, et vade*' ('Arise, and hasten ...') being ironically 'subverted' by the 'answering' *narrative*, where the initially strong, indicative '*surrexit*' (answering 'surge') is ironically deflated by the weaker (and in this context, bathetic) subjunctive form of '*fugeret*', "that he might (be able to) flee". In this juxtaposition the Vulgate 'poet' uses grammar as a kind of thematic, didactic symbol, signaling in its very simplicity of language a profundity of expression which enforces the moral of the story.

In fleeing '*a facie*', Jonah is fleeing in fear not only of martyrdom but of sensible punishment for disobedience, and this is made more obvious by the echo of the same phrase at the height of the storm:

Et timuerunt viri timore magno, et dixerunt ad eum: Quid hoc fecisti? (Cognoverunt enim viri quod a facie Domini fugeret, quia indicaverat eis.) [Caput I, 10]

[And the men were greatly afraid, and they said to him: "Why hast thou done this?" (For the men knew that he fled from the face of the Lord, because he had told them.)]

We can see emerging here a detailed system of internal parallelism in the Vulgate, highlighted by the austerity of its form, which allows it to be read both as a well-wrought poem and as the essential accompanying text for *Patience*, whose sophistication in terms of structure and resonant diction is essentially derived from it. The Vulgate's parallel

patterning is a stylistic technique which again fulfils a moral role, inviting and indeed enforcing greater concentration upon the major theme of disobedience.

A further echo of Caput I, 1 – 3 invites a contrast between Jonah and the Ninevite king. Having had the eventual, contrite obedience of Jonah emphasised through parallelism by the progression “*factum est verbum ... Surge ... Et surrexit Jonas...*” in Caput III, 1 - 3, we find a further parallel in Caput III, 6:

Et pervenit verbum ad regem Nineve: et surrexit de solio suo, et abiecit vestimentum suum a se, et indutus est sacco, et sedit in cinere.

[And the word came to the king of Nineve: and he rose up out of his throne and cast away his robe from him, and was clothed with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.]

The syntactic parallel between the verbs ‘*pervenit*’ and ‘*surrexit*’ emphasises the autonomy of the king, who ‘*surrexit de solio suo*’ as soon as he heard the word of God, a positive reaction whose immediacy parallels Jonah’s equally immediate, but contrary, reaction to ‘*verbum Domini*’. This sense of immediacy is conveyed by the “syntactical connection ... of the most rudimentary sort” noted by Auerbach, allowing for the forceful relation of ‘*pervenit*’ to ‘*surrexit*’, and implying that the action of the first verb causes the action of the second. Also implied, by the echo in ‘*surrexit*’ of Caput I, 3 and Caput III, 3, is a contrast with Jonah’s reaction upon receipt of ‘*verbum Domini*’. ‘*Verbum*’ initiates in the king’s case the progression ‘*surrexit ... abiecit ... indutus est ... sedit*’, verbs which follow hard upon one another, conveying the speed and determination of the king’s contrition; ‘*surrexit*’ and ‘*sedit*’, connote respectively action then passivity – passivity being a characteristic of *Patientia*. Every verb attributed to the king here is prompted not so much by a divine command as by speculation upon divine forgiveness; this is made apparent by his speech in verses 7 – 9, ending with its speculative question:

“Quis scit si convertatur, et ignoscat Deus ... et non peribimus?”

[“Who can tell if God will turn and forgive ... and we shall not perish?”]

Jonah’s disobedience is highlighted by contrast with the actions of the Ninevite king. Jonah ‘*surrexit ... ut fugeret*’, and this purpose clause, modifying ‘*surrexit*’, is bathetic when seen as the response to the divine word in ‘*Surge, et vade...*’ [Caput I, 2], emphasising the abuse given to the divine command. Next in Caput I, 3 we have the progression of the verbs which, as in the case of the passage describing the king, is related to ‘*surrexit*’: ‘*descendit ... invenit ... dedit ... descendit*’ – but which, in contrast to the king’s case, indicates not a movement towards but away from God. The progression ends not with a verb of ‘passivity’ but with a verb of action portraying lack of patience: ‘*descendit*’. This begins a downward movement, continued through Capita I and II, in which physical descent becomes a metaphor for spiritual decline.

Caput I, 5 is important here:

Et timuerunt nautae, et clamaverunt viri ad deum suum: et miserunt vasa, quae erant in navi, in mari, ut alleviaretur ab eis: et Jonas descendit ad interiora navis, et dormiebat sopore gravi.

[And the mariners were afraid, and the men cried to their god: and they cast forth the wares, that were in the ship, into the sea, to lighten it of them: and Jonas went down into the inner part of the ship and fell into a deep sleep.]

The phrase ‘*vasa, quae erant in navi*’ has an ironic effect, since what must be ejected from the ship to ensure the sailors’ safety is Jonah himself. This irony is pointed by the close following of ‘*in navi*’ by ‘*descendit ad interiora navis*’, which creates the sense of Jonah retreating into the hold as the ‘*vasa*’ are coming out. We also feel the sense of continued descent, or falling, in the repetition from Caput I, 3 of ‘*descendit*’ here. This is increased by the phrase ‘*sopore gravi*’, since the adjective ‘*gravis*’ holds both meanings of ‘deep’ and ‘heavily laden, heavy’ and in this context allows the reader to infer that Jonah is suffering from spiritual as well as physical torpor.³ Thus Jonah, heavily laden with guilt and sin, is hiding ‘*a facie Domini*’ - and ‘*in aeternum*’ falling away from God's grace.

We can associate ‘*sopore gravi*’, uttered in the ship's hold, with ‘*tribulatione mea*’ in Caput II, 3, uttered from the belly of the whale, and thus see an implied connection between ‘*interiora navis*’ and ‘*interiora piscis*’. This connection is encouraged by the further use of the verb ‘*descendit*’ in Caput II, 7, transferred now from the narrative voice to Jonah's speech. There is an important interaction of narrative and direct speech at the beginning of the passage:

2. *Et oravit Jonas ad Dominum deum suum de ventre piscis.*

3. *Et dixit: Clamavi de tribulatione mea ad Dominum, et exaudivit me: de ventre inferi clamavi, et exaudivisti vocem meam.*

The Douay Bible translates:

And Jonas prayed to the lord his God out of the belly of the fish. And he said: I cried out of my affliction to the Lord, and he heard me: I cried out of the belly of hell, and thou hast heard my voice. [Douay Bible, p. 1173]

One important detail makes the passage one of severe complexity and spiritual optimism (which, as will be seen, the *Patience* poet fully recognises): Jonah's use of the past tense elevates his utterance from the level of a prayer in affliction to that of a psalm expressing confidence in salvation. Jerome's exegesis emphasises this:

*Non dixit “clamo”, sed “clamavi”: nec de future precatur, sed de praeterito gratias agit.*⁴

He then quotes Psalm CXIX, 1, which bears a close resemblance to II, iii here:

³ Jerome adduces a sense of grief here: “*ideo descendit ad interiora navis, et tristis absconditur*” - *Patrologia Latina* (1844), 25, coll. 1125.

⁴ *Patrologia Latina* (1844), 25, coll. 1117 – 1152: “He did not say ‘I beseech’, but ‘I DID beseech’: nor does he pray concerning the future, but [instead] gives thanks for that which has passed” [my translation].

Ad Dominum cum tribulatione clamavi, et exaudivit me

[In my trouble I cried to the Lord: and he heard me.]

Thus begins the first of a series of ‘Gradual Canticles’ (Psalms CXIX to CXXXIII), perhaps the most cited of which in literature is Psalm CXXIX:

1. *De profundis clamavi, ad te Domine;*
2. *Domine, exaudi vocem meam.*

[Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord.]

[Lord, hear my voice.]

The note to these gradual psalms in the Douay-Rheims Bible is important:

The following psalms ... are called gradual psalms or canticles, from the word ‘*gradus*’, signifying steps ... as the degrees by which Christians spiritually ascend to virtue and perfection...⁵

We should also bear in mind here Jonah Caput II, 5:

verumtamen rursus videbo templum sanctum tuum

[... but yet I shall see thy holy temple again]

The use of the future indicative, [my emphasis] here – in favour of (for example) a ‘*utinam...*’ [‘would that...’] optative subjunctive construction – makes it clear that Jonah's ‘hymn’ is the Vulgate poet's imitation of a gradual psalm uttered in complete confidence of salvation: the sense is “my deliverance *is* assured: I *will* see the holy temple”. This confidence is vindicated by Caput II, 11:

Et dixit Dominus pisci: et evomit Ionam in aridam

[And the Lord spoke to the fish: and it vomited out Jonas upon the dry land.]

The emergence of Jonah from the sea is a parallel event to that of God's forgiveness of the Ninevites. The Ninevite king's speech presents a close parallel to Jonah's Psalm for purposes of contrast. The parallel is announced in Caput III, vii:

Et clamavit, et dixit in Nineve ex ore regis et principum eius, dicens ...

[And he caused it to be proclaimed and published in Nineve from the mouth of the king and of his princes, saying ...],

which corresponds to Caput II, 2 and 3:

⁵ Douay Bible, p. 764.

Et oravit Jonas... Et dixit: Clamavi ...

However, the similarities cease from this point. The king's speech is, as stated above, speculative; this is no 'De Profundis', as in Psalm CXXIX. First, he utters a series of jussive subjunctives in verses vii - viii:

non gustent...nec pascantur...operiantur...clament...convertatur,

which themselves impart less of sense of authority than would direct imperatives. Added to this, the king's speech ends with a question in Caput III, 9:

Quis scit si convertatur, et ignoscat Deus: et revertatur a furore suae, at non peribimus?

[Who can tell if God will turn and forgive and will turn away from his fierce anger: and we shall not perish?],

where the conditional sense contrasts with Jonah's unblinking:

Hebraeus ego sum, et Dominum Deum caeli ego timeo, qui fecit mare et aridam. [Caput I, 9]

["I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord the God of heaven, who made both the sea and the dry land."]

The certainty of Jonah's 'indicative' belief, and the confidence which it engenders in him, are therefore thrown into sharp relief in the story by the contrasting 'subjunctive' gentile element; and there is a strong sense that Jonah's state of spiritual health is of far greater importance, both to the biblical account and to God, than that of the Ninevites. For this reason, Jonah's psalm, resting as it does in the confidence of his belief in God's mercy from the depths of his soul, is given central positioning and a whole Caput to itself, in contrast to the Ninevite king's speech, which has only three verses.

It is the transmission of this sense of confidence in Jonah via the forcefulness of the Vulgate's grammar, patterning and verbal echo which puts into strong relief Jonah's position at the end of the book. His speech in Caput IV, 2 reveals that same confidence which informs the psalm in Caput II, but here it forms (with notable irony created by the changed context of the verbal echo) the explanation for the confrontation which we examined earlier between '*verbum meum*' [Caput IV, 2] and '*verbum Domini*' [Caput I, 1]:

...propter hoc praeoccupavi ut fugerem in Tharsis, scio enim quia tu Deus clemens, et misericors es, patiens et multae miserationis, et ignoscens super malitia. [Caput IV, 2]

[...therefore I went before to flee into Tharsis: for I know that thou art a gracious and merciful God, patient and of much compassion and easy to forgive evil.]

However, there could also be seen here an admission by Jonah that he was the more confident in his flight since ('quia') he knew God to be merciful. This ambiguity, created by the closeness of '*praeoccupavi ut fugerem*' and '*quia*', with no sense of the sins of the Ninevites specifically, is important when viewing the presentation of Jonah in *Patience*. The

Patience poet, as we will see, fuses the spiritual senses of Jonah's confidence in God's mercy (which are manifest in Jonah's conception of himself both as 'Hebraus' and as God's prophet) with the secular confidence which was a vassal's right to possess regarding his feudal lord.

A further contrast between *Caput II* and *Caput IV* is created by the fact that, whereas Jonah's psalm reveals a confidence in salvation by God (*Caput II*, 10: "*quaecunque vovi, reddam pro salute Domino*"), in *Caput IV* Jonah's speech leads to a prayer for death:

Et nunc, Domine, tolle quaeso animam meam a me [Caput IV, 3]

[And now, Lord, I beseech thee take my life from me]

The episode of the woodbine ('*hedera*', *IV*, 6) only confirms that resolution. This episode is strongly related to that of the whale via parallel verbal patterning:

Et praeparavit Dominus piscem grandem ut deglutiret Ionam [Caput II, 1]

[Now the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonas]

Et praeparavit Dominus deus hederam, et ascendit super caput Jonae, ut esset umbra super caput eius, et protegeret eum [Caput IV, 6]

[And the Lord prepared ivy, and it came up over the head of Jonas, to be a shadow over his head, and to cover him]

The subjunctive '*protegeret*' is grammatically parallel to '*deglutiret*', but contrasting in meaning. Also, there is an ambivalence as to the subject of '*ascendit*' in *IV*, 6 since the subject of the sentence is '*Dominus Deus*', but the literal sense demands '*hedera*' to govern the verb; thus we have a suggestion through this 'implied duality of subject' that the ivy is a manifestation of God, contrasting with Auerbach's God of Genesis, who "appears without bodily form". Consequently, the progression

Deus... ascendit... ut... protegeret eum [Caput IV,6],

forms a strikingly ironic, contrasting parallel to *Caput I*, 3:

Jonas ascendit... ut iret... a facie Domini,

[Jonas rose up ... to flee ... from the face of the Lord],

presenting God and Jonah moving in contrary motions to one another.

Thus the Vulgate poem creates its depth of resonance. Through this pattern of internal parallelism and contrast, *Caput IV*, 6 ensures both a close relationship between '*piscis*' and '*hedera*' and a strong contrast between Jonah and God. Also, the parallelism noted immediately above has the effect of connecting the storm episode with the whale and woodbine episodes. These last two contrast Jonah's two inconsistent attitudes: when

under duress in the whale he praises God in the confidence of anticipated salvation; but once he has been saved he criticises God for those same qualities which prompted that salvation.

Caput IV is divided into three sections: the first two, verses 1 - 4 and verse 5 - 9, are governed by two characteristics: God's repeated question,

Putasne bene irasceris tu? [Caput IV, 4 and IV, 9]

["Do you really think you have a right to be angry?" (my translation)],

and Jonah's maintained anger, first at the sparing of the Ninevites, then at the destruction of the vine. The Vulgate creates strong structural patterning here. Jonah's response to the first question is to say nothing and to exit the city, taking his station where the bower is to be built; there then follows the episode of the woodbine, which finishes with God's second question, building on the first: "*Putasne bene irasceris tu super hedera?*" Jonah's reply,

Bene irascor usque ad mortem [Caput IV, 9]

[I am angry with reason even unto death],

in its intransigence and brevity, and in its positioning at the end of verse 9 (with the following final two verses being wholly occupied by God's direct comment upon the whole story), has the air of being Jonah's answer to all three questions. Thus, as the story is centred upon Jonah, it is infused with a deep but perhaps not a total pessimism; for the pessimism can be understood to be tempered by the final example of parallelism in the poem, which is created in Jonah's answer itself in verse 9, which refers us back (through the verbal echo of the last phrase) with profound irony to Jonah's 'gradual psalm' in Caput II:

Circumdederunt me usque ad animum [Caput II, 6].

[The waters compassed me about even to the soul]

This parallel reference at this final stage in the story to the gradual psalm raises the question, which is not fully answered in the Vulgate poem, of whether Jonah has come any closer to God in the scale of spiritual *gradus*. Also, there is resolution in the statement "*Bene irascor ego ad mortem*", where '*ego*' creates considerable emphasis, conveying the sense that Jonah is retreating into himself and therefore is in a lower position spiritually than he was in the whale. However, during the course of Caput IV Jonah shifts between two extremely contrasted emotional states, which are placed in parallel:

Et afflictus est Jonas afflictione magna [Caput IV, 1]

[And Jonas was exceedingly troubled, and was angry]

... et laetatus est Jonas super hedera laetitia magna [Caput IV, 6]

[... and Jonas was exceedingly glad of the ivy.]

We should compare here also the actions which follow immediately after each of these: when *'afflictus'*, Jonah *'oravit ad Dominum'* [IV, ii]; but when *'laetatus'*, far from praying to God, he retreats from him. There is a profound narrative irony created here in these two parallel episodes. Both the whale and the woodbine are God's creation; in the whale, Jonah addresses God as if he were present, whereas under the woodbine he hides from God, and becomes one of those whom he himself has condemned in psalm uttered inside the whale:

Qui custodiunt vanitates frustra, misericordiam suam derelinquunt. [Caput II, 9]

[They that are vain and observe vanities forsake their own mercy.]

This verse had an air of mystery in its immediate context, but now can be seen to be applicable to Jonah himself, *'laetatus super hederam'*, since *'hedera'* can be accurately designated *'vanitas, quae sub una nocte nata est, et sub una nocte perit'*. It is an indication of the presence of internal parallelism and the extent of rhetorical patterning in the Vulgate that a criticism can be levelled at Jonah through a statement which, with the greatest irony, is uttered by himself at the height of his confidence in God's mercy.

Thus Jonah's position at the end of the book is far from simple. In Caput IV the issues raised by the story of Jonah are brought together, and we see Jonah displaying a series of extreme attitudes, as we have illustrated above. The Vulgate in its austere but highly structured form presents these attitudes very forcibly; with no equivocality, but also with no overt comment. The moral comment upon Jonah is, however, covertly expressed by its system of internal parallelism; and in his response to this system the *Patience* poet offers a highly developed form of 'poetic imitation as interpretation'.

This last section of the Vulgate story is marked by questions - and ends with God's final question. The *'-ne'* suffix in the first two questions is emphatic, creating a sense of more colloquial intimacy between God and Jonah in this last exchange – the overall sense being:

"Do you *really* think you have a right to be angry? – you grieve for the woodbine, which you didn't plant or care for, and which appeared in one night and was gone the next – don't you think I have the right to spare the Ninevites...?"

God's first two questions to Jonah have the air of dialectic – the attempt to draw his interlocutor, by questioning, to an understanding of a plain truth. One can compare Boethius (1973) – *"Videsne igitur quanto in caena probra volvuntur, qua probitas luce resplendet?"* – "Don't you see, then, in what deep mire wickedness wallows, with what brightness goodness shines? (*Consolatio* IV, iii). This is the tone of the ending of the book, bringing Jonah and God into a more intimate, less antagonistic relationship. These final questions by God create a 'calming' effect on the mental anguish that Jonah has experienced; the miniscule words, *"...-ne ... tu ... ego"* – all emphatic, and not essential to the meaning in this inflected language, create a sense of intimacy between God and Jonah.

This 'Boethian' intimacy the *Patience* poet greatly elaborates, and celebrates, in his imitation.

3. *Patience*: The Poem

The poet purports at the end of the Prologue to follow the Vulgate story of Jonah closely:

I schal wysse yow per-wyth as holy wryt tells... [60].

However, as he engages with the source on a stylistic level, responding to the system of parallelism which we have observed in the Vulgate, '*holy wryt*' becomes transformed into a new poem which, in using the source to explore the virtue of *Patience* in all its aspects, seeks to present the homiletic exploration of that virtue via exemplum, and to convey a sense of spiritual elevation over its whole movement; this is implied in the "fettledd" (ME "belted") relationship between the first and last lines, between which the quality of "patience" undergoes an elevation from 'poynt' to 'noble poynt'.⁶

This quality of patience is first presented both as a practical skill and as a spiritual asset,⁷ an active principle which by experience one can accept as being necessary in the diminution of suffering, as is apparent in line 6:

And quo for pro may nozt pole, pe pikker he sufferes.

We are then presented immediately with an essential difference between the source and the version under discussion here: the elemental word of God is placed against the interpretative, moralistic, but also humanising 'word' of the poem. The lines

Goddess glam to him glod pat him vnglad made,
With a roghlych rurd rowned in his ere [63 - 4]

transform the austere Biblical:

Et factum est verbum Domini [Caput I, 1]

There is, of course, also humour here, heightened by the alliteration, especially in the first line: God's 'glam' ('word') makes Jonah 'vnglad' – exactly the opposite reaction that

⁶ The 'circular structure' of *Patience* has often been noted, e.g. by Burrow (1971, p. 64) re: the qualities of *Patience* and *Purity*. Quoting *Patience* lines 37-8 (concerning 'Beatitudes'): "For in pe tyxte pere pyse two arn in teme layde, / Hit arn fettledd in on forme, pe forme and pe laste, ...", Burrow applies this idea to the structure of the whole poem. This study seeks to assess the pervading internal structural methods of the poet within this overall design, and to relate these to the same qualities found in the Vulgate.

⁷ I am inclined take 'poynt' to mean 'virtue', with Anderson (1977, p. 50) (citing *SGGK*, line 654); also Burrow and Turville-Petre (1992, p. 162). My reasons are that a definite 'moral' meaning seems to be implied by the concessive phrase 'pa3 ...' immediately following; also, the word appears in the opening line of the poem, linked strongly to the 'titular' word 'Patience' by alliteration – which suggests a meaning with a force equivalent to that word. However, a convincing argument for a meaning closer to 'condition, quality' can be found in Putter and Stokes (2014, p. 573). Cf. also Hatt (2015, p. 224) *et al.* re: the '*apoynt*' reading.

Auerbach's Abraham presents – and in this one line we have an encapsulation of the tone and focus of the whole poem:

The poet's treatment of the story of Jonah is comical and irreverent ... this treatment ... powerfully evokes the ineluctable nature of the Word of God and moreover helps to raise the subject of Jonah's mistaken affirmation of self as an autonomous controller of events. (Hatt, 2015, p. 15)

The poet thus develops his character from the outset. The epithets 'vnglad' and 'roghlych' convey Jonah's psychological reaction to God's command and clarify the mystery of the biblical progression which we have already examined in the related Vulgate passage: '*Surge, et vade ... Et surrexit Jonas, ut fugeret ...*' [Caput I, 2 - 3]. Here the command and contrary execution were presented with no overt explanation, but as we have seen this presentation implied a profound, but tacitly-expressed, moral. In *Patience* the related phrases, "Rys radly... [65] and "penne he ryses radly..." [89] are separated by twenty-three lines which elaborate both God's command and Jonah's related action, and in which:

... we are given a detailed insight into Jonah's thought process, something that makes his selfish motivation clear, but in so doing gives him a humanity that readers are encouraged to recognise". (Hume, 2021, p. 132)

In God's command we can detect significant echoes of the Prologue:

"... her malys is so much, I may not abide,
Bot venge me on her vilanye and venym bilyue.
Now sweze me pider swyftly and say me pis arende." [70 - 72]

Here, a kind of narrative irony presents God himself as expressing a tendency contrary to the poem's declared tenet, or maxim; Jonah in turn responds to God's 'impatience' with the same quality. God's word 'malys' refers us back to the prologue, in which the narrator relates the necessity of patience to himself:

For ho quelles vche a qued and quenches malice ...
þen is better to abyde þe bur vmbe-stoundes,
þen ay prow forth my pro, þa3 me pynk ylle. [4, 7 - 8]

Thus the poem's elaboration of 'verbum domini' conveys a thematic concentration, developing elements of patience put forward in the prologue; here these elements are tolerance and obedience, the latter being closely associated with the acceptance of one's ordained fate. God's position becomes reversed, however, by the end of the poem:

"I may not be so malicious and mylde be halden,
For malyse is no3 to mayntyne boute mercy with-inne." [522 - 3]

These lines echo the 'malys' of lines 4 and 70, thereby indicating a considered exercise of patience by God – a parallel presenting the divine exemplar in accordance with the thematic

maxim. This is contrasted with Jonah's effective adherence to disobedience, established by the correlation of the following lines:

Penne he ryses radly and raykes bilyue,
Jonas toward port Japh, ay janglande for tene [89 - 90]

and,

Jonas al joyles and janglande vp-ryses,
And haldez out on est half of pe hyze place [433 - 4]

This parallel encourages a correlation between Jonah in initial disobedience and Jonah in anger – anger at the contravening of the prophecy which he was enjoined to utter. Both disobedience and anger are contrary to the code of patience as set out in the Prologue, but they are connected here with great subtlety in the poem's equivalents to Vulgate Caput I, 3 and Caput IV, 5 respectively:

Et surrexit Jonas, ut fugeret... [Caput I, 3]

[And Jonas rose up, to flee...]

Et egressus est Jonas de civitate, et sedit contra orientem civitatis. [Caput IV, 5]

[Then Jonas went out of the city, and sat towards the east side of the city.]

The poem is thus being generated by close analogy to the internal parallelism of the Vulgate, which stresses by verbal echo the connection between Jonah's first disobedience and his later contrite obedience, expressed in Caput III, 3: "*Et surrexit Jonas, et abiit in juxta verbum Domini*". This sense of the poem being '*generated*' by the source is a crucial aspect of poetic imitation as a type of translation. It is important to bear in mind that, despite the *Patience* poet's obvious piety, he is also *primarily* poet, and he is in this poem responding as much to the artistry of the Vulgate as he is to the spiritual message. As Celia Hatt has said, expanding upon the idea of "... the place of art in the conversation between God and humanity":

We may observe in the poems the idea of reciprocal giving being applied to conscious artistic creation ... in *Patience* the gift is a divine message that demands human collaboration for its realization. (Hatt, 2015, p.12)

The poet's imitation of the Vulgate poetics thus becomes a perfect blending of piety and poetical endeavour.

A significant addition made by the poem to the source (perhaps prompted by the relation between '*iuxta*' and '*contra*' quoted above) is evident in the parallel created between Jonah's escape to Tarshish and his exit from Nineveh. The Vulgate presents no overt parallel between these two episodes, but *Patience* does. Here the poet exhibits a profound subtlety, and exercises what might be termed "*analogous imitation*": that is,

imitation of an aspect to be found in the source but which is not in the particular passage which the version is at present addressing. In each passage (89-90 and 433-4) Jonah progresses from 'janglande' (90; 433) to 'joyful' (109) or 'so glad' (457) within about the same number of lines; and in each case that joy is seen to be illusory and subject to destruction by God. In relation to the lines 89 – 90 quoted above we have the quatrain:

Wat3 never so joyful a jue as Jonah wat3 penne,
Ɔat pe daunger of dry3ten so derfly ascaped;⁸
He wende wel pat pat wy3 pat al pe world planted
Hade mo mazt in pat mere no man for-to greue. [109 - 112]

And in relation to lines 433 – 4 we have:

Penne wat3 pe gome so glad of his gay logge,
Lys loltrande per-inne lokande to toune;
So blype of his wod-bynde he balteres per-vnder,
Ɔat of no diete pat day - pe deuel haf! - he roz3t. [457 - 60]

Through this parallel the poem thus connects, with very close reference to its *exemplum*, the two vices of disobedience and anger, demonstrating that, whatever temporary reward (or relief) they might offer, they are both subject to retribution by God. This sustained engagement with the source is such as to produce a tightness of structure and strength of statement which elevates the poem to 'imitation as homily'. In the first instance here [109-112], the joy which Jonah is showing is connected tonally to his disobedience through the description of the embarkation, which represents a substantial elaboration of the Vulgate text. There is a strong sense of progression and connection traceable in the lines:

Penne he ryses radly ... [89]
Ɔus he passes to pat port ... [97]
Ɔen he tron on po tres ... [101]
Gederen to pe gyde-ropes ... [105]
Ɔe blype brepe at her bak ... [107]
Wat3 neuer so joyful a jue ... [109]

The brisk movement connects the sense of exhilaration at the embarkation and Jonah's joy at the idea of freedom from God's effective jurisdiction. However, one of the most important elements here is the wind, which is at first central to the sense of happiness at embarkation - but is of course to be instrumental in the destruction of that happiness. This *motif* is thematically significant to the poem: as happiness contains the seeds of

⁸ Cf. Putter (2018, p. 199): "As far as he is concerned, he is not a coward, shirking his duty, but a hero embarked on a brave mission to stand up 'derfly' ('boldly') to God's tyranny. Of course, the poet knows better ...".

unhappiness, so in the same way unwillingness to suffer and suffering itself are intimately connected. Here, line 107,

be blype brepe at her bak be bosum he fyndes (107),

anticipates the ensuing

An-on out of pe norp-est pe noys bigynes,
When bope brepes con blowe vpon blo watteres [137-8]

Similarly, in the woodbine episode part of the plant's beauty is expressed in the lines,

Ʒe gome glyzt on the grene graciose leues,
Ʒat euer wayued a wynde so wype and so cole [453-4]

However, it is 'zeferus' in line 470 which has a major part creating discomfort for Jonah after the worm's destruction of the vine. The embarkation and the woodbine episodes are also connected by the similarity of the kinds of happiness portrayed. With the embarkation, Jonah's 'joy' is rooted in the illusion of freedom, complemented by the sense of exhilaration at setting sail; with the woodbine, the excessive nature of his happiness shuts God out of his mind – the irony being, of course, that it is God himself who has created the vine for him. The poet creates a metaphor for this during the description of the vine:

Ʒe schyre sunne hit vmbe-schon, Ʒaz no schafte myzt
Ʒe mountance of a lyttel mote vpon pat man schyne. [455-6]

Here, the traditional association of God with the sun is used to complement the *motif* that happiness and unhappiness have the same root. We see Jonah completely shielded from the sun by the woodbine, which is God's gift; the *motif* is completed four stanzas later as the poem modulates to the retributive theme again:

And sypen he warnez pe west to waken ful softe,
And sayez vnto zepherus pat he syfle warme,
Ʒat per quikken no cloude bifore pe cler sunne,
And ho schal busch vp ful brode and brenne as a candel. [469 - 472]

The excess of Jonah's happiness while the vine is flourishing is thus presented in the poem as an exhibition of the lack of patience, which God confirms at the end of the poem: "be pacient in payne and in joye" (525). Jonah's excessive 'joye' inevitably leads to unhappiness, as his 'impatient' (but initially joyful) flight to Tarshish inevitably led to his incarceration within the whale.

The strength of expression in the poem resides, to a great extent, in the 'imitative' nature of the process of its composition: the poet 'celebrates' and reacts imaginatively to the Vulgate's perfection of structure and resonance of statement, which are secured tacitly

through the implication of the parallels. However, the poet connects the three parts of the Vulgate story concerning the ship, the whale and the woodbine in ways other than those evident in the Vulgate. There, as we have seen, the idea of ‘descent’ linked the ship and the whale, and verbal parallelism [Caput II, 1; Caput IV, 6] linked the whale with the woodbine. *Patience* adds both imagery and the idea of the accomplishments, or creations, of God and man. In the ship episode the activity of the mariners precedes the expression of Jonah's joy [109]; in the same way his joy at God's creation of the woodbine follows the description of his own efforts in creating the shelter:

Ʒer he busked hym a bour, Ʒe best pat he myzt,
Of hay and of euer-ferne and erbez a fewe [437-8]

The use of ‘bour’ here is important, as it connects the woodbine with the whale:

Ʒer in saym and in sorze pat sauoured as helle,
Ʒer watz bylded his bour pat wyl no bale suffer. [275-6]

There is a contrast here between the passive construction ‘watz bylded’ and the active sense of ‘he busked hym’ in the first passage: these indicate the actions of God and Jonah respectively. Related to this there is a change in the descriptive mode from the *metaphorical* in the whale episode to *literal* in that of the bower. The contrast in size between Jonah and the whale is strongly stressed by the lines:

And Ʒrwe in at hit prote with-outen pret more,
As mote in at a munster dor, so mukel wern his chawlez ...
Til he blunt in a blok as brod as a halle. [267 – 8; 272]

These lines work in parallel to the description of the bower:

For hit watz brod at the bopem, bozted on lofte,
Happed vpon ayper half, a hous as hit were...
The schyre sunne hit vmbe-schon, Ʒa3 no schafte myzt
Ʒe mountance of a lyttel mote vpon pat man schyne... [449 – 50; 455 - 6]

We see here an elaboration of the kind of verbal interchange noted in the Vulgate parallels; the actual correspondence is to Vulgate Caput II, 1 (greatly expanded by the *Patience* poet):

Et praeparavit Dominus piscem grandem...

and Caput IV, 6:

Et praeparavit Dominus Deus hederam...

Jonah's 'bour' is described in terms of a house, connecting it to the whale described as a 'halle'; and the 'bour' and the whale share the epithet 'brod'. Greater resonance is created by the use of the word 'mote': in line 268 it is used in a simile related to Jonah, conveying the idea of his vastly diminished stature - in which he can still make the whale 'wamel', however; and, more importantly, can still be seen by God. In contrast, passage 455-6 quoted above makes a definite distinction between 'mote' and 'man', 'mote' being a part of the 'sunne' which, via line 445, is closely connected with God and symbolic of his power, as is the wind. In the image of Jonah being protected from the sun by God's woodbine there is the idea of God creating a barrier between Jonah and divine wrath, an idea which complements one of the last lines in the poem,

"For malyse is no3 to mayntyne bouthe mercy with-inne". [523]

The poem's parallel patterning thus emphasises three different attitudes exhibited by Jonah: in the ship he hides from the wrath of God as represented and conveyed by the storm caused by his disobedience; in the whale he utters the equivalent to the Vulgate gradual psalm, which in the English has also the quality of a penitential prayer (aligning him with the Ninevite king); and in the bower he waits vainly in anger for the destruction of Nineveh, anger which is only temporarily alleviated by the appearance of the woodbine, and increased at its destruction.

However, in the second of these attitudes, that expressed in the gradual psalm, Jonah is exhibiting an aspect of the complex Medieval notion of *patientia*, a spiritually highly-placed, active virtue. The poet begins his psalm thus:

"Lorde, to pe haf I cleped in care3 ful stronge,
Out of pe hole pou me herde of hellen-wombe;
I calde, and pou knew myn vn-cler steuen." (305 - 7)

As we have seen, the Vulgate is presenting an *imitation* of the 'Gradual Canticles'; but here it exploits the metaphorical nature associated with these Canticles by giving that imitation a literal context. 'Canticles' make frequent use of metaphor to express the condition of the soul fearing the consequences of being forsaken by God; for example, in Psalm CXXIII:

5. Our soul hath passed through a torrent: perhaps our soul had passed through a water insupportable ... [Douay Bible, p. 812]

Here, the imagery is a metaphorical representation of the depth of affliction from which the mercy of God can rescue the soul. But in the Book of Jonah this kind of imagery has an obvious literal quality. When Jonah says (Caput II, 4):

"Et projecisti me in profundum in corde maris, et flumen circumdedit me: omnes gurgites tui, et fluctus tui super me transierunt",

the ‘metaphorical’ imagery of the gradual psalm is given a literal meaning: Jonah has, literally, been thrown ‘in profundum’. The *Patience* poet has added a passage in lines 289 – 292 presenting an answer from God to his prayer that is actual and immediate: “With pat he hitte to a hyrne and helde him per-inne”. This provides a new setting for the prayer which immediately follows: “I calde, and pou knew myn vn-cler steuen.” Thus, line 307 here expresses two distinct thoughts: gratitude for actual benefit received from God, and confidence in complete reconciliation with God and in God's willingness to alleviate Jonah's affliction. This second point, taken in conjunction with lines 305 – 6 here, supports very strongly the idea of Jonah in his prayer exhibiting *patientia*: the ‘care3 ful strong’ and the realisation of being in ‘hellen wombe’ are expressed with no sense of complaint, but with, on the contrary, a sense of acceptance that they exist for that time in accordance with divine necessity. The maintenance in the poem's language of the demeanour of the Biblical gradual psalm is also of fundamental thematic importance, since it follows the theological thinking that confidence in salvation must be a sound basis for endurance of affliction on earth.⁹ This imitation of the gradual psalm expresses profound conviction – revealing a strength in adversity which is central to the ‘patience’ theme, just as Jonah's prayer is central to the poem. Being centrally placed in the Vulgate, commanding a whole Caput to itself as we have seen, it becomes the subject in the English poem of an intense piece of poetic imitation. The stylistic ‘engagement’ with the source has a strength, and communicates a strength of expression, which in itself is a complement to the primary sense in the poem of patience as an active, strong quality, a heroic virtue. Jonah in uttering the prayer is embodying patience: the dwelling upon the details of his suffering, as in the stanza:

De grete flem of py flod folded me vmbe;
Alle pe gote3 of py guferes and groundele3 powle3,
And py stryuande streme3 of strynde3 so mony,
In on daschande dam dryue3 me ouer [309 - 312],

presents Jonah in the position of actively bearing the brunt of his allotted fate. In this expression of his affliction the human and the personal element is presented very strongly, as it is in the lines following this stanza. This is so also in the Vulgate, but the English poet makes an addition by including the sense of the feudal relationship between a lord and his ‘man’:

To laste mere of vche a mount, man, am I fallen.
Pe barrez of vche a bonk ful bigly me haldes,
Pat I may lachche no lont, and pou my lyf weldes.
Pou schal releue me, renk, whil py ryt slepez,

⁹ For the commonly-accepted reading of Jonah's psalm in the Vulgate as being a later, ‘satirical’ addition (also re: the ideas of ‘metaphorica’ as opposed to ‘literal’ meanings discussed here), see Hatt (2015, p. 138).

Purȝ myȝt of py mercy pat mukel is to tryste. [320 - 324]

Here, the force of ‘man’ and ‘renk’ suggests the respective roles of feudal vassal and his lord; also, the line “pou schal releue me, renk, while py ryȝt slepez”, is densely packed, which accounts for the ‘charismatic’ quality which it seems to have in the poem. The ME word *schal* serves two purposes: it conveys the predictive sense (without volition) of ‘It is inevitable that you will take me out of this affliction’; and it also conveys a sense of obligation, a standard ME sense of the word, referring to the duty of protection which a feudal lord owes to his vassal. The line also maintains a very close relation to the source text, since ME *releve* picks up the Vulgate Latin *sublevis* in the line “*et sublevabis de corruptione vitam meam, Domine Deus meus*” [Caput II, 7] - not offering an exact translation, but a closely related kind of echoic pun on the word. There is therefore, here, a perfect fusion of the Biblical and contemporary medieval elements, and the most significant aspect here is that the poet, so perfectly, fuses his modernising interest with his interpretation of the poem's major source. This is evident also in the more colloquial exchanges between God and Jonah towards the end of the poem, where the poet seems to be responding to the ‘dialectic’ nature of the exchanges in the final part of the Vulgate, as we have earlier observed.¹⁰

Although this shows Jonah exhibiting the quality of patience, he is nevertheless presented through the parallelism in the poem as a man who turns to God only in affliction; even then we can detect an assertiveness¹¹ above and beyond the sense of confidence communicated by the stylistic elements of the Psalm as noted by Jerome. This assertiveness connects again the lines:

“Pou schal releue me, renk, whil py ryȝt slepez [323]

and

“Hit is not lyttel,” quop pe lede, “bot lykker to ryȝt” [493]

where we have a rather final note of dissatisfaction in Jonah, increased by his following line, which is an expression of an attitude exactly opposite to the medieval virtue of patience:

“I wolde I were of pis worlde, wrapped in moldez” [494]

However, the poem’s structural system which we have been assessing here allows no one line to stand upon its own; the strong network of internal parallelism compromises any sense we might have of line 494 representing Jonah's final and irrevocable position; the poem encourages us to weigh this attitude with its opposite, expressed in the prayer at the centre. God's final words to Jonah:

¹⁰ Cf. Gustafson (2022, p. 504): “...the depiction of divine speech may also suggest the limits of representing God in human terms...”.

¹¹ Cf. Anderson (2005, p.135): “...the language of Jonah's appeal seems unduly assertive”.

Be noȝt so gryndel, god-man, but go forth py wayes,
Be preue and be pacient in payne and in joye ... [524-5],

reveal the poet's appreciation of the more colloquial, calming, 'Boethian'¹² intimacy which we saw at the end of the Vulgate Book of Jonah – and these lines, with this reading of the source, facilitate a smooth transition, "fettlede" Jonah with the figure of the poet/narrator himself in the last stanza:

For-py when pouerte me enpreceȝ and payneȝ in-noȝe,
Ful softly with suffraunce saȝttel me bihoȝeȝ ... [528 – 9],

where the two centrally-placed, alliterative, juxtaposed words in line 529 create a strong structure, conveying a celebratory sense of completion in the poem. The AN word *suffraunce*, 'patience', is twinned with *saȝttel*, derived from OE *sæhtlian*, 'to be reconciled' - reconciliation implying, of course, a previous conflict which is now smoothed over by the softer-sounding *suffraunce*¹³. This line also demonstrates the rich vocabulary of the *Patience* poet, the main characteristic of which is a fusion of words derived from Anglo-Saxon / Old Norse, and Old French / Anglo-Norman. Here we can perhaps surmise that the poet is revealing a consciousness of these two contrasting linguistic aspects of his poetic discourse, and that this is a deliberate, linguistically-inspired, juxtaposition - the 'marriage' of two very different languages complementing the theme of reconciliation so central to the poem. The poetical mastery of this line transforms the concept of 'patience' into a state of calm, something to be welcomed into oneself, rather than a state to be endured.

Thus the imitation of Biblical poetics in *Patience* is geared towards supporting the poet's interpretation of the Vulgate story, in which he presents a balance between the qualities of 'patience' and its opposite. He achieves this balance without compromising his portrayal of the two contrasting attitudes in Jonah, and much of this achievement is possible through the poet's mastery of the medium of poetic imitation. In celebrating and thus illustrating the perfect structure of his source, the poet can be seen to be making a profound critical appraisal of the Book of Jonah itself, as a discrete work: that it is, in its entirety, a metaphor for the potentially intimate connection between God and man – an idea which gains strength from the colloquial exchanges which he creates between Jonah and God, and also from the surprising level of humour which characterises the poem.

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¹² Cf. Bowers (1971, p. 62): "...the poet regards Jonah throughout from a Boethian point of view".

¹³ Cf. Stokes (1984) re: the poet's use of the word 'suffer'.

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About the author: Dr. Rob King is Honorary Research Associate in the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bristol, where he studied for his Ph.D. on "Poetical Imitation" under J. A. Burrow. He is currently researching his book entitled "The Art of the Ballad", a critique of the artistic qualities discernible in traditional balladry, the main source being Francis Child's collection.