THE ‘GEOMETRICS’ OF THE RAHAB STORY:
A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF JOSHUA 2

A Thesis submitted by

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For the Award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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The biblical story about Rahab, the prostitute from Jericho, has been included within the Book of Joshua to serve a specific purpose in a remote historical context. However, it has since been read not only by an audience contemporary to the author or redactor, but also by a multitude of readers in later centuries who read and interpreted it from their particular perspectives and used different methodologies to do so. All these factors, along with others, certainly influenced the manner in which the story has been interpreted.

The aim of this study is to examine the dialectic relationship between the text, conceived as the vehicle of narrative communication, and a reader, using the example of the biblical Hebrew text of Joshua 2. In fact, the necessity of envisioning two essential components in such an interpretative process, namely the text and the reader, led me to adopt the communication paradigm as the hermeneutical strategy for analysing such an interaction. In particular, I will focus on the two essential categories in such a process: the ‘encoded reader’ in Joshua 2 and the ‘perplexed reader’, who will serve as the hypothetical counterpart of a real reader in the communicative circuit.

Moreover, the construct of the hypothetical reader will allow me to investigate some stages of later understandings of the Rahab story. The purpose of such an insight is to register how successive interpretations overlap and set the interpretative pattern for subsequent generations of readers. Admittedly, such inflow is very characteristic of traditional texts; therefore, it should be taken into consideration when examining the process of narrative communication. Finally, these three entities: the text of Joshua 2, the two main streams of its “afterlife”, and the perplexed reader, representing the specific context and particular interpretative interest, constitute salient facets of the research model which will interfuse with each other in the course of the analysis.
As a result of this conceptual framework, the Rahab story will be presented in the broader context of the communicative process, which has been challenging the story’s readers for centuries. In fact, such deep immersion into both internal-textual and external-historical contexts will reveal the generally overlooked thread within the Rahab story, namely “the power of storytelling”, which may prove relevant for contemporary readers by providing grounds for inter-cultural dialogue in the postmodern world. In such a way, another fibre will be woven into the expanding fabric of the story.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Psalm 118:1

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ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations follow *The SBL Handbook of Style* guidelines.¹

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BHS</td>
<td><em>Biblia Hebraica Studgartensia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Masoretic Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIB</td>
<td>New Interpreter’s Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syr.</td>
<td>Syriac</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vulg.</td>
<td>Vulgate</td>
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ANCIENT SOURCES:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Clem</td>
<td>1 Clement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ant.</td>
<td>Josephus, <em>Antiquitates judaicae</em> (Jewish Antiquities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td><em>Babylonian Talmud</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. mend.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>Contra mendacium</em> (Against Lying)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com. Ps.</td>
<td>Jerome, <em>Commentarioli in Psalms</em> (Homilies on the Psalms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Ex.</td>
<td>Jerome, <em>De Exodo, in Vigilia Paschae</em> (Homily on the Exodus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deut. Rab.</td>
<td><em>Deuteronomy Rabbah</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dial.</td>
<td>Justin, <em>Dialogus cum Tryphone</em> (Dialogue with Trypho)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epist.</td>
<td>Jerome, <em>Epistulae</em> (Letters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. Luc.</td>
<td>Ambrose, <em>Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haer.</td>
<td>Irenaeus, <em>Adversus haereses</em> (Against Heresies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg.</td>
<td>Megillah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mek.</td>
<td>Mekilta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Num. Rab.</td>
<td><em>Numbers Rabbah</em></td>
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</table>

¹ *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd edn (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014). The list also contains some abbreviations which were found in relevant publications.
Paenit. John Chrisostom, *De paenitentia* (On Repentance)

Pesiq. Rab Kah. *Pesiqta of Rab Kahana*

TJ Targum Jonathan (of the Prophets)

Trac. Orig. Gregory of Elvira, *Tractatus Origenis de libris Sanctarum Scripturarum* (Origen’s Tractates on the Books of Holy Scripture)

Zebah. Zevahim

**PERIODICALS, SERIES AND REFERENCE WORKS:**

AB Anchor Bible (Commentary)

AbrN *Abr-Nahrain*

ACCS Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture

AnBib Analecta biblica

AOAT Alter Orient und Altes Testament

APB *Acta Patristica et Byzantina*

ATAT Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament

BDB Brown-Driver-Briggs: *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*

BETL Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium

Bib *Biblica*

BibInt *Biblical Interpretation*

BibInt Biblical Interpretation Series

BO Bibliotheca orientalis

BSac *Bibliotheca Sacra*

BZAW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

CBR *Current in Biblical Research*

CCSL Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina

CJT *Canadian Journal of Theology*

ConBOT Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament

CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum

CV *Communio Viatorum*

EC *L’Esprit Créateur*

FC Fathers of the Church
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FCB</td>
<td>Feminist Companion to the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPBS</td>
<td>Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAR</td>
<td>Hebrew Annual Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT</td>
<td>Handbuch zum Alten Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCOT</td>
<td>Historical Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSM</td>
<td>Harvard Semitic Monographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFT</td>
<td>Introduction in Feminist Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JANESCU</td>
<td>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBQ</td>
<td>Jewish Bible Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNSL</td>
<td>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRB</td>
<td>Journal of Reading Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSNT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBFA</td>
<td>Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LASBF</td>
<td>Liber Annuus Studii Biblii Franciscani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHN</td>
<td>The Living Handbook of Narratology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNTS</td>
<td>Library of New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSAWS</td>
<td>Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLN</td>
<td>Modern Language Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDEJ</td>
<td>Notre Dame English Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLH</td>
<td>New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICOT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTL</td>
<td>Old Testament Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Poetics Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTMS</td>
<td>Princeton Theological Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>Revue biblique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLRBS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semeia</td>
<td><em>An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Semiotica</td>
<td><em>Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies</em></td>
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<td>SubBi</td>
<td><em>Subsidia Biblica</em></td>
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<td>ThFr</td>
<td><em>Theologie und Frieden</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTC</td>
<td><em>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>TynBul</td>
<td><em>Tyndale Bulletin</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td><em>Vetus Testamentum</em></td>
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</table>
INTRODUCTION

The Book of Joshua is important because it provides the main account of the Israelite conquest of Canaan. One of the principal events in this conquest was the capture of Jericho (cf. Josh 6) and the choice of the prostitute Rahab in helping two Israelite spies against the King of Jericho and her own compatriots (cf. Josh 2). The story of Rahab, however, is not simply a historical chronicle which records events as they unfold, but is rather the message, in narrative form, to be interpreted.

The aim of this study is to investigate how the text of Joshua 2 has been and still can be the vehicle of literary communication. This goal enfolds many other questions related to the thorny issue of the interpretation of texts, which still is debated in biblical scholarship. The basic challenge consists of defining the decisive entity in generating the meaning of the text. Therefore, the basic assumption of the Historical-Critical and Form-Critical approaches, which have dominated the research on the Rahab story in the past, was that the interpretation of the text should be equated with discovering the meaning intended by its author. In reaction to that assumption, new methods have been developed which privileged the final, literary composition during the interpretative process. Recently, the focus switched from author and text to reader, who has regained his/her creative role in the process of interpretation. In light of that background, I will investigate the dynamic in which both text and reader come together in the process of interpretation. The necessity of embracing these two components leads me to adopt the communication paradigm as the hermeneutical model for this inquiry. In order to accommodate the premises of this research, the following procedures are envisioned.

In the first chapter, I will develop the methodological model which will allow me to enquire on the text-internal and historical-external context of the Rahab story. I will then propose the hypothetical model of the reader, namely the perplexed reader whose intrinsic property will allow me to examine such a dialogical interaction with this biblical story.

The second chapter offers an extensive review of literature concerning the Rahab story, which will at the same time constitute the first portion of the “mental library” of the perplexed reader. This review will explore the diversity of methodologies and approaches employed in the interpretation of the Rahab story, which will eventually
strengthen my argument for the necessity of multi-level analysis prospected in this study.

As the Hebrew text of Joshua 2 is assumed to be an important entity in the communication process, Chapter 3 sets out to establish the textual vantage point (the encoded reader) through which the perplexed reader will be guided into the world of the story. To that end, I employ the method of syntactical analysis of the biblical Hebrew narrative texts elaborated by Alviero Niccacci. This kind of analysis does not differ considerably from classical literary criticism. However, the new angle of this research consists of focusing mainly on the linguistic features of Joshua 2 in steering the reader’s involvement. Such methodological procedures will elucidate the texture of Joshua 2 and henceforth will describe more precisely how this text guides the process of communication.

The fourth chapter builds on the internal-textual dimension of Joshua 2 and will focus on the main trends in rabbinic and patristic interpretations of the Rahab story. As this section will focus on various readings, the actual role of empirical readers in the interpretation of the Rahab story will be clearly exposed. This selective insight into the historical process of interpretation of the Rahab story will also constitute the second portion of the perplexed reader’s “mental library”, which will be essential to realize how this story has been relevant to a non-authorial audience.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I will attempt to fulfil the multi-faceted analysis of the Rahab story in which the text and reader interact. The perplexed reader analysis will relate to the textual features of the Rahab story; hence, the reader’s vantage point, elaborated previously in Chapter 3, will constitute the blueprint for such an interaction. On the other hand, the perplexed reader analysis will be susceptible to various findings coming from historical-empirical readers as well as from the history of research, as these two bodies of knowledge will constitute the principal parts of the perplexed reader’s “mental library”. This analysis will essentially allow me to enquire into the multi-dimensional interaction between the perplexed reader and the Rahab story. Finally, such an analysis will gradually reveal the generally overlooked pattern within the Rahab story, which consists of the “power of storytelling”. This will address the ultimate question of the relevance of the Rahab story for a contemporary reader.
In the conclusion, I will summarise how the inner workings of the text may guide the process of interpretation and how the reader may be creatively involved during the interpretative reading of the Hebrew narrative texts. Finally, I will recapitulate the particular contribution which each kind of analysis may offer to the scholarship.

Since the concept of originality for doctoral research ranges from exploring the unknown (content) to using new or different techniques and procedures (methodology), I hope that this multilayered analysis of Joshua 2 will give the stamp of “originality” to my research, as it is perhaps the first attempt to advance such a complex analysis of the Rahab story.
CHAPTER 1: DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH MODEL

The biblical story of the prostitute Rahab from Jericho has been the subject of extensive enquiries throughout the centuries. The next chapter will summarize the main methodological breakthroughs that have occurred in the approach to this story over the past few decades. The plurality of methods available today may help to better understand the various aspects of a biblical text, which often go beyond the range of one particular methodological perspective. On the other hand, it may concoct a bewildering experience for the beginner researcher pursuing his or her own strategies, since the list of methods currently being used is quite broad and sometimes conflicting. All of them have their strengths, weaknesses, and specific procedures, which should be respected, yet all of them are limited in regard to the complexity of ancient writings. Therefore, the key point is to determine the particular purpose and context of one’s own enquiry and then to develop an appropriate strategy of investigation.

1.1 Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the dialectic relationship between the text and the reader based on the example of the biblical Hebrew text: Joshua 2.

This apparently easily formulated goal enfold many other questions. The basic challenge consists in defining the concept of “reader”, which entails the further question of its role in generating the meaning. Is the reader reduced to a kind of “nutcracker” that is meant to release the meaning sealed by the author in the text, or has it a more creative role in the reading process? As a matter of fact, this issue significantly relates to the hermeneutical question of the interpretation of biblical texts, which is still at the heart of biblical scholarship.

Another challenge consists in developing an appropriate methodological framework which assumes both the internal-literary analysis of Joshua 2 and the external-historical approach, which registers readers’ interaction with this text.

Moreover, as this study is constrained to the ancient Hebrew text, it requires specific

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tools to carry out such an analysis. Therefore, the first objective is to provide an adequate methodological framework for such a transaction between the reader and the text and eventually to introduce a particular apparatus that allows an analysis of both the internal structures of the Hebrew text and an external process of interaction between the text and readers.

1.2 Text in the Communication Process

The basic characteristic of the second chapter of the Book of Joshua is that it is a narrative text. A narrative is a particular kind of literary composition which presupposes the existence of a story, i.e. a series of events, either true or fictitious, and of a narrator who tells the story.\(^3\) However, such a perspective, which sets the narrative within the boundaries of its internal-structural level, fails to consider its function as a communicative act. Any text presupposes and evokes a communicative situation which involves at least two more parties, i.e. the author and the reader.

The communicative framework, however, reveals another problematic issue: that of ascribing a dominant role in such a communicative process. Louise Rosenblatt’s comment may serve as an illustration for such a situation. She writes:

>...The long history of the theory of literature, from Plato to the present, records certain well-known shifts of emphasis. In surveying these changes, I find it helpful to visualize a little scene: on a darkened stage I see the figures of the author and the reader, with the book—the text of the poem or play or novel—between them. The spotlight focuses on one of them so brightly that the others fade into practical invisibility. Throughout the centuries, it becomes apparent, usually either the book or the author has received major illumination. The reader has tended to remain in shadow, taken for granted, to all intents and purposes invisible. Like Ralph Ellison’s hero, the reader might say, 'I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.'\(^4\)

Rosenblatt’s “visualization” applies equally well to the paradigm shifts in modern biblical scholarship, which essentially parallel the general trends in literature studies. In fact, in the past, the role of the reader in the interpretation of biblical texts had been neglected, either to privilege the author or the text. Recently, however, the spotlight has been switched from the author and the text to the reader and it has become apparent that the reader must be accommodated as an essential entity in biblical hermeneutics. The necessity of envisioning three essential components in the interpretative process, which

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may be roughly labelled as the author, the text and the reader, led many scholars to adopt the communication paradigm as their hermeneutical approach when analysing biblical texts. It is also my choice, in order to accommodate the premises of this research. In developing such a model, I will limit myself to some significant stages in its formation, as it is beyond my objectives to stray into the vastness of philosophical-theoretical discussion concerning communication theory in general. In particular, I will review three models focusing on the gradual emergence of the reader’s prominence in the narrative communicative process.

### 1.2.1 Narrative-Communication Models

In developing the model of narrative communication, it is useful to begin with the elementary model of communication articulated by Roman Jakobson, which can be graphically represented as follows.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Message</th>
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<tr>
<td>Addresser</td>
<td>Addressee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Code</td>
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</tbody>
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As clearly seen on the diagram, Jakobson explains only the fundamental components of the verbal communication, which he himself recapitulates in one sentence: ‘Addresser sends a Message to the Addressee’. Jakobson is aware that this process implies further conditions to make the message operative, such as the context of the utterance, the code shared by both addresser and addressee and the contact which guarantees successful communication. Nevertheless, as many rightly impute, this model better describes the human “voice to voice” discourse rather than linguistic communication, which presupposes a more complex dynamism in which ‘the message mediated through a

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8 Jakobson, ‘Closing Statement’, p. 553.

narrative must establish its own context and codes in a way which can be discerned by the interpreter.\textsuperscript{10}

Hence, in a search for a more suitable pattern, one should consider what is probably the most famous model of narrative communication, that advanced by Seymour Chatman.\textsuperscript{11} The graphic representation of his model includes six elements.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node[draw, rounded corners] (Narrative) {
\begin{tabular}{c}
Real author \[\rightarrow\] Implied author \[\rightarrow\] (Narrator) \[\rightarrow\] (Narratee) \[\rightarrow\] Implied reader \[\rightarrow\] Real reader
\end{tabular}
};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

I will postpone defining these concepts until the periphrasis of my final model, which will also include Chatman’s contribution. That said, it is worth noting here two important features of his model. The first remark comes from Chatman himself, who explains that only two entities, i.e. the real author and the real reader are extrinsic to the text. The others are rather intrinsic functions within the narrative world whereof the narrator and narratee are optional entities.\textsuperscript{12} The second remark was pointed out by others, as the shortcoming of the above representation of the communicative situation.\textsuperscript{13}

In the above diagram, the direction of the arrows denotes a linear and one-way transmission from the author to the reader. Instead, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this linear dynamic has been undermined, with scholars now stressing that in the narrative communication, the contribution of the reader is as important as that of the author or the text. In the process of “activating” the reader’s faculties, at least two iconic figures should be briefly mentioned: Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish.

Iser’s main contribution consists of his exploring the nature of relationship between a literary text and the reader’s activity. He perceives in texts a certain openness toward a reader. These are textual ‘gaps’ which invite a reader into an active role during the act of reading and, consequently, to collaborate in producing the meaning, which

\textsuperscript{10} Danove, \textit{The End of Mark’s Story}, pp. 56-57.


\textsuperscript{12} Cf. Chatman, \textit{Story and Discourse}, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{13} For example, cf. Danove, \textit{The End of Mark’s Story}, p. 58.
therefore cannot be circumscribed in the text only.\textsuperscript{14} The implication of his contribution is almost imperceptible in the diagram, but has significant consequences in perceiving the nature of the communication process. In the diagram, one only needs to change the arrow between the text and readers from ‘uni-directional’ (→) to ‘bi-directional’ (↔).\textsuperscript{15} The implication for the understanding of the communication process is far greater. It means that the reader will not remain “in the shadows” anymore.

Fish’s merit, in turn, consists of his drawing attention to the contextual reading. In the later phase of his career, he maintained that a meaning of the text derives solely from the reader, or more precisely, from the interpretative strategies that any reader inherits and shares with his/her community, rather than from objective textual structures. His conviction is clear when he writes that the meaning is ‘a product of a point of view rather than simply ‘read off’.\textsuperscript{16} Again using Chatman’s model as the point of the reference to illustrate Fish’s contribution, one should rotate the uni-directional arrows about 180 degrees, and surround the reader with a graphic equivalent of a historical context which controls his/her response.

Many, however, are hesitant to accept Fish’s scepticism about the fact that the meaning has no foundation in objective textual structures and his conviction about the one-dimensional and over-controlling role of communities in interpreting text. For example, Robert M. Fowler vindicates the objective capacity of texts to exert some power over the reader and on the community. He writes:

\begin{itemize}
  \item (1) the community defines what the text is and tells the reader how to go about reading; at the same time,
  \item (2) the text (as defined by the community) molds its reader and constrains the critical gaze of the community; and at the same time,
  \item (3) the reader (as instructed by the community) construes the text and contributes to the evolution of the critical community.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{itemize}

Fowler, therefore, locates the reader in a multi-directional or dialogic relationship with the text and the community. Such a multifaceted and prominent allocation of the reader is well captured by the third model I refer to, that developed by Paul L. Danove, who

\begin{itemize}
  \item Cf. Danove, \textit{The End of Mark’s Story}, p. 60.
\end{itemize}
introduces some adjustments, first from contributions of Iser, then from Fish and finally from Fowler. Hence, the following chart.  

![Diagram](image)

All above-mentioned inputs are reflected in Danove’s model of narrative communication, which he concisely annotates as follows:

1. (With Iser) the real reader is a co-equal participant in the generation of the meaning of the text (the arrows between the real reader and the text point both ways). 2. (With Fish) the interpretative community has an integral role in the determination of a text’s meaning, but (contra Fish and with Fowler) this role does not remove the “objectivity” of the text or the “subjectivity” of the reader.

Undoubtedly, it is possible to pinpoint endlessly the various elements of a written communication circuit. Inasmuch as each model just approximates the complex reality which transcends every effort to define it, Danove’s model captures the fundamental prerequisites of the text as a communicative act and will constitute the theoretical framework for the enquiry of my sample text. Nevertheless, in view of the assumed goals for this study, I have also to introduce a number of necessary amendments to better meet the premises of my research and singularity of the ancient Hebrew text.

Hence, two categories from the above model will acquire a specific definition, i.e. the “implied reader” and “real reader”. These two, in fact, are the key terms which will structure my whole research. The precise definitions of those entities will eventually allow me to come up with the final model, which will outline the itinerary for my dissertation.

18 Danove, The End of Mark’s Story, p. 64.
19 Danove, The End of Mark’s Story, p. 64.
20 For example, the contribution of Tzvetan Todorov is noteworthy, as he distinguishes elements in the text that are unquestionable by readers (‘signification’) and other elements which are subjected to the readers’ interpretative subjectivity (‘symbolization’). The consequence of such fissure is that ‘the imaginary universe constructed by the reader’ will be never identical with that evoked by the author. Cf. Tzvetan Todorov, ‘Reading as Construction’, in The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation, ed. by Susan Rubin Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 67-82 (pp. 72-77).
1.2.2 Terminology

The following outline is intended to provide the initial agreement on the first four components of the narrative circuit and highlight their roles in the communication situation.\(^{21}\) The defining of the concept of “reader” will receive more detailed consideration afterwards.

1.2.2.1 The Real Author

The real author is the historical entity who ‘can be defined in a narrow sense as the intellectual creator of a text written for communicative purposes’.\(^{22}\) Nevertheless, most of the biblical books cannot be attributed to any real author. Their identity is often hidden in the shadow of great figures to whom the books were ascribed, such as Moses, David, Solomon or Paul. Unfortunately, ancient authorship lacks the modern concept of the copyright. The writings were considered as part of the heritage of the community and hence were often expanded or re-shaped in the process of transmitting, a fact that opens another thorny issue: to what extent does a redactor embody the qualities of an author? The compositional character of the biblical writings and the impossibility of determining their real authors occasionally resulted in excluding the author from having control over the meaning (Intentional Fallacy).\(^{23}\)

Despite the improbability of establishing the real author of the Rahab story, I retain this category, as it is crucial for the theoretical dynamic of the communication. Nevertheless, most often when I use the term without any further specification, I will mean the concept of the implied author, because as Chatman rightly notices:

> There is always an implied author, though there might not be a single real author in the ordinary sense […]. The narrative may have been composed by a committee (Hollywood films), by a disparate group of people over a long period of time (many folk ballads), by random-number generation, by a computer, or whatever.\(^{24}\)

If one deletes from this description the modern interpolations such as “Hollywood films” and “computers”, one obtains a satisfactory depiction of biblical authorship.

\(^{24}\) Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 149.
1.2.2.2 The Implied Author

The implied author is the image of the real author reflected in his work. The concept was introduced by Wayne Booth to better describe the process of linguistic communication. In this process, as the real author generates the image of the potential reader for his/her work, similarly, the same author imprints his/her own marks in the work. These are: ‘the system of values, the world-view, the norms, interests, and creative power that we can discern in narration’. Then, as Chatman insightfully perceives: ‘He, or better, it has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn’. In sum, the implied author ‘refers to the author-image evoked and constituted by the stylistic ideological and aesthetic proprieties for which indexical signs can be found in the text’.

The ascribed words of Mozart, who (might have) said, ‘I am vulgar but my music is not’, were often used by narratologists to portray the difference between the real author and the implied author reflected in the work. Instead, in biblical scholarship, the term “Deuteronomist” is often employed to indicate the real agent who collected and crafted various ancient sources into one whole. Nevertheless, this term befits the category of the implied author, as the deutoronomistic propensity of this agent is the intrinsic characteristic of those writings.

1.2.2.3 The Narrator

The narrator is the voice who tells the story, but this voice must be distinguished from either the implied or the real author. The narrator is always present in the story as an essential part of its structure although it may recount the story in different ways. The narrator can appear within the narration in the first-person accounts when its “I” is clearly perceived, or it can tell the story without appearing in the scene in the “third person” stories. In this case, the reader can detect the narrator’s voice more clearly in comments, when the flow of the narrative is interrupted to provide the reader with more

information. Moreover, one character in the story may become a narrator’s tool to tell the story. In most cases, the biblical narrator (Genesis-Kings) is an omniscient narrator, who through the “inner vision” can penetrate the thoughts of various characters, including those of God. The biblical narrator limits his knowledge only when the story is told from the point of view of a character. Chatman distinguishes various strategies by which the narrator can recount the story. Some of his refinements may also be useful for a more precise definition of the “biblical” narrator. Particularly helpful may be his distinction between ‘filter,’ ‘centre’ and ‘slant’. When the narrator uses a character as the means to tell the story through his or her consciousness, this function is called ‘filter’. Instead, when one particular character is of central interest for the narrator, but his/her consciousness is not accessible for the reader, such a focus is called ‘centre’. Finally, ‘slant’ or ‘angle’ is the stance of the narrator who explicitly or implicitly shares the character’s point of view. Undoubtedly, such awareness of slightly different functions which the narrator may perform in the process of recounting the story may be an advantageous tool for a reader to experience the world of the story more intently.

1.2.2.4 The Narratee

The ‘narratee’ is a term coined by Gerard Prince in order to better examine the flow of information within the boundaries of a narration. He maintains that:

All narration, whether it is oral or written, whether it recounts real or mythical events, whether it tells a story or relates a simple sequence of actions in time, presupposes not only (at least) one narrator but also (at least) one narratee, the narratee being someone whom the narrator addresses.

Thus, similarly to the implied author and narrator, the narratee is also a category intrinsic to the story and denotes the entity which is meant to be the narrator’s audience. Although the above definition seems to be fairly clear, the concept was widely discussed, leading occasionally to confusion, especially between the narratee and the

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31 Chatman introduces this distinction in reaction to the imprecision of terms such as “point of view” or Genette’s “focalization”. Cf. Seymour Chatman, ‘Characters and Narrators: Filter, Center, Slant, and Interest-Focus’, PT 7/2 (1986), 189-204. Also in Seymour Chatman, Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 139-160.
implied reader or the narrative audience. As a matter of fact, the category of the narratee can take different forms and can be differently articulated in the literary work. In fact, Prince’s further classifications of narratees are necessary to grasp the idea he was advancing. In the later part of his article he distinguishes three different classes of narratees. The first category of the narratee would be a kind of a “ghost narratee” that always exists but can be hardly identified, as the narrator is addressing no one in particular, either directly or indirectly. The second class, instead, is when the narratee is specifically mentioned by the narrator, who by different rhetorical means may refer to him or her quite directly. The third one is a particular case when the narratee materializes as a character that is addressed by a narrator. For example, the narratee for Moses’ first speech in Deuteronomy is the people of Israel while they were ‘beyond the Jordan in the wilderness’ (cf. Deut 1:1 NRSV). Assuredly, an absorbing circumstance occurs when the domains of the narratee and the implied reader overlap, since this proximity might be intended to involve the real reader in the world of the story.

1.3 The “Anatomy” of a Reader
The above outline established the initial conceptual agreement on the majority of components in the narrative communication as represented in the diagram. Now, I will proceed to the category of ‘reader’ and its importance in the communication process. As the categories of the implied reader and the real reader determine the perspective of my research, it is crucial now to specify these concepts and indicate particular procedures for their study.

1.3.1 The Implied Reader
The implied reader differs in concept and terminology, and its various aspects are the subjects of an extensive debate. Hence, it is essential to define this entity, as it will be one of the objectives of my enquiry. First, I will provide an essential background for

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this notion and indicate its role in communication. Then, I will establish the identity of the implied reader, which will constitute the object of the analysis in the first part of my research. Finally, I will indicate specific methodological procedures for its analysis.

1.3.1.1 Wayne Booth

The concept of the implied reader was also articulated by Wayne Booth, who maintains that in the writing process ‘the author creates […] an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement’. 36

From such an affirmation emerges the image of the implied reader, that is, the rhetorical construct implemented in the text by a real author, as a kind of counterpart to his own image in the text, namely the implied author. Booth further explains this concept when he writes that ‘as rhetorician, an author finds some of the beliefs on which a full appreciation of his work depends come ready-made, fully accepted by the postulated reader as he comes to the book, and some must be implanted or reinforced’. 37

Hence, the concept of the implied (or postulated) reader advanced by Booth embodies all those values and beliefs cherished by the real author, whose decoding from the text and acceptance guarantee the optimal reading. This implicit tuning in to the author’s system of values would undoubtedly be problematic for those critics who, by all means, desire to liberate a reader from such an unnecessary burden.

1.3.1.2 Wolfgang Iser

It is impossible to deal with the idea of the implied reader without considering the contribution of Wolfgang Iser. His phenomenological model enjoys considerable recognition in scholarship. Iser explains:

[The implied reader] embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect-predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader.

Thus the concept of the implied reader designates a network of response-inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text. Iser introduces the idea of the implied reader as a potential structured action inscribed in the texts, whose “ontological fabric” presupposes both ‘a network of response-inviting structures’ and the active participation of a reader in their actualization. He is not defining an historical reader but rather a “timeless intelligence” which actualizes those structures in the text. This idea is even clearer when he explains that the implied reader ‘incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader’s actualization of this potential through the reading process’. Hence, Iser’s implied reader is a theoretical prospect that exists when both a text and a reader are invited to interact with each other in the process of reading. For example, if a gap appears to be one of those ‘response-inviting structures’, its “ontological fabric” also requires the action of filling the gap. In this ideal dialogic interaction, the response of the reader may also supply a unique element. In fact, Iser broaches the theoretical fissure for the individual and socio-historical dimension of the response when he admits that the actualization of meaning may be ‘coloured by the reader’s existing stock of experience’. Nevertheless, this issue has been pointed out as the “weakest link” in the Iserian model. As a matter of fact, his phenomenological model of aesthetic interaction is insufficient to examine any socio-historical influence in the process of actualization. Susan Suleiman's remark when she describes the Iserian implied reader as ‘a transhistorical mind’ whose share is always the same is characteristic. On the other hand, every attempt to establish theoretical discussion on potential contributions of historical readers will inevitably collide with the inexhaustible influx of possible data.

1.3.1.3 Umberto Eco

The concept of the model reader was advanced by Italian semiotician Umberto Eco, one of whose main theoretical concerns was to examine the interrelationship between a text and a reader in the process of interpretation. Eco explains its substance as: ‘a textually

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39 Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. XII.
established set of felicity conditions [...] to be met, in order to have a macro-speech act (such as a text is) fully actualized. Thus, the model reader is created by various textual means such as ‘a specific linguistic code’, ‘a certain literary style’ or ‘specific specialization-indices’, which demand a precise profile of a reader who is ‘supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them’. Two basic prerequisites are also postulated from the model reader to meet the challenge, namely ‘intertextual frames’ and ‘conventional frames’. The former encompasses the reader’s cognitive knowledge of other texts, which is necessary, occasionally indispensable, for a beneficial understanding of the chosen text. The latter, instead, refers to the assumed cultural knowledge of the world beyond a text, which enables the comprehension of the text. Finally, it is worth mentioning that Eco is well aware of a possible mismatch in assuming the role of the model reader. As a matter of fact, a big part of his effort consists in pointing out certain unpredictable elements during the actualization process.

1.3.1.4 Seymour Chatman

Finally, this overview cannot miss the conceptualization of the implied reader by Seymour Chatman, whose model was readapted for this research. As clearly observable in his diagram, the entity of the implied reader is enclosed within the word of the narrative. It is a kind of “screenplay” inscribed in the text to be performed by the real reader. Chatman reveals the nature of his concept by concluding that only ‘when I enter the fictional contract [...] I become an implied reader’. Thus, the implied reader is the reader designed by the text, the ideal reader postulated by the story who is able to

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44 Cf. Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, pp. 20-22. Interestingly, the “cognitive narratology” further develops this concept, inquiring into dynamics by which the context may influence the reader’s mind during the reading process. These structures are, for example, ‘frames’ and ‘scripts’ readers use ‘to make sense of events and descriptions by providing default background information for comprehension, as it is rare and often unnecessary for texts to contain all the detail required for them to be fully understood’. Catherine Emmott and Marc Alexander, ‘Schemata’, in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, [http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Schemata](http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Schemata) § 2 [accessed 28 April 2015]; Also cf. David Herman, ‘Cognitive narratology’ in LHN, [http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Cognitive_Narratology](http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Cognitive_Narratology) [accessed 28 April 2015].
46 Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp. 149-150.
understand and respond adequately to its cultural codes. It is less a person than a concrete role that each reader is invited to assume in the reading process.

The problem is that such a role of the real reader who is able to stand perfectly at the dictate of the implied reader is as much “ideal” as “idealized”. It was already pointed out by Danove that the main drawback of Chatman’s model consists in reducing the real reader to a passive and ruthlessly obedient, hence inauthentic, entity.

1.3.2 The Reader in the Text

The above survey was intended to provide the essential background for the concept of the implied reader. As is clear from the above enquiry, the notion is far from being unequivocal and broadly ranges from textual structures which steer the reader’s involvement to the ideal role of the reader postulated by the text. Hence, I will now redefine the concept of the implied reader, which will constitute the object of my enquiry, then I will discuss its importance in the process of linguistic communication, and finally I will outline the strategy for its analysis in Joshua 2.

First and foremost, the implied reader who will be the object of the enquiry in the first part of my research is the textual phenomenon. Thereby, I will be using designations such as ‘the encoded reader’. Thus, the encoded reader is the perspective encoded in the text by the linguistic and literary features which constitute the means to involve readers in the textual world.

The potential of such structures cannot be underestimated in the process of reading and interpreting the literary work, in this case the Rahab story. In fact, they create the pattern which enables the reader to make sense of the plot development, uncover the profiles of the characters or help to distinguish different perspectives from which the events are presented and hence steer the reader’s perception of the story. There are many other rhetorical phenomena which enter into this category and which may be also significant for an overall experience of reading, such as asynchrony in the plot development (flashback, omission and prolepsis), emphasis, repetitions or inclusions. The combination of all these linguistic and literary devices produces the “vantage point” through which the reader enters into the narrated world and undoubtedly constitutes important elements in the reading and analysis of the text,

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which is presupposed as the medium of communication. In a certain sense, Adele Berlin’s comparison of the biblical narrative with a film narration illustrates the idea that in the interpretative reading, information is as important as the way it is conveyed. She writes:

In a filmed version of the play (or in any film) [...] the story is filtered through the perspective of the camera eye. Sometimes the camera gives long-shots, sometimes close-ups. It may focus on the entire scene or on any part of it. And it constantly shifts perspective, showing the action from different angles. The viewer’s perspective is both expanded and controlled by the camera; he can see the action from many directions and perspectives, but can see only what the camera shows him. Biblical narrative, like most modern prose narrative, narrates like film. The narrator is the camera eye; we ‘see’ the story through what he presents.\(^{48}\)

Her visual comment strengthens the conviction that the way of presenting textual information can determine the reader’s perception of the narrated world. Therefore, the effort to establish and then implement the encoded reader as the means to approach the biblical story is not groundless.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the whole notion of the “reader in the text”, or whatever it may be called, and especially its purposefulness in the reading and interpretative process, was occasionally undermined. Wilhelm Wuellner's article is an example, as he firmly stands against the strategy of biblical exegesis mediated by the “reader in the text” calling it the ‘fallacy of encoded reader’.\(^{49}\) In his article, in fact, he points out six main issues which compel to reflect on the legitimacy of such approach. Hopefully, in the course of the following enquiry, I will be able to demonstrate that such a strategy is not unproductive, but on the contrary, that it may offer promising possibilities in approaching the Hebrew biblical narratives.

However, one vulnerability of such a strategy must be brought to the fore, as it seems that there is no escape from the ‘hermeneutic circle’ it creates.\(^{50}\) Suleiman perfectly captures the point when she writes: ‘I construct the images of the implied author and implied reader gradually as I read a work, and then use the images I have constructed to validate my reading’.\(^{51}\) It appears to be inevitable that the encoded reader requires a reference to the real reader. Without such reference, literary communication

\(^{48}\) Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, p. 44.


\(^{50}\) It was pointed out as a possible limitation by Willem Vorster who is overall favorable to the notion of the “reader in the text”. As the description of this ‘hermeneutical circle’ he also quotes the above reported quotations of Suleiman. Cf. Willem S. Vorster, ‘The Reader in the Text: Narrative Material’, *Semeia* 48 (1989), 21-39 (p. 36).

\(^{51}\) Suleiman, ‘Introduction’, p. 11.
will not be possible, since the actualization of textual structures is ultimately the faculty of any actual reader. In turn, such reference necessarily presupposes a certain degree of subjectivity (or creativity) in establishing the means, which at the same time defines the interpretative strategy. Perhaps the problem is less important for those who do not claim the absolute autonomy and authority of the text in shaping the experience of reading, but who assume the active role of the reader in such a process. Under that premise, the reading and interpreting process mediated by the previously-established encoded reader may be seen as the expression of the dialogical relationship between the text and the reader.

To sum up, in my enquiry, the encoded reader is understood as the textual perspective of reading prompted by linguistic and literary features whose realization is the domain of the real reader, which in the methodological model adopted for this study will be rendered by the hypothetical construct.

### 1.3.2.1 Strategy of Research for the Encoded Reader in Joshua 2

As stated above, the first part of my research consists of revealing the encoded reader in Joshua 2, interchangeably called the reader’s vantage point in the text. Once more, it is important to highlight that such a construct is already a manifestation of the dialogical relationship between the reader and the text of Joshua 2. In other words, the realisation of such structures and elaboration of the vantage point through which the reader may view the narrated world of the Rahab story also reveals the reader’s eventual contribution.

Then, in establishing such an internal-textual perspective, it is necessary to look in the text for ‘all the levels of the structure and functions of narratives. Pro-and retrospection, gaps and indeterminacy, selection and organization, are signs of the reader’. However, the issue is that the Rahab story belongs to the vast collection of biblical Hebrew literature; hence the method of its investigation must be appropriate to the specificity of that particular style of writing. Therefore, the enquiry of the encoded reader in Joshua 2 will be based on the theoretical model of “textual linguistics” elaborated by Alviero Niccacci. This choice is motivated by several reasons. First of

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all his system, once properly understood, deeply elucidates perhaps the thorniest issue of the Biblical Hebrew i.e. the syntax of the verb.\textsuperscript{54} His constant effort to discern and describe more thoroughly the verbal shifts from the textual perspective brought significant results revealing the consistency and sophistication of the Hebrew verbal system. In fact, his contributions in this field have been widely recognised by Hebraists, although sometimes also polemically discussed.\textsuperscript{55} Secondly, and most importantly, his scholarly effort consists in articulating better the function and use of the verbs in biblical texts, rather than in isolation, as they usually appear in dictionaries. Since his approach focuses on the linguistic constructs with reference to the function they carry out in the texts, it can also be an advantageous tool for analyzing the linguistic communication process. Hence, the employment of this method for establishing the reader-oriented features of the biblical narrative texts will constitute a valid contribution to biblical scholarship though, in my thesis, the approach will be applied only to the sample text of Joshua 2.

The methodological procedure will be articulated in the following stages. First, I will highlight the principal elements of the verbal system of biblical Hebrew based on the principles of “textual linguistics” developed by Niccacci. Then, I will proceed towards a practical application of that system, i.e. a syntactical-textual analysis of the Rahab story. This will allow me to identify the specific linguistic and other literary features of the text that exert an influential force on the reader during the interpretative process. Ultimately, this linguistic-literary analysis will allow me to elaborate the reader’s vantage point in Joshua 2 (encoded reader) which then will become the means to approach the Rahab story by the hypothetical reader, which constitutes a final but not lesser entity in the linguistic communication process. In the following, in fact, I aim to define the entity of the hypothetical reader and delineate its domain.

\textsuperscript{54} He confesses: ‘As I had to take over teaching Hebrew syntax [...] I was faced with the unattractive prospect of having to present the subject in a way which even at the time of my own early studies at the end of the sixties, I had considered to have little credibility. Since then I have become aware that the syntax of the verb is particularly fraught with problems.” Niccacci, \textit{Syntax}, p. 9.

1.3.3 Readers of the Rahab Story

Jakobson highlighted three essential agents in the literary communication process, i.e. the addresser, the message and the addressee. Although all are important, without the receiver the process would not be realized, as the reader is the ultimate “consumer” of the linguistic message.\(^{56}\) On the other hand, as was already explained, the reader’s response is a creative and non-linear process influenced by variety of stimuli and hence offers a vast range of possible outcomes, which are difficult to unfold.

A possible solution to this dilemma is to propose the hypothetical model of a reader whose specific property allows enquiring into a possible response. That was precisely the common practice in dealing with the elusiveness of the category of “reader” in the theory of literature. Only recently were various hypothetical constructs of “reader” advanced to posit certain boundaries of the possible. Each of them embodies specific, very often idealistic qualities, which assuredly reflect the interpretative interests of their inventors, who employ them as interpretative tools. Their multiplicity and diversity very often result in a lack of clear distinction between the historical flesh-and-blood readers, the hypothetical reader, which is a counterpart of the real reader, and the reader that is postulated by the text, i.e. the implied reader. The following list, reported by Elizabeth Freund, which is certainly far from being exhaustive, juxtaposes some distinct personifications of these concepts:

- The concept ‘audience’ or ‘reader may be anything from an idealized construct to an actual historical idiosyncratic personage, including the author. Personifications—the mock reader (Gibson), the implied reader (Booth, Iser), the model reader (Eco), the super-reader (Riffaterre), the inscribed or encoded reader (Brooke-Rose), the narratee (Prince), the ideal reader (Culler), the literent (Holland), the actual reader (Jauss), the informed reader or the interpretative community (Fish)—proliferate.\(^{57}\)

Each of these constructs not only embodies the specific traits which allow investigation of previously established dimensions of the reader’s involvement during the reading

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\(^{56}\) At the early stages of its literary composition and even in the later stages of its transmission, the Rahab story was not meant to be read silently, but rather to be performed and read aloud to an audience. In fact, that was the common characteristic of the Bible as well as ancient literature in general. This fact, however, does not exclude the existence of trained readers who could actually engage with the written text: read it, interpret it or translate it. Hence, the low percentage of literates in antiquity and even lower number of those who could afford scrolls, codices or later books, does not deprive the Rahab story of its textuality which will receive primary focus in my study.

activity, but occasionally imposes some imperative conditions in order to experience such successful involvement. Hence, to some extent, they restrict the range of acceptable readings which, by some reader-response critics, is perceived as positing the boundaries of the autonomy of both the text and the reader. Nevertheless, the main objection to the inclusion of the hypothetical readers to the linguistic communication process would be that they are precisely “hypothetical”, hence never exist or exist only as artificially-crafted responses based on strictly defined methodological procedures.

Certainly, those objections are not unfounded, but on the other hand, one may wonder why the answer of any actual flesh-and-blood reader should be particularly privileged. Real readers’ responses are also subject to unpredictable preconceptions, or sometimes misconceptions, and are certainly directed by highly subjective and selective processing of data, which make their interpretations equally plausible as those offered by the hypothetical model of the reader.

Hence, in line with the established praxis in reader-response theory, my proposal is to advocate another hypothetical construct which will constitute the equivalent of the real reader in the communicative circuit shown in the first part of this chapter. This will be the perplexed reader.58

1.3.3.1 The Perplexed Reader

First of all, the perplexed reader functions not as the ordinary reader ‘who, in reading a text, is under no obligation to explain it, or to comment upon it […], and generally satisfy himself with a modest, unassuming comprehension, for his own use and in his own measure’.59 The hypothetical construct of the perplexed reader represents rather the contemporary (21st century) biblical scholar whose analytical expertise is representative and directed to such a community of readers. Hence, one can assume professional competencies for the perplexed reader. There is actually nothing unusual in ascribing

58 The name of the construct is partly inspired by the paper ‘Confessions of the Perplexed: An Historian’s Worries about Translating Traditional Texts’ delivered by Jonathan Norton at the conference ‘The Signs of the Times: Exploring Translation of the Bible and Other Texts’ at Heythrop College, University of London, on 9th-10th September 2013.
59 Michał Glowiński, ‘Reading, Interpretation, Reception’, *NLH* 11/1 (1979), 75-86 (p. 78).
such competency. In all concepts of the implied reader, presented above, from that of Booth to the last one of Chatman, such competence is presupposed.\(^6^0\) Fowler writes:

\[\ldots\] for being a critic means being part of a guild, or an “interpretive community”, as Stanley Fish […] likes to say. Such a guild has a history, it has a language, and it has rules and rituals for entrance into its ranks, and for subsequent advancement, demotion, or excommunication.\(^6^1\)

Admittedly, such identification presumes certain specific skills shared by this ‘guild’ of readers: a fair acquaintance with biblical languages, just to mention an essential one. Nevertheless, despite such peculiar “equipment” the model of the perplexed reader has also several limitations, since the sphere in which it is circumscribed is broad and greatly diversified. Thus, the perplexity of the reader is the inherent quality of the concept itself, which must be hypothetical and limited if it is meant to offer at least some data with respect to the complex issue of the reader’s role in the reading process, which eludes any generalization. Precisely, the impossibility of circumscribing within the model all factors which play an important role in the interpretative process is one reason for the reader to be perplexed. Moreover, the perplexity of the reader is compounded by the diversity and multiplicity of methods employed by various scholars, each of them claiming validity for itself. In fact, many scholars conduct analyses of the same texts and under the heading of the same general methodology, but as can be easily predicted, their outcomes differ considerably. The case is hardly an exception in biblical scholarship, which is undoubtedly another premise for being perplexed.

Nevertheless, perplexity is not a manifestation of scepticism or helplessness, but rather awareness of the complexity which is presupposed by this study. Perhaps such an approach will not be as perspicuous as a one-contextual and narrowly delimited investigation, but in turn it envisions the interpretation of the Rahab story which results from the processing of both the internal-textual data and the external-historical context, which will involve selecting some trends from the history of its interpretation.

In the following, I will delineate more specifically the strategy of the perplexed reader’s interaction with the diverse contexts of the Rahab story, focusing on the criteria which validate the eventual resolutions.


1.4 The ‘Geometrics’ of the Rahab story

In order to examine the dialogic relationship between Joshua 2 and the reader, I have adapted the linguistic communication process as the general hermeneutical model of the analysis. Three perspectives will be particularly articulated in the following research. The first one boils down to the analysis of the inner linguistic and literary fabric of Joshua 2, in order to establish the reader’s vantage point (the encoded reader) of the Rahab story. The second main concern will be with the reception and interpretation of the Rahab story, and finally the interpretation of the perplexed reader will be offered which will encompass dialogical interrelationship between the reader, the chosen story and its reception. As the reading is a ‘mysterious merger of text, reader and context’, these three focuses of study will constitute the principal facets which will interfuse with each other in the course of the analysis. They will also constitute “the triad” defining the boundaries of my enquiry. The visualization of the coalescing of these areas in the process of analysing this biblical story gave rise to the overall title of the thesis: “The Geometrics of the Rahab story”. The following diagram, which emanates from the previous models of Jakobson, Chatman and Danove, also includes my amendments to better meet the premises of this research and to depict the following methodological procedures.

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1.4.1 Interpreative Trajectories of the Perplexed Reader

First of all, it must be acknowledged that the model of narrative communication adopted for this study reflects the communicative nature of the biblical texts. It also guarantees the theoretical basis for such multi-contextual integration because the perplexed reader, as the extra-textual entity, has the faculty of insight into both ‘internal-literary’ and ‘external-historical’ contexts of the Rahab story. It results from the very nature of the linguistic communication which, aside from the three essential entities (the sender, the message and the receiver), also encompasses the context(s) in which such communication occurs. Nevertheless, the spectrum of the perplexed reader’s insight is not, and cannot be, exhaustive, because this would necessarily imply the realization of all conceivable potentials of the text, which is simply implausible and in the words of Iser would be ‘ruinous for literature’. Hence, the most sensitive issue is to outline an interactive range for the perplexed reader and then to define its stand in relation to various contexts of the Rahab story. This will be the subject of the last section of this chapter, which will also provide the periphrasis of the above diagram. Thus, the perplexed reader’s analysis will embrace the following strategic elements.

1.4.1.1 Perplexed Reader: Between the Text and the Story

First of all, the perplexed reader exists to reveal the textually-concerned interpretation, hence the constant effort to relate to the linguistic and literary features of Joshua 2, which will result in establishing the reader’s vantage point regarding the text. In this

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63 Cf. Brown, Scripture as Communication, pp. 11-16.
64 In the broad sense the internal-literary context consists in ‘the interrelations of the elements of the text’, while external-historical context presupposes ‘the broad societal/cultural situation of the text’ in which it was interpreted. Cf. Elizabeth S. Malborn, ‘Text and Contexts: Interpreting the Disciples in Mark’, Semeia 62 (1993), 81-102 (p. 83).
66 During the research for my Master’s degree, I focused on the syntactic analysis of the Hebrew narrative texts as presented by Prof. Alviero Niccacci. In fact, my final dissertation, entitled The Syntactic and Narrative Analysis of Exodus 14, combined two independent approaches to the biblical text, i.e. the syntactic-textual approach, developed and articulated by Prof. Niccacci, and the narrative approach. The object of my research was the comparison of the two approaches, identifying the contributions they both made and the tensions that arose in their application. The application of the two methods has allowed me to study the relationship between the two. The conclusion I have drawn is that between the two methods there is a priority of the syntactical method over the narratological one, in that the narrative act mediated by the text cannot exist without the logical succession of the linguistic signs. In practical terms, it means that the study of the account should start with the careful examination of the verbal forms. Nevertheless, such a priority of syntax over narratology does not exclude the contribution of the latter. On the contrary, as will be occasionally shown, recourse to narratological criteria is indispensable. Eventual tensions between the two diminish if the methodology proper to both approaches is respected. Basically, this is the
way, the encoded reader will be the blueprint of the perplexed reader’s strategy to approach the Rahab story.

The relation between the text and the reader is, and will continue to be, the battlefield of audience-oriented criticism. In order to justify the ‘respect for textual offerings’ of the perplexed reader, I evoke an insightful metaphor of John Barton, who distinguishes two forms of reader-oriented criticism, i.e. ‘hard’ and ‘soft’. The ‘hard’ version is like a ‘picnic to which the author brings the words and the reader the meaning’. In this position, the reader has hegemonic control over the text. Of several reservations that the author expresses toward that position, at least one is worth quoting, which he ably calls a ‘naive question’. He wonders: ‘How can a text ever surprise or inform us, if we ourselves bring the meaning to it, if the text is nothing but an occasion for us to formulate ideas which we ourselves find unexceptionable?’ This is not a naive question at all. On the contrary, it gets very much to the point. Therefore, the perplexed reader is more akin to the ‘soft’ form of reader-oriented criticism, in which both the text and the reader are important in producing the meaning of a text.

1.4.1.2 Mental Library of the Perplexed Reader

Two related issues need to be addressed in the following paragraph. The first one concerns the nature and domain of the ‘mental library’ of the perplexed reader, and the second one gives a rationale for its inclusion in the communication model developed for this research.

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reason why I will present the analysis into two distinct sections. While in Chapter 3 I will focus, as much as possible, on the syntactical arrangement of the text, in Chapter 5 I will broaden the syntactical dimension and also include stylistic and rhetoric devices employed in the story. This is to reveal how these two dimensions merge at the literary level of the story in order to involve the reader in its world.


70 Then, continuing his argument, he writes: ‘We acknowledge the Bible as authority, and yet can hear it only when it says what we already believe to be true’. Barton, ‘Thinking about Reader-Response Criticism’, pp. 195-196.

71 The term and the concept of the ‘mental library’ is adopted from Sean M. Ryan, Hearing at the Boundaries of Vision: Education Informing Cosmology in Revelation 9, LNTS 448 (London: T & T Clark, 2012), p. 5; pp. 75-78; pp. 121-122.
To describe the nature of the mental library, I am using a quote from Paulo Desogus, who describes Eco’s concept of ‘encyclopedia,’ and in a certain sense, discloses also the “architecture” of the mental library of the perplexed reader. He writes:

"The encyclopedia is akin to an immense library whose books accrue knowledge as it has been represented by cultures of different epochs. However, the library must not simply be considered an archive. The library is also a space wherein books talk with each other, generate intertextual links, and display possibilities of meaning that can be used in order to produce new signs." 

Similarly, the mental library of the perplexed reader is a dynamic realm of knowledge which stores, activates and interconnects various voices coming from the reception history of the Rahab story. Necessarily, it can encompass only some specifically selected threads from that immense library, which are of particular interest for the perplexed reader.

More specifically, in the structure of the thesis the mental library is comprised of two demarcated stages or streams: modern academic research and some ancient interpretations of the Rahab story. Although both stages are varieties of the same tradition, activated and brought to life by the same biblical story, the only reason for their separation is that they offer different ‘types of source material’. The history of modern scholarship is construed on the basis of the professional-biblical sources, such as biblical commentaries, monographs and articles, while the genres of the ancient sources are more diverse ranging from rabbinic midrashim, through the “homilies” of the Church Fathers, even to the epic poem of Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri. This somehow artificial classification of the scholarly literature of the Rahab story is aimed

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73 For the discussion of various terms used in the context of reception theory, such as Wirkungsgeschichte (history of effect) or Rezeptionsgeschichte (reception history), and their philosophical ground in the theories of Gadamer and Jauss, and finally their adaptation to biblical hermeneutics cf. Robert Evans, Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation: Gadamer and Jauss in Current Practice, LNTS 510 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 1-19. In the line with the following research which demands a narrow selection of the material, a useful specification comes from Jonathan Roberts who writes: ‘The reception of the Bible comprises every single act or word of interpretation of that book (or books) over the course of three millennia […] No one and nothing is excluded. Reception history however, is a different matter. That is usually–although not always–a scholarly enterprise, consisting of selecting and collating shards of that infinite wealth of reception material in accordance with the particular interests of the historian concerns, and giving them a narrative frame’. Jonathan Roberts, ‘Introduction’ in The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible, ed. by Michael Lieb, Emma Mason and Jonathan Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-8 (p. 1).
to better articulate my own research, which aspires to be a PhD thesis, in the broad spectrum of modern biblical scholarship. Nevertheless, both the history of the modern scholarship and major trends in ancient reception will constitute the perplexed reader’s mental library, indicating the broad spectrum of actual understandings of the Rahab story presumed to be accessible for the perplexed reader during the interpretative process.

As the strategy of researching both stages essentially boils down to the analyses of relevant sources, inevitably, their assortment must be selective and will be based on the conviction that the chosen samples mostly represent mainstream interpretative trends, and hence they are somehow exemplary in the particular context. A similar rationale for such conventional selection in context of the reception history is advocated by David Parris, who writes that ‘given the overwhelming amount of material that has been preserved that either comments on the Bible or was inspired by it, our primary consideration, in many instances, should be given to the most influential interpretations’.\(^75\) Those, in fact, are potentially more efficient in perpetuating the interpretative inflow which, being very characteristic to the traditional texts, will therefore take precedence while examining the process of literary communication. Again, the words of Parris are appropriate, when he writes that ‘this is the level where the defining moments of tradition’s contours are located’.\(^76\) By all means, this is not to deprecate some more peculiar readings which might manifest the heterogeneity of interpretative dynamics. In fact, occasionally, a few distinctive traits will also be recalled to reveal the interpretative potential of the Rahab story and/or the unpredictability of the reading strategies.\(^77\)

At this point, a second issue must be raised, relating to the legitimacy of the inclusion of the reception history in the model of literary communication. Already, Robert C. Holub has pointed out that ‘perhaps the most important problem surrounding

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\(^{76}\) Parris, *Reception Theory*, p. 217.

\(^{77}\) For example, Yvonne Sherwood deliberately includes quirky readings of the book of Jonah ‘so that we can pay attention to all mutations of the biblical in Culture, including those that the Mainstream may well regard as monstrous or deviant’. Cf. Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives. The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 208.
reception theory concerns its relationship to a theory of general communication.³⁷ In
the other words, in the following research, there is a risk of providing an extensive
anthology of the various interpretations of the Rahab story without an awareness or
rationale underpinning such a strategy for the communication process. Ulrich Luz
illustrates such a pitfall in one concise phrase: ‘one does not yet understand what the
subject matter of the text means, if one understands what it has meant’.³⁹ Indeed,
narrative communication is a highly complex process which cannot be reduced simply
to the one-dimensional relation between text and reader in a hermeneutical vacuum, but
at the same time, it cannot be conceived as a more or less extensive archive which
merely registers or informs one about the afterlife of the text. Narrative communication
involves an intricate set of interactions in which the text and its afterlife may affect the
response of a reader. Such an intrinsic entanglement between a text and its reception is
again splendidly described by Luz. He writes:

A biblical text is not reservoir or a cistern, with a fixed amount of water in it that can be clearly
measured. Rather it resembles a source, where new water emerges from the same place. This
means that the history of interpretation and effects that a text creates is nothing alien to the text
itself, as if the text with its meaning existed at the beginning and then only afterward and
secondarily had consequences and created a history of interpretation.⁸⁰

His comparison of biblical text with a hydrological source profitably broadens the
domain of a text, which should not be restricted to the usually static linguistic realm, but
it also provides a rationale for including the reception history in the model of inquiry
since it is ‘nothing alien to the text itself’. Hence, this outflowing dimension of a text
cannot be underestimated by critics, though many fervently do.⁸¹ Perhaps that is why
Parris, who is well acquainted with the works of Luz, warns all sceptics by asserting
that ‘if the post-history of the text functions as a hermeneutical bridge between our
contemporary understanding of the bible and the text itself, then we ignore this
historical dimension at our own peril’.⁸² Hence, my aim was to develop a hermeneutical

107. In the same chapter (pp. 107-121) he discusses the efforts of theorists such as Jauss, Iser, Gumbrecht
and others to relate the reception history into the framework of the communicative situation.
³⁹ Ulrich Luz, Matthew 1-7: A Commentary, trans. by Wilhelm C. Linss (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990),
p. 98.
⁸⁰ Ulrich Luz, Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,
⁸² Parris, Reception Theory, p. XVI.
model in which the perplexed reader is “leaning over the source” but is also aware of its abundant outflows, because ‘a text is not an independent object which remains the same regardless of how it is construed’.83

I would like to conclude this section dealing with the nature, range and validity of the perplexed reader’s mental library with another voice, which this time comes from socio-rhetorical criticism and which may prove to be a very profitable analytic for further exploration of the intertextual dynamic within the communication process. David B. Gowler concludes his article with lofty words which can serve as a bottom line for this section. He declares:

> Therefore, we stand on the shoulders of centuries of conversations; our own positions are never independent of the reception history of these texts—ancient and modern—and our own work is woefully incomplete without a dialogic presentation of or response to those other responses.84

I could not agree more with his conclusion.

### 1.4.1.3 Social Context and Interpretative Interest of the Perplexed Reader

As has already been mentioned, my construct of the reader represents an entrant into contemporaneous biblical scholarship. Therefore, in a certain sense, it is anchored in a very specific, contemporary “guild” of biblical scholarship. On the other hand, it is located in a worldwide context, as the great number of academic institutions and societies promotes biblical research in different countries from different social perspectives. In fact, in the era of globalization and cross-cultural exchange, when the world is like a “global village”, such a far-reaching stand may be profitable in developing a dialectical pattern for intercultural communication between multiple territorial communities in the world. Indeed, such exchange may be an enriching experience in an ever-changing world, even if it just makes one become more aware and less suspicious, which does not mean uncritical, toward contextual approaches and the particular contributions they may offer to the study of the Bible, and in particular, the Rahab story. If we tackle the issue of the interpretative context in terms of intercultural dialogue, the reproof that for too long ‘biblical criticism as an academic discipline was

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thought in an undifferentiated manner throughout the world.\textsuperscript{85} becomes less forcible. Hence, being aware of such pitfalls as timelessness or immutable interpretation, my attempt is still to reveal some universal dimensions activated by this biblical story, such as demanding loyalties, faith or ethnic or religious identity, which have constantly been challenging generations of readers and hence may provide a foundation for the creative dialogue between any reader and the Rahab story. In this sense, the perplexed reader’s interpretation is to offer an alternative look at a story about the most famous prostitute of the Old Testament.

One more critical component is still missing in order to validate those creative connections between the world of the Rahab story and the perplexed reader. In fact, that component will provide a pivotal rationale for and interactive strategy and, to a certain extent, will also define the ideological stance of the perplexed reader during the interpretative process. Thereby, the intrinsic catalyst of the perplexed reader in the interpretative process will be ‘the narrative empathy’.\textsuperscript{86} The following definition explicates this category, which has recently been absorbed by rhetorical narratology as it contributes to a better understanding of the effects of literary compositions on readers:

\begin{quote}
Narrative empathy is the sharing of feeling and perspective-taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing, or imagining narratives of another’s situation and condition. Narrative empathy plays a role in the aesthetics of production when authors experience it […], in mental simulation during reading, in the aesthetics of reception when readers experience it, and in the narrative poetics of texts when formal strategies invite it.\textsuperscript{87}
\end{quote}

Thus, narrative empathy will be an attribute of the perplexed reader in navigating manifold meanderings of the Rahab story and will consist of searching for, accepting and immersing oneself in the narrative world induced by the text.\textsuperscript{88} More specifically, such engagement will reveal forceful patterns in the structure of the Rahab story, which not only guide readers into its world, but also allow them to experience the narrative


\textsuperscript{87} Keen, ‘Narrative Empathy’, § 1.

\textsuperscript{88} Narrative empathy should not be equated with similar phenomena such as sympathy. While first category leads to the sharing of emotions and feelings with a character, the latter refers rather to the sentiment for a character’s situation: “I feel for you” rather than “I feel with you”. Cf. Keen, ‘Narrative Empathy’, § 5; Keen, ‘A Theory of Narrative Empathy’, pp. 208-210.
events. As the narrative empathy ‘enables a living reader to catch the emotions and sensations of a representation’, the perplexed reader response will attempt to expose those affections, unexpected turns, alliances, conflicts and demanding relationships “frozen” in the world of the Rahab story. In order to involve oneself deeply in such an alien universe as that of the biblical story, simple identification with one or another character is not sufficient. A more complex procedure is required, involving a survey on the work's texture, which includes such components as the narrative chronology, obtrusions of the narrator or dialogues, which together craft a narrative world represented by this biblical story. Only then may the reader attempt to experience the atmosphere of representation and participate with the characters in their world, including their movements, dilemmas and choices as envisioned by the story. Therefore, ‘even so, empathy may be strategically employed in narrative for purposes of ideological manipulation’, the empathic, interpretative attitude of the perplexed reader will gradually allow to emerge the peculiar thread within the Rahab story which for centuries was and still can be a useful pattern for a dialogue in the cross-cultural society.

To sum up, the model of literary communication elaborated for this study is intended to reveal how the internal-textual and external-historical dimensions of the Rahab story together define the ever-expanding range of the biblical text and how the awareness of such dynamics can be vital for interpretation. Indeed, they will be crucial for the perplexed reader’s response. In such a perspective, the narrative communication between the Rahab story and the perplexed reader can be defined as the process in which not so much the ultimate meaning of Joshua 2 is discovered or even searched for, but rather as the ongoing dialogue between the text and the reader, who represents the specific interpretative contexts and interest.

In that sense, the above-presented model bridges also the “classical” and “postclassical” phases of narratology. As a matter of fact, the model presented for this

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89 Keen, ‘Narrative Empathy’, § 5.
91 Keen, ‘Narrative Empathy’, § 12.
92 The category of the ‘postclassical narratology’ gradually emerged from the scholarly effort of David Herman and then continued inter alia by Monika Fludernik. Actually, their two seminal works, which present the limits of classical narratology and envision directions for its development are respectively: Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis, ed. by David Herman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999); Monika Fludernik, ‘Histories of Narrative Theory (II): From Structuralism to the Present’, in A Companion to Narrative Theory, ed. by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 36-59. Instead, for a critical overview of the cutting-edge trends in narratology cf.
study is rooted in and was built upon the classical models of linguistic communication (cf. Jakobson and Chatman), but was subsequently gradually developed, providing ‘an extension, an expansion, a broadening, a refinement’ of previous models. Those refinements consisted mainly of increasing receptivity toward external context(s) of the text, the reader’s creative role in its reception and the extrinsic and intrinsic cognitive motivations of the reader in the process of interpretation.


93 In fact, Gerard Prince suggests that the new phase and new name ‘does not represent a negation or rejection of classical narratology but an extension, an expansion, a broadening, a refinement. Postclassical narratology includes classical narratology as one of its decisive stages or components, rethinks and recontextualizes it, exposes its limits but exploits its possibilities, retains its bases, reevaluates its scope, and constitutes a new version of an enterprise that, once upon a time, was new too’. Gerard Prince, ‘Classical or/and Postclassical Narratology’, EC 48/2 (2008), 115-123 (p. 116).

94 A certain association may be established between my methodological assumption and that of the socio-rhetorical criticism developed by Vernon K. Robins, who postulates multi-contextual and interdisciplinary dialogue for the better understanding of the biblical texts. His metaphor of a ‘tapestry’ is symptomatic in exposing the multithreading nature of a text. As Robins identifies up to five textures, i.e. (a) inner texture; (b) intertexture; (c) social and cultural texture; (d) ideological texture; and (e) sacred texture’, his interpretative analytic is far more complex and requires considerable extension of the conceptual and methodological procedures. Cf. Robbins K. Vernon, Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), p. 3.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following chapter, I intend to present a critical evaluation of the scholarly literature of the Rahab story. There will be two distinctive features of this review. I will consider the vast range of methodological approaches employed in the study of this story and focus on their fundamental methodological assumptions. This procedure is necessary for several reasons. First of all, it will reveal the diversity as well as the limits of previous scholarship. Secondly, it will allow assessment of their outcomes within an appropriate methodological context. Finally, it will better articulate the orientation and necessity of this research in the broad spectrum of modern and postmodern biblical scholarship.

The following review focuses on the period from the early twentieth century, when Martin Noth developed the ‘Deuteronomistic History theory’, which is considered today as a major turning point for the critical exegesis of the Historical Books. Necessarily, this will be preceded by a brief summary of leading tendencies in scholarship before Noth’s theory. As has been explained in the previous chapter, the extrapolation of biblical scholarship from the broad spectrum of the reception history of the Rahab story is mainly driven by the specificity of the source material under consideration. Nevertheless, along with some ancient threads in the reception of the Rahab story (Chapter 4), it will constitute the mental library accessible for the perplexed reader during the interpretative process.

2.1 In the Grip of the Historical-Critical Method

In the past, the historical-critical method has dominated the research on the Rahab story, as has biblical exegesis in general. It is important to remark, however, that the generic term “historical-critical method” hides a range of various approaches, such as source criticism, form criticism or redaction criticism. Although it is possible to trace their common origin or influential interdependence, each of them carries their own specific natures. Nevertheless, at the common basis of these approaches is the assumption that the determination of the meaning of a particular text must be justified by its original milieu. In other words, the interpretation of biblical texts equates to the meaning uncovered within the historical context of its origin: the world behind the text.
Consequently, the ultimate goal of these procedures is to reveal the process of the formation of the literary unit, possibly from its oral form (form criticism) through the different literary stages (source criticism) to its final redaction (redaction criticism). Accordingly, the Rahab story has been the subject of this kind of enquiry.

2.1.1 Source and Redaction-Critical Study of the Rahab Story

In Hebrew tradition the Book of Joshua belongs to the second main section of the Tanah called Nevi’im (Prophets). In the Christian Canon, it opens the second main section, the Historical Books. However, this antique tradition separating the book of Joshua from the Pentateuch has been challenged by many scholars, leading to the hypothesis of the Hexateuch (Six Scrolls).95 The main reason for joining the Book of Joshua to the Pentateuch was that the origins of Israel are incomplete without an account of the conquest of the land which was promised to the Patriarchs and to Moses. In terms of source-criticism, it was compelling to assume that the source strata “J” and “E” identified in the Pentateuch each had their own version of the conquest, which was to be found essentially in Joshua 1-12 and Judges 1. Hence, the early critical scholarship on the Book of Joshua and therefore on the Rahab story was marked by the various attempts to establish ultimately pentateuchal sources used in its composition.

A proper overview of this kind of debate regarding the Rahab story is offered by François Langlamet,96 who presents a synopsis of how scholars, at the turn of and in the early twentieth century, separated Joshua 2 into parts, according to how different sections were drawn from each of its sources. Particularly indicative for the critics were numerous textual tensions within the story, such as the redundant repetition in Joshua 2:6 of the information already given in Joshua 2:4 or the whole section in Joshua 2:12-21. In this part of the story, after the initial agreement (vv.12-14) Rahab lets the spies down from the window (v.15) but then surprisingly starts again to converse with them (vv.16-21). Interestingly, the “out of the window” speech portrays the spies differently. In fact, up to this point, they were oddly passive, while at the end of the story they regain their initiative. In accordance with the methodological assumptions of source criticism these tensions could be explained by recourse to the two source strata blended

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in the actual story. In fact, it appears from Langlamet’s data that in order to explain the above mentioned tensions, a number of scholars distributed the material in Joshua 2 between the sources “J” and “E.”97 Some others, however, strongly advocated for only one “J” source with eventual additions, “J².”98 The latter view was also shared by Sigmund Mowinckel, who maintained that Joshua 2 reflects an older “J” source. In fact, Mowinckel postulated that Jahwist’s version might have included a sort of a geographical overview of results of the conquest. Rudiments of the “J” stratum are visible particularly in Joshua 2:11; 24 and Judges 1 and correspond with the “J” version in Numbers 32. This particular overview of the conquest was subsequently elaborated, resulting in “J’” (variatus) which, in turn, was a source for the Deuteronomistic redactor.99

This tendency to search for the predominance of the pentateuchal sources in the Book of Joshua was a common practice until the emergence of Noth’s theory, which undermined literary connections between Joshua 1-12 and the Pentateuch. Although his hypothesis initially did not exert a significant impact on scholarship, over time it became the most influential theory for the study of the Historical Books and therefore for the Rahab story.

2.1.1.2 The Rahab Story and the Deuteronomistic History Theory

In developing the ‘Deuteronomistic History theory’,100 Noth demonstrated the close relationship between the Book of Deuteronomy and the following Books: Joshua-2 Kings. This relationship consisted of the presence of certain passages throughout the Historical Books in which style, vocabulary and theological ideas denote a striking interdependence with the Deuteronomistic law. Another aspect of his theory was the assumption of one Deuteronomistic author/redactor (henceforth Dtr), who arranged the older and varied material into one continuous history according to his theological principles. Noth sets the activity of Dtr in the middle of the 6th century, i.e. during the exilic period. Supposedly, the national drama of the exile caused him to undertake this

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literary project so as to understand the situation in his own time in the light of various
national traditions. Noth insisted that Dtr had at his disposal a self-contained and
detailed account which he incorporated into his work, complementing it only with his
introductions, epilogues and some supplementary material. For example, in the book of
Joshua, there are two discourses (Josh 1 and Josh 23) which frame and interpret this
period of Israelite history, recalling the conditions of the successful conquest of the land
and peacefully dwelling in it.¹⁰¹

Accordingly, Noth maintained that the first part of the Book of Joshua (Josh 1-
12) mainly consists of Benjaminitic conquest traditions from the pre-monarchic period,
which were collected by *Sammler*, presumably after the division of Israel’s Kingdom.
The Collector, in adapting and unifying various traditions, had to broaden their local
perspective into a more national view, replacing, for example, a local hero with the
figure of Joshua. Furthermore, Noth believed that Joshua 2 is a local etiological saga
which was developed in the Gilgal sanctuary and only under the hand of *Sammler*
received a fixed literary form. Eventually, this literary production was adopted by the
Dtr. In Joshua 2, Noth considers the possibility of Dtr’s or a later intervention only in
vv. 9b, 10b, 11b.¹⁰²

Perhaps the scholar most faithful to Noth’s theory is Alberto Soggin, who
suggested similar conclusions.¹⁰³ The Rahab saga, as well as most of the other traditions
from Joshua 1-12, was originated, preserved and handed down in the Gilgal sanctuary.
He was also convinced that the actual account of the conquest was a remnant either of
Monwincel’s “J” redaction or more probably Noth’s *Sammler*, both coming from the
early monarchical period. However, Soggin hesitated as to whether the Deuteronomistic
History (henceforth DtrH) came from a single hand or was a collective work. He
maintained that the unity of the work presupposes a single redactor, while the length of
the period involved in its composition (622/21-550 BCE) suggests a collective work.¹⁰⁴

In the Rahab story, he traced Deuteronomistic intervention only in the statement of

¹⁰¹ Cf. Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, ‘Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research
and Debated Issues’, in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent
Research*, ed. by Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi, JSOTSup 306 (Sheffield:
¹⁰² Cf. Martin Noth, *Das Buch Josua*, HAT 7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck Verlag, 1938), p. XIV; Noth, *The
Deuteronomistic History*, p. 62.
3-14; 34-43.
Rahab (Josh 2: 9-11), which was probably inspired by the ancient confessions of faith (cf. Deut 26:5b-9; Josh 24:2b-13).105

Gene M. Tucker also continued a similar tradition-historical approach to the text.106 He began the analysis from the final form of the story and reconstructed three stages of developing tradition. The deepest stratum reached by his investigation consists of the oral prehistory of the Rahab saga. The pieces of evidence which confirm his conclusions are inconsistencies, repetitions, duplicates and unevenness in the style. One of these is the puzzling sequence in Joshua 2:15-21 that indicates a complex prehistory and may attest to oral transmission. However, he draws only very general and tentative conclusions concerning the shape of that tradition. Subsequently, he suggested that the pre-Deuteronomistic redactor, who had at his disposal that ‘profane anecdotal saga’, interwove it with the independent cultic tradition of the conquest (Joshua 6), producing the literary unit. In this literary production, verses in Joshua 6:1-21 imply and serve as the conclusion of both accounts. Tucker is more cautious than Noth in dating the pre-Deuteronomistic composition and in assuming that Joshua as the national hero was so airily introduced at this level without any confirmation from the tradition. The very fact that the Dtr basically accepted the story as he received it may indicate that the ideological and temporal span between him and the author of his source was not as vast as Noth indicated. Therefore, the Dtr used this source in composing his version and the actual story of the conquest with only a few distinctive additions in vv. 9b; 10b; 11b and 24b, which present parallels to the Deuteronomistic language.107

Soggin’s hesitation about the unity of the DtrH and Tucker’s suggestion of later pre-Deuteronomistic literary production were the first symptoms of the attenuating force of Noth’s plea. A further development of the Deuteronomistic theory would even undermine Noth’s major postulates of one author, literary unity and the early origin of the conquest tradition. Frank M. Cross raised the idea of the double redaction of the DtrH, with the first edition composed as ideological propaganda for the Josianic reformation (Dtr1) and the second revision (Dtr2) accomplished after the fall of Jerusalem, as a response to the new exilic reality. Rudolf Smend also argued for the

105 Cf. Soggin, Joshua, p. 37.
double exilic redactions. In this scenario the Deuteronomistic historian was responsible for the first edition while the Nomistic redactor expanded it, insisting on the role of the Law. Finally, Smend’s disciples Walter Dietrich and Timo Veijola have extracted one more layer added by the Prophetic redactor.\(^\text{108}\) These extensive developments were also relevant to the study of the Rahab story and had resulted in various attempts to prove the literary and thematic complexity of Joshua 2.

Thomas Römer, for example, argued for DtrH as a product of the editing process in three successive periods: Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian.\(^\text{109}\) The first collection of documents had been assembled during the reign of Josiah as political and military propaganda for Josiah’s reformation. These documents are characterized by an optimistic tone in some conquest stories, a positive view of the Davidic dynasty and praise for Kings Hezekiah and Josiah. Subsequently, these documents were entirely re-elaborated in the light of the fall of the Judean monarchy, the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of the land. The purpose of that re-elaboration was to explain the causes of the national tragedy and produce an ideology to help construct a national identity in the new exilic circumstances. Finally, in the Persian period, when the deportees could return to Judah after Cyrus’s rise to power (539 BCE), one of the challenges for the returning *Golah* community was the threatening relationship with the people then living in the land. According to Römer, the revision the Deuteronomistic material underwent in that period was characterized, *inter alia*, by the ideology of separation between the returning *Golah* community and the people of the Land. An example of this ideology is reflected in Deuteronomy 12:2-7, which strongly advocates the necessity of such separation. Instead, in the Book of Joshua this idea is particularly evident in Joshua’s farewell speech, which condemns both shared worship and marriages with other nations (cf. Josh 23:7; 12).\(^\text{110}\) In such a scenario of the DtrH’s development, the most fitting socio-political context in which the Rahab story might find its way to the Deuteronomistic collection is the late Persian period. In that period, after the edition of the Torah which took the Book of Deuteronomy out from DtrH, the remaining material of Joshua-Kings has undergone some further editorial revisions. According to Römer,


one of these post-Deuteronomistic additions is the Rahab story, which was inserted ‘to counter the Deuteronomistic ideology of segregation’.  

On the other hand, John Van Seters proposed the most striking theory, since it reverses the order of the composition of the Pentateuch and DtrH.  

The main point of his theory is that the Book of Deuteronomy and the DtrH were written before the Tetrateuch. In fact, the Yahwist and Priestly writers, having at their disposal the literary narrative of the conquest, composed the Tetrateuch as additions to the earlier Deuteronomistic history. He writes:

The Yahwist and Priestly writers looked upon the conquest as portrayed in Joshua as the fulfillment of their land promise theme, and thus composed the rest of the Pentateuch (the Tetrateuch) in two stages as additions to the earlier history. There was consequently no need for them to produce their own accounts of the conquest-settlement tradition de nuovo. Of course it was still possible for the Yahwist and the Priestly writers to supplement the Deuteronomistic conquest narrative with additional material in their own style and perspective.

The Rahab story would be, in fact, one of these additions to the Deuteronomistic conquest theme. The arguments for Van Seters’ conclusion are that Joshua 2 creates the chronological tension between Joshua 1:11 and Joshua 3:2. He also highlights the well-established observation of the contextual mismatch of Joshua 2 and Joshua 6 in assuming the nature of the conquest of Jericho. The spying exercise in Joshua 2 assumes some kind of military attack, whereas Joshua 6 presents the conquest as an entirely divine intervention. Finally, there are some elements in Rahab’s confession which denote a strong connection with the pentateuchal “J” source: the reference to the Red Sea deliverance and the defeat of Sihon and Og (cf. Josh 2:10). In sum, according to Van Seters, the Rahab story ‘is secondary and not part of the original Deuteronomistic stratum. The episode was contrived and added in order to articulate a more universalistic perspective on Israel’s religion’.

As is clearly seen, in spite of the evolution of the Deuteronomistic theory, the origins of the Rahab story remained contested. Besides, some scholars were still intrigued by the parallels of the text with the pentateuchal traditions. The above-mentioned Langlamet study on the vocabulary of Joshua 2 has revealed nineteen

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111 Cf. Römer, The So-called Deuteronomistic History, n. 54, pp. 134; 182.
113 Van Seters, In Search of History, p. 323.
114 Van Seters, In Search of History, p. 325.
linguistic correspondences with the story of Abraham’s servant who was sent to find a wife for Isaac (cf. Gen 24), seventeen affinities with the story of Lot’s deliverance (cf. Gen 19) and few others which equally would confirm the dependence of the Rahab story on the “J” tradition.\textsuperscript{115} Also, Tucker noticed that Shittim as the point of the departure of the spies in Joshua 2:1 is specified in Numbers 25:1, which may suggest a parallel with the Tetrateuchal tradition.\textsuperscript{116} Instead, Murray Newman revealed the parallels between the pentateuchal “E” source and the Rahab story.\textsuperscript{117} He proposes, in fact, two distinct stages in the oral development of the Rahab tradition. At an early oral stage, the story was originated and perpetuated by Rahab’s clan as a kind of ‘security clearance legend’ to remind the Israelites of their commitment. Certainly, in this version the leading role is accredited to Rahab (cf. Josh 2:1-16; 22-24). The second one (cf. Josh 2:17-21), would reflect a later appropriation of that story by the Israelites, who credited the spies with more initiative. These two versions of the story would be woven into a literary composition and included in the “E” account, since the northern origins and settings of the story easily point to the literary circles which produced the “E” source.\textsuperscript{118}

Finally, the most extensive and distinctive study dedicated exclusively to the Rahab story has been carried out by Johannes Floss, who in two volumes enquires into the text, literary composition and intention of Josh 2.\textsuperscript{119} The thorough and detailed textual and literary analyses of the chapter allowed him to isolate various stages in the process of its formation. The following table represents this stratification.\textsuperscript{120}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I unit</th>
<th>1, 2, 3, 4c.d, 5, 6</th>
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<td>II unit</td>
<td>8, 9a-c, 11a-c, 12, 13b, 14</td>
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<td>III unit</td>
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<td>17a, 18, 19, 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Further Additions</td>
<td>4a.b, 7, 9d, 10, 11d, 13a, 17b, 20a.b</td>
<td>24</td>
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\textsuperscript{120} Floss, \textit{Kunden oder Kundschafter?}, I, p. 79.
In the first volume, then, Floss carries out the analysis of the first basic literary unit, whereas in the second volume, a similar analysis applies to the later redactional additions. At first sight such diversification may be appealing since the actual version, as has been repeatedly mentioned, presents some major tensions and contradictions. It may be also appealing because Floss advances the hypothesis of the story’s development from the pre-literary stage to the actual version, based on the solid methodology practised by his tutor Professor Wolfgang Richter.

Nevertheless, some criticism of Floss’ methodological criteria and the procedures on which he based his conclusions came from Langlamet.\textsuperscript{121} In an extensive review, he brought forth a good deal of examples which make some of Floss’ conclusions dubious. To mention just one, which will also become the object of further analysis here, the repetition of the fact of hiding the spies (Josh 2:4 and Josh 2:6), must not necessarily be a sign of a doublet or later addition, but it can be considered as a stylistic device of explicitness.\textsuperscript{122} Hence, considering the perspective of my study in which I privilege the actual, i.e. Masoretic text of the Rahab story, particularly disturbing is Floss’ general methodological procedure in which, ultimately, he examines not the Rahab story, but the hypothetically extracted units from the Rahab story.

\textbf{2.1.1.3 The Origins of the Rahab Story}

Two general means of approaching the issue of the origins of the Rahab story have emerged. The first one, depending on the pentateuchal source criticism, postulates the Rahab story as a remnant of the pentateuchal “J” source, while the second one, assuming the “Deuteronomistic History Theory” as a way to uncover origins of the story, advocates the activity of multiple editors in its final composition, which span from the monarchic period to the late Persian period. Thus, the origin of the Rahab story and its path to the final literary construction is still unclear. Many problems, in fact, remain unsolved or a matter of conjuncture.


\textsuperscript{122} Cf. Langlamet, ‘Recensions’, p. 565.
Moreover, very often one can have an impression, as Brian Peckham pointed out, that ‘the historical analysis essentially consisted in fabricating sources and imagining a time and place for them to fit’.\textsuperscript{123} In fact, various internal tensions and discrepancies within the text were considered by critical historians as “literary seams” which undeniably testified to the editorial intervention and the presupposed rich and diverse pre-history of the composition. Consequently, the beginning of their methodological procedure was the “incision” of these seams to see what lies behind. In fact, such was the case of the Rahab story, which was subjected to similar treatment. However, these difficulties can often be explained without recourse to the parallel sources or traditions. William Moran has demonstrated that many literary problems within the Rahab story can be readily explained by the peculiarity of the Hebrew narrative style.\textsuperscript{124} In the analysis below this thread will be duly articulated, indicating how apparent tensions within Joshua 2 can be explicable by literary techniques. The reference to the conventions of Hebrew narrative does not necessarily solve all the problems and probably does not deny the complex prehistory of the unit. Nevertheless, it invites the reader to interact more with the story itself without freezing the interpretative process in the almost unreachable historical factuality.

2.1.2 Form-Critical Study

Another issue which had attracted the attention of many historical scholars was the form-critical study of Joshua 2. This kind of research is related to the previous enquiry, since traditionally, the form-criticism attempted to reconstruct the original form of literary units with a special consideration for the oral traditions which had determined them. Nevertheless, the fundamental assumption of form-criticism is that the specification of literary forms is essential for a proper understanding of how the text functioned within its social context, and is hence indispensable for its interpretation. Fundamentally, the discussion focused on three literary forms regarding the Rahab story: the etiological saga, the cultic legend and the spy narrative.

2.1.2.1 Etiological Saga

As mentioned above, Noth classified the Rahab story along with other individual stories in Joshua 1-12 as etiological sagas, which in Gunkel’s term existed to ‘explain something’.¹²⁵ This identification was mostly due to the etiological formula ‘until this day’ in Joshua 6:25. According to this categorization, the story would explain the presence of Rahab’s clan among Israel after the conquest.

Nevertheless, further study shed a new light on the issue and reversed the common opinion. Brevard S. Childs thoroughly analysed the formula ‘until this day’ from the formal point of view and suggested that it is secondary to the tradition, and hence it is ‘a formula of personal testimony added to, and confirming, a received tradition’ rather than an explanation of any phenomenon.¹²⁶ Additionally, in his successive study he argued that in order to classify the story as a ‘genuine etiology’ there must be employed a ‘principle of mythical causality’ which alters the structure of reality.¹²⁷

Subsequently, Dennis J. McCarthy applied increasing caution regarding etiology in Joshua 1-9. He argues that the identification of the literary form must derive from the formal features within the story and not from any external addition. Consequently, he gives evidence that the ‘etiological’ addition in Joshua 6:25 ‘emphasizes the effectiveness of Joshua’s leadership’.¹²⁸ On the other hand, Peet J. van Dyk considers this formula as a listener/reader-orientated ‘rhetoric device of persuasion oriented to affirm the truth and to heighten the entertainment value of the narrative’.¹²⁹

In this way, the formula which was primarily responsible for creating the etiological function of the story was neutralized, and so the search for the anatomy of the Rahab story continued.

2.1.2.2 Cultic Legend

There is a tendency among many scholars to read some biblical narratives as a reflection and support for certain cultic practices. Gustav Hölscher, for example, advocated the existence of cult prostitutes in Jericho who were descendants of Rahab. The story itself, similarly to the cult legend of Abydos, would provide an etiology for such practices.\(^\text{130}\)

On the other hand, Jan Heller assumed that Rahab could be a priestess for a local deity. Her independent status without a husband, as well as the structure of her house, might indicate such a profession. In fact, he suggested that the roof where Rahab hid the spies was a place of worship and that the equipment found on it served such practices. In this light, the Rahab story necessarily takes on a deeper meaning and reveals the overwhelming power of Yahweh against the local deities.\(^\text{131}\)

As was already mentioned, the cultic life settings for the Rahab story were considered by many scholars; however, only Jay A. Wilcoxon articulated the issue in a new fashion, arguing that the whole narrative section of Joshua 1-6, is not so much a result of literary activity based on some cultic traditions but rather a literary perpetuation of the cultic celebrations around the Gilgal sanctuary during the festival of Unleavened Bread. He states:

The total plot of the story would have provided the sanction and rationale, not simply for a single cultic action but for the traditional structure of whole series of cultic actions that together composed a complex cultic observance […]. What the whole narrative of Joshua 1-6 contains, then, is a festival legend for traditional ceremonial observances in and around the sanctuary of Gilgal.\(^\text{132}\)

The principal argument that leads him to this conclusion is the liturgical “hue” of the whole section. In fact, the narrative is abundantly filled with detailed liturgical instructions similar to those from a liturgical book, which set up the ceremony for a feast. Apart from Joshua 6, which is more like a description of a liturgical procession than a military siege, he denotes similar liturgical aspects in the crossing of the Jordan River (Josh 3-4) or even in Joshua’s inauguration (Josh 1:1-9; 12-8). In sum, the basic plot in Joshua 1-6 allowed him to encode a course of actions which had possibly been performed during the festivities in Gilgal. Moreover, such an approach allowed him also


to unravel the temporal inaccuracies. He argues that the actual narrative of Joshua 1-6 combines ‘two seven days periods’ which in practice were successive, but which overlap in the narrative. Nonetheless, the question remains of how the Rahab story fits in with this theory. In other words, what kind of cultic background may be reflected in the story? Wilcoxen highlights the commonly noticed dramatic character of the story, which unfolds like a three-act play, each act consisting of more or less extensive direct speech. He suggests, then, that these speeches as well as others in Joshua 1-6 ‘were spoken at appropriate moments in a complex Israelite observance at Gilgal’.\textsuperscript{133} Following his thought, the scarlet cord and the spatial redistribution of the three speeches may also be perceived as obscure residues of liturgical action.

Despite these arguments, the hypothesis that the Rahab story provides ‘sanction’ and ‘rationale’ for cultic practices remains weak, because the dramatic character of the story, enhanced by the correlation between direct speech and narration, can be more easily and safely explained by the conventions of Hebrew literature. Some traditions in Joshua 1-6 might have been developed and preserved within the cult but to what extent, if at all, the Rahab story was shaped by and for the cult remains a matter of contention.

2.1.2.3 Spy Narrative

The comparative study of narratives from Numbers 13-14; 21:32, 33-35; Deuteronomy 1:19-46; Joshua 2; 14:7-8 and Judges 18 led Siegfried Wagner to extract six essential elements belonging to the genre called the “spy narrative”. They are:

1) Selection or naming of the spies; 2) Dispatching of the spies with specific instructions; 3) Report of the execution of the mission, along with confirmation through an oracle or reference to the context of salvation history; 4) Notice of return and results; 5) A perfect tense formula confirming the gift of the land by Yahweh; 6) Conclusions derived from 1-5, namely action of entering or conquering the land.\textsuperscript{134}

Wagner’s characterization of Joshua 2 as a spy narrative was followed by many scholars to such an extent that it seems to be the predominant.

Tucker, however, pointed out that the spy motif in the Rahab story is quite different from that in Numbers 13-14. Accordingly, he maintained that the intention of the story itself is not really concerned with exploring the land or showing the military

\textsuperscript{133} Wilcoxen, ‘Narrative Structure’, p. 56.
skills of the Israelite army but rather aims to reassure them that God is on their side to give them victory, as evidenced by the formula from accounts of holy wars in Joshua 2:24: ‘Truly, the Lord has given all the land into our hands’.  

Similarly, McCarthy concluded that the Rahab story reflects the theology of holy war. There are two principal elements to support this hypothesis: the theme and the vocabulary. First of all, he noticed that the story in Joshua 2 is a well-defined whole and does not need a particular continuation. Additionally, the outline of the story indicates that at the core of Joshua 2 is a folk-tale which had been elaborated to serve a new literary purpose. Further, the plot of the story highlights the passiveness of the messengers which, in turn, points to the real cause of their successful endeavours, i.e. God. In fact, Yahweh will win the war and will give them the land through his elected leader Joshua. Finally, the whole story, especially its climax (Josh 9-11), is ‘loaded with the holy war vocabulary’.  

In fact, McCarthy dedicates another short study to examine four words which embody this vocabulary. They are: ḫāpar, (to spy) in Joshua 2:2; 3; ēmā (terror) in Joshua 2:9, māsas (melting of heart) in Joshua 2:11 and mōg (also melting of the enemy’s heart) in Joshua 2:9. According to him, all reflect holy war theology and served to depict the paralyzing fear of Canaanites before God got “involved” in the matter.  

Finally, Trent C. Butler, focusing on the form-critical study of the chapter, highlighted first of all a three-fold methodological procedure characteristic of this kind of investigation, namely, determining the present narrative form, removing editorial elements and other additions to determine the previous forms and finally describing the nature and function of such earlier forms. Accordingly, he considered the present narrative form to be a cultic spy report. The formal element which leads him to consider the account as a spy report rather than the spy narrative outlined by Wagner is the lack of dramatic tension within the story. Instead, the spy narrative with folkloric elements lies behind the present report, was probably built around the intrigue and conspiracy of betrayal, and might have circulated among military campfires under the title ‘The Harlot Helped Us Do It’. In sum, Butler explains the growth of the story in three stages:

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A popular story was transformed by a cult into a spy story and finally adopted by the Dtr as the basis for his theological creed.  

Nevertheless, the hypothesis that the Rahab story is the spy narrative legitimatized by a holy war ideology presents some drawbacks, which were summed up by Robert G. Boling who notices that Joshua 2 contradicts warfare guidelines from Deuteronomy 20:10-20 which clearly prescribe to destroy ‘the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites’ (Deut. 20:17 NRSV). Secondly, if the message of the story from Joshua 2 was to assure God’s assistance in forthcoming events according to the holy war motto that ‘Yahweh and not men win wars’, the story would be superfluous and redundant, since God’s reinforcement was clearly stated in Joshua 1. Finally, Boling remarks after G. H. Jones that: ‘the holy war idea in Israelite tradition was a post eventum interpretation and schematization of past events, although it was built on a tradition that already existed in the Yahweh War experience’.  

After all these studies, two basic questions are still valid: what is the genre of the Rahab story, and what was the context or contexts of its origin and development? As has been shown, the scholarship is far from unanimous in its conclusions. Incidentally, the effort to unravel the form of the Rahab story has uncovered the elusiveness of form-criticism itself, which assumes that the original form of the narrative can be readily revealed.

2.1.3 Conclusion on the Historical Critical Research

Two closely related issues, i.e. the history of formation and the form-critical study, have dominated the historical critical research on the Rahab story. Without undermining the intrinsic value of these approaches, sometimes it is possible to get the impression that this type of investigation has consisted in multiplying the sources, or ‘a name game’ where ‘the primary goal for the study is to develop the right name for the object of the

139 Cf. Butler, Joshua, p. 34.
140 Robert G. Boling, Joshua: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary, AB 6 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), pp. 139-152.
141 Boling, Joshua, p. 15.
However, after all these studies, two basic questions are still valid: what is the genre of the Rahab story, and what was the context(s) of its origin and development?

In fact, the investigation of the genesis of the Rahab story confronts us with the fact of the editorial process in its composition. Also, the overall outcomes of the form-critical study suggest that what has been involved is the re-elaboration(s) and the adaptation of the pre-existing form, whether from a popular tale or saga, to a new target. This creative process probably takes the actual story out of the standard pattern and presupposes a variety of socio-historical contexts, as Butler expresses:


This elaborative processing creates a unique literary production which opens new and fresh interpretative potentials and easily moves beyond the established form. The unveiling of such compounds in the Rahab story is as important for a reader as the effort to label it with a hypothetical source or form name, because it urges him to look for the locus of meaning, not only in the world behind the text but also in the textual world. In fact, in response to the historical-critical method, new literary methods have been developed that are particularly attentive to the final composition of the text within its literary context. These approaches were also employed in studying the Rahab story.

\section*{2.2 The Rahab Story under the Literary Lens}

As has been discussed previously, diachronic methods tend to focus on isolating units of the tradition, whereas the final text within its literary context opens up new possibilities of interpretation. That is why recent years have witnessed the sprouting of many new methods based on the synchronic approach to the biblical texts. It must be remarked that the following section encompasses a broad spectrum of text-centred approaches, such as Rhetorical or Narrative analyses, which pay particular attention to the final, literary composition. The basic assumption of these approaches holds that the meaning of the text is concealed within the world of the text itself. Hence, the methodological

\footnote{Butler, \textit{Joshua}, p. 34.}
procedures to unravel it demand a particular attention to the literary artistry of the narrative. Therefore, the following contributions, instead of investigating the world behind the Rahab story, ask us to consider some aspects of the story itself, such as the coherence of the final redaction, the story’s literary qualities or the relationship between the text and readers.

In this section, I will consider, first, some scholarly contributions which focus on intertextual connections of the Rahab story, since these are of considerable importance in understanding the significance and purpose of the narrative. Secondly, I will evaluate a few other remarkable studies which propose the narrative analysis of the story.

2.2.1 The Rahab Story in a Web of Related Texts

The first three inputs emerge from some Commentaries on the Book of Joshua. Their objective is to uncover the meaning and purpose of the Rahab story within the broader literary context. In many cases, in the background of the literary approaches lies the tension between “old” and “new” methodologies. Richard Nelson tries to reconcile historical-critical and literary approaches. Accordingly, he is aware of the complex prehistory of the text of Joshua 2, which has undergone many editorial interventions. However, he focuses on the narrative’s present form in order to observe how the originally independent narrative has been employed in the plot of the book of Joshua, and in the even broader context of the Bible. Therefore, he proposes reading the Rahab story within four systems of meaning.

In the first one, the Rahab story is perceived as a self-contained tale. In this perspective, the story functions as the etiology for the presence of the ‘house of Rahab’ among Israel. Nelson perceives etiological features of the story in the pivotal role of Rahab and the excessive focus on her negotiations with the spies. Hence, the etiological character is intrinsic to the principal story and does not derive solely from the redactional formula in Joshua 6:25. As is clearly seen, within the first system of meaning Nelson operates as an exemplary historical critic and continues the discussion...
initiated by his peers in this field. Successively, in the second system of meaning he proposes reading the Rahab story with a particular focus on Joshua 2-11. In this perspective, the Rahab story appears to be a spy narrative. This reading is due to the immediate context of the story, i.e. the conquest of the land, and its main purpose, which is to reassure Israel of the divine will. In the third system of meaning, the author further extends the context of reading. At this level, the Rahab story becomes a story of conversion. In fact, Rahab’s conversion smooths the apparent clash with the Deuteronomistic notion of ḥērem. In the widest system of meaning, Nelson reads the Rahab story in the light of the New Testament. In this perspective, Rahab is presented as an ancestor of David and Jesus (cf. Mt 1:5), as well as an example of faith (cf. Heb 11:31) and faithful works (cf. Jas 2:25).

Although it is possible to argue with Nelson’s particular outcomes, his strategy of contextualized reading is a valuable suggestion because it portrays how the delimitation of the literary context may influence the process of interpretation.

It is precisely the broader literary context of the Rahab story that allows Gordon Mitchell to focus on ‘mutually contradictory texts concerning foreigners’. One of these commonly noted but still disturbing tensions is the survival of foreigners such as Rahab and the Gibeonites (cf. Josh 9:3-16) against the Deuteronomistic law of the ban. In fact, this issue has gained a permanent space within the scholarly discussion of the Rahab story. In short, the question is why Rahab and Gibeonites were allowed to live among the Israelites against the command of ḥērem clearly expressed elsewhere (cf. for example, Deut 7:2; 20:16-17; Josh 6:18-18). This contrast is rendered even more conspicuous by the story of an Israeli named Achan for whom the law was outright (cf. Josh 7:1-26). Mitchell is rather hesitant and considers it, after Sternberg, as the ‘unresolved tension’, which, paraphrasing his own words, the reader is invited to appreciate rather than opt for any solution. Many scholars, however, will be less hesitant and will try to resolve this ambiguity.

Robert Polzin is more radical in his methodological assumption than the previous two scholars, and therefore firmly departs from historical critical analysis. Instead, he

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attempts to emphasize the integrity of the final form of the DtrH with its distinctive literary conventions. According to him, the ideological perspective of the whole deuteronomistic composition consists in the dialogue between ‘authoritarian dogmatism’ and ‘critical rationalism’. This dialogue consists in understanding, interpretation and application of the Law of Moses. The selected narrative episodes in the literary composition of the DtrH play the role of ‘cruces interpretationis’, i.e. they raise and interpret particular issues from the Mosaic Law code. The Rahab story would be one of these narratives that raise again the issues of the promise of the land, the justice and mercy of God, and the unique status of Israel.\textsuperscript{148}

In Deuteronomy 1:22-39, Moses reminded the people of the event in Kadesh-Barnea when he commanded them to occupy the land. The people, however, hesitated and asked for reconnaissance of the country, and this disobedience led to fear among the Israelites. Now on the shores of Jordan, Joshua is also commanded to take the possession of the land and again the spies are sent to reconnoitre it. This time, the outcomes of the mission are reversed: not the Israelites but the inhabitants are terrified. Subsequently, Polzin attempts to unravel the above-mentioned conflict between the Rahab case and the Mosaic rules of the ban. The text of Deuteronomy 9:4-5 is the starting point for his analysis. There, Moses explained that Israelites were to occupy the Promised Land not because of their righteousness but because of the inhabitants’ wickedness. Now, the Rahab story will be reversed, the ‘story of Israel told from the point of view of the non-Israelite’.\textsuperscript{149} As Israel will receive what it does not deserve, namely the land, so Rahab will not receive what she really deserves, namely destruction. However, she will escape her fate not because of her merits but because of the wickedness of Israel, who sanctioned the oath against Mosaic Law. Polzin sees this story as ‘the complex picture of Israel’s relationship to God and to the nations whose land they have come to posses’.\textsuperscript{150}

The intertextual reading of the Rahab story allows Daniel Hawk to compare it with the apparently unrelated story of Lot’s survival. In addition to Langlamet’s lexical evidence mentioned above, he adds the argument of similarity in plot development.

\textsuperscript{149} Polzin, \textit{Moses and the Deuteronomist}, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{150} Polzin, \textit{Moses and the Deuteronomist}, p. 89.
Both lexical and dramatic correspondences lead him to assume that ‘Joshua appropriates elements of the story of Lot to tell the story of Rahab; the story of Rahab’s deliverance from Jericho is rendered after the pattern of Lot’s rescue from Sodom’.

Consequently, the comparative analysis of both stories brings Hawk to the conclusion that ‘the allusions to Lot’s story increase the sense that something very wrong is happening at Jericho, despite Israel’s subsequent success’. If the “wrongness” hinted at by the author is the acceptance of the oath with the Canaanite prostitute against the command of the ban, this is apparent enough without reference to the story of Lot. Hawk’s second claim is that ‘by transforming key elements of the Lot story, the narrator transforms the common theme of deliverance’. In contrast to the Lot’s freely-given deliverance, Rahab earned hers by words and deeds.

A similar technique of reading between texts allows Elie Assis to suggest another analogy between the stories of Rahab and Yael. He bases his conviction on several structural similarities, each reflecting and emphasizing the main paradigm of the resourceful foreign woman who assists Israel. Despite some differences between the two episodes, Assis concludes that the significance of such an analogy consists in portraying ‘the divine providence which works in surprising and unexpected ways and that God uses often unanticipated and unexpected agents to implement his plan’. Certainly, the meaning carried by this analogy is expressive, although very common in biblical stories.

Analytical procedures of biblical scholars are usually more complex than the above titles of paragraphs may suggest. This is true for Robert Culley, who combines the contextual approach with a close reading to better understand the Rahab story in the broader context of Joshua 1-11. In his analysis, Culley focuses on the plot development of the stories, since the action is a basic feature of the narrative, with others being points of view and characters. In Culley’s words, this technique simply intends to ‘trace movement: how a story begins, how it ends, and how it gets from

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152 Hawk, ‘Strange Houseguests’, p. 96.
153 Hawk, ‘Strange Houseguests’, p. 96.
beginning to ending’.

According to him, the story of the conquest as described in the Book of Joshua is developed around the dynamic principle or movement from ‘announcement’ (Josh 1) where Yahweh declares His intention to give the Land to Israelites, to ‘occurrence’ (Josh 11:23) when that promise is fulfilled. This mega-action of the first part of the Book is developed by a varied series of stories, the first of them being the Rahab story.

In the Rahab story, Culley detects three interwoven narrative sequences: The first one consists in fulfilling the mission assigned to the spies. Joshua sends two men to spy the land and ultimately they bring him their report, even if this amounts only to repeating Rahab’s words. The second sequence, which is articulated by two phases: hiding and releasing, involves the dynamic of Rahab rescuing the spies. The third one, which has its happy ending only in Joshua 6, recounts, also in two stages (promise and fulfilment), the survival of Rahab’s family. Despite some distortions and condensations in the narrative flow, the above threads are successfully combined into a coherent unit which fits squarely into the overall dynamic of the conquest of the land. Besides, Culley emphasizes that in the interpretative reading of composite texts such as Joshua 2, eventual tensions and discrepancies shouldn’t prevent the reader from grasping the coherence and logic of the narrative. Although repeatedly reiterated, it is a pertinent observation.

The contribution of Tikva Frymer-Kensky to an understanding of the story about ‘the prostitute-with-the-heart-of-gold’ can be an excellent recapitulation of the contextual reading. Frymer-Kensky considers the Rahab story ‘a masterpiece of allusive writing’ or ‘narrative analogy’ and detects within it over a dozen interconnections with other biblical stories. Some of them are commonly observed; others seem a result of the careful reading of the scholar. Concluding the section dedicated to contextual reading, it seems appropriate to set out the most conspicuous of them.

156 Culley, ‘Stories of the Conquest’, p. 29.
159 This juxtaposition slightly deviates from the order presented in the article. Cf. Frymer-Kensky, ‘Reading Rahab’, pp. 57-67.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Rahab story</th>
<th>Other Biblical sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiding of the spies (2:4)</td>
<td>Hiding the infant Moses (Ex 2:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahab’s lying to the King (2:4-5)</td>
<td>Midwives’ lying to the Pharaoh (Ex 1:17-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahab saves the spies (2:16-21)</td>
<td>Angels save Lot (Gen 19:1-29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarlet cord (2:18)</td>
<td>The mark of lamb’s blood (Ex 12:7, 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fear of the inhabitants of Jericho (2:9-11)</td>
<td>The announcement of that fear (Ex 15:15-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahab’s profession of faith (2:9;11)</td>
<td>Jethro’s profession of faith (Ex 18:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “covenant” with Rahab (2:9-14)</td>
<td>The covenant with Gibeonites (Joshua 9:9-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahab (2:14, 17; 6:17; 6:22-23)</td>
<td>Achan (Joshua 7:11-26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahab’s fate (2:14, 17; 6:17; 6:22-23)</td>
<td>Deuteronomy code (Dt 7:2, 20:17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rahab story (2:1-24)</td>
<td>“Second” Testament (Jas 2:25; Heb 11:31; Matt 1:5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contextual reading is a valuable suggestion and is indispensable in order to understand the function of a unit in the broader literary context. Thus, the above-mentioned reading of the Rahab story against the Deuteronomistic law of ban or setting it parallel to the spying mission in Numbers 13 and the stories of Achan or Gibeonites.
can be profitable in determining not only the dynamics of the mega-story of which the Rahab story is a “small cog,” but it can also be revealing for the plot of the actual Rahab story. Nevertheless, such “midrashic” reading has some drawbacks, as it can become overwhelming when the web of meticulous interconnections blurs the autonomy of the story or unit itself.

Additionally, it is preferable to position the contextual reading clearly in the domain of a reader who, on the basis of the literary context available to him/her, can legitimately perceive certain interconnections. Any claim to authorial agency would require a more thorough, and not only synchronic but also diachronic study, since the context available to the reader differs from that of the author.

2.2.2 A Close Reading of the Rahab Story

Previous contributions were primarily concerned with the meaning of the Rahab story in its broader literary context. The principal attention of the following scholars, instead, is given to the dramatic action of the story itself. Focusing on the decisive elements of the plot development and character study, they highlight the perceptions of a reader involved in the communication process mediated by this text. Although narrative analysis or close reading presupposes several methodological steps, in practice, the enquiry into the plot is of capital importance to encode the design of the whole narrative, as Ska rightly observes: ‘the plot serves to organize events in such a way as to arouse the reader’s interest and emotional involvement, while at the same time imbuing the events with meaning’. 160

In line with these principles, Aaron Sherwood attempts to capture the meaning of the Rahab story. He highlights the three dimensional theological purposes of it. The first one serves to undermine the integrity of Joshua, who by sending the spies to reconnoitre the land committed ‘a false start in his overall successful career’. In fact, the poetic analysis of the text registers a ‘calamity motif’ which consists in leading the reader to expect the worst. The ominous tension begins exactly when Joshua, despite God’s assurance and command to take the land in Chapter 1, decides to spy on it secretly. Sherwood reads the hapax legomena (ḥārēš = secretly) as hiding the mission

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from his own fellows. In summary, the Rahab story would attenuate the leader status of Joshua, who is supposed to be the successor of Moses and the instrument chosen to fulfil God’s promises. The only problem with this interpretation is that, outside this episode, Joshua rises to the challenge. Ultimately, the author comes off well by insisting on this incident as a false start to an overall successful career. The other two theological purposes of the story serve to portray Rahab in a positive light and, most of all, to glorify God who, although hidden, is the principal agent. Both are fairly agreed upon by a majority of interpreters.

Distinct inputs for the search for the interpretative dynamics of the plot in the Rahab story are brought by two scholars: Yair Zakovitch and the response to his paper by Frank M. Cross. The first, employing a “close reading”, argues that the Rahab story is imbued with a ubiquitous humour which can be unveiled at the compositional and literary levels. At the compositional level, the humour emerges in the fact that the Rahab story combines two different story-types, i.e. a ‘spy story and ‘the woman who rescues the man’ story. The first type is ‘entirely masculine’, while in the second, a woman plays a dominant role. Zakovitch supposes that the Rahab story is a parody of a real spy story, because the dominant role of Rahab ‘makes the male spies appear to be worthless lackeys’. Consistent with this assumption, he then unveils ‘certain narrative jocularities’ such as the inability of the spies to benefit from a place which exists to provide enjoyment or the naivety of the king’s messengers. In sum, according to Zakovitch, almost everything in this story should make a reader laugh: from Joshua’s selection of spies, when he ‘may simply have grabbed the first two lads who happened to be near his tent’, to the spies’ final report where they are portrayed as the ‘mouthpiece for Rahab’. Additionally, he considers Rahab as a ‘harlot with a calculating mind’ which, firstly, had put spies into danger by denouncing their presence to the King, and then saved them to achieve her final goal: the promise of rescue.

166 Cf. Zakovitch, ‘Humor and Theology’, p. 94.
Frank Cross, in his response to Zakovitch’s “close reading”, notices that in many instances there are no formal elements within the story to support many of Zakovitch’s conclusions. For example, he points out that Zakovitch ‘bolsters his argument for Joshua’s spies being inexperienced’. At the same time, he overlooked the salient elements of the story, such as Rahab’s profession of faith or the stipulation of the oath which ‘fits the conventions of time’. Hence her attitude cannot be simply considered as the manifestation of her opportunism.

The above “duel” again portrays the hermeneutical issue of the meaning and the role of the reader in the process of its determination. Cross clearly represents the trend which assumes that the text acts on the reader and only requires from him competence in decoding various linguistic and literary codes to obtain the expected response.

Similarly, John H. Stek takes his stand ‘unabashedly’ with the literary critics who believe that the biblical narrative is a foolproof composition and that the text exerts a determinative force in creating the meaning. Consequently, to unravel the meaning of the Rahab story, he focuses on four major generators of meaning: context, structure, genre and audience. This four-gridline study leads him to a conclusion that the Rahab story confronted the people of Israel with the fundamental ‘facts of life’, such as the advancement of Yahweh’s kingdom and the radical choices which this requires from all, even a Canaanite prostitute. Undoubtedly, the outcomes of his study are noteworthy. However, I will argue with his excessive conclusion. He ends his study with this triumphant note: ‘this is the meaning of Joshua 2 for all generations of God’s people’. If this is so, how shall we consider the results of many other scholars?

The last two entries in this section merit a particular emphasis, as they both share the conviction clearly articulated also in the present thesis: that the “close reading” of the story should be preceded and combined with a detailed linguistic analysis of the text. These are the study of Nicolai Winther-Nielsen and the more modest Master's

170 Stek, ‘Rahab of Canaan’, p. 29.
Thesis of Mark Klassen.\textsuperscript{174} Both of them extensively make use of the discourse grammar approach of the famous American linguist Robert Longacre,\textsuperscript{175} but also refer to Niccacci’s Syntax.

Winther-Nielsen’s discourse grammar combines a rhetorical analysis with a computer-assisted description of interrelations within the text. In fact, the rhetoric and grammatical features are, for him, primary devices in establishing the narrative structure, which is the groundwork for the further analysis. The outcomes related to Joshua 2 takes the form shown in the following table:\textsuperscript{176}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituents</th>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Superstructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>Spies sent and arrive</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 1</td>
<td>2:2</td>
<td>The arrival is reported</td>
<td>Inciting Incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 2</td>
<td>2:3-8a</td>
<td>Dialogue 1</td>
<td>Complication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 3</td>
<td>2:8b-14</td>
<td>Dialogue 2</td>
<td>Climax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 4</td>
<td>2:15-21</td>
<td>Dialogue 3</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 5</td>
<td>2:22</td>
<td>The rescue of the spies</td>
<td>Lessening Tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closure</td>
<td>2:23-24</td>
<td>Spies return and report</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such an established narrative structure demonstrates how the inner fabric of the narrative, especially the dialogues, elaborates the principal theme of the narrative and how this theme fits within the overall structure of the Book of Joshua. Winther-Nielsen concludes that: ‘The plot in Joshua 2 is clearly focused on Rahab’s unconditional allegiance with the spies and her daring leap of faith at the risk of her life’.\textsuperscript{177} Additionally, the examination of the thematic macrostructure of Joshua 2 allows him to accommodate this narrative with the main motif of the Book, i.e. the conquest of the Land. He remarks:


\textsuperscript{176} Winther-Nielsen, \textit{A Functional Discourse Grammar}, p. 113.

\textsuperscript{177} Winther-Nielsen, \textit{A Functional Discourse Grammar}, p. 157.
While the first dialogue concerns the spies and the second centers on the conquest, the third unites the spies’ situation with the conquest theme. The spy theme encapsulates the conquest theme of survival for Rahab. The conquest is the most nuclear element in the confession (v 9-11) and is reiterated in the final report (24b-c).\footnote{Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, p. 158.}

Thus, the Rahab story does not necessarily “stick out like a sore thumb” but reveals the main theme of the Book.

Mark Klassen’s thesis is even closer to my assumptions, as he focuses more on the plot of the story. First, he examines the text-level of the narrative by employing the verb-ranking clauses discussed by Longacre. He then investigates the literary features of the Rahab story, especially the elements of the plot development, and finally presents the contextual reading of the Rahab story.\footnote{Cf. Klassen, A Reading of the Rahab Narrative, pp.1-146.}

The outcomes of both Winther-Nielsen and Klassen demonstrate that the strategy of focusing first on the linguistic structures can be instrumental in revealing the dynamics of the narrative. In the case of Joshua 2, both authors agree that despite some tensions, there is overall thematic coherence and unity within the narrative and hence the synchronic study should precede eventual diachronic analysis. Both also agree that the section of Joshua 2:9-14 is emphasized by the syntactical structure as a peak of the narrative. Finally, both of them argue that Rahab’s story found its way into the Book of Joshua not accidentally, but because it fits the overall theme of the conquest.\footnote{Cf. Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, p. 162; Klassen, A Reading of the Rahab Narrative, pp. 145-146.}

Undoubtedly, literary approaches have caused a considerable reversal in approaches to the Rahab story, which has reappeared again as “the story” and not simply as a collection of individual sources crafted more or less ably or as subsequent textual layers to be peeled out. The question is not about deprecating the historical-critical method, but it is rather about appreciating the artistry of that story, skilfully employed in the actual literary context. In fact, intertextual enquiry and narrative analysis have emphasized some interesting literary devices and inter-connections that may guide a reader in the interpretative process.
2.3 Social Context of the Rahab Story

Three further contributions add an additional element in illuminating the Rahab story, namely, the social context presupposed by this text. These approaches, in fact, assume that the interpretative process should consider biblical texts in relation to the distinctive social conditions in which they were shaped. Form criticism has already broached this subject, focusing on social conditions in which particular genres could have been developed. However, the distinctive feature of the following studies is to reveal social background information needed to have a better understanding of the Rahab story.

For example, Lori L. Rowlett employed, in her study of the Book of Joshua, the style of analysis called ‘New Historicism’. These are some foundational assumptions of this approach:

The New Historicism as a methodology has the advantage of giving historical context the attention it deserves, without making the history of a text’s composition the primary point of research (as though determination of sources were an end in itself). On the other hand, the new historicists avoid the pitfalls of a literary formalism (in which the text is seen as a world unto itself), which denies the complex interaction between cultural context and the art produced within it.  

Rowlett’s study leads her to ascertain that the Deuteronomistic language of warfare is similar in form, content and ideological usage with the Neo-Assyrian war oracles. She concludes then that the Book of Joshua, in its socio-historical context, served to strengthen national identity during King Josiah’s reign. In this ideological propaganda, ‘the rhetoric of violence appropriated from the oppressor is turned by the oppressed into a vehicle of self-reconstruction’. In this context, the Rahab story serves an important function, especially when read with reference to Achan’s fate (Josh 7). In fact, the comparison of the two stories illustrates the process of how Rahab (an outsider) became an insider while Achan (an insider) became an outsider. Rowlett continues to write that this comparison ‘reveals that true organizing principle of the narrative is not primarily ethnic identity but voluntary submission to authority structures, including the patriarchal

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political arrangement as well as the central ruling establishment represented by Joshua’. 184

This interpretation is surely appealing for a postmodern reader, who is often disturbed by the overwhelming presence of violence in the Bible. In fact, it transforms the category of real violence against a particular ethnic group, such as Canaanites, into ‘rhetoric of violence’ against “others” who fail to submit to the authority within their own population.

Phyllis A. Bird’s methodological procedure also combines literary artistry with socio-historical criticism. 185 She argues that the Rahab story depends on a ‘reversal of expectations’, but to detect this dynamic, it is crucial to understand the image of the harlot assumed and employed by the author. First of all, the reference to the story of Enkidu from the Gilgamesh Epic allows her to assume the ambivalent attitude of an ancient audience toward harlots, whom she describes as ‘both desired and despised’. 186 Further references, either to Near Eastern or biblical texts, strengthens her assumption that harlots are often associated with taverns and beer houses, are of ‘a low social status and low reputation’ and therefore a ‘never fully accepted person in any society’. 187 Now, this negative image is crucial for the plot development, which depends on a reversal of expectations. By employing this dramatic feature, the narrator highlights the fundamental message of the story: ‘Rahab, the pagan confessor discerns what others fail to see’. 188

Finally, the motif from the Gilgamesh Epic of the encounter between Enkidu and the courtesan ‘Joyful Lass’, which marks the first step of his integration with the sedentary lifestyle, allows Daniel Bodi to suggest the reading of the Rahab story ‘as a paradigmatic and symbolic vision of the encounter between Hebrew nomads and the Canaanite city dwellers through the intermediary role of the local prostitute’. 189

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As is clearly seen, those approaches bridge the two previously described tendencies in Biblical scholarship, focusing on their strengths and trying to avoid their pitfalls. In fact, the social world reflected or presupposed by the Rahab story may be informative for its interpretation, especially when decoding certain social conventions of the time. Nevertheless, in light of the general outcomes of the previous historical critical research (cf. for example the conclusions of Van Seters and Römer), the determination of the historical context of the Rahab story still remains a problematic question.

2.4 Postcolonial and Feminist Interpretations

In exploring the complex issue of postmodern biblical criticism, Andrew K. M. Adam points out that ‘postmodern thought is not one thing’. As it is rather a range of various theoretical perspectives employed in the analysis of biblical texts, I will focus only on the postcolonial and feminist perspectives, as these are frequently employed in reading the Rahab story.

The basic assumption of the postcolonial approach is that the Bible had a great impact on colonialism, to the extent that it became ‘a defining symbol of European expansion’. Therefore, the task of postcolonial scholars is to unravel these colonial dynamics in the Bible as well as in the history of its interpretation. On the other hand, gender and feminist analysis sensitizes the reader to the power dynamics in the Bible that resulted in social inequity. In many instances, however, the two perspectives converge, as both involve struggle against the established oppressive systems, either imperialism or patriarchy. As there are a number of scholars who consider the Rahab story from both the postcolonial and the feminist standpoint, the two perspectives also overlap in the following section.

Accordingly, Musa W. Dube combines the two discourses and suggests an unveiling in the interpretation of biblical texts of both androcentric and imperial ideologies. She goes on to correlate the story of Rahab with the contemporary context of postcolonial African countries. This strategy of reading reveals two basic patterns in

imperialistic aspiration, i.e. ‘anti-conquest’ and ‘contact zone’. The first pattern justifies the colonial project, while the second one describes the dynamic of the encounter between colonizer and colonizing. Both are reflected in the Rahab story, as she voluntarily cooperated in the colonizing project by helping the spies and equally willingly accepted the colonizers’ superiority by her profession of faith and binding covenant. This observation is strengthened by the fact that it was a woman who submitted to the male colonizers. This leads Dube to promote a particular strategy of reading, namely ‘Rahab’s reading prism’, which denounces various forms of oppression, especially patriarchy, sexism and colonialism, lest we share Rahab’s fate.

A similar warning was advocated by Judith E. McKinlay, who reads the Rahab story from the perspective of a woman living in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As her “I”, clearly influenced by a modern reflection on ethnicity, engages in the story, she unravels a certain ambivalence in the narrative, which can be doubly dangerous when read by a modern reader. The dominant cultures may find it inspiring for their expansion, but a ‘more disturbing danger’ may be for those who have lost their land, to be persuaded to deny their own history and identity.

Lori L. Rowlett articulated similar colonial dynamics by comparing Rahab’s story with Disney’s Pocahontas. First of all, the imperialistic situation in both stories is revealed by the intimate yet submissive relationship of the heroines toward their colonizers. It is then strengthened by their collaboration against their own people and the adherence to the cultural and religious principles of conquerors. Finally, their ‘reproductive powers’ were appropriated by colonizers. Besides, Rowlett highlights an aspect of the imperialistic ideology reflected in both stories by presenting ‘the indigenous people as voluntarily complicit in their own domination’.

Another particular voice comes from Melissa A. Jackson, who after individuating the comic elements of the Rahab story employs them in her feminist-

195 Dube, Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation, pp. 121-124.
199 Rowlett, ‘Disney’s Pocahontas’, p. 68.
200 Rowlett, ‘Disney’s Pocahontas’, p. 72.
critical interpretation. From this perspective these elements can be sometimes ‘humorously insulting’, since they were conceived to entertain a patriarchal society. This happens when, for example, ‘others’ are ridiculed by feminizing them.\textsuperscript{201} Nevertheless, the comic features play important functions in the Rahab story. First of all, when read by Israelites, it ridicules Canaanites when Rahab makes fool of the King and his messengers: ‘The Canaanites are such undesirables that even one of their own is willing to betray them and transfer her loyalty to another people’.\textsuperscript{202} However, the Rahab story ‘vicariously ridicules’ the Israelites too, when it portrays the supposedly skilled male spies appearing like puppets in the hand of a Canaanite harlot. This subversive feature is also revealed in her confession, during which the foreigner woman is portrayed as the emblematic believer. In this sense, the humour is a powerful device employed to redefine the boundaries between ‘we’ and ‘others’, which can no longer be maintained rely on the ethnic criteria only. In conclusion, the comic reading of the Rahab story reveals some characteristics easily shared by the feminist approach, i.e. the reversal of the subject/object dichotomy and subverting tendencies which constitute a threat to the establishment.\textsuperscript{203}

A contrasting image of Rahab emerges, however, from the two following feminist contributions which portrayed Rahab differently. In line with more traditional interpretation, she is considered the heroine, and her story can depict an inspiring pattern of behaviour for contemporary women. In particular, Alice O. Bellis highlights her as an independent and courageous woman who is able to stand up for herself despite her low social status.\textsuperscript{204} Alternatively, Mary E. Jensen, focusing on the climax of the story (Rahab’s profession), presents her as a woman of faith, which can be particularly relevant for Christian women in improving their lives of faith.\textsuperscript{205}

In sum, postmodern approaches do not avoid contrasting interpretations, though these should rather be called complementary, since one of the postmodern assumptions is not to privilege one interpretation over another. In addition, the above discussion

\textsuperscript{202} Jackson, \textit{Comedy and Feminist Interpretation}, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{203} Cf. Jackson, \textit{Comedy and Feminist Interpretation}, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{205} Cf. Mary E. Jensen, \textit{Bible Women Speak to Us Today} (Minneapolis, MN: Ausburg Fortress, 1983), pp. 63-65.
reveals that the postcolonial and feminist approaches appreciate the role of reader in producing the meaning. The above-mentioned scholars, in fact, are aware of the fact that in shaping their interpretations they were influenced by their socio-cultural environment. This awareness of an active role of a reader who brings to the text different presuppositions, interests and cultural experience results in the impossibility of proposing one ultimate interpretation. As pluralism and polyvalence are intrinsic to postmodern thought, all accusations of relativism or projectivism coming from Historical Critics or Structuralists are promptly rejected.\textsuperscript{206} On the other hand, searching for an historical or an authorial meaning is often deemed impossible.

2.5 Literature Review as the Mental Library (I) of the Perplexed Reader

The overview of the biblical literature of the Rahab story confronts us with a plurality of methodological approaches whose outcomes will not form one unified picture. The divergence is perceived not only at the level of individual results but in the basic methodological assumptions which justify various strategies of reading this story. This variety is probably due to both the progressive development of methods and changes in worldviews that require new forms of inquiry.\textsuperscript{207}

The main focus of the historical-critical investigations was on the process and milieu in which the Rahab story was shaped, reconstructing possible sources and stages in producing its actual literary version. In other words, historical-critical scholars tried to explain how this account came to be formed because their assumption was that the key to the interpretation of the story lay precisely in its original milieu and equated with the meaning intended by its author. Conversely, synchronic approaches and their practitioners investigated not the genesis of Rahab’s story but its final literary composition with its linguistic and literary features assuming that the meaning of the Rahab story is sealed within the text and its structures. Finally, the postmodern scholars “let” the reader play an active role in the process of interpretation of the Rahab story, often treating the text as the pretext for their pre-existing beliefs. Thus, it is clear that the variety of methods and approaches available today ’has contributed to a growing

\textsuperscript{206} Cf. Adam, \textit{What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?}, pp. 22-23.
consensus that the field will never be dominated by one, two, or even a handful of methods’. 208

Hence, this extensive enquiry into the Rahab story leads me to depart from articulating the issue of interpretation as a product relying on one entity only, whether or not that should be the author, the text or the reader. As a matter of fact, this literature review strengthens my conviction that the interpretation of the text needs to be multicontextual and should attempt to focus on various (internal and external) dimensions of the text. In line with this decision, the main focus of the following research will be on the dynamic interaction between the reader and the text of Joshua 2 as configured in various interpretative ways. In such an interactive process, the above literature review constitutes the essential stream of the perplexed reader’s mental library, who during the interpretation process (Chapter 5) will be credited with knowledge of the most recognized achievements in academic research about the Rahab story. Hopefully, such an approach will allow me to develop an alternative contribution without claiming it to be exclusive.

CHAPTER 3: THE ENCODED READER IN JOSHUA 2

The encoded reader as defined in the first chapter is a complex category. Unlike the characters whose presence is clearly marked out, or the narrator whose voice can be readily perceived, the reader’s vantage point sealed in the text goes beyond one plain reference. It is rather a collection of various reader-oriented codes in the text which can influence the way of reading it. The aim of the following section is precisely to reveal this aspect of Joshua 2.

In the following discussion, I will present first the theoretical model of “text-linguistics” of Harald Weinrich on which Niccacci built his system. Then, I will discuss the principal elements of the verbal system of biblical Hebrew based on these principles, after which some preliminary issues concerning the text, its delimitation and translation will be evaluated. Then, I will proceed towards the practical application of that system, i.e. the syntactical analysis of Joshua 2. Finally, at the macro-syntactical level, such analysis will unravel textual features which set up and direct the linguistic communication process.

3.1 The Main Principles of Weinrich’s “Text-Linguistics”

It was Bloomfield’s definition of the sentence as the largest unit of grammatical description, quoted by J. Lyons, which marked the traditional belief according to which the sentence was regarded as the highest level of analysis. In the common use of language, however, written material does not simply occur in the form of words, phrases and clauses, but rather in the form of woven organic prose, characterized by the fact that the elements composing it are structured in a particular way. This intertwining of elements is called “the text” from the Latin word textus, which means ‘woven’ or ‘web’, a name that alludes to the fact that the sentences in the text are interwoven with each other in a particular way, and that this “weaving” deserves a special consideration in the analysis.

One linguist who denied the sentence every form of ‘particular respect’ was Harald Weinrich. In his seminal book, he writes that the phrase is neither the largest nor

the smallest unit of linguistic expression, but the average unit between the text and its phonemes. Consequently, the point of reference for verifying his conclusions is not the phrase, but the text, which he defines as ‘a logical (i.e. intelligible and consistent) sequence of linguistic signs, placed between two significant breaks in communication’. The central issue of his study, then, is the verbal system, especially its temporal values. In contrast to human existence, where the moments fly never to return, the temporary nature of the language has a value in itself, and is not reduced to the sign representation of events from past to present and then to the future. Hence, the assumption that the tenses in a text have their own autonomy and logic is the starting point of the author. Accordingly, the close examination of different tenses leads Weinrich to the conclusion that their articulation in literary texts functions not only to inform the reader about the temporal display of events within the narrative, but also as macro-syntactic signals referred to the reader during the communication process. In other words, the syntactical ordering of the text, and especially its verbal forms, leads the reader into the world of the text in a consistent manner. Consequently, Weinrich identifies three linguistic levels that describe different dimensions in a text, namely, ‘linguistic attitude’, ‘linguistic perspective’ and ‘linguistic prominence’.

In the ‘linguistic attitude’ the system of tenses indicates the attitude of the author towards his statement. Weinrich, in fact, denotes a certain logic and consistency in the selection of various tenses, which he divides into two groups: the ‘discussed world’ (Besprechung) and ‘narrated world’ (Erzählung). In a literary text this selection is made according to the degree of involvement of the author with his statement. In the first case, i.e. in the ‘discussed world’, the author is directly involved in the events he reports and uses mainly the tenses of the first group. This is the signal for the reader to assume a similar attitude of tension in receiving such encoded information. In the second case, i.e. in the ‘narrated world’, the author is more detached in reporting the events and so uses the second group of tenses, according to the axis of time. Similarly,

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213 Cf. Weinrich, Tempus, p. 41.
214 Cf. Weinrich, Tempus, pp. 57-67. In English, for example, to the first group are assigned: the present tense, present perfect and future. Instead, to the second group are assigned: the imperfect, simple past, past perfect and conditional. Cf. Niccacci, Syntax, § 3, p. 19.
this is also a signal for the reader to assume a detached attitude toward such encoded information.

To sum up, in the linguistic attitude Weinrich evaluates the communicative situation in which an author expresses his statement and a reader receives a given message. The author using ‘comment’ tenses suggests that it is appropriate for the reader, in receiving that text, to assume an attitude of “tension”, i.e. major involvement, while with the ‘narrative’ tenses he signals to the reader that the text in question can be received in a more detached manner.\textsuperscript{215}

In the ‘linguistic perspective’, the verbal system indicates a temporal arrangement of events in the process of linguistic communication. As stated above, the narrative chronology has value within itself, and is not reduced to the flow of events from past to present, and then to future. An author can arrange the events freely. In a process of reading, a reader reconstructs the chain of events in a chronological sequence, but the story itself does not expose all the events necessarily in that order. Hence, the reader must constantly assume a state of alertness regarding the arrangement of events in a temporal order. Depending on whether he/she should recover or predict the time of action, there are three possible scenarios: the degree zero or the ‘story line’, which indicates that there is no asynchrony in the temporal ordering of events; the retrieved information or the flash-back, which takes the narrative back in relation to the time of actual narration; and the prolepsis, which puts the narrative forward, anticipates the narrative event. Again, the verbal system with its particular forms provides a reliable guideline for the reader about the temporal arrangement of the textual information.\textsuperscript{216}

Finally, in the ‘linguistic prominence’, the verbal system provides an indication of a varied emphasis in the distribution of the textual information. In fact, such distribution is not random but depends on the author’s choice to emphasize some narrated elements, which are presented to the reader as the foreground of the narrative, while some others serve as the background information. Again, this distinction reveals the narrative strategy in organizing and differentiating information, whereas verbal forms are valid signposts for such a strategy.\textsuperscript{217}

\textsuperscript{216} Cf. Weinrich, \textit{Tempus}, pp. 73-7.
\textsuperscript{217} Cf. Weinrich, \textit{Tempus}, pp. 115-120.
To sum up, according to Weinrich, it is clear that only the text is the real and complete message, whose individual elements are organized and progress in a consistent way to issue a linguistic act. Besides, the arrangement of those elements, and especially tense-shifting, are designed not only to unfold the sequence of narrative events in the text but also to establish with the reader the precise communicative situation in which both the author and the reader assume a similar attitude towards the textual information.

Now, Weinrich’s study takes into account mainly modern European languages such as Italian, German, English, French and Spanish and is not concerned with Semitic languages. It was Wolfgang Schneider who applied Weinrich’s theoretical model to biblical Hebrew.\(^218\) His grammar was the alternative to contemporaneous traditional grammars because it treated biblical Hebrew from a text-linguistic perspective. In this sense, Schneider’s Grammar represents a turning point in studying Hebrew syntax, as it focuses on specific functions which the verbal forms perform in the broader textual units, rather than in the singular sentences.

Schneider, however, overestimated the function of the form in the text. Niccacci notices that the Hebrew verbal system does not have precise forms for all the levels of communication highlighted by Weinrich and on many occasions the same forms are used at different textual levels with different specific functions. Hence, other criteria such as the axis of time or the quality of the action should be considered in explaining the choices made for each level of communication.\(^219\) Consequently, Niccacci, partly relying on Schneider’s and Talstra’s contributions,\(^220\) traced the broader framework of the Hebrew verbal system, making it more structured and coherent.\(^221\) The examples of how the same forms perform different functions in the text will be evident in the discussion of Niccacci’s system offered directly below.

One contribution of this research to general biblical scholarship is the employment of this theory in analysis of Joshua 2 and particularly in highlighting the

\(^{220}\) Also, Eep Talstra pointed out the shortcoming of Schneider’s syntax, and in his twofold review, first tried to develop it more in line with Weinrich’s theoretical framework and then to reconcile the syntax with semantics. Cf. Eap Talstra, ‘Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible I: Elements of a Theory’, BO 35 (1978), 169-174; ‘Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible II: Syntax and Semantics’, BO 39 (1982), 26-38.
\(^{221}\) For overall bibliography of Niccacci cf., <http://198.62.75.1/www1/ofm/sbl/segr/profs/Niccacci.html> [accessed 1 May 2014].
reader’s perspective in this text. Such methodological procedures will be advantageous in describing more precisely how the text guides the process of communication since, in line with Weinrich’s and Niccacci’s conviction: ‘verb forms should be seen as linguistic signs at the speaker’s or writer’s disposal to present his information in a meaningful, forcible way so as to influence and guide the response of the listener or reader’. The new angle of this research is that it focuses also on the linguistic features of Joshua 2 in marking the reader’s perspective, since the narrative act mediated by the text cannot exist without the logical succession of the linguistic signs.

3.2 The Biblical Hebrew Verbal System in Prose

Niccacci begins his analysis of the Hebrew verbal system from the preliminary consideration of different types of individual clause. This, in fact, conforms to his ‘bottom up’ methodology, which proceeds from the morphology through the syntax to

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222 This is not the first attempt that has been made to implement those principles to the biblical narrative or poetic texts. Niccacci himself is the first practitioner, and his publications are filled with the analyses of extensive biblical passages. As a matter of fact, his system results from insightful study of the biblical texts and not vice versa. Particularly important is his seminal work already quoted here: Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose, which will be the main point of reference in the following section. In his original Italian version, which has more extensive sections dedicated to the analyses of texts, he deals, inter alia, with Joshua 2, the text chosen for this study. Cf. Alviero Niccacci, Lettura Sintattica della Prosa Ebraico-Biblica: Principi e Applicazioni, SBFA 31 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press 1991), pp. 62-75. Nevertheless, while Niccacci describes linguistic phenomena of Joshua 2 in general, to highlight the coherence of his system, my study will articulate the appropriateness of this syntax in the quest for the encoded reader, which is only half way through my methodological journey. Moreover, there are some other publications which to a greater or lesser extent draw from Weinrich, Schneider or Niccacci’s contribution. The following reference does not exhaust all of them. Instead, I report those that are in some measure pertinent to my enquiry. However, none of the following articulate and employ the system in the same way or on the same text. These are: Roberto Tadiello, Giona tra Testo e Racconto, Doctoral Dissertation, Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2003); Klassen, A Reading of the Rahab Narrative; Andy C. Witt, The Syntax of the Verb in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: The Textlinguistic Theory of Alviero Niccacci, Master Degree (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), in <www.academia.edu> [accessed 5 May 2015].


224 Nevertheless, such priority of the linguistic analysis over the narratological one does not exclude the contribution of the latter. On the contrary, in some instances the recourse to dramatic criteria will be indispensable in proper assessment of linguistic constructs. Also cf. Tadiello, Giona tra Testo e Racconto, p. 59.

the discourse analysis and not vice versa.\textsuperscript{226} The main criterion for qualification of those clauses is the position of the verb in the sentence. In fact, according to him, this is the ‘basic criterion of the Hebrew verbal system’.\textsuperscript{227}

The sentence with the finite verb in the first position\textsuperscript{228} is called the ‘verbal clause’. This type of sentence is constituted in Hebrew by wayyiqtol, we-qatal, we-yiqtol, and volitive forms in the first position. The sentence with a finite verb, but in the second position, is called the ‘compound nominal clause’. This category, at the level of the single clause, consists of x-yiqtol and x-qatal, where x indicates the non-verbal i.e. nominal or adverbial element in the first position. Finally, if the sentence does not have a finite verb, it is called a ‘simple nominal clause’. This type of clause is also constituted by nominal forms, including participles and infinitives.\textsuperscript{229}

This classification did not appeal to many Hebraists who, apart from ongoing discussion about the verbless clauses,\textsuperscript{230} were particularly reluctant to consider the sentence with the finite verb in the second position as the nominal clause.\textsuperscript{231} Hence, Niccacci constantly returns to this issue, further elucidating his conviction. The following table summarizes his outcomes.\textsuperscript{232}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{228} Niccacci specifies: ‘First one should note that “waw” does not occupy the first position. The same applies to the negative particles \textasciitilde{w} (\textasciitilde{q}) and \textasciitilde{w} (\textasciitilde{q}). The finite verb form immediately following them holds the first position of the sentence. Subordinating conjunctions like \textasciitilde{w} and \textasciitilde{w} do occupy the first position’. Niccacci, ‘An Outline of the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System in Prose’, \textit{LASBF} 39 (1989), 7-26 (p. 11).
\item \textsuperscript{230} Cf. \textit{The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches}, ed. by Cynthia L. Miller, LSAWS 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999).
\item \textsuperscript{231} Niccacci is well aware of the scepticism toward his categorization, quoting himself some voices to the contrary. Cf. A. Niccacci, ‘Finite Verb in the Second Position’, n. 2, p. 434. However, he also firmly disagrees with the standard designation ‘verbless clause’ for two reasons: ‘First, it may let people think that a verb is missing when it is simply not needed. Second, it does not account for the fact that a finite verb may be used with the function of a noun’. Cf. Niccacci, ‘Types and Functions of the Nominal Sentence’, in \textit{The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew}, pp. 215-48 (p. 215).
\item \textsuperscript{232} The table is from: Niccacci ‘An Outline of the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System’, p. 9.
\end{itemize}
It should be pointed out that in order to understand Niccacci’s classification one must firmly keep in mind the type of the grammar he employs in describing the Hebrew verbal system. As a matter of fact, Niccacci departs from the diachronic or historical description and adopts a functional method, which in qualifying various linguistic phenomena goes beyond the sentence as an ultimate point of reference in the analysis. His quoting of Weinrich is affirmative in this regard: ‘A grammar which does not accept units beyond the sentence can never even notice let alone resolve the most interesting problems of linguistics’. It is precisely such a “text-linguistic” perspective that allows him to distinguish a consistent function of compound nominal clauses, which differs considerably from that of the verbal clauses in the text. In fact, the constructions with the finite verb in the second position mark the break in the main line of the narrative and indicate that the information is presented in the secondary line. In the due course of my further analysis, different realizations of both verbal and compound nominal clauses will come into view, which will allow me to specify their intrinsic function within the text.

### 3.2.1 ‘Narrative’ and ‘Direct speech’ in Biblical Hebrew Prose

It has been said that the distinction between the “narrated” and the “discussed” world was essential in Weinrich’s theory. According to Niccacci, in biblical Hebrew prose, distinctive verbal forms belonging to these two worlds can be also distinguished. However, Niccacci speaks of ‘narrative’ and ‘direct speech’. He specifies:

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234 Sometimes his terminology can be confusing, as in his earlier studies he blurred the distinction between ‘narrative’ and ‘discourse’. Niccacci is aware of possible misunderstanding and hence clarifies the issue. He explains: ‘In previous works I called these two genres “narrative” and “discourse”, respectively. Unfortunately, this terminology is confusing when talking of “discourse analysis” instead of textlinguistics. It would involve the use of the word “discourse” in two completely different ways.'
Narrative concerns persons or events that are not present or current in the relationship involving the writer/reader. In narrative the attitude of the writer is one of distance, and therefore the third person is normally used. In direct speech, on the other hand, the speaker/writer addresses the listener-reader directly. Dialogues, sermons, or prayers are forms of direct speech. The attitude is one of involvement and first and second person forms are normally used. Direct speech can also be a comment to the reader; in a narrative, for instance, the writer sometimes holds up the story for a moment to express his own reflections on the events narrated.\footnote{Niccacci, ‘Analysis of Biblical Narrative’, p. 176.}

Thus, in the Biblical Hebrew verbal system there are two sets of strictly distinctive sets of constructs which act in the text as macro-syntactical signals to inform the reader how the given information is encoded, that is, whether it belongs to the ‘narrated’ or ‘discussed’ textual world. This issue is essential for the perspective of my research and will be a guideline in my quest for the encoded reader.

3.2.1.1 Narrative

The basic narrative Hebrew form is wayyiqtol.\footnote{Sometimes, Niccacci uses the adjective ‘historical’ to mark that the term ‘narrative’ refers here to Weinrich’s ‘narrated world’ and should not be confused with the general sense carried by the word “narrative”, which sometimes can simply mean: the story. The meaning of “narrative” as referring to the ‘narrated world’ is also intended in this section.} In fact, wayyiqtol develops the main line of the narrative through a chain of similar forms connected with each other, thus ensuring the consistency of the text. When a simple nominal clause or compound nominal clause appears in the text, it is a sign of interruption of the main line. It means that the new information is placed not on the main level but on a secondary level of the narrative, usually to provide circumstantial information related to the main action. These shifts in tense, however, do not necessarily produce significant disruption in communication. They just slow down the rhythm of the narrative to convey a reflection or to explain the facts conveyed by wayyiqtol, which continues the main line of the narrative.

Therefore I now prefer to call the two genres “narrative” and “direct speech,” the latter referring to dialogue, sermon, or prayer. It is also indicates indirect speech, as when an author comments in different ways upon the story he is narrating’. Niccacci, ‘On the Hebrew Verbal System’, p. 119. Then, in the note to his clarification, he further explains: ‘This is a main issue with Weinrich (1985). German possesses a very precise way of expressing this distinction, namely, “Erzählung” (narrative) vs. “Besprechung” (comment). The terms direct speech and indirect speech as used here have nothing to do with “directed reported speech” (i.e., quotation) and “indirect reported speech” of the English grammar’. Niccacci, ‘On the Hebrew Verbal System’, n. 5, pp. 132-3.
A good example of this phenomenon is found at the beginning of the Rahab story when the author, after a series of wayyiqtol’s, shifts to the simple nominal clause.\(^{237}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wayyiqtol - narrative</th>
<th>Небо Вторы - отвечает вышее</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>↑ SNC (simple nominal clause) - comment</td>
<td>шумат Рубб</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Wayyiqtol - narrative | Небо Вторы | 6:1a) In the year…
|                       | נוה בשמותו שנה |
|                       | וַיְהִי בִשְמוֹנִים שָׁנָה |
| 1b) (Solomon) built the temple for Y. | נבּ המבּית לֶיהוֹוה |
| 2a) The temple which king Solomon built for Y. | החבּ אֵשֶר בַּנָה המֶלֶךְ שְלֹמֹה לֶיהוֹוה |
| 2 b) 60 cubits its length, | ששימאמה אָרְבָּא |
| 2c) 20 cubits its width, | וֹעֶשֶרִים רָחְב |
| 2d) and 30 cubits its height. | עוּלֶשוּמִים אָמָה |
| 3a) The ulam which was in front of the hekal of the temple, | וְהָאוֹלָם עַל־פְּנֵי הֵיכַל הַבַּיִת |
| 3b) 20 cubits was its length compared with the width of the temple, | נֶשֶר אָמָה אַרְבָּא עַל־פְּנֵי רֹחַב הַבָּיִת |
| 3c) 10 cubits its width compared with the temple. | נֶשֶר בּאָמָה רָחְבִּים עַל־פְּנֵי הַבָּיִת |
| 4) And he made in the temple windows with gratings and shutters (?) | נַעַשׁ לָבְתָא חֵלֶת עִשְׂמֵי אַמָּה |

It is clear that this shift is only a momentary transition from the main to the secondary line of the narrative to inform the reader of the name of the woman. After this brief pause, the narrative returns to the main line marked by the following wayyiqtol.

The above example shows just a brief transition from the main to the secondary line of the narrative. However, a similar transition may also occur in the form of an extensive unity developed by the series of secondary constructs syntactically connected with each other. A good example of a longer exposition comes from 1 Kings 6:1-4, which describes the dimensions of the temple built by Solomon.\(^{238}\)

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\(^{237}\) Henceforth, the sign “↑” indicates shifts in tense.

\(^{238}\) The following example including the translation is adapted from: Niccacci, *Syntax*, § 83, pp. 112-114.
The main line of the narrative is marked by *wayyiqtol* (v. 6:1b), which reports the fact of Solomon building the temple. Afterwards, in line with the principle of interruption, the compound nominal clause (*waw-x-qatal*) in v. 6:2a marks the shift to the secondary line of the narrative, which is further developed by a series of secondary line clauses. In this way, the whole section describing dimensions of the temple (vv. 4:2b-3c) is syntactically related to the previous *wayyiqtol* in v. 4:1b. Only the subsequent *wayyiqtol* form in v. 4:4 marks the return to the main line of the narrative.

### 3.2.1.1.1 Off-line Wayyiqtol

The *wayyiqtol* is the main narrative form which marks the main line of the narrative, i.e. the degree zero in the ‘linguistic perspective’ and the foreground in the ‘linguistic prominence’. However, there is an exception for every rule. Occasionally, the *wayyiqtol* loses its primary narrative function and is used in the continuative form. Perhaps the following English sentence, adapted from my former translation, captures the nature of this phenomenon, anticipating the usefulness of the method in unravelling the complexities of the story. The shorter version of the whole unit is the following:

```
2:6a) She had brought them up to the roof and hid them with the stalks of flax…
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In the English sentence, the simple past tense “hid” continues the temporal value of the action established by the past perfect: “had brought”. It reflects exactly the Hebrew text in which *wayyiqtol* continues the secondary line initiated by *waw-x-qatal* construct. Hence, the *wayyiqtol* can sometimes have the continuative function in the off-line units, which does not lessen in any way its primary role as the marker of the main line of the narrative. It is only necessary to carefully assess the *wayyiqtol* form in the context of its occurrence.

### 3.2.1.1.2 Antecedent in the Narrative

The narrative section can begin straightaway with the *wayyiqtol* form, or some circumstantial information can precede the main action according to the pattern:

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240 For more examples and criteria in qualifying the *wayyiqtol* either as the narrative or continuative form cf. Niccacci, *Syntax*, §§ 140-46, pp. 175-80.
circumstance $\rightarrow$ wayyiqtol. Niccacci insightfully remarks that ‘all the necessary information previous to a story is conveyed by nominal constructions having a finite verb form in the second position’.\textsuperscript{241} Such transitions mark either the beginning of the story or create a significant break within the narrative, which does not necessarily mark its absolute outset. Unlike the comment treated above, which follows the wayyiqtol and is syntactically related to it, the antecedent information precedes the wayyiqtol. Hence, two scenarios are possible:

\begin{align*}
\text{Antecedent (or break) } & \rightarrow \text{ Wayyiqtol} \\
\text{Wayyiqtol} & \leftarrow \text{ Comment}
\end{align*}

Unfortunately, syntactic criteria are not sufficient to specify which variant occurs in the text. As a matter of fact, in order to decide whether the construct of interruption relates to the preceding or following wayyiqtol, literary and semantic criteria must be taken into consideration. In other words, to decide whether we are dealing with a pause for comment, a significant interruption within the narrative or even its absolute beginning, we must also rely on semantic and literary criteria such as the context, meaning, change of theme or change of place and time, etc.\textsuperscript{242}

The antecedent, similar to the comment, is often not a brief piece of information but develops itself into a narrative section that retains the function of background to the story. The following constructs are attested for the antecedent:

- waw-x-qatal for event or information presented as occurring once in the past
- waw-x-yiqtol and w$^e$qatal for repeated or continuous event or information
- waw-simple nominal clause for contemporary event or information.\textsuperscript{243}

A good example of an antecedent which Niccacci adduces very often is the very beginning of the Bible: Genesis: 1:1-3.\textsuperscript{244}

1:1 When God began to create the heavens and the earth,

בְּרֵאשִית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָּאָרֶץ

1:2a) the earth was formless and empty,

וּוְהָּאָרֶץ הָּיְתָה תֹהוּ וָּבֹה

1:2b) darkness was above the abyss

וְחֹשֶךְ עַל־פְנֵי תְהוֹם

1:2c) and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

וְרַחַם אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְנֵי הַמָּיִם

1:3) Then God said…

In line with the syntactic pattern: antecedent → wayyiqtol, the actual narrative begins only in v. 1:3. Instead, the first four clauses of the Bible (vv. 1:1-1:2c) form a syntactically-crafted antecedent which report circumstances and information previous to the main action. Incidentally, this agrees with the understanding of this section by Rashi, who also proposed a similar rendition: ‘At the beginning of God creating the heavens and the earth’.

In conclusion, I report a slightly adapted table, which registers possible tense shifts in the narrative and consequently shapes three essential dimensions of the Hebrew narrative. The brackets indicate that the “waw” is the optional element.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning of the narrative = Antecedent (secondary level)</th>
<th>→ Beginning of the main line = Foreground (main level, narrative chain)</th>
<th>→ Off line = Background (secondary level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x-qatal</td>
<td>→ wayyiqtol in a chain of coordinate verb forms</td>
<td>→ (waw-) x-qatal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or: non verbal sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td>→ non-verbal sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(waw-) x-yiqtol</td>
<td></td>
<td>→ (waw-) x-yiqtol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w’qatal</td>
<td></td>
<td>→ w’qatal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be clearly seen, the system of tense shifts is a vantage point for the mechanics of the narrative, as the shifts reveal the inner design of the story. Moreover, this differentiation gives the narrative a kind of “dynamism”, as the information is not uniformly monotonous, but is presented at different levels of communication. Most importantly, however, this system is capable of attuning the attitude of the reader toward obtained information, thereby leading the process of communication. In fact, the

above tense-shift pattern informs the reader that the axis of communication is unfolding by recounting distant events.

3.2.1.2 Direct Speech

The second genre of text for Niccacci is ‘direct speech’. It is important to recall that direct speech, in Niccacci’s terms, refers to Weinrich’s ‘discussed world’, i.e. a way of relating to the communicated information, and is not the same as reported speech.

As a matter of fact, direct speech uses more diverse verb forms than the narrative and prefers to be in the foreground and a direct relationship with the receiver. The Hebrew verbal system, however, is much poorer than those of European languages and does not have different forms for all levels of communication, as highlighted by Weinrich and pursued by Schneider. Distinct and unique forms exist only to express the mainline in the narrative and direct speech.

As mentioned above, in Hebrew narrative, a wayyiqtol clause indicates the main line of communication. In direct speech, instead, the first level is indicated with x-yiqtol indicative, with the volitive forms, the (x)-qatal, and with the simple nominal clause. As for the secondary line in narrative and in direct speech we have the same forms as are used for the main line; therefore, other criteria such as the location of the axis of time or quality of the action must be taken in account to explain the choices for each level of communication. The following table registers concisely the tense shifts belonging to this category in three axes of time:247

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axis of time</th>
<th>Main line (Foreground)</th>
<th>Secondary line (Background)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>(x-) qatal → (wayyiqtol) Here wayyiqtol is a continuous form</td>
<td>→ x-qatal, Simple Nominal Clause, x-yiqtol, w²qatal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Simple Nominal Clause with/or without participle</td>
<td>→ Simple Nominal Clause with/or without participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future indicative</td>
<td>a) Simple Nominal Clause</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A matter of particular interest in the above above tense-shifting is the axis of the past. It begins with a qatal or x-qatal construct and is continued by wayyiqtol which, exceptionally, has the continuous function here. Then, the structure very much resembles the historical narrative, since the background is marked by secondary line constructs. Niccacci feels the need to distinguish this particular realization of direct speech by calling it ‘oral narrative’ or ‘report’. He remarks:

Distinctively, oral narrative begins not with the secondary-level, antecedent constructions as historical narrative… but directly with main-level, foreground constructions, i.e., first-place qatal or else x-qatal. This fact constitutes a major difference from the historical narrative because in the latter qatal is not a first-place verb form nor does it indicate the main line of communication.250

Among many examples of oral narrative, Niccacci draws attention to Deuteronomy 1: 5, where Moses recounts to the people their past, precisely in the form of an oral narrative. Instead, particularly interesting are parallel verses which reveal an astonishing consistency of verbal structuring. For example, Genesis 40:2 and Genesis 41:10 inform the reader about the same event, namely, the anger of Pharaoh toward his two servants. Whereas in Genesis 40:2 this event is narrated (wayyiqtol), in Genesis 41:10 it is presented as an oral report (x-qatal → wayyiqtol).252

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248 In the oral narrative qatal can occupy either the first or the second place in the sentence without any significant difference. Cf. Niccacci, ‘An Integrated Verb System’, n. 28, p. 111.
249 Cf. Niccacci, Syntax, § 74, p. 102.
The above example reveals the syntactical consistency in encoding these two patterns of communicating.\textsuperscript{253} Ultimately, it is also relevant in establishing the reader’s vantage point in the text. While the information encoded by the narrative \textit{wayyiqtol} implies that the event is presented from the narrator’s perspective, the oral report presupposes the character’s view on recounted events. Hence, in the words of Niccacci, in the oral report ‘events are not reported in a detached way, as in a historian’s account, but from the speaker’s [a character in the story] point of view’.\textsuperscript{254} Indeed, this aids in orienting the reader’s attitude toward the textual world.

### 3.2.1.3 The Two-Element Syntactic Constructions

Another phenomenon of the Hebrew syntactic texture, occurring in either the historical narrative or direct speech, is ‘the two-member syntactic construction’. Niccacci rejects the standard terminology for this construction, i.e. “waw of apodosis”, because the “waw” is not a compulsory element in such structures.\textsuperscript{255} Besides, the explicit markers of subordination are not always inherent, which makes the effort to establish the nature of interdependence between two members of the structure even more problematic. For Niccacci, the surest criterion comes again from the text linguistic perspective and is boiled down to the position of the verb within the sentence. He writes:

\begin{quote}
Biblical Hebrew possesses two equally effective ways of producing subordination: one with a subordinating conjunction (grammatical subordination), the other without a subordinating conjunction, by simply putting the finite verb in the second position (syntactical subordination).\textsuperscript{256}
\end{quote}

The syntactical subordination becomes evident only from the broader textual perspective. In fact, in such a perspective, all non-initial constructs marking the second line of narrative create a unit which is syntactically entangled with the main form of \textit{wayyiqtol} to which it is related: respectively, in the case of comment to the preceding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral report (Gen 41:10)</th>
<th>Narrative information (Gen 40:2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>וַיִיתֵן אֹתִי פַרְעֹה קָׁצַף עַל־עֲבָדָיו ←֝ יָדָאֵת</td>
<td>וַיִֽקְצֹף פַרְעֹה עַל שְנֵי סָרִיסָיו</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$x$-qatal $→$ \textit{wayyiqtol} (continuative)</td>
<td>\textit{wayyiqtol} (narrative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{253} For more examples cf. Niccacci, Syntax, § 23, pp. 42-43.
\textsuperscript{254} Niccacci, \textit{Syntax}, § 74, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{256} Niccacci, ‘On the Hebrew Verbal System’, p. 128.
and in the case of the antecedent to the following *wayyiqtol*. Niccacci urges this factor to be taken into account in assessing relations between textual units. He emphasizes:

> It is of paramount importance for the analyst of biblical narrative to remember that verb forms of interruption are dependent verbs from a syntactic point of view, and from a textlinguistic point of view they express a subsidiary level of communication. As such, they depend on independent verb forms of the mainline of communication.

Therefore, I should like to stress anew that this criterion provides a well-founded pattern of involving a reader in the world of the text and in this regard reveals the perspective which has been designed for him/her in the text. In the following, I will thrash out a particular type of two-element syntactic construction: the double sentence.

### 3.2.1.3.1 Double Sentence

This particular structure partially resembles English subordinating clauses, for example, conditionals which are built according to the pattern: If clauses → apodosis and are syntactically entangled. Similarly, within the Hebrew double sentence, ‘protasis and apodosis constitute an indivisible syntactical unit to the point that neither can stand alone’. The following table resembles the various forms of double sentence attested by Niccacci.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protasis</th>
<th>Apodosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- conjunction + finite verb</td>
<td>Axis of the present: waw-simple nominal clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- finite verb in the second position</td>
<td>Axis of the past: qatal, or wayyiqtol without any difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- w Queqat</td>
<td>Axis of the future: yiqtol, waw-x-yiqtol, or w Queqat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- preposition + infinitive</td>
<td>without any difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- preposition + noun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- adverb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>casus pendens</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Naturally, the following general pattern: “protasis → apodosis” is comprised of different types of subordination, which correspond to various types of subordinated.

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clause, such as conditional, temporal or causal. Naturally, Niccacci deals with all of these, describing them more thoroughly.\textsuperscript{261} Instead, I would like to focus on the principle of the interruption of the main line of the narrative, which will be the leading principle of the upcoming analysis.

Thus, from the grammatical point of view, the apodosis is the main sentence in those structures. As the main sentence, it presents some anomalies in relation to what has been said so far. For example, indicative \textit{yiqtol} can occupy the first position in the apodosis, which does not happen elsewhere. Also, \textit{w\textsuperscript{iq}qatal} is not an initial construct but occasionally may appear at the beginning of the apodosis. Besides, only in the apodosis do both constructs \textit{yiqtol} and \textit{w\textsuperscript{iq}qatal} occur interchangeably at the beginning ‘without any difference’, as \textit{wayyiqtol} and \textit{qatal} also do. Niccacci has a ready explanation of these “anomalies”. Insomuch as the protasis and apodosis constitute inseparable syntactical union and the protasis precedes the apodosis, there is no difference as to which form begins the apotosis, as it is already in the second position.\textsuperscript{262} In other words, as the protasis “deprives” the apodosis of the first position in the two-element structure, it releases a greater possibility of initial forms against the plain sentence.

This phenomenon is relevant also to the principle of interruption, since the structure with the demoted verb should interrupt the main line and mark the off-line. There is, nevertheless, a way to prevent such communicative disruption. This is the function of the syntactical marker: \textit{ָּיִּיָּה}, which has a double function in the text. It might be the \textit{wayyiqtol} form of the verb \textit{יִּיָּה}, or can equally be the ‘macrosyntactical marker’ in the text.\textsuperscript{263} As the ‘macrosyntactical marker’ it has precisely the function of incorporating the reported event into the main line of the narrative or direct speech and to prevent communicative disruption.\textsuperscript{264}

The following example from Ruth 1:1 is most telling because two functions of \textit{ָּיִּיָּה} occur within just one verse.\textsuperscript{265}

It happened at the time when the judges judged, 

it happened in the days of the judges.

While the second בִיָמֵי שְפֹט the verb of the apoptosis: ‘there was’, the first יְהִי is the syntactical marker, which has to introduce the circumstantial phrase and set it at the main line of the narrative. Hence, the verse is constructed according to the following pattern: יְהִי (it happened) → protasis + apodosis. In such structure the whole double sentence, protasis and apodosis, constitutes ‘the subject’ of the first יְהִי. Niccacci concludes:

Wayehi is the supreme “macro-syntactic sign” of narrative […]. This means that its presence is enough to mark the passage as narrative, though not necessarily a narrative which is historical and detached (even though by the far the most common type) but also reported narrative or “narrative discourse” […]. The textual function of wayehi is to introduce a new element into the main narrative thread so that element becomes an integral and important part of the account.266

Once again, it becomes clear that the broader perspective is indispensible in the proper qualification of some linguistic phenomena which are elusive from the perspective of a single sentence.

3.2.1.3.2 Casus Pendens

Finally, I need to consider a particular realization of the double sentence, namely, casus pendens → apodosis, because in this structure the principle of interruption of the main line has again to be slightly reformulated.268 In such construction the first member of the double sentence is placed at the beginning of the structure to mark the issue to be discussed. Hence its name: casus pendens. An example from 1 Kings 12:17 may exemplify the idea.269

Casus pendens: Instead, the sons of Israel, who lived in the cities of Judah

Apodosis: over them Rehoboam reigned (…)

266 Cf. Niccacci, ‘A Neglected Point’, § 2.4.4, p. 16.
269 The example and translation after: Niccacci, Syntax, § 104, p. 136; § 123, p. 148.
First, the technicality of this structure needs to be elucidated. The *casus pendens* is the front-hanging element in the construction and its function is not so much to receive the emphasis, but rather to announce the point to be dealt with. In the words of Niccacci: ‘The function of such a clause is to identify the subject (who in fact is performing the action[s])’.\(^\text{270}\)

Therefore, *casus pendens* reveals the matter at hand but does not really occupy the first place in the sentence. Hence, the principle of interruption of the main line switches to the apodosis, where the criterion of first position must be applied. Hypothetically, when the “waw” in the apodosis is missing, it is difficult to distinguish between the *casus pendens* structure and the compound nominal clause (with the verb in the second position) because the two constructions are formally identical. In this case, one needs to rely on other elements to support the *casus pendens* structure. For example, the presence of an anaphoric or resumptive pronoun would be indicative.\(^\text{271}\)

With regard to the above example, Niccacci notes:

> A normal sentence would run “Instead, Rehoboam ruled over the Israelites who dwelt in the cities of Judah”; whereas, the construction with *casus pendens* becomes “Instead (as for the) Israelites who lived in the cities of Judah (casus pendens). Rehoboam ruled over them (resumptive pronoun)”.\(^\text{272}\)

Apart from translations, which for many reasons may opt for a particular choice, I would stress the fact that the structure by which the information is conveyed and the quest for its understanding has great importance in revealing the reader encoded in the text. Thus, it is not without significance how the information is sealed in a sentence and the sentences crafted into a text. Contrarily, this structuring constitutes the vantage point from which the reader is drawn in the world of the text.

### 3.2.2 The Evaluation of Niccacci’s System

So far, I have avoided discussing polemical points of Niccacci’s Syntax in order to better clarify the coherence of his system. Inevitably, some of them, such as the appearance of the complex nominal clause, have already been pointed out, and a few


others have been singled out by scholars to be defined more clearly. In the following, I limit myself to questions pertinent to my research.

In many instances, Niccacci himself is aware of the ambiguity of his description. For example, the terminology he adopts is potentially susceptible to confusion, hence he tried to define it more clearly and make it uniform over time. This is the case of the category of ‘direct speech’, which he interchangeably calls ‘discourse’. Both terms, however, are easily confusing. While the term “discourse” can be easily associated with the object of discourse analysis, the term “direct speech” can also be mistaken to mean reported speech. Instead of searching for a better description, which could only increase confusion, I tried to capture the meaning given to these terms by the author.

In my analytical view, an important area in Niccacci’s system which could be better articulated is the issue of the very nature of communication through narrative and direct speech. He himself encourages further elucidation when he writes that:

A more precise understanding of the distinction between narrative and discourse is necessary in order to recognize the coherence of the Hebrew verbal system. “Discourse” indicates both direct speech between participants in a story and indirect “comment” of the writer in the course of a narrative, without a direct address to the reader.

Perhaps the general notion of domains in a text which has been adopted for syntactical analysis of Biblical Hebrew texts can be useful in clarification of those questions. As a matter of fact, the basic distinction between primary domain and subdomain in the text is already very helpful. The primary domain in the text is realized in the axis between the writer and the reader. The writer can communicate to the reader through narrating events or incorporating the subdomain: speaker-listener into the principal domain. Both speaker and listener are characters within the story and their dialogue in the text occurs as direct speech. The following chart portrays the situation.

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Niccacci includes dialogues in the category of direct speech. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that in dialogues communication through direct speech occurs within the subdomain, or as Niccacci used to say, ‘between participants in the story’. 277 Perhaps, at the syntactical level which most concerns Niccacci, this is satisfactory, since it describes the linguistic disposition of the text, as if to say that dialogues share constructs proper to the category of direct speech. Nevertheless, for the perspective of my research it is advisable to specify how those subdomains or dialogues function in the primary domain. In other words, the questions are: how do dialogues appeal to the reader, and how is major involvement is required from him or her? Once again, the syntactical perspective must be supplemented by the broader literary perspective.

### 3.2.2.1 Telling vs. Showing

It cannot go unnoticed that this alternation between narrative and dialogue coincides with a common feature of biblical literature, which can be referred to as a ‘telling vs. showing’ convention. 278 Whereas the narrative parts essentially inform the reader about the unfolding of the plot, the dialogues, in the form of direct speech, “recreate” the event which is displayed “before the reader’s eyes”. This immediacy, which almost brings the reader to the scene, develops the feeling of a more vivid participation and helps him/her to properly evaluate the significant points of the story. It is not a trivial matter in the interpretation process. Robert Alter aptly notes:

> The biblical writers [...] are often less concerned with actions in themselves than with how [an] individual character responds to actions or produces them; and direct speech is made the chief instrument for revealing the varied and at times nuanced relations of the personages to the actions in which they are implicated. 279

He continues: ‘when an actual process of contemplating specific possibilities, sorting out feelings, weighing alternatives, making resolutions, is a moment in the narrative

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event, it is reported as direct discourse. Thus, the incisive force of direct speech binds not only the characters within the story but also the one who reads the story.

**3.2.2.2 Comment vs. Direct Speech**

Another point from the Niccacci description which needs clarification is the comment by the author in the form of direct speech. As has been emphasised, direct speech in the text can occur not only in the form of dialogue but also in the form of comment addressed indirectly to the reader. My impression is that Niccacci considers all secondary forms that interrupt the main line of narrative as indirect appeal to the reader. He concludes:

> By using verb forms and constructions of the secondary line in narrative [...] the writer switches from pure narrative, in which he narrates in the detached mode of historian, to comment. It is as if he would address his reader indirectly, i.e. without using the first and second persons but using verb forms characteristic of discourse. In this indirect dialog the biblical historian conveys details of the narrative - emphasizes items of the main event or information, or communicates information before the story begins.

Although the overall statement is correct, I am afraid that the comment does not always acquire such a pregnant function in relation to the reader. Let us consider two examples that reveal the point. The first one comes from my chosen text: Joshua 2:15.

15a) Then she let them down by a rope through the window.

15b) for her house was upon the town wall

15c) and she dwelt upon the wall

16a) And she said to them,

In the above example, first the author informs the reader about the release of the spies from Rahab’s house (v. 15a). Then the main line is interrupted to convey the information about the position of her house (v. 15b-c). Now, I do not detect any difference in the attitude of the writer toward these two items of data. Both are set in the past in relation to the axis of communication, or they are ‘detached’, as Niccacci prefers. The difference is perceivable from the perspective of the linguistic prominence, since this interruption introduces a secondary line of communication (background).

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Nevertheless, there are cases when the author’s comment may also be relevant to the linguistic attitude. For example, in Genesis 32:33, after describing Jacob’s confrontation, the author concludes: ‘Therefore to this day (עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket…’ (Gen 32:33 NRSV). In this case, the author’s attention undoubtedly shifts from past to present, which turns the narrative ‘into a kind of direct speech by the writer directed to the reader’. Since in both cases the linguistic constructs proper to direct speech occur, in order to decide when the interruption of the main line constitutes the background of the narrative and when the section begins which appeals directly to the reader, more than just syntactical criteria are required. In the reported case of Genesis 32:33, the task was facilitated by the expression: עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה (to this day), which clearly indicates that the author shifts from past to present or from being an ‘historian’ to being a ‘commentator’.

The recent study by Christopher T. Paris can also be helpful in defining more specifically various kinds of comment which occur in the biblical literature. His distinction between two of them seems particularly relevant for the current argument. Firstly, he individuates the ‘explanatory gloss’, which is ‘a commentary by the narrator explaining or qualifying an aspect or an action of the story’. The second one is termed as the ‘explicit commentary’ which is ‘an intervention by the narrator, whether in a commentary on the story (interpretation, explanation, judgment) or in a direct communication to the narratee (addressing the reader)’. This is a useful distinction which I will adopt in my further analysis.

I recall, once again, that Niccacci’s methodological interest is confined to Hebrew syntax. Hence many of these nuances are probably imperceptible, as both comments would share the same linguistic constructs. Nevertheless, as in many instances, he declares the necessity of broadening the macro-syntactical perspective in order to specify more precisely the linguistic phenomena. Perhaps this is also the case. Taking into account these amendments, the method elaborated by Niccacci is a profitable tool for my further research.

284 Paris, Narrative Obtrusion, p. 43.
3.2.3 Reader’s Vantage Point

The former section aimed to emphasize and discuss the main lines of the text-linguistic approach developed by Niccacci. Studying the chosen text: Joshua 2:1-24, further details will be evaluated. Now, I will indicate how this method can be an effective tool for the scope of the first part of my research: the quest for the reader encoded in the text. The following diagram, which summarizes the main points of the previous discussion, will be helpful in revealing the reader perspective sealed in the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reader’s Vantage Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Attitude</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Prominence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Perspective</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a narrative text, which has been defined by Weinrich as ‘a logical sequence of linguistic signs, placed between two significant breaks in communication’, there are three well-articulated perspectives that guide the communication process, in the sense that they orientate the reader in a particular way to the textual information. Niccacci has proved that it is also possible to distinguish similar dimensions in the biblical Hebrew text according to specific linguistic constructs.

In the ‘linguistic attitude’, the narrative, which is developed primarily by the narrative wayyiqtol’s, distances the reader “spatiotemporally” by conveying events which ‘are not present or current in the relationship involving writer-reader’. In direct speech this distance is minimized. In fact, in direct speech the reader is drawn straight into the scene and is either directly entangled in the communication flow or invited to “witness” the event, which is constructed to unfold right in front of his/her eyes.

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Certainly, these two patterns of encoding information, and most importantly reliable criteria for discerning between two, are vital for the experience of reading.

Similarly, in the ‘linguistic perspective’ the reader is offered precise coordinates about temporal distribution of information. Again, this dimension consists of the linguistic constructs, which allow the reader to detect a frequent asynchrony in the temporal flow of the narration or direct speech. In this way, he or she is able to determine, first of all, the actual time of narration, and then eventually to recognize some information marked as recovered or anticipated in relation to this time.

Finally, ‘linguistic prominence’ offers the reader the criteria to evaluate the information according to the hierarchy of presentation. As was mentioned in the previous discussion, the biblical Hebrew narrative can lead the reader straight to the main event (wayyiqtol), ignoring circumstantial features such as temporal or spatial features. Conversely, it can first provide some circumstantial information (antecedent) or in due course pause to provide some further remarks (comment). Hence, this textual perspective allows the reader to ponder the unfolding narrative hierarchically, where the background information provides an entourage for the main, fore-grounded action.

Therefore, the three-parameter model presented above can be advantageous in the quest for the encoded reader as each perspective is designed not only to develop the communicative content but also to offer the reader the possible orientation toward this multifaceted edifice of a textual world. In fact, the principles of “textual linguistics” elaborated by Niccacci will further become the guiding lines of the analysis of Joshua 2.

3.3 Text and Delimitation of the Narrative Unit

In the linguistic process of communication, the text is the only vehicle of information. The fact that ancient biblical texts underwent a long process of transmission, which has resulted in various recensions, urges awareness in choosing the version which will constitute the object of the analysis. It is beyond my methodological interest to undertake the thorny task of textual-criticism in order to determine the critical edition of the text. Instead, the following overview provides a rationale for my presupposed choice of the text and its boundaries.
3.3.1 The Text

The text which is adopted as the basis for the forthcoming analysis is the Masoretic Text (MT) as edited in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) and further in the *BibleWorks* (WTT). Actually, this is the prevailing edition of the Hebrew Old Testament which has been preserved by the oldest complete manuscript: *The Leningrad Codex*, from the beginning of the eleventh century.

The textual studies of the Book of Joshua have their own rich history. Initially, the attention of scholars was attracted especially by the quantitative difference between the MT and the Septuagint (LXX), which is roughly 4-5 percent shorter and in a few instances presents a different order of events. This realization might lead to various suppositions: for example, that the Greek translator shortened the text due to the working principle of “curtailment” or that the Hebrew *Vorlage* used for the Greek translation was not yet as lengthy as the MT.

Although the Book of Joshua as a whole may be quite a challenge for textual criticism, its second chapter was always deemed a ‘relatively easy chapter’ and consequently mostly omitted from the textual-critical discussion, which was focused on the more complex parts of the Book. In the majority of Commentaries or

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289 The best up-to-date study which also covers the history of the textual-criticism related to the Book of Joshua is: Michaël N. van der Meer, *Formation and Reformulation: The Redaction of the Book of Joshua in the Light of the Oldest Textual Witnesses*, VTSup 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
290 However, the difference between the two versions is much more complex, as in many instances the LXX presents significant “pluses” with respect to the MT. Moreover, when the number of words does match, they occasionally differ in meaning. Finally, both versions had undergone expansionistic development which makes the process of transmission more intricate that it might appear at first glance. Cf. Leonard Greenspoon, ‘The Book of Joshua-Part 1: Texts and Versions’, *CBR* 3/2 (2005), 229-261 (p. 234).
291 The most striking difference is in the section dealing with the erection of the altar on Mt. Ebal, which in the LXX appears later that in MT, i.e. after Joshua 9:2. Cf. Emanuel Tov, ‘Some Sequence Differences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint and their Ramifications for Literary Criticism’, in *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 411-13 (pp. 411-13).
294 For example, the abovementioned study of van der Meer almost entirely focuses on Joshua 1 and 5:2-12, making only a few references to the second chapter. Cf. van der Meer, *Formation and Reformulation*, p. 554. Also cf. Auld Graeme, *Joshua Retold: Synoptic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), pp. 7-24.
Monographs, authors register textual variants within it but they are of moderate importance to the overall discussion.\(^{295}\)

Moreover, the initial admiration of the Greek translator, who was characterized as “literal” and “competent”, has been gradually reversed.\(^{296}\) Theo A. W. van der Louw, after examining the MT and the LXX of Joshua 2, has come to the conclusion that:

Joshua 2 must have impressed the Greek reader as very exotic. The text, stiff with Hebraisms, cannot be linked anyhow to the styles defined by Demetrius of Phaleron in De elocutione. Thackeray’s judgment that “Joshua (part)” constitutes “good κοινή Greek” does not apply to Joshua 2.\(^{297}\)

At the end of the article, his judgment becomes even harsher when he insinuates that ‘the omissions in Joshua 2 testify to economy of labour rather that to a principle of curtailment’ and that ‘the translator was working under time pressure and/or a tight budget’.\(^{298}\)

Also, scrolls from the Judean desert: 4QJosh\(^{a}\); 4QJosh\(^{b}\) and XJoshua,\(^{299}\) although significant for the formation of the Book of Joshua as whole, bring little evidence regarding the Rahab story.\(^{300}\) The biggest scroll, 4QJosh\(^{a}\) which is compounded from twenty-two different fragments, preserved no remains of Joshua 2. The scroll 4QJosh\(^{b}\) which fragmentarily preserves verses of Joshua 2:11-12, in this case corresponds closely to the MT.\(^{301}\) Similarly, the smallest scroll, designated XJoshua, which fragmentarily preserves 46 words, including part of Joshua 2:4-5, does not disclose any deviation from the MT.\(^{302}\)

\(^{295}\) One of the handiest lists to consult is perhaps that of Butler, who not only registers differences in the MT and the LXX but also categorizes them under the following tendencies: ‘mechanical errors in copying; misunderstanding of meaning, forms or syntax; literary improvements; free use of familiar phrases; homiletic interpretation and exegesis; avoidance of unacceptable language’. Butler, *Joshua*, pp. xix-xx. For the more thorough textual-criticism which includes also versions of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion cf. Leonard J. Greenspoon, *Textual Studies in the Book of Joshua, HSM* 28 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983). Instead, for the most exhaustive textual study devoted exclusively to Joshua 2, cf. Floss, *Kunden oder Kundschafter?* I, pp. 8-63.


\(^{297}\) Van Der Louw, ‘Translator’s Competence’, p. 5.

\(^{298}\) Van Der Louw, ‘Translator’s Competence’, p. 17.

\(^{299}\) The 4QJoshua\(^{a}\) is dated to the 2\(^{nd}\) - 1\(^{st}\) century BCE, the 4QJoshua\(^{b}\) to the middle of the 1\(^{st}\) century BCE and the XJoshua to the 1\(^{st}\) century AD. Cf. Van der Meer, *Formation and Reformulation*, pp. 95-104.

\(^{300}\) Especially 4QJosh\(^{a}\) differs considerably from the MT and the LXX as it presents a different order. The most significant difference is related again to the erection of the altar in Mt. Ebal, which is referred to earlier in relation to the LXX and the MT. Cf. Greenspoon, ‘The Book of Joshua-Part 1’, p. 236.

\(^{301}\) Van der Meer, *Formation and Reformulation*, p. 98.

\(^{302}\) Van der Meer, *Formation and Reformulation*, pp. 104-5.
Thus, without underestimating the validity of the textual criticism or the
importance of ancient witnesses, especially the LXX, in light of the above data, the
most reliable text for the forthcoming analysis is the MT. In several cases, primarily
when a variant may indicate creative interpretation during the process of translation,
they will be reported and duly analyzed.

### 3.3.2 The Boundaries of the Rahab Story

Another preliminary issue which must be broached now concerns the boundaries of the
narrative unit. The question is twofold. The first one relates to the delimitation of the
narrative unit, which will constitute the primary object of the syntactical-literary
analysis. The second one discloses the broader context of reading it. In other words, the
second question is: how far back and forth does the narrative continuity range?

#### 3.3.2.1 Zooming “in”: Delimitation of the Narrative Unit

The dramatic criteria are principal in delimiting the narrative units which will constitute
the object of the appropriate analysis. In fact, the perception of the completeness of the
narrative unit is marked by dynamics of the dramatic action, such as a new theme, the
movement of the characters on ‘the stage’ or by a change of place and time. Also,
stylistic criteria such as repetitions, inclusions and changes in vocabulary can be
indicative for such a purpose.\(^\text{303}\) I also take into account the above-presented syntactical
criteria of division.

The first means by which the narrator indicates that Joshua 2 is an episode in its
own right is the framing inclusion. In Joshua 2:1, the principal character of the Book is
introduced by his longer patronymic name: ‘Joshua son of Nun’ (cf. Josh 2:1). He is the
one who sends the scouts on the mission and to whom they return with their report.
Again Joshua is referred to by his longer name as ‘Joshua son of Nun’ (cf. Josh 2:23).\(^\text{304}\)
The mission then presupposes “to and fro” spatial movement from Shittim to Jericho


\(^{304}\) After the occurrence of the long form: ‘Joshua son of Nun’ at the beginning of the Book, which makes
sense as it introduces the main hero (cf. Josh 1:1), then there is a series of three shorter references using
only the simple name: ‘Joshua’ (cf. Josh 1:10;12;16). Unexpectedly, in Joshua 2 the longer form: ‘Joshua
son of Nun’ reappears twice. It would be more logical to continue with the shorter name unless, in chapter
2, the longer name plays more than a referential function.
and back to Shittim. Admittedly, this “sending-receiving” inclusion marks the boundaries of the episode.305

Then, in such a framed unit, it is possible to distinguish the principal phases of the dramatic action, such as: stage (v.1), conflict (vv. 2-5), pause (vv. 6-8), climax (vv. 9-14), resolution (vv. 15-22) and conclusion (vv. 23-24).306 These elements constitute the backbone of the complete narrative episode.

A complete narrative unit is also marked out by the change of the characters to focus on a cast that is almost exclusive to this story. In fact, at the beginning of the second chapter, Joshua initiates a new campaign in which a new group of characters, including Rahab the harlot, two nameless spies, the king of Jericho and his messengers appear on the stage. There will be further allusions to them, especially to Rahab and the spies (cf. Josh 6: 17; 22- 23; 25), but only in Joshua 2 do they play a key role.

In sum, from the literary point of view, Joshua 2 is a self-contained narrative entity suitable for the analysis prospected in this study. In fact, such a delimited unit reveals the inner coherence of narrative, which is sufficient and adequate to accomplish the analysis of the linguistic communicative process mediated by this text.

Despite the fact that dramatic and stylistic criteria clearly mark out Joshua 2 as a self-contained episode, such a status is not reflected in the syntactical texture of the narrative. In Joshua 2:1 and Joshua 3:1 the continuous wayyiqtol form occurs, which smoothly accommodates Joshua 2 within the immediate context of the Book.307 Therefore, while reading this story, the reader encounters a series of signals which, on the one hand, mark out Joshua 2 as an integral episode, but on the other hand urge that it be read within the broader literary context.

306 This is just an example of literary division of the unit made by Klassen, A Reading of the Rahab Narrative, pp. 60-99. Scholars debate the boundaries of the individual sub-units. At this point, however, I wish to indicate only the mere fact that crucial elements of the dramatic action are present in the indicated episode.
307 In fact, the significant syntactical interruption occurs only in Joshua 6:1 where it is possible to individuate the antecedent constructed by three simple nominal clauses syntactically related to the following wayyiqtol and therefore marking the new section. Hence, from a syntactical point of view, Joshua 2 is an integral, i.e. uninterrupted part of Joshua 1:1-5:15.
3.3.2.2 Zooming “out”: Broader Literary Context

It is a truism, but nonetheless important, that literary context influences the interpretation of the story.\(^{308}\) Therefore, after determining the narrative unit which will constitute the primary focus of the proper syntactical and literary analysis, the broader contexts of the story must be envisaged. At this point, it is necessary to be aware that such interconnections firmly belong to the domain of a reader who has an insight to the present shape(s) of the Canon.\(^{309}\) Thus, the intention now is to expose how some thematic and linguistic features intrinsic to the Rahab story encourage the inter-contextual approach from the reader.

It has just been pointed out that the Rahab story is framed by the “sending-receiving” inclusion. Precisely due to that framing, the narrative may be perceived as a spy story, although all further endeavours of the Israelite “intelligence” were far from the standards of a spy mission. Besides the obvious fact that this initial inclusion marks the boundaries of the episode, the insistence of the patronymic name of Joshua is indicative. It may recall his participation in a similar campaign described in Numbers 13:1-33 and reported again in Deuteronomy 1:22-39. Hence, such a frame may urge the reader to juxtapose this event with the similar ones, which require acquaintance with the broader context of Numbers-Joshua.

Apart from the deuteronomistic style of Rahab’s confession, her allusion to crucial events from Israelite history, namely the crossing of the Red Sea (cf. Ex 14-15) and defeat of the Amorite Kings Sihon and Og (cf. Num 21:21-35; Deut 1:4) is noteworthy. Only the familiarity of the reader with the broader context allows him or her to grasp a certain irony, as for example Zakovitch did when he wrote: ‘Rahab’s words reveal that she, a small-time prostitute from Jericho, knows better than Joshua how great and powerful is Yahweh, the God of Israel’.\(^{310}\)

Similarly, the problematic concept of “ban” is unperceivable from the perspective of the Rahab story alone. In fact, within Joshua 2, her protection can be explained by the pact: *quid pro quo*. Rahab saves the spies’ skin, so they assure her safety rather than her annihilation. Instead, the survival of foreigners such as Rahab and the Gibeonites (cf.

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310 Zakovitch, ‘Humor and Theology’, p. 90.
Josh 9:3-16) takes on a new and threatening dimension only in the light of a command expressed elsewhere (cf. Deut 7:2; 20:16-17; Josh 6:18-18). This contrast, as has already been mentioned, is rendered even more prominent by the story of an Israelite, Achan, for whom the same law was ruthless (cf. Josh 7:1-26). Hence, only reading in the context of the “Deteronomistic History” allows the reader to explore some extra functions of this story.

It is possible to stretch the context of reading the Rahab story even more. As there are some allusions to it in the NT (cf. Mat 1:5; Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25), the reader may wish to establish such interpretative interconnections. Once again, it is worth recalling that the story itself does not presuppose this context, but the later development of the Canon (tradition) made it possible.

Altogether, the Rahab story in Joshua 2 as preserved by the MT is an adequate episode and will now be the primary focus of my syntactical-literary analysis. In certain instances, a broader context, that of Exodus-Joshua, will be necessary to elucidate the deeper significance of some elements within the story. In the second part of the thesis, the broadest context, OT-NT, will also be taken into account to highlight the story's adaptation in later biblical writings.
3.4 The Syntactical Analysis of Joshua 2

In this section, the objective of my investigation will be the internal-literary context of the Rahab story. In practice, it means the syntactical analysis of Joshua 2 will be conducted according to the principles of text-linguistics discussed above. However, in line with my methodological concern, the ultimate purpose of this analysis is to identify the specific linguistic and literary features designed to lead any actual reader into the world of the text and hence guide the process of communication.

In the investigation of these features, the main focus will be on the syntactical analysis, since the narrative act cannot exist without the logical succession of the linguistic signs. Nevertheless, such a priority of syntactical arrangement does not exclude the importance of the literary devices. On the contrary, occasionally recourse to dramatic criteria will be indispensable to properly discern the linguistic phenomena.

In the arrangement of the text, I follow the proposal of Niccacci, who distinguishes three levels: level 1, at the margin on the right for the main line of the narrative; level 2, for the secondary line or background of the narrative and level 3, for direct speech.311 The sign “↑” indicates the shift to the secondary line of the narrative, which is syntactically connected to a previous wayyiqtol form. A vertical arrow: “←” marks recovered information. The sign: “÷” means that the sentence continues, but for lack of space it is continued on the next line. In the right column I have also accommodated some textual notes which may reveal interpretative strategies already employed at the level of ancient translations, especially in the LXX. Finally, on the left side the English translation of Joshua 2 is presented.312

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311 Niccacci does not assign a special level for background information in direct speech because ‘the tense shifts found in direct speech do not affect the general structure of the narrative if the quotation formulas are in the wayyiqtol. In this case, the main line of communication is carried on by the quotation formulas no matter how long and how complex the direct speech is’. Niccacci, ‘Analysis of Biblical Narrative’, p. 180.

312 It is good to keep in mind the point suggested by Emanuel Tov that the correct understanding and perfect translation is only an abstract concept. He writes: ‘We do not understand all words in MT, and therefore modern translations often suggest alternative renderings of individual words, add question marks, or note that the translation is conjectural’. Tov, The Greek and Hebrew Bible, p. 203. I made a choice, as much as was possible, to offer the translation which results from and is in synchrony with my syntactical analysis. For semantic and lexical choice apart from the appropriate tools, the NRSV was consulted.
Joshua 2 begins with the wayyiqtol form, which marks the main line of the narrative.

A narrative unit may equally begin with a secondary line constructs that communicate information circumstantial to the main action. This does not occur here. Therefore, from the syntactical point of view the narrative proceeds steadily from the first to the second chapter without any significant syntactical interruption. Hence, despite the earlier conclusion that that dramatic and stylistic criteria mark out Joshua 2 as a self-contained episode, such a status is not reflected in the syntactical texture of the narrative. In the

313 The two spies sent by Joshua to reconnoitre Jericho are referred to in the LXX as δύο νεανίσκοι (two young men) compared to the MT where they are simply qualified as שְנַיִּם־אֲנָשִּים (two men). A similar translation has also occurred in Joshua 2:23. According to Tov, this rendering is probably due to Joshua 6:23, where the spies are described as a οἱ νεανίσκοι (the young men). In fact, Tov argues that translator made a constant effort to make the description identical. He calls this effort a ‘midrash-type exegesis’. Cf. Tov, ‘Midrash-Type Exegesis in the Septuagint of Joshua’ in The Greek and Hebrew Bible, pp. 153-64 (p. 155).

314 The word וְֶָּלִּשׁ (secretly) is the hapax legomenon, omitted by the LXX and Syr. It is hardly possible that the hapax was later introduced to the MT as the contextual addition. Rather, the translator omitted it due to ignorance of the word. Cf. Richard S. Hess, Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary, TOTC 6 (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996). In the MT, then, there are two possibilities of reading it. First, in relation to Joshua’s action: ‘he sent them secretly’ and second in relation to the spies’ mission: ‘he sent them exploring secretly.’ The latter possibility is redundant as the spying mission assumes secrecy. Moreover, the conjunctive Massoretic accent: Munach connects this adverb with the introductory quotation formula לֵאמֹר, indicating perhaps that this time the mission of spying was meant to be hidden from Joshua’s own fellows. Cf. Aaron Sherwood, ‘A Leader’s Misleading and a Prostitute’s Profession: A re-examination of Joshua 2’, JSOT 31/1 (2006), 43-61 (p. 50).

315 Interestingly, the LXX translates the Hebrew wayyiqtol verb לִשָּׁכֵב (lay down to sleep) with κατέλυσαν (lodged). From almost 200 occurrences, only here the LXX renders the Qal of לִשָּׁכֵב by καταλύω. Cf. Moran, ‘The Repose of Rahab’s Israelite Guests’, p. 276. Although this rendering mitigates the possible clash with Joshua 2:8a, it also deprives the narrative of naughty ambiguity perceivable in the MT.
proposed translation, this continuity in relation to the previous chapter is highlighted by the adverb: “then” (v.1a).

Afterwards, a short direct speech of Joshua to the spies (vv. 1b-c) is introduced by the quotative frame. As the introductory frame is constructed by the main-line wayyiqtol form, the whole locution is inserted into the principal event unfolding in the main line. In other words, Joshua’s utterance is deployed as the subsequent event unfolding in the main line. His command, then, is constructed from two imperatives connected asyndetically, which gives the whole locution a semantic tinge of meaning: ‘go to see’ (vv. 1b-c).316

Eventually, three following wayyiqtols (vv. 1d; 1e; 1g) continue developing the main line of the narrative, speedily “transporting” the spies and the reader from the Israelite camp in Shittim to the prostitute’s house in Jericho. Only in v. 1f does the author pause to report the name of the woman. In fact, the simple nominal clause marks the secondary line of narrative. This shift, however, does not produce major communication disruption, but only a pause to convey a brief remark: in this case, the name of the prostitute.

Thus, by such structuring the main line of the narrative keeps track of the unfolding action while the off-line allows for the implantation of some additional, by no means less significant, information. In this case, it is just the woman’s name. She is, in fact, the only character, apart from Joshua, referenced in the story by proper name. Although conveyed in the secondary line, it is not a second-rate clue, because biblical authors do not squander names accidentally but reserve them for the pivotal characters.

2a) And it was told to the king of Jericho, saying,

b) “Behold, men came here this night from the sons of Israel to search out the land”. 317

3a) Therefore the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying,

b) “Bring out the men who came to you”.

317 In the MT the noun הַלַיְלָה (this night) in v. 2b must refer to the period far before nightfall as, for example, in Ruth 3:2. Otherwise it will contradict the following action and most of all Rahab’s assurance that the spies left her house before the gates closed at dark. The omission of הַלַיְלָה in the LXX was probably intentional. In Greek, a similar use of νυκτα to point out the late afternoon or the evening is anomalous; hence the translator transports την νυκτα to the next verse where it fits the context better. Cf. Van Der Louw, ‘Translator’s Competence’, p. 12.
c) who entered your house,

d) for they have come to search out all the land”.

After the formulaic introduction (v. 2a), the direct speech opens with the *x-qatal* of report אֶתְכֶלֶת אֲנִיתַת יִשְׁרָאֵל which parallels the narrative *wayyiqtol* (v. 1b).319 Accordingly, the reader’s vantage point shifts from obtaining plain narrative information (v. 1b) to focusing on how this news is delivered and further alerts the king (vv. 2b-3d). Such perspective is reinforced by the particle הוּא which is the most common, though not unique, indicator of the change of the point of view in the story; from a syntactical point of view, it gives the sentence the aspect of immediacy and urgency.320 Without this particle, the information would be presented as a generic communication of the fact, while when introduced by the particle הוּא, it requires an urgent response from the king. It signals that a new fact introduced by it should raise in the reader the expectation of an immediate consequence. Indeed, it allows the reader to imagine the chain of subsequent events in a sequence of cause and effect. In the other words, the reader is “urged” by this particle to perceive how the information given to the king has had a devouring effect, resulting in his immediately sending the messengers to Rahab.

Occasionally, the particle הוּא appears paired with another adverbial particle הָיָה which explicitly underlines this aspect of urgency and consequence according to the pattern: הוּא (information) → הָיָה (consequence). Since, in this case, the particle הָיָה does not occur, the following *wayyiqtol* (v. 3a) adopts the aspect of the consequence, which has been marked in the translation by the adverb “therefore” (v. 3a).321 Hence the

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318 The LXX condenses vv. 3b-c, omitting the redundant expression: רֹאִים לְךָ (who came to you) in v. 2b. Cf. Van Der Louw, ‘Translator’s Competence’, pp. 15-16. However, as it will be revealed in the last part of my analysis, the MT as it is, with the “apparent” redundancy, may carry out an intriguing ambiguity which reveals the King’s attitude to Rahab.

319 Despite the second position of the verb in this phrase, the information is presented as a foreground of the direct speech. Apparently this “anomaly” contradicts the principle formulated by Niccacci that the clause with the finite verb in second position marks the background. Although this criterion is always valid in the narrative, in direct speech there are three instances when it seems to be contradicted, maybe because direct speech prefers a foreground and direct relationship to the addressee. Cf. Niccacci, *Syntax*, § 23.1, p. 43.


following rendition of the whole sequence: ‘Behold, men came… → Therefore, the king of Jericho sent…’ (vv. 2b-3a).

The last clause: רָכַל (v. 3d), which in turns parallels the same information given to the king (v. 2b), functions to emphasize the nominal element “x”. The literal translation would be: “for - to search out all the land - they came” (v. 3d). Such emphatic construction may indicate that according to the king, Rahab might not know the true intentions of her guests, so their real purpose is revealed to her so emphatically. Beyond doubt, after such a forcible alert, the king and perhaps also the reader would expect her loyalty and cooperation.

4a) And the woman took the two men, 
   324 The verb הָקָם has the pronominal suffix of the third masculine singular and literally will be: ‘She hid him’. The majority consider it as a scribal error, either ditography or correction. Cf. Butler, Joshua, p. 26. In fact, the LXX has the plural form of the suffix: ἐκρύψεν ὑπό τοὺς (hid them). However, there is also the possibility of reading it in a distributive sense ‘each of them’, or as the residue of an archaic dual: Cf. Marten H. Woudstra, The Book of Joshua, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), n. 13, p. 70; Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, n. 29, p. 122. Although in Joshua 6b an appropriate form appears: וַתִּטְמְנֵם (and hid them), I acknowledge in v. 4b the distributive use, as it is not without precedent in biblical Hebrew. For example, similar use occurs in Jeremiah 31:15, when one reads that Rachel is weeping for her children because: וּאֵינוּ (lit. it is not) in the sense that ‘each one is no more’. A similar distributive sense can also be detected in Isaiah 2:20; 17:1. Cf. Samuel Friedeberg, Joshua: An Annotated Hebrew Text with Introduction, Vocabulary, Geographical and Historical Glossary and Three Maps, (London: Heinemann, 1913), p. 35.

b) and hid each of them

c) and said:

d) “Yes, the men came to me,

e) but I did not know

f) where they were from

5a) And it happened that, about the time when the gate was to be closed at dark,

b) the men went out

c) I do not know

d) where the men went.

e) Pursue them quickly,

f) for you will overtake them”. 

324 The verb הָקָם has the pronominal suffix of the third masculine singular and literally will be: ‘She hid him’. The majority consider it as a scribal error, either ditography or correction. Cf. Butler, Joshua, p. 26. In fact, the LXX has the plural form of the suffix: ἐκρύψεν ὑπό τοὺς (hid them). However, there is also the possibility of reading it in a distributive sense ‘each of them’, or as the residue of an archaic dual: Cf. Marten H. Woudstra, The Book of Joshua, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), n. 13, p. 70; Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, n. 29, p. 122. Although in Joshua 6b an appropriate form appears: וַתִּטְמְנֵם (and hid them), I acknowledge in v. 4b the distributive use, as it is not without precedent in biblical Hebrew. For example, similar use occurs in Jeremiah 31:15, when one reads that Rachel is weeping for her children because: וּאֵינוּ (lit. it is not) in the sense that ‘each one is no more’. A similar distributive sense can also be detected in Isaiah 2:20; 17:1. Cf. Samuel Friedeberg, Joshua: An Annotated Hebrew Text with Introduction, Vocabulary, Geographical and Historical Glossary and Three Maps, (London: Heinemann, 1913), p. 35.
However, this does not happen. Three short clauses of the wayyiqtol type (vv. 4a-c) move the action very quickly to the main line of the narrative, revealing to the reader the woman’s surprising decision to hide the spies. In contrast to the reader, who is informed of her unexpected action, the messengers have to rely on Rahab’s assurance. Her speech to them begins with the affirmative x-qatal and is followed by a negative clause yTi[d:y” al{w (vv. 4d-e). The last can be the negative form of either a qatal or wayyiqtol. The second possibility is more probable here, because in this construction the wayyiqtol continues the form (x-) qatal.325 This also agrees with the principle that in direct speech wayyiqtol is always a continuative form and assumes the temporal aspect of the preceding constructs.326 Furthermore, the negative clause yTi[d:y” al{w presents an adversarial aspect highlighted in the translation by the contrastive conjunction: ‘But, I did not know where they were from’ (v. 4e).327

Rahab’s subsequent speech (vv. 5a-b) presents a peculiar structure. It begins with the construct yhiy>w, which, as has already been remarked, carries a double function in the text. Briefly recalling, it might be the wayyiqtol form of the verb היה, or the ‘macrosyntactical marker’ of narrative.328 Here, the latter is true. Actually, the section in vv. 5a-b is a two-member syntactic construction, which is structured according to the pattern: “circumstance” → x-qatal. Moreover, it is clear that wayehi is dependent on the apodosis, in the sense that the apodosis becomes its logical subject: it happened (wayehi) → when (protasis) → what (apodosis). So, the construct wayehi in v. 5a serves as the “macrosyntactical marker” and functions to incorporate the reported event of the departure of the spies into the course of the woman’s speech and to prevent communicative disruption. The literal translation of this section might be as follows: ‘And it happened (יָהֵיהַ) that, about the time when the gate was to be closed at dark (protasis), the men went out (apodosis)’ (vv. 5a-b).329

The last two clauses (vv. 4e-f) present the following structure: imperative → ו + yiqtol. The yiqtol here is in the indicative mood and assumes the aspect of the

conclusion. The conclusion is skillfully shaped to cause the reader to snigger as Rahab is fooling the royal militia: ‘Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them’ (vv. 4 e-f).

At this point, it is necessary to pause for a more thorough analysis of the *quotative* formulae in v. 3a and v. 4c, as they are crucial for the proper understanding of the course of the action. As a matter of fact, many scholars have expressed their puzzlement by the section presenting the delivery of the message to Rahab, wondering how she hid the spies when the messengers were at her door. As in many similar cases, the easiest way to explain this incongruence was to have recourse to the source criticism. Such astonishment hastily presupposes that the v. 3a records the moment of the delivery of the message. Instead, the problem consists in unravelling whether the following expression records the moment when King issues the command or when the messengers report the King’s message to Rahab.

3a) The king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying,

\[ יִנָּלָתָה בְּשִּׁכְרוֹ לֹאֹפְּרָה לָאֶלּוֹהִים לָאָם \]

Careful scrutiny demonstrates that this quotation is reported from the perspective of the King. In other words, the *quotative* formula records the moment of issuing the command by the King in his palace. In fact, the sender (the King) and the addressee (Rahab) are clearly expressed, while the agency is skilfully bypassed. At this point, it is not clear who are the messengers and how many there are. The reader will acquire this information only from Rahab’s answer to them (vv. 4e-f). Thus, the order of the actions recorded by this narrative is as follows: 1) King issues his command; 2) Rahab hides the spies and 3) answers the King’s messengers. In the light of such an arrangement, the problem of rushing back and forth while the militia is at the door fades. Put simply, the author decided to surpass the moment of delivery of the message which, in turn, creates

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333 The question is wonderfully captured by Meier when he deliberates: ‘Because biblical literature usually condenses the narration of messenger-relay and records the message only once, a semantic problem arises in trying to identify the speaker of the message. Are the words that are quoted in the text spoken by the sender or the messenger?’ Samuel A. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible*, VTSup 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 123.
334 Similarly, Winther-Nielsen, *A Functional Discourse Grammar*, p. 120.
for the reader a very intriguing “narrative illusion” that the matter is playing out between Rahab and the King personally.

6a) Now, she had brought them up to the roof,  

b) and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof  

7a) And the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords.  
b) and the gate was shut  
c) as soon as the pursuers had gone out.  
8a) And before they lay down,  
b) she came up to them on the roof  
9a) and said to the men:

Verses 6-8 present a peculiar syntactical structure which caused various suppositions. The repetition in v. 6b of the information already given in v. 4b was for many scholars considered a sign of editorial intervention. However, at first glance, one notices that in contrast to v. 4b, where the author just hastily mentions the fact of hiding the spies, in vv. 6a-b a reader is informed of many other details, such as the place and the way of hiding. Why, then, this repetition and withdrawal of the linear plot, and what is the function of this peculiar structure within the story?

First of all, the waw-x-qatal (v. 6a) interrupts the chain of the narrative wayyiqtols and introduces the secondary line of the narrative, which will be continued to the end of v. 8. Therefore, the whole section: vv. 6a-8b constitutes off-line communication and functions as the antecedent for the wayyiqtol in v. 9a. Secondly, in the above structure, the waw-x-qatal has the function of recalling the information already given to clarify it. In the terms of Niccacci, the waw-x-qatal (v. 6a) followed by the continuative wayyiqtol (v. 6b) is the form of the ‘recovered information’, which is not a hitch within the story but a purposely implemented specification of the previous slapdash information. In literary terms, the recovered information (vv. 6a-b) functions

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337 Cf. Niccacci, Lettura Sintattica, p. 68.
as a flashback which conveys to the present communicative situation some information that has already taken place but previously went unsaid.

In the following verses, the narrator focuses on new facts, such as the king’s men chasing after the spies (v. 7a), the closing of the gate (vv. 7b-c) and the situation on the roof after the pursuers have gone (vv. 8a-b). Again, all these enlightenments are presented in the secondary line of the narrative, because the two waw-x-qatal and x-qatal constructs in vv. 7a-c continue displaying the information equally at the secondary level of the communication. Furthermore, the secondary line is continued by the two-member structure (vv. 8a-b) because both protasis and apodosis are clauses with the verb in the second position, respectively: waw-x-רֶפֶּשׁ + yiqtol and: waw-x-qatal.

This is the recapitulation of the above syntactical construction: waw-x-qatal → continuative wayyiqtol (vv. 6a-b) + 2 waw-x-qatal (vv. 7a-b) → x-qatal (v. 7c) + רֶפֶּשׁ + yiqtol → waw-x-qatal (vv. 8a-b) → wayyiqtol (9a). Thus, the verbal forms indicate that events in vv. 6-8 constitute the off-line of the narrative whereby the whole construction exists to provide the reader with some expositional data about the state of affairs which preceded the present event and are necessary for an understanding of the further moment in the plot development deployed in the main line of the narrative by the wayyiqtol in v. 9a. What then is the function of this rather complex syntactical architecture?

I reckon a twofold purpose of this unit. First, it slows down the action to prepare the reader for the climax of the story. In fact, according to R. Buth ‘there is relationship between marking peak and background-discontinuity structures both in Hebrew and Aramaic’. Furthermore, he explains that similar discontinuity ‘is the grammatical equivalent of a slow motion technique or of a freezing of a frame at an emotional point of a motion picture film’. Thus, it functions as the ‘dramatic pause’ which considerably delays a heretofore steady rhythm of action, increasing dramatic tension, which ultimately holds the reader’s interest.

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338 Cf. Niccacci, Lettura Sintattica, p. 68.
339 The use of yiqtol in the protasis is conditioned by the particle adverb רֶפֶּשׁ (before) in the sense that this is the archaic use of it for the past. Cf. Niccacci, Syntax, § 171, p. 194.
Secondly, this section notably fits with Niccacci’s notion of ‘indirect comment’, which an author constructs using verb forms of direct speech.\textsuperscript{342} It is not news that the biblical narratives are known for their reticence in presenting the narrator’s evaluation of the events he describes. Instead, in vv. 6-8, it looks like an author articulates the narrator’s voice more clearly. The withdrawal from the lineal development of the plot allows the author to build narrative tension and articulate more clearly the narrator’s voice. What this evaluation is and how it is rhetorically structured will be developed in the next section.

\begin{tabular}{l}
9a) and said to the men: \\
\hline
b) “I know  \\
c) that the Lord has given you the land,  \\
d) and that your terror has fallen on us,  \\
e) and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you.
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{l}
10a) For we have heard \\
b) the fact that the Lord dried up the waters of the Sea of Reeds before you when you came out of Egypt, \\
c) and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, \\
d) namely that you utterly destroyed them.
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{l}
11a) And when we heard it  \\
b) our hearts melted,  \\
c) and there was no spirit left in any man because of you,  \\
d) because, as for the Lord your God,  \\
e) He is God in heaven above and on earth below.
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{l}
\textsuperscript{343} While the MT ascribes in v. 10c the action against the kings to the agency of the Israelites: (you did), the LXX refers it directly to God: ἐποίησεν (He did). Boling suggests that the MT ‘has assimilated to the person and number of the final verb in the sentence’: וַיַּחרֲמֶם (you [pl.] destroyed) in v. 10d. Cf. Boling, \textit{Joshua}, p. 142. Butler, although acknowledging the LXX as the simplest reading, recognizes also that ‘the theological statement is implicit in either reading’. Cf. Butler, \textit{Joshua}, p. 26.
\end{tabular}
The salient moment of the story actually begins in v. 9 where the introductory formula (wayyiqtol) incorporates a long oration by Rahab (vv. 9b-11e) into the main line of the narrative. The speech, then, begins with the qatal: רָאָשְׁנָה (v. 9b) and is followed by three objective propositions (vv. 9c-e) all introduced by the particle רָאָשְׁנָה. The first one (v. 9c) emphasizes the indirect complement דַּם which, oddly, comes before the direct object and hence attracts the reader’s attention to the recipient of God’s generosity: ‘I know that (to you) the Lord has given the land’ (v. 9c). Two others (vv. 9d-e), equally suggestively, describe the morale of the inhabitants of Jericho, or rather their lack of it.

Commonly, it has been noted that Rahab’s: רָאָשְׁנָה ‘I know’ (v. 9b) parallels antithetically her previous רָאָשְׁנָה אָל ‘I don’t know’ to the King (v. 4e). Thereby, the reader is gradually persuaded as to which side Rahab is on. Soon, it also becomes clear “why”.

The new causal-explanatory clause, introduced again by the particle רָאָשְׁנָה (v. 10a), is followed by three objective clauses (vv. 10b-d) each beginning with רַבָּא → qatal structure. The relative particle רַבָּא in v. 10b and in v. 10d makes nominal whole clauses which follow it, while v. 10b makes nominal only the following verb, making it an equivalent of the participle. This function of the רַבָּא is captured in the translation of the whole sequence, which unfolds as follows: ‘for we have heard the fact that (v. 10b) and what you did to (v. 10c), namely (the fact) that’ (v. 10d). Thereby, Rahab recalls two of the most glorious events of the Israelite wilderness tradition, i.e. deliverance at the Sea of Reeds and the slaughter of the Amorite kings. However, this is not the end of her impressive expertise; the most unexpected statement comes next.

First, two wayyiqtol forms (vv. 11a-b) and its negative equivalent in v. 11c continue the direct speech opened in v. 9b and portray the paralyzing effect of that story on the inhabitants of Jericho. Suddenly, an even more unexpected turn happens when the reader is taken aback by the prostitute’s profession of faith.

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345 Niccacci specifies that this nominalization is not morphological but functional. In other words, qatal or yiqtol does not become a name but functions as a name in the text. Cf. Niccacci, *Lettura Sintattica*, n. 82, p. 69. Also, cf. Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), § 19.3.
The profession of Rahab’s faith (vv. 11d-e) is introduced by the causal-demonstrative particle יְּהֵנָּה and then continued by the two-member structure: casus pendens → nominal phrase. The casus pendens is a name or nominal equivalent which is placed in an extra position before the phrase. Its function, as was discussed previously, is to introduce the subject to be treated and not to emphasize it. The emphasis, instead, falls on the pronominal pronoun אָהֵב which is placed in the first position of the nominal clause (v. 11e) and obviously regains the extra positioned half. The following translation roughly renders the whole construction: ‘Because, as for the Lord your God (casus pendens), He (resumptive and emphatic pronoun) is the God in heaven above and on earth below (apodosis)’ (vv. 11d-e).

Therefore, it did not go unnoticed that the prostitute from Jericho proclaims her faith in God using the most cherished Israelite formulas. John McKenzie writes: ‘Rahab is quoted as being rather well read in the Deuteronomistic tradition of the Exodus and the wilderness’. Nevertheless, one detail did go unnoticed, which will become the “golden thread” of the further analysis, namely: it was the story she heard that changed her life. In other words, the Rahab story is also about the power of the story. This idea will be gradually developed in further analysis. At this point, it is necessary to realize its basis in the text. Hence, the following chart presents again the crucial expressions:

(v. 9) יְּהֵנָּה (v. 11a-c) נַסְתֵּמָה (v. 11d-e)

First, it has been commonly noticed that the whole speech is located at the central part of the chapter. In other words, Rahab’s speech on the roof also occurs at the point of highest dramatic tension within the story, which sheds light on her motivation and further requests. In literary terms, it is the climax of the story. Only at this point does the reader understand the deepest motivation of Rahab’s actions. She acts so strangely because she has heard the story about the powerful Israelite God and made sense of it. The causal-explanatory clause יְּהֵנָּה (v. 10a) with three following objective clauses (vv. 10b-d), which present the content of that story, are at the centre of her speech and

349 Cf. Soggin, Joshua, p. 37.
give reason both to her previously stated knowledge (v. 9) and her further recognition of the omnipotence of God (vv. 11d-e). In between, instead, there is a picturesque account of the devastating power of that story (vv. 11a-c). Thus, it seems that Rahab is not motivated by the particular efforts of the spies, who, in fact, are presented in the story as slightly lost, but is rather motivated by the “rumour” about the powerful deeds of the Israelite God. It was that report which allowed her to envisage something different for her future.

12a) Now then, swear to me by the Lord, 
   b) since I have dealt kindly with you, 
   c) I hope that you will also deal kindly with my father’s house 
   d) and give me a sign of good faith. 
13a) that you will spare my father and my mother, 
    my brothers and sisters and all who belong to them, 
    b) and deliver our lives from death.

Rahab’s personal confession soon results in a covenant.352 The particle שֶׁ (‘now then’) (v. 12a) introduces the current consequence, resulting from events dealt previously. Hence, in Rahab’s argument, the particle שֶׁ highlights a necessary connection between her previous action in favour of the spies and her present request of an oath from them: שֶׁ תְּכַפֵּרָה נָשָׁתָה (‘now swear to me’) (v. 12a).

The following part of her speech is structured as follows: יִ + qatal (v. 12b) → wʻqatal: (four clauses: vv. 12c-13b). Although there are different ways to analyze this section, Niccacci suggests that the best solution is to consider the clause in the v. 12b introduced by יִ as the protasis and the following four wʻqatal clauses as the apodosis.

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351 In v. 12b, the LXX omits the request of the sign by Rahab, but mentions it later in Joshua 2:18, where, in turn, the MT does not have it. Many suggest the superfluity or later insertion of this line to the MT. Cf. Samuel Holmes, Joshua: The Hebrew and Greek Texts (Cambridge: University Press, 1914), pp. 20-21; Soggin, Joshua, 37. Nevertheless, in the present form, Rahab’s asking for the pledge seems natural and in conformity with convention as, for example, in Gen 38:17. Cf. Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar of Joshua, n. 62, p. 134.

In this way, all the elements of the following speech (vv. 12c-13b) become the objects of the verb “swear”.

Moreover, the wqatal that follows the imperative in v. 12c has the function of expressing desire rather than command, since wqatal is not a volitive form here. Consequently, the proposed translation begins with the desiderative form: ‘I hope that you will also deal kindly with my father’s house’ (v. 12c). This apparently insignificant detail reveals to the reader the interior disposition of the woman, namely, that her demand is not pretentious.

Naturally, Rahab’s argument could not miss the two key terms in the context of a treaty, i.e., אַחְרֶה and אֲסִית. As a matter of fact, these two words enclose her request: first, reminding the spies what she had done for them, namely, אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי ‘mercy’ (v. 12b), and then expecting the same in return asking for the sign of their good will: אַחְרֶה אֲסִית (v. 12d).

To sum up, the request, structured in such a way, reveals that Rahab’s decision to help the spies was not random. Assuredly at this point, the reader is led to realize that Rahab’s words and deeds follow a consciously scheduled plan.

14a) And the men said to her, נִאמְרֵךְ לְךָ הָמִישָׁה
b) “Our life will be for yours even to death נָפְשֵׁנָה חָשָׁבַךְ לְמֻתָּה

355 The whole clause (v. 14c) is missing in the LXX.
356 The LXX, which omits the previous line, also changes the subject of the following statement, putting it in Rahab’s mouth: καὶ ἀντὶ ἐπετει̂ ὡς ἀν παραδό γὰρ ῥῦμας ὑμῖν τὴν πόλιν ποιήσατε εἰς ἐμὲ ἔλεος καὶ ἀληθεύσας (Josh 2:14 LXX) ‘and she said, When the Lord shall have delivered the city to you, ye shall deal mercifully and truly with me’ (Josh 2:14 LXE). Apart from the change of the subject of the locution, the LXX, as in v. 18a, envisages also the conquering of the city: τὴν πόλιν, instead of the land. Boling alerts that ‘the text is jumble’. Cf. Boling, Joshua, p. 142. Butler suspects the Greek version as possibly the original, which during the textual transmission was ‘misunderstood and changed to continue the speech of the spies’. Cf. Butler, Joshua, p. 27. Instead, Soggin considers the Greek version as ‘meaningless repetition’. Cf. Soggin, Joshua, p. 37. Apart my presupposed preference for the MT, the Hebrew version is coherent as ‘it reasserts the promise’ required by Rahab, which Boling calls ‘a hendiadys for covenantal integrity’. Boling, Joshua, p. 147; Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, p. 136.
The answer of the spies, surprisingly voiceless to this point, is framed by the introductory formula (v. 14a). Subsequently, their oath is structured by the two double-element constructions. The first one in vv. 14b-c presents the reversed order. The nominal clause, which is the apodosis, (v. 14b) comes first, while the protasis (v. 14c) is second. The presence of yiqtol in the protasis places the whole structure on the axis of the future.\(^{357}\)

The second double-element construction (vv. 14d-e) is introduced by the w\(^{eq}qatal\) form of the verb הָיִשָּׁר, which gives to the structure a consecutive and conclusive aspect. The protasis (v. 14d) is then constituted by the preposition: ב → infinitive, which has the temporal aspect, while the apodosis (v. 14e) is constructed by another w\(^{eq}qatal\) phrase.\(^{358}\) The key term previously formulated by Rahab, namely חסד, ‘mercy’ (v. 12b) now reappears on the lips of the spies, who assure her of her safety during the conquest of the city: "we will deal kindly and faithfully with you" (v.14e).\(^{359}\)

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359 The oath formula has two suffixes of the 2\(^{nd}\) person masculine plural: ‘Our life will be for yours (pl.)’ and ‘if you (pl.) will not tell…’ (vv. 14b-c). This indicates that the oath formula and condition of “not telling” apply to the whole family of Rahab. The suffix of the 2\(^{nd}\) person feminine singular returns only in v. 14 e: ‘we will deal kindly and faithfully with you (sing.).’ After Floss, Winther-Nielsen suggests that this ‘forceful personal address’ highlights perhaps ‘Rahab’s responsibility for the family’, which in turn, removes tension between her previous request of saving the whole family (vv. 12c-13b) and the actual promise of the spies to save only her. Cf. Winther-Nielsen, *A Functional Discourse Grammar*, p. 136.
361 Remarkably, the whole off-line section (vv. 15b-c) explaining the position of Rahab’s house is missing from the LXX and partially (v. 15c) from the Vg. Butler implies that this omission by later tradition is due to the tension with Joshua 6 where the destruction of the walls is reported. Cf. Butler, *Joshua*, p. 27.
The subsequent important step in the plot development is presented in a main narrative line by the wayyitol (v. 15a). Shortly thereafter, the author interrupts the foregrounding and by means of the two nominal clauses (vv. 15b-c) introduced by the explanatory particle יְהַפְּקָדָה conveys the clarification regarding the position of the woman’s home. This comment is necessary for understanding the otherwise unintelligible fact that she let them down through the window. Only after the clarification that her house is a part of the city walls is the reader able to understand that the former action effectively releases the spies from the city. Hence, the particle ki which introduces the whole additional information (vv. 15b-c) clearly has the reader-oriented explicative nuance in order to provide background evidence for the main action of deliverance. 362

The introductory formula בְּרֵאָסֶה in v. 16a opens the subsequent direct speech, which again arouses much discussion because it does not present a chronological record of events and was broadly considered broadly to be a textual incongruence. 363 From the plain reading of the text it is clear that Rahab let the spies down from the window (v. 15a) and then starts again to converse with them (v. 16a). For many, the scene of a woman leaning out of an upstairs window, conversing with the spies standing down below is incomprehensible, since the mission of the two men is being presented in the atmosphere of absolute secrecy. It would be more logical if this conversation happened inside the house. Hence, some translations change the order of the events, rendering the Hebrew wayyiqtol form with the English past perfect: ‘Now she had said to them’ (cf. Josh 2:16 NIV). This reading partially solves the problem as it re-establishes the order, indicating that the conversation had happened before she let the spies down through the window. However, there is no evidence in the text to justify such translation. Since the speech introductory formula in v. 16a is in the wayyiqtol form, the direct speech is firmly linked to the main line. As a result, the flow of communication proceeds in a straightforward manner, leaving the reader with the puzzling logic of an ancient literary composition which does not necessarily expose all events chronologically. This asynchrony will be the object of the literary analysis in the final section.

363 For example, cf. Tucker, ‘The Rahab Saga’, pp. 75-76.
In Rahab’s practical hints for the spies’ safe return (v. 16a-f), the nominal element רָאָה ‘toward the mountain’ is placed before the imperative emphasizing the precise direction of the first phase of their escape. Then, the indicative וְקַטַּל (v. 16d) determines equally precisely the duration of their concealment in the mountains: ‘three days’. Finally, her instructions conclude with the וָאָיֶקֶל (v. 16f). In this structure, the element “x”, i.e., the adverb רַאָה ‘afterwards’ is emphasized, which again strongly confirms that Rahab knows what she is saying and that it would be better if the spies paid attention to her advice.

17a) And the men said to her,  
17b) “We will be guiltless of this oath of yours  
17c) that you have made us swear.  
18a) Behold, when we come into the land  
18b) you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window  
18c) through which you let us down,  
18d) and you shall gather into your house  
18e) your father and mother,  
18f) your brothers, and all your father’s household.

19a) And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of your house into the street,  
19b) his blood shall be upon his head,  
19c) and we will be guiltless:  
19d) and whosoever shall be with you in the house  
19e) his blood shall be on our head,  
19f) if any hand be upon him.

364 There is an error in the MT, as the gender of the demonstrative pronoun should be feminine singular: זאֹת without the article (cf. Gen 24:8). Cf. BDB, § 2543, 2b; Friedeberg, Joshua, p. 40.  
365 The relative clause (v. 17c) is missing in the LXX. Cf. discussion of v. 20c.  
366 Instead of the invasion of the land in the MT, the LXX envisages the entrance ‘into a part/outskirts of the city’: εἰς μέρος τῆς θάλασσας (cf. Josh 2:18 LXX). Butler suggests that the Greek version ‘fits the story better’, while the ‘MT represents theologizing of the tradition’. Cf. Butler, Joshua, p. 27. On the other hand, the Hebrew: בָאָרֶץ ‘into the land’ is more ‘consistent with the conquest theme’. Cf. Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, n. 86, p. 141.  
367 The LXX adds: καὶ θήρασε τὸ σήμαιν ‘and you shall set a sign’ (Josh 2:18 LXX). Soggin takes into consideration that ‘the scarlet cord at the window may also have been the agreed signal for the attack on the city’. Nevertheless, as he rightly observes later, the fact that Rahab placed this cord immediately after the spies left her (cf. v. 21e) would be against this hypothesis. Cf. Soggin, Joshua, p. 42.
20a) But if you tell this business of ours, 

b) then we shall be guiltless of your oath

c) that you have made us swear”.

Not only modern novels delight in unexpected twists. In response to the final advice of Rahab, which could have ended their treaty, the spies continue the conversation by setting other conditions for the pact. Their further specifications are interestingly structured into well-organized unity, where the first clause of their speech (v. 17b) builds an inclusion with the last one (v. 20b), highlighting the theme of their eventual freedom from guilt:

v. 20b: then we shall be guiltless of your oath…

v. 17b: We will be guiltless of this oath…

Overall, it creates an absorbing structure according to the pattern: A→ B, C ← A. First, the spies anticipate the conclusion i.e. the consequence of not keeping the treaty, then present the conditions, and finally, confirm them by repeating the eventual consequence of not keeping the treaty.369

Internally, the two conditions of tying the scarlet cord and gathering the relatives are conveyed by the double-element structure. The particle הָיָה introduces the simple nominal clause, which functions as the protasis presenting the temporal circumstance (v. 18a). The apodosis, instead, which is constructed by two identical phrases: (waw-) x-yigtol (vv. 18b-d), emphatically informs Rahab and the reader about the two conditions, since in both cases the nominal element comes before the verb.370 Especially the first requirement of tying the scarlet cord has gained lots of attention among commentators.

368 The LXX begins v. 20 with the additional condition: ότι δέ τις ἐμᾶς ἀδικήσῃ ‘But if any one should injure us’ (Josh 2:20 LXA), but as in v. 17c omits the final specification ‘that you have made us swear’ (v. 20c). The double omission of the relative clauses in vv. 17c; 20c is ascribed by Holmes to the Hebrew reviser rather than to the Greek translator’s inattention. It would mean that two relative clauses in the actual text are the sign of the expansion of the Hebrew text in respect to its shorter Vorlage. Cf. Holmes, *Joshua*, p. 3. However, Boling and Butler opt respectively, the former for haplography and the latter for a simple omission. Cf. Boling, *Joshua*, p. 142; Butler, *Joshua*, p. 27.

369 A similar structuring of the speech occurs also in Gen 24:41, which again confirms the fact that repetition in the text is not always a sign of editorial blunder. Cf. Niccacci, *Lettura Sintattica*, p. 73.

In this section, it is enough to remark that this element efficiently stimulates the imagination of the reader.

Further, the construct הַיְצֵל (v. 19a) introduces another double-element structure, which specifies more precisely the second condition of gathering all the relatives into Rahab’s home.\(^{371}\) The first nominal clause (v. 19a) is the *casus pendens* which indicates the case to be considered. In this story, it is the fate of those who will eventually go out from Rahab’s house into the street. Then, the nominal clause, which functions as the apodosis, clearly states the consequence of such an action: ‘his blood shall be upon his head’ (v. 19b). The second nominal clause adds the information which, relating to the above mentioned inclusion, is like a golden thread through this part: אֲחָסִרְך נֶפֶש ‘we will be guiltless’ (v. 19c).

The same structure of *casus pendens* → nominal clause + nominal clause re-appears in vv. 19d-f. Here, in a parallel way, the fate of those who will stay with Rahab is considered. The last condition of not telling anyone of the spies’ business (v. 20a) is sealed by an inclusion (v. 20b) that concludes the pact, giving the impression that the whole speech is a more thoughtful reflection on the initial spontaneous adherence to Rahab’s request. Clearly, the theme of eventual blamelessness has acquired prominence by the force of triple repetition.

21a) And she said,  
21b) “According to your words, so be it”.  
21c) Then she sent them away,  
21d) and they departed.  
21e) And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

22a) They went  
22b) and came unto the mountain,  
22c) and stayed there three days  
22d) until the pursuers returned.


\(^{372}\) The whole clause is missing from the LXX. Perhaps this omission is due to the tension it would create with the command of the spies to tie the cord only when they will be coming to conquer the land (vv. 18a-c). Cf. Holmes, *Joshua*, p. 22.

\(^{373}\) The LXX omits the Hebrew clause: דִּקְרֵאתָבָה קִרְפֵיס ‘until the pursuers returned’ (v. 22d) which creates a logical problem, informing first about the return of the pursuers and only then reporting their search for
After Rahab’s sober but forcible agreement (vv. 21a-b), the action resolves very quickly in the main line of the narrative with a series of narrative wayyiqtol (vv. 21c-24a). However, there are two hooks which may attract the reader’s attention in the above section. The first one is thematic and the second rhetorical.

In fact, the reader may be surprised by Rahab’s promptness in tying the red cord (v. 21e), which might have aroused the suspicion of the residents of Jericho. However, more absorbing for this section is the second one, as it deals with the mechanics of narrative.

In the v. 22f: לא is not x-qatal but is the negative form of wayyiqtol. The sole, brief off-line clause of x-qatal type is ‘until the pursuers returned’ in v. 22d. There is a subtlety of the Hebrew style here, as this circumstantial information is given before the main-line reference to the pursuers’ futile chase (vv. 22e-f). Perhaps this short literary anticipation is designed to help the reader grasp a situational irony which consists in hearing about the “feverish tracking” while already knowing that the spies are safe. Moreover, this off-line communication may be an allusion to Rahab’s

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373 The verb לָא ‘and they came’ (v. 23d) is missing from the LXX. Against Holmes, Van Der Louw does not consider this omission as a sign for a different (shorter) Vorlage, but rather as the condensation of the Greek style. Cf. Van Der Louw, ‘Translator’s Competence’, p. 17.
374 The verb והם ‘and they came’ (v. 23d) is missing from the LXX. Against Holmes, Van Der Louw does not consider this omission as a sign for a different (shorter) Vorlage, but rather as the condensation of the Greek style. Cf. Van Der Louw, ‘Translator’s Competence’, p. 17.
375 More likely this information serves to highlight Rahab’s readiness in fulfilling the oath. Cf. Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, p. 141.
words (v. 16e) and suggest that the spies faithfully kept her indications. Hence, it is clear that the reader is led to notice something important for the understanding of the plot, namely, that the spies dance to Rahab’s tune.

Baffling fidelity to Rahab’s words is also revealed in the conclusion of the story. The particle יִקְרַא (v. 24b) which opens the report to Joshua is emphatic,\(^{377}\) adding the triumphal tone to the spies’ statement, which again, no more and no less, repeats Rahab’s words from v. 9. Further, Claassen has proved that the particle יִקְרַא can sometimes have a speaker-oriented function within the narrative, which ‘indicates the structure of an argument, the speaker’s own position towards his hearer and towards the factors which have influenced him’.\(^{378}\) If this is the case, the particle יִקְרַא has the function here to highlight the direct communication between the narrator and a reader.

As the spies return to Joshua, the second chapter is concluded by the “sending-receiving” inclusion which marks the boundaries of the episode. However, the syntactical texture, i.e. *wayyiqtol* in Joshua 3:1, reminds the reader that this story is just an intriguing episode within the broader literary context.

### 3.4.1 The Encoded Reader in Joshua 2

The syntactical analysis conducted according to the principles of the text-linguistics elaborated by Niccacci allowed me to single out linguistic codes relevant to the process of communication. Now, based on previous analyses, I will articulate more clearly how these features, perceived in Joshua 2, may guide the process of linguistic communication by directing the reader’s attitude toward presented information (linguistic attitude), revealing the “two-dimensional” technique of conveying information in the main or secondary line of the narrative (linguistic prominence), or alerting him/her to the eventual temporal asynchrony within the narrative (linguistic perspective).

The following table schematically illustrates the overall structure of the Rahab story and displays the above described phenomena. The letter ‘N’ means the narrative parts; ‘D’ marks dialogues in the form of direct speech, while “C” indicates a comment.

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\(^{378}\) Claassen, ‘Speaker-Oriented Function of *Kî’*, p. 44.
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahab’s coming up to the roof (8a-b)</td>
<td>↑ C: ‘Unil the pursuers return’-a comment (22d)</td>
<td>N: The chase of the pursuers (22e-f)</td>
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<td>N: Returning of the spies to Joshua (23a-e)</td>
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<td>N: Introductory formula (24a)</td>
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<td>D: Final report of the spies to Joshua (24b-c)</td>
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From the perspective of the linguistic attitude, the syntactical-textual analysis of Joshua 2 has brought to light an interesting correlation between the narrative sections and direct speech. As a matter of fact, direct speech scenes dominate in Joshua 2. The narrative sections are barely essential and in some instances, especially in the second half, are reduced to formulaic introductions. It has been mentioned that, from the literary point of view, this arrangement corresponds to the common principle of biblical narration, which is referred to as a “telling vs. showing” convention. The alternation between narration and direct speech, which in the Rahab story boils down to reported speech or simply dialogues, develops a feeling of attending a sort of “slide show”. The narrative parts are fast and essentially move the plot forward, while in the “dialogue scenes” the reader is offered an insight into the main points of the story. In fact, the dialogues directly entangle the reader in the communication process and invite him/her to commit himself/herself more personally to the event. Altogether, there are 62 clauses of reported speech arranged into 10 dialogue scenes, while there are only 29 narrative clauses, out of which 10 are introductory formulas, and finally 11 clauses which constitute the narrator’s comment.

In fact, from the point of the linguistic prominence, the only considerable interruption of the narrative flow is the comment constituting a dramatic pause in the story (vv. 6-8). As will be shown in the last section, this is the instance when the voice of the narrator and his evaluation is most clearly perceivable to the reader. Three others are: the comment in v. 1f, when the narrator pauses to convey the name of the heroine. The second one occurs in vv. 15 b-c, when further information is given about the position of Rahab’s house, and finally is the comment in v. 22d, when the narrator makes an allusion that the spies were hidden in the mountain until the pursuers return to the city. All of them provide circumstantial information (explicatory glosses) to the events displayed in the main line of the narrative by the chain of wayyiqtol’s. Hence, from this textual perspective the reader is able to ponder the unfolding narrative hierarchically, where the circumstantial information provides a background for the main fore-grounded action.

Finally, the linguistic perspective, which offers the reader coordinates about the temporal distribution of information, allows one to detect in the Rahab story an
asynchrony in the temporal flow of the narrative. The most obvious is the recovered information or flashback in v. 6b, which has the function of recalling the information already given to clarify it. Also, the wayyiqtol introductory formula in v. 16a, which for many does not present a chronological record of events, in this case, was an obstacle to smoothing chronological shifts, but in this way stimulates even more the reader’s curiosity to understand the reason for the informational displacement. Finally, the comment in v. 22d also interferes with the chronological order of the linear unfolding of events, as it anticipates the information about the return of the pursuers. All these phenomena undoubtedly stimulate the reader to reconstruct information in a chronological order, but primarily challenge him/her to explain their purposes in the story.

In conclusion, the story gives the audience diverse impressions. It can steer the reader’s attention not only by its profound content, but also by its syntactical and rhetoric fabric, which stimulates the reader’s imagination and involves him/her in the world of the story. The present chapter specified the textual perspective, which will become the blueprint for the interpretative reading of the perplexed reader in the last section of the thesis.
CHAPTER 4: THE “AFTERLIFE” OF THE RAHAB STORY

In a certain sense, the history of reception resembles a deconstruction process. In the second chapter, the hypothetical “fusion” of the Rahab story was outlined: from the oral stage(s), through various literary editions, to its final destination in the Book of Joshua. In actuality, the real “collision” and “decomposition” takes place when a reader begins reading the text. In such a process, the text ‘undergoes bizarre and unpredictable mutations’ and becomes the pretext for a profusion of meta-stories.379

Until now, my focus was on the internal-literary context of the Rahab story and its structures that mediate the dialogue between the narrator and the reader. Henceforth, my methodological procedures will proceed, in some measure, from the internal-literary to the external-historical context of the Rahab story. The investigation of the external-historical context extricates a certain “spaciousness” from the methodological model of communication adopted in the first chapter and not only allows for enquiry into the two-dimensional interaction between the text and the reader, but also opens that dialogue toward the third dimension, i.e. the text’s reception. David P. Parris rightly notices that the awareness of such a facet ‘provides a means for us to engage our rich heritage of biblical interpretation in a manner that not only allows us to grasp how our tradition has shaped who we are, but also to realize that we are active participants in the ongoing process of that living tradition’.380

Thus, my purpose now is to reveal two principal tendencies in Rabbinic and early Christian tradition, which dictated interpretative trends for centuries and, as I will try to demonstrate, are sometimes continued up to today. It must be remarked, however, that the following section is not intended to trace the reception history of the Rahab story in an exhaustive manner.381 Instead of encompassing the over-extensive collection of data, I will follow the two main streams, highlighting some of the most important factors which caused the Rabbis and the Fathers of the Church to interpret the Rahab story in their own distinctive ways. The ultimate goal is to perceive how those

380 Parris, Reception Theory, p. IX.
381 The Book of Joshua, which provides the immediate literary context for the Rahab story, has a long and fairly well-attested history of reception in both the Jewish and Christian tradition. Cf. Thomas R. Elßner, Josua und seine Kriege in Jüdischer und Christlicher Rezeptionsgeschichte, ThFr 37 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008); The Book of Joshua, ed. by Ed Noort, BETL 250 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), pp. 511-647. The following review concerns only with the Rahab story.
interpretations overlap and set the pattern for subsequent generations of readers. In other words, the objective is not to detect every possible exegesis of the Rahab story, but to perceive how this story has been relevant for a non-authorial audience.

4.1 The Midrash Rahab

The word “midrash” (מִדְרַש) meaning ‘to study’ or ‘to investigate’ became a technical term for a rabbinic method of interpreting Scripture. More specifically:

The term ‘midrash’ designates an exegesis which, going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious. The Talmud (Sanh. 34b) compares this kind of midrashic exposition to a hammer which awakens the slumbering sparks in the rock. 382

The Rahab story was repeatedly subjected to such rabbinic “hammering”, which resulted in many configurations of “flying sparks” in all possible directions. For example, one tradition credited Rahab with extraordinary beauty similar to that of other heroines of the biblical narratives, Sarah, Abigail and Esther:

The Rabbis taught: There have been four women of surpassing beauty in the world – Sarah, Rahab, Abigail and Esther […]. Our Rabbis taught: Rahab inspired lust by her name; Jael by her voice; Abigail by her memory; Michal daughter of Saul by her appearance. R. Isaac said: Whoever says, ‘Rahab, Rahab’, at once has an issue. Said R. Nahman to him: I say Rahab, Rahab, and nothing happens to me! He replied: I was speaking of one who knows her and is intimate with her (b. Meg. 15a). 383

It seems that Rahab owes her beauty, a quality which is completely ignored by the biblical story, to the kindness she demonstrated toward the Israelite spies. Perhaps this illustrates the truth of the maxim that “good” must also be beautiful. 384 The second part of the comment, instead, indicates that the name of the heroine is not accidental and can spark interpretative imagination. In the above case, the meaning of the Hebrew root וֹרֶה,
which evokes the idea of “spaciousness” or “broadness”, was processed within the patriarchal society to evoke clearly masculine sexual association.  

Another source, unlike the biblical narrator who is restrained in explicit characterization, delights in filling the gaps. First, it identifies the unnamed spies as Phinehas and Caleb, then describes minutely their mission in Jericho undercover as potters, and most importantly offers an interpretation of the unexpected singular form of the Hebrew personal pronoun in the verb: וָתִּצְפְנֹ (v. 4b).

Who were they? Our Rabbis thought: They were Phinehas and Caleb [...]. Phinehas said to her: ‘I am a priest and priests are compared to angels’; [...] and an angel, if he wishes, can be visible, and if he wishes he can be invisible [...]. Phinehas, then, said to Rahab: ‘I am a priest and do not need to be hidden. Hide Caleb, my companion. I will stand before them and they will not see me.’ She did so; as my be inferred from verse, And the woman took the two men, and she hid him (Josh. II, 4): not ‘she hid them’, but ‘she hid him’ is written. This proves that she did not hide Phinehas but only Caleb (Num. Rab. 16:1).

As it is clearly seen, rabbis are very keen in detecting even small anomalies in the text, which can inspire their imaginations. Those associations, however, are governed by the strict rule of rabbinic exegesis, which allows the illumination of the passage by other biblical references. Hence, the intercontextual reading of the Rahab story, privileged by some modern scholars, is not original but has a long history of practice. For example, according to the late, probably thirteenth century midrash, (Eshet Hayil 31:21), Rahab is seen as the personification of ‘a woman of valor’ described in Proverbs 31:10-31. The association of the expression: תִּקְוַת חוּט הַשָנִּי (Josh 2:18) with: לָבֻש שָנִּים (Prov 31:21), allows this interpretative connection to be established and confirms the scarlet cord in the Rahab story to be a symbol of Rahab’s bravery. Another, even later rabbinic tradition, preserved in the Midrash HaGadol (Chayei Sara 23:1), also implies that the Proverbs 31:21 esteems Rahab. It also indicates the “origin” of the scarlet cord

385 Baskin reiterates after Cohen: ‘Classical rabbinic Judaism has always been, and in many circles still is, a male dominated culture, whose virtuosi and authorities are males, whose paragon of normality in all legal discussions is the adult Jewish male, whose legal rulings in many areas of life (notably marriage and ritual observance) accord men greater privilege than women, and whose values define public communal space as male space’. Judith R. Baskin, Midrashic Women, Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature (Hanover, NH; London: University Press of New England, 2002), p 2.
389 ‘She is not afraid for her household when it snows, for all her household are clothed in crimson [לָבֻש שָנִּים]’ (Prov 31:21 NRVS).
suggesting that that the spies could be twin brothers: Perez and Zerah. The latter would offer her the scarlet thread which was tied around his hand during his birth (cf. Gen 38:28).

As is shown by the above examples, the ‘sparks’ of rabbinitic exegesis flew in many different directions. However, a careful look at the immense collection of data reveals a brighter beam. As a matter of fact, from the great variety of passages preserved in the most diverse collections, the figure of Rahab emerges as the exemplary convert to Judaism.

4.1.1 Rahab: The Proselyte

While navigating the rabbinic literature, the first impression one receives is that their interpretative focus is on the main character of the story rather than on the story itself. Rabbis took almost for granted the plot of the action bringing to the foreground the character of Rahab and her deliberations. On the other hand, this accords with the dynamic of the story, which is designed to put the main character in the foreground. The Rabbis’ insightful readings, however, do not stem from nowhere but are textually based. In the production of the image of Rahab as the Jewish proselyte, they aptly spotted the climax of the story, considering Rahab’s discourse (vv. 10-11) to be the interpretative key. In fact, plenty of their comments orbited around Rahab’s confession, which was considered nothing less than an irrefutable argument for her conversion. An example is the passage from Deuteronomy Rabah which emphasizes the excellence of Rahab’s recognition of God in comparison to those of Jethro and Naaman:

The rabbis say: Jethro attributed reality to idols, as it is said, Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods (Ex. XVIII, 11). Naaman partly acknowledged them, as it is said, Behold, now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel (II Kings V, 15). Rahab placed God in heaven and upon earth, as it is said, For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath… (Deut. Rab. 2:26-27).

Unlike the deficient recognition of God by Jethro and Naaman, Rahab’s confession is exemplary, as she unambiguously recognizes the sovereignty of the Israelite God. It is


391 The inquiry into the rabbinic literature encompasses a variety of material which stretches broadly from the first century up to the comments of medieval rabbi Shlomo Itzhaki (Rashi). The review, then, must be selective and is thematic rather than historio-chronological.

precisely her whole-hearted confession that constitutes a principal argument for Rabbis to consider her as a prominent example of the proselyte.\footnote{Judith Baskin, ‘The Rabbinic Transformations of Rahab the Harlot’, \textit{NDEJ} 11/2 (1979), 141-57 (p. 145).} Often, the passages go far beyond the paraphrase of the biblical version and transform Rahab’s modest praise into a touching plea for forgiveness:

\begin{quote}
They say: Rahab was ten years old when Israel went out from Egypt. And during all the forty years that Israel was in the wilderness, she practiced harlotry. At the end of her fiftieth year, she became a proselyte, saying before the Holy One, blessed be He: “I have sin in three things, forgive me because of three things, because of the cord, the window and the wall,” as it is said: “Then she let them down by a cord through the window; for her house was upon the side of the wall, and she dwelt upon the wall” (\textit{Mek. R. Ishmael: Amalek III}).\footnote{Mekilta De-Rabbi Ishmael: A Critical Edition, Based on Manuscripts and Early Editions, with an English Translation, Introduction, and Notes, ed. by Jacob Z. Lauterbach, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), p. 272. Also, cf. \textit{b. Zebah}. 116a-b.}
\end{quote}

This interpretation may indicate that the rabbinic formula was directed to anyone who might have dwelt on his/her past, convincing them that “the sins of youth” are not an obstacle to a new beginning. It does not matter that the story was shredded by such procedures; in return, the message to potential proselytes was articulated even more emphatically.

It should be noted, however, that the biblical text is not as univocal as is the Rabbis’ belief about Rahab’s proselytism. In the light of textual data, it is preferable to speak about the recognition or praise of God than the conversion.\footnote{Baskin writes: ‘In the pentateuchal period, “Judaism” was the national religion of Israel; it was natural that only members of that nation should practice it. In this light, Rahab’s declaration […] (Josh. 2:11), seems sincere praise of Israel’s God by the adherent of another national religion’. Baskin, ‘The Rabbinic Transformations’, p. 142.} As a matter of fact, biblical literature registers several examples of similar praise of Israel’s God without making those speaking the praise members of Israel. Among these are Jethro (Ex 18), Balaam (Num 22-24) and Naaman (2Kings 5).\footnote{Cf. Baskin, ‘The Rabbinic Transformations’, p. 142.} Also, the words the Egyptians proclaimed at the shores of the Sea (Ex 14:25) in a certain sense resemble the glorification of the omnipotence of God as they fulfil God’s prediction to Moses: ‘the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord’ (Ex 14:4; cf. also Ex 14:18).\footnote{Cf. Jean-Louis Ska, \textit{Le Passage de la Mer: Étude de la Construction, du Stile et de la Symbolique d’Ex 14, 1-31}, AnBib 109 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1986), p. 79.} Moreover, Rahab’s confession, although most likely modeled on the Deuteronomistic formula (cf. Deut 4:39), reveals a significant divergence from it. While the Deuteronomistic formula

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\end{enumerate}
is unambiguously monotheistic, Rahab’s confession peculiarly omits the words: ‘there is no other [God]’.\(^{398}\) Hence, taking into account Rahab’s profession as well as the assurance of Joshua 6:23 that Rahab lived outside Israel’s camp, the most proper stand would be to consider Rahab as a ‘ger-toshav’ (a resident alien) who benefited from Israel’s protection.\(^{399}\) Thus, it should be recognized that in the process of transformation of Rahab from eulogist into declared convert historical circumstances played the crucial role. Baskin aptly notes:

> The Diaspora of Jews in the Greco-Roman world and increased contacts with sophisticated gentiles provided fertile ground for Jewish conversionary activities […]. In such a climate, Jewish religious leaders were anxious to find biblical and historical models of proselytes worthy of emulation.\(^{400}\)

Presenting Rahab as a model convert thus had wide-ranging consequences which influenced further rabbinic commentaries. If she had to be an archetype of the proselyte, as well as a metaphor of positive Jewish influence among gentiles, according to some, her reputation as a prostitute had to be tweaked, and according to others, she had to be provided with a pedigree. Consequently, plenty of rabbinic interpretative efforts moved in these directions.

### 4.1.2 Rahab: Harlot or Hostess?

The ambiguity about Rahab’s “profession” has become apparent from the early stages of the story’s reception. The LXX calls her: γυναικὸς πόρνης (a harlot), which is the

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\(^{400}\) Baskin, ‘The Rabbinic Transformations’, p. 143. She detects even earlier external circumstances favorable to the transmutation of Rahab into a declared convert. She writes that ‘Judaism, under prophetic influence, became a strictly monotheistic religion, the idea of complete conversion to Israel’s God and the practice of His law by members of foreign nations became possible and even deliverable’. Baskin, ‘The Rabbinic Transformations’, p. 143.
plain translation of the Hebrew expression: אִשָּׁה צוֹנָה found in the MT. Instead, Josephus Flavius, in his rendition of the story portrays Rahab as an innkeeper. It is worth quoting the beginning of his version, because together with the *Targum Jonathan* on Joshua 2:1 it is often evoked by modern scholars as the source of the controversy about Rahab’s profession.

Now when he [Joshua] had pitched his camp, the spies came to him immediately, well acquainted with the whole state of the Canaanites; for at first, before they were at all discovered, they took a full view of the city of Jericho without disturbance, and saw which parts of the walls were strong, and which parts were otherwise, and, indeed, insecure, and which of the gates were so weak as might afford an entrance to their army. Now those who met them took no notice of them when they saw them, and supposed they were only strangers, who used to be very curious in observing everything in the city, and did not take them for enemies; but in the evening they retired to a certain inn [ἐκ τοῦ ἐκταγομένου] that was near the wall, where they went to eat their supper; which supper, when they had done, and were considering how to get away, information was given to the king as he was at supper, that there were some persons come from the Hebrews’ camp to view the city as spies, and that they were in the inn kept by Rahab [Ῥαὰβῆς καταγωγίῳ], and were very solicitous that they might not be discovered. So he sent immediately some to them, and commanded to catch them, and bring them to him, that he might examine them by torture, and learn what their business was there (*Ant.* 5:5-8).

First of all, Josephus’ reworking of the story is notable in that it perceives how the personal experience of a reader influences his/her interpretation. In fact, Josephus abundantly fills the gaps and blurs the ambiguities of the biblical story. This process results clearly from his professional knowledge as the former commander of Jewish forces against Romans. Unlike the biblical story, his version portrays the spies as being well-trained in military terms and knowing exactly how to go unnoticed and what the strategic points of the city are. In Josephus’ version there is no room for the humour and irony that emerge from the biblical story. As he would know that spying is a serious matter, he portrayed spies as professionals. Perhaps, in this context, it would be simply unprofessional to let the spies into the prostitute’s house. Hence he opted for another tradition, presenting Rahab as an innkeeper.

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401 Similarly, the New Testament references to Rahab (Jas 2:25; Heb 11:31) induce the same meaning as indicated by the Greek apposition: ἔπαθα ἡ πόρνη.
Similarly, in the Targum Jonathan the word פֻנדְקֵיתָא is used, which generally has the meaning of ‘innkeeper’ or ‘hostess’.\textsuperscript{404} It seems, however, than this expression still induced a pejorative meaning, hence it can be considered at most a euphemism.\textsuperscript{405} Other rabbinic sources are also divergent on the issue. While the majority portrays Rahab as a prostitute, some others try to “whiten” her profession and consider her a hostess.\textsuperscript{406}

After all, venerable Rabbi Shlomo Itzhaki (Rashi) is also aware of that tradition and portrays Rahab as an innkeeper. He is adducing to the etymological similarity between words זונה and מזונות, assuming that both names stem from the same root: זון (to prepare food).\textsuperscript{407} The voice from his commentary reads: ‘Innkeeper: זונה. Targum Jon. renders: Innkeeper, one who sells various foodstuffs (מזונות)’.\textsuperscript{408}

The debate initiated in antiquity has continued along the two traditions up to modern times. Many scholars still argue about Rahab’s profession. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult to define clearly what is at the heart of the controversy: the philological contingency or the historical concession.

### 4.1.3 Rahab’s Family Tree

The direct consequence of Rahab’s adoption as a convert was the elaboration of her pedigree. Providing Rahab with progeny had a twofold purpose. It was a sign of the effectiveness of her conversion but at the same time a token of reward for those who


\textsuperscript{405} Cohen Chayim points out: ‘as first noted by Kimḥi (on Josh. 2:1), the adherents of this theory simply misunderstood the Targum, for the Targum to the Prophets in various passages also renders zonah by pundeqētā, plural pundeqāyăn or pundeqā‘ān (e.g., 1 Kings 3:16; Ezek. 23:44), in which it cannot possibly have been understood to mean anything but “prostitute.” Therefore, the Targum’s rendering of Hebrew “prostitute” with the Aramaic form “innkeeper” is to be understood either as a euphemism or as an intended double entendre, implying that there is a connection between bars or inns and prostitutes’. Cohen Chayim, ‘Rahab’, in \textit{Encyclopaedia Judaica}, ed. by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn, vol. 17 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), pp. 66-67 (p. 66).


\textsuperscript{407} Again Cohen Chayim insightfully explains: ‘The second tradition contends that Rahab was not a prostitute at all but an innkeeper. This tradition (e.g., Rashi on Josh. 2:1) is based on the Targum’s rendering of zonah as pundekīta (pundeqīta), the assumption being that this word means, like pundakīt (pundaqīt) in Hebrew, “hostess, innkeeper,” and the derivation of the word zonah (normally “prostitute”) from the same stem as mazon (מזון, “food”). If Rahab had been merely an innkeeper, then the shame of considering a former prostitute to be the ancestress of some of Israel’s most important figures would cease to be a problem’. Cohen Chayim, ‘Rahab’, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{408} ‘Rashi’s Commentary to Joshua 2’, in \textit{The Complete Jewish Bible with Rashi Commentary} [http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15786/jewish/Chapter-2.htm#showrashi=true] [accessed 8 December 2014].
might consider such a possibility. The sources abound, resulting in an extensive family tree of one of the most cherished matrons of Judaism.

For example, in *Numbers Rabah*, Rahab is presented as a convert who rescued the Israelite spies. The reward for such brave and compassionate action is her descendants, among whom are prominent figures such as the prophets Jeremiah and Baruch. The reference to the priests and prophets in the lineage strengthened considerably the manifesto that Rahab was indeed blessed for her resolution. Another tradition goes further, including the prophetess Huldah in the list of descendants. On the occasion of the dispute regarding the prophetess Huldah in the genealogy of Rahab, the most spectacular tradition is born where she is betrothed to Joshua.

R. Nahman said: Huldah was a descendant of Joshua […]. 'Ena Saba cited the following in objection to R. Nahman: 'Eight prophets who were also priests were descended from Rahab the harlot, namely, Neriah, Baruch, Seraiyah, Mahseyah, Jeremiah, Hilkiah, Hanamel and Shallum.' R. Judah says: Huldah the prophetess was also one of the descendants of Rahab the harlot […] – He replied: ' ‘Ena Saba […] –the truth can be found by combining my statement and yours’. We must suppose that she became a proselyte and Joshua married her. But had Joshua any children? Is it not written, Nun his son, Joshua his son? […] He had no sons, but he had daughters (b. Meg. 14b).

The common denominator of all these traditions was the willingness to propagate the effectiveness of Rahab’s conversion and the strict correlation between conversion and reward, which was manifested in such a noble genealogy. Very likely, such a message was elaborated to address some challenges within communities that had already been composed of converts or perhaps to convince other potential proselytes to seek a new beginning within Judaism. Hence, again it is clearly seen that the interpretative process of rabbis was strongly influenced by the community/world’s plight.

Finally, the rabbinic exegesis also detects the clash between the deuteronomistic command of proscribing the inhabitant of the land and Rahab’s survival, which is still the subject of many inquiries among modern scholars. Thus, the saving of Rahab and her household is read off as an expression of Israel’s disobedience, which will have afflicting consequences for the nation. In the following passage, the affliction is fulfilled in the mission of Jeremiah, “the grandson” of Rahab.

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Although there are different modern explanations of this problem (cf. the second chapter) which differ from that reported above, both modern exegetes and ancient sages share the same textual realization as the point of interpretative departure, i.e. that the act of the saving of Rahab clashes with the Deuteronomistic law of proscribing to death the natives of the conquered cities.

In conclusion, the rabbinic processing of Rahab’s story resulted in depicting its heroine as a successful convert and a prominent figure within Judaism. According to Baskin, three factors played important roles in this process of transformation. These are: ‘The rabbinic view of the proselyte, evolving Jewish attitudes toward prostitution, and the appropriation and reinterpretation of rabbinic commentary and typology by early Christianity’. 414

This transformation deprived the biblical story of its narrative dynamic and pulls it out of the literary context. In fact, the rabbis focused primarily on selected passages that attracted their interpretative interest, ignoring the coherence of the whole story. Such procedures inevitably wipe out many narrative nuances and ambiguities, subordinating them to the interpretative assumptions of the sages. This changed the Rahab story into a kind of “embryonic” paradigm of Rahab the proselyte, which was more easily assimilated by new socio-historical circumstances.

Finally, from the post-modern perspective it is advisable to remark that the process of Rahab’s transformation, which happened in a patriarchal society, unravels ‘the efficacy of Judaism and its tradition in taming the disordering powers of female sexuality’. 415 Baskin develops this idea, arguing that: ‘Rahab’s conversion may be seen as a form of domestication. This formerly notorious prostitute, who epitomized all the dangers of the gentile temptress, was rendered benign when she adopted the non-

415 Baskin, Midrashic Women, p. 155.
threatening guise of compliant Jewish wife and mother.\textsuperscript{416} Such a “conciliated” image of Rahab was, and in most cases still is, promoted by Jewish educational programs, which mirror not only the data of the biblical story, but also the rabbinic interpretations/transformations of that story. As a matter of fact, Rahab’s journey from the sinful past to the prominent role as the devoted wife of Joshua as well as the mother of priests and prophets was and is retold in modern Jewish contexts, highlighting the profuse reward for her declaration.\textsuperscript{417}

\section*{4.2 The Homily on Rahab}

As in Judaism, so also in early Christianity, Rahab was a very popular figure. She owes her popularity to three allusions mentioning her in the Christian Bible (cf. Mat 1:5, Heb 11:31; Jas 2:24-26). As a matter of fact, Rahab’s story has been read by Christians not so much within its original literary context, i.e. the Book of Joshua, but within the broader context of the Christian Bible. Sometimes, it seems that those three allusions are more important for the interpretative process than the entire original story. In any case, they constitute a kind of filter through which early Christian readers (Fathers of the Church) read this story. Hence, in order to glimpse the common pattern in early Christian interpretation of Rahab’s story, first of all, attention must be paid to these three New Testament allusions.\textsuperscript{418}

\subsection*{4.2.1 In the Lineage of Christ}

At the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, Rahab is presented as the wife of Salmon (or Salma) and the mother of Boaz in the royal lineage of King David leading to Jesus Christ.

\begin{quote}
An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, […] and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab […] and Jesse the father of King David […] and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah (Mat 1:1-16; NRSV).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{416} Baskin, \textit{Midrashic Women}, pp. 159-160.
\textsuperscript{418} As in the case of rabbinic literature, the approach is thematic rather than historio-chronological. In other words, I do not trace the process of historical formation of traditions.
There are several problems with this tradition. Although Jewish exegesis delighted in providing Rahab with an extended family tree, none of the traditions “marries” Salmon (father of Boaz) to Rahab, who in this way will be included in the royal lineage of David.\(^{419}\) Secondly, if Rahab is to be the mother of Boaz, she must have lived sometime later. In fact, there is a historical span between Rahab of the time of the settlement of Israelis in Canaan and Rahab mother of Boaz in the unspecified time of the Judges (cf. Ruth 1:1). Thirdly, there is a different spelling of her name in the Gospel and in the LXX. While in the Gospel her name is transcribed as Ραχαβ, in the LXX it is recorded differently as 'Ρααβ.\(^{420}\) All these divergences might suggest that these are two different heroines.\(^{421}\) However, Raymond Brown supports the idea that Matthew in his Gospel refers to the biblical Rahab from Jericho.\(^{422}\) Despite the mismatches and queries, it seems that one of the reasons for the inclusion of Rahab in the messianic lineage was ‘to emphasize the non Jewish elements among Christ’s ancestors and to indicate that he came to bring salvation to all men. This should be a typological finger-post. Rahab, the pagan ancestor of Christ, is a type of the pagans whom Christ came to save’.\(^{423}\) Another reason would be to highlight the unexpected ways in which God brings salvation.\(^{424}\)

\(^{419}\) Although Zakowitch tentatively argues that this association may be a result of a midrashic development which the author of the Gospel was acquainted with. Cf. Yair Zakowitch, ‘Rahab als Mutter des Boas in der Jesus-Genealogie (Matth. 1 5)’, NovT 17 (1975), 1-5. Instead, John Hutchison’s argument for inclusion of four women in the genealogy of Christ is not so much to bring attention to the persons, but rather the stories those heroines represent. In this light, Rahab will be a representative of the Conquest story. Cf. John C. Hutchison, ‘Woman, Gentiles, and the Messianic Mission in Matthew’s Genealogy’, BSac 158 (2001), 152-64.

\(^{420}\) According to Richard Bauckhman, the different transliteration is possible and means only that Mathew in this case differs from the LXX. Instead, he ponders: ‘Reference to an otherwise completely unknown Rahab or Rachab would be much more difficult to explain than an unusual spelling of the famous Rahab’s name’. Richard Bauckham, ‘Tamar’s Ancestry and Rahab’s Marriage: Two Problems in the Matthean Genealogy’, NovT 37/4 (1995), 313-29 (p. 321).

\(^{421}\) J. D. Quinn argues that Rahab from the Gospel is unknown woman. Cf. Jerome D. Quinn, ‘Is RAXAB in Mt 1:5 Rahab of Jericho?’, Bib 62 (1981), 225-28. However, he fails to provide the reason for inclusion of an unknown woman in the Genealogy of Christ.


\(^{423}\) Jean Daniélou, ‘Rahab a Type of the Church’, in From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), pp. 244-60 (p. 245). Similarly, cf. Bauckham, ‘Tamar’s Ancestry’, pp. 313-29. One of the objections against this proposal would be that in the rabbinic tradition, as it has been demonstrated, Rahab was presented as the proselyte and not so much as a foreigner. Cf. Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, pp. 72-73.

\(^{424}\) Cf. Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, pp. 73-74.
This understanding of Rahab’s presence in the genealogy of Christ would influence early Christian commentators in elaborating her image as a type of the Church.

### 4.2.2 Rahab the Example of Salvation

The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Letter of James highlight two different aspects of the Rahab story. While the first focuses on Rahab’s faith, the second one favours her deeds. From the perspective of contemporaneous readers these seem like a midrashic juxtaposition of two contrasting views on the issue. Thus, in the letter to the Hebrews, the reader is persuaded that Rahab was saved by her faith:

> By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace (Heb 11:29-31; NRSV).

After mentioning eight forefathers of Israel (cf. Heb 11:4-28), the author also includes Rahab in his treatise. Despite being a woman of foreign origin and a prostitute, she is presented as an example of unshakeable faith.\(^{425}\) Pointing out Rahab as the heroine of faith must have been very impressive for the readers/listeners of Letter of James because, in the context of the battle of Jericho, one would rather expect Joshua to be commended.\(^{426}\) First of all, it indicates that in Judeo-Christian circles, at the turn of the first century, this story was very popular, and hence the audience would readily understand the allusion. In fact, the message might have been very blunt, reinforced perhaps by the reference to Rahab’s profession (ἡ πόρνη) which stuck to her almost like a “second name”. Like Rahab, who heard the report of God’s revelation in the history of his people and believed it, similarly the Christian audience should cling to their emerging faith as the source and witness to Christ’s revelation. In such a way, the unilateral and admittedly positive perception of Rahab would be consolidated for centuries to come.

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\(^{425}\) Carl Mosser argues that the entire hero list was designed to culminate with Rahab. Cf. Carl Mosser, ‘Rahab Outside the Camp’, in The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology, ed. by Richard Bauckham and others (Grand Rapids, MI, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 383-404 (pp. 403-4).

\(^{426}\) Cf. Mosser, ‘Rahab Outside the Camp’, p. 394.
Another dimension of the Rahab story is underlined by the Letter to James, in which the author persuades his reader that Rahab escaped death thanks to her initiative (good works) in favour of the spies:

Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead (Jas 2:23-26; NRSV).

The example of Rahab fits with the author’s argument, since he exalts good works out of faith. Thus the complex biblical story is again reduced to an embryonic and one-dimensional pattern for Christian paraenesis. In this view, Rahab becomes the personification of Christian hospitality and acts of mercy. Moreover, two interesting elaborations are evident in the above reference. Firstly, the author calls the spies ἄγγελοι (messengers), which is a rather free rendition for those sent to spy in the Land. The second choice is even more astonishing: ‘sending the messengers by another road’ is considered as the example of good works. Necessarily, it refers to the fact of sending the spies to the mountains, while their pursuers were searching the valley of the Jordan. But this somehow goes against the biblical evidence (cf. Josh 6:25) and Jewish tradition, which indicate the concealment of the spies as Rahab’s praiseworthy deed. It is difficult to establish with certainty if these nuances are personal elaborations of the author or if he is following a specific tradition.\footnote{Franklin Young argues that those transformations are dictated by the fact that the author of James was indebted to the tradition preserved by the First Epistle of Clement. Cf. Franklin W. Young, ‘The Relation of 1 Clement to the Epistle of James’, \textit{JBL} 67/4 (1948), 339-45 (pp. 344-5).}

It is clear that they will constitute an input for further processing of the Rahab story.

In fact, the First Epistle of Clement, another piece of Christian writing from the end of the first century which eventually will not be included in the Christian Canon, seems to reconcile both previous positions, pointing out that Rahab was saved by both faith and good works, i.e. hospitality (cf. \textit{1 Clem} 12:1).\footnote{Although, not included into the Canon, the First Clement belongs to the prestigious and highly regarded collection of writings grouped under the name of “Apostolic Fathers”.} However, the most influential interpretation is found toward the end of the paragraph. The author states:

Moreover, they gave her a sign [σημεῖον] to this effect, that she should hang forth from her house a scarlet thread. And thus they made it manifest that redemption should flow through the blood
of the Lord [ὅτι διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου] to all them that believe and hope in God. Ye see, beloved, that there was not only faith, but prophecy, in this woman (1 Clem 12:7-8). ⁴²⁹

The reference to the prophetic characteristic of Rahab may indicate acquaintance with rabbinic exegesis, which also endowed her with a prophetic quality (cf. Ruth Rabbah 2.1). Nevertheless, the most relevant point initiating long-lasting Christian exegesis is the association of the “scarlet thread” with “the blood of the Lord”. Anthony Hanson argues that this association is established on the basis of the Greek word σημεῖον (sign) in the LXX of Joshua 2:18, which in rabbinic exegesis had a prophetic significance pointing to the remote future. ⁴³⁰ If there was a textual device which could absorb any association, the most immediate one would be that of the blood of the Lamb from the story of Exodus (cf. Ex 12:7), which had a clearly Christological interpretation pointing to the blood of Christ. In such a way, the scarlet cord in the Rahab story was read not only as the pledge of Rahab’s rescue but as a sign of the universal salvation brought by Christ. Thus, according to the First Epistle of Clement, Rahab is saved not only by her faith and good works but first of all by the sacrifice of the Lord. In this view she is, and through the ages will be, the perfect portrayal of the effectiveness of Christ’s salvation. This barely-outlined Christological pattern, along with other NT references, will be privileged by the Fathers of the Church and developed into a more complex model which, in turn, will be more absorbable and relevant for generations of Christians.

⁴.².³ Rahab and the Church Fathers

It is rather challenging to embrace the multithreaded allusions of the Church Fathers to the Rahab story. As it was very popular and often exploited, there is extensive data to be explored. ⁴³¹ Moreover, the generic heading “Fathers of the Church” hides a quite broad socio-historical range of approximately the first five centuries of Christianity. This, among many variances, involves the different languages in which their works were produced (Greek and Latin) which, in turn, touches the problem of the translations they

⁴²⁹ Bible Works 9.
⁴³⁰ Anthony T. Hanson, ‘Rahab the Harlot in Early Christian Tradition’, JSNT 1 (1978), 53-60 (pp. 56-7).
⁴³¹ A good selection of excerpts related to the Rahab story can be found in Joshua, Judges, Ruth 1-2 Samuel, ed. by John R. Franke and Thomas C. Oden, ACCS IV (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2005), pp. 7-15.
were consulting. In critical assignments of their writings, it would be also advisable to pay close attention to the genre in which a particular view appears, as their biblical references almost always served to support their particular literary and theological perspective. For the above reasons, the thematic mode of presenting their references to the Rahab story is not irreproachable because it misses the specific, historical and literary contextualization of single comments. Nevertheless, it is fairly sufficient for the purpose of this research to sensitize the interpretative awareness of the perplexed reader. In fact, despite the above described complexities, some motifs stand out distinctly, like the contours of a beautiful stained-glass window.

4.2.3.1 Rahab: The Virtuous Prostitute

Once again, the name of the heroine sparks the interpretative interest of the Fathers. In the following passage, this name becomes a metaphor for a spiritual transformation, which led to a new identity. Jerome writes:

‘I will be mindful of Rahab.’ Rahab; what is the force of her name? We have been following the historical sense; let us now reflect upon the anagogic significance of the name. Rahab thus admits of two interpretations: the name may imply either a ‘broad space’ or, better, ‘pride.’ Consider, therefore, its impact. She who formerly worked the broad, spacious road to death, she who pride was driving her to destruction, was later converted unto humility (Com. Ps. 86).

By referring to ‘pride’, Jerome is probably inspired by those passages where the name רַהַב is the poetic synonym for the pride of Egypt or primordial sea monster subdued by God’s strength (cf. Ps 87:4; Isa 51:9). Thus, the midrashic technique of illuminating the passage by means of other biblical verses is also frequently employed by the Fathers. In Jerome’s argumentation it better articulates the necessity of metanoia.

Then, like the Rabbis, the Fathers did not blame Rahab for her past either, but rather praised her for audacity. This time, such a forcible example was directed to the early Christians, who should experience similar dynamics of converting in the reality of the Church. It is exactly to emphasize the possibility of such conversion that the Fathers underlined Rahab’s former profession. As a matter of fact, in the whole biblical history

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it is hard to find a better example of such a spectacular, almost archetypical reversal. Origen successfully employs this archetype in his *Homily*.

Nevertheless, our Jesus sends spies to the king of Jericho, and they are received hospitably by a prostitute. But the prostitute who received the spies sent by Jesus was no longer a prostitute since she received them. Indeed every one of us was a prostitute in his heart as long as he lived according to the desires and lusts of the flesh (*Adnot. Jes. Nav.* 1:4).

Interestingly, Origen “plays” on two names, Joshua and Jesus, which in Greek are equivalent: Ἰησοῦς (Jesus). This allows him to adapt the story from the Old Testament to the new reality initiated by Jesus Christ. In fact, this is one of the distinctive characteristics of the patristic exegesis, which aimed to demonstrate the unity of both Testaments. Moreover, the above passages, as well as many others, are examples of the spiritual reading of the Scripture, which was dear to the Church Fathers and which modern exegesis somehow lost. Thus, as for Rabbis Rahab was an archetype of the proselyte, similarly for the Church Fathers she was the example of a convert who embraces the salvation brought by Christ. Hence, it is not surprising that occasionally she was also associated with figures from the New Testament, such as Zacchaeus from Jericho (cf. Lk 19:1-10) or the woman who wept at Jesus’ feet (cf. Lk 7:36-50). All of them reveal similar characteristics of profound transformation.

Nevertheless, there is another point in the story which attracted the moralistic minds of the Fathers and which needed to be somehow lightened. This was Rahab’s lie. Since Rahab was presented as a heroine of faith, her lying to the King’s messengers (cf. Josh 2:4-5) had to be properly interpreted. In this argument Augustine leads:

Therefore, no lie is just […]. As for its being written that God dealt well with the Hebrew midwives and with Rahab the harlot of Jericho, He did not deal well with them because they lied but because they were merciful to the men of God. And so, it was not their deception that was rewarded, but their benevolence; the benignity of their intention, not the iniquity of their invention (*C. mend.* 15:31-32).

From the above argument, Rahab’s lie, as with lying in general, is not praiseworthy at all. Rahab, in fact, was rewarded not because of her lie but because of what she has

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done for the spies who are, for Augustine, ‘the men of God’. Instead, John Chrysostom goes a step further, considering Rahab’s choice almost providential because it aimed to save good heroes. His erudite line reads: ‘O this good lie! O this good fraud, which does not betray the divine, but safeguards the sacred!’ (Paenit. 7:5.17).\textsuperscript{437}

Once again it is apparent that the biblical story is used as an illustration for a specific argument a given author was developing. Taken out of context, defragmented and implanted into completely new discourses, the Rahab story was still relevant, gaining new generations of readers/hearers for whom she was a virtuous prostitute saved by her faith and good works.

4.2.3.2 Rahab the Type of the Church
In order to better understand further elaborations of the Rahab story, it is also necessary to be aware of the specific method which the Fathers were employing in interpreting Scripture. The one relevant for the Rahab story is the typological reading. The purpose of this exegesis was to make the text relevant to a new audience and to portray the unity of the Old and New Testaments. This unity consisted in the fact that the realities described in the Old Testament foreshadowed those inaugurated by Christ. Origen, at the end of his third Homily on Joshua, regards the sign in Rahab’s window as a prophetic reference to the incarnation of Christ:

\begin{quote}
In that the sign hangs in a window I think this is indicated: A window is that which illumines the house and through which we receive light, not wholly but enough, enough to suffice for the eye and for our vision. Even the incarnation of the Savior did not give us pure wine and the whole aspect of divinity, but through his incarnation, just as through the window, he makes us behold the splendor of the divinity. For that reason, so it seems to me, the sign of salvation was given through a window (Adnot. Jes. Nav. 3:5).\textsuperscript{438}
\end{quote}

In the Origen’s Christological interpretation, the window in Rahab’s house was not only “the means” of salvation for the spies and eventually a sign of protection for Rahab’s family, but it was primarily a mysterious foreshadowing of that greater and ultimate salvation initiated by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. One can assume that the biblical passage from the Old Testament became “a window” through which divine realities

\textsuperscript{438} FC 105, p. 50.
initiated by Christ were foreseen. Thus, the Rahab story was again dissected in search of elements that might be read in the context of Christian ecclesiology. Gregory of Elvira found one of these elements in the person of Rahab herself. He writes:

Let us see, therefore, what our hostess represents. This Rahab, although she is called a prostitute, nevertheless is a sign of the virgin church, considered as a foreshadow of the coming realities at the end of the age, where she alone is preserved to life among all who are perishing [...]. Indeed, she is called “the church” because the Greek word ecclesia means “gathering of the people.” [...]. Because the church, as I have often said, gathered from the multitude of Gentiles, was then called a prostitute, therefore the church is found in the figure of Rahab, the hostess of saints (Trac. Orig. 12:7-8).439

In this perspective, Rahab the prostitute prefigures the Church gathered from the multitude of Gentiles, for whom it became the means of salvation. Ambrose presents the same idea even more emphatically calling Rahab: ‘typo meretrix, mysterio ecclesiae’.440 This statement contributed to a meaningful oxymoron used in reference to the Church: casta meretrix (a chaste whore).441 Kritzinger agrees with Biffi in his assertion that Ambrose’s emphasis falls on the first term of this conjunction, which indicates that Rahab’s past is easily superseded in the light of the mystery she foreshadows.442 Instead, Jerome, always in the same line, focuses more emphatically on the gathering of Rahab’s relatives into her house, which he compares to Noah’s ark.443 All these realities, i.e. Noah’s Ark, Rahab’s house and the Church fulfil similar functions: to protect and ensure salvation to those gathered within them. Then, in the context of the ecclesiological interpretation, one of the most difficult formulations in the history of the Church is expressed. Origen states:

Also this commandment is given to the person who was once a prostitute: “All,” it says “who will be found in your house will be saved. But concerning those who go out from the house, we ourselves are free of them by your oath.” Therefore, if anyone wants to be saved, let him come into the house of this one who was once a prostitute. Even if anyone of that people wants to be saved, let him come in order to be able to attain salvation. Let him come to this house in which the blood of Christ is the sign of redemption […]. Let no one persuade himself, let no one

deceive himself. Outside this house, that is, outside the church, no one is saved. If anyone goes outside, he is responsible for his own death. This is the significance of the blood, for this is also the purification that is manifest through the blood (Adnot. Jes. Nav. 3:5). 444

Thus, as Rahab gathered her household in one place which assured them protection, similarly, according to Origen, the Church is the community which guarantees salvation because its members are redeemed by Christ’s blood. The axiom: extra ecclesiam, nemo salvatur reflected in the above comment was widely exploited in the struggle against various movements that disquieted the early Church and eventually became the object of theological discussion for centuries.

Alternatively, John Chrysostom in his ecclesiological reading of the story highlights Rahab’s confession as the element which particularly reflects and foreshadows the reality of the Church. Thus again, perhaps intuitively, the climax story became a device for typology.

Do you see how with faith she takes on her lips the word of the Lawgiver? “And I realize that your God is up in heaven and down on the earth, and that apart of him there is no God.” Rahab is a prefigurement of the church, which was at one time mixed up in the prostitution of the demons and which now accepts the spies of Christ, not the ones sent by Joshua the son of Nun, but the apostles who were sent by Jesus the true Savior […]. Therefore, Rahab, the prefigurement of the church, is worthy of all praise (Paenit. 7:5.16). 445

Therefore, Rahab embodies a “sinful paganism”, which by accepting the apostles (antitype of the spies) of the true Savior is converted and saved in the Church. Once again, the focus is clearly on the final stage of that process, hence Rahab is overall praiseworthy while her past and perhaps some other “fibs” vanish in the noble identity, which can be referred to the mystery of the Church. As can be clearly seen, times have changed, but the archetype of Rahab the convert coined by the Rabbis was now successfully employed by Christian Fathers for their own theological purposes.

The distinctive mark of salvation in the Church is the blood of Christ. Hence, the enigmatic element of the story, namely the red cord which was to mark out Rahab’s house and protect it from the destruction, has been promptly associated by typology with the blood of Christ. As has been mentioned already, this association can be

444 FC 105, pp. 49-50.
445 FC 96, p. 99-100.
retraced as early as in 1 Clement, but Justin Martyr exemplarily develops this correlation:

Would God have been mistaken, then, if this sign had not been made over the doors? That is not what I say, but I do say that he thus foretold that salvation was to come to the human race through the blood of Christ. So, too, the red rope, which the spies sent by Joshua, son of Nun, gave to Rahab the harlot in Jericho, instructing her to tie it to the same window through which she lowered them down to escape their enemies, was a symbol of Christ’s blood, by which those of every nationality who were once fornicators and sinful are redeemed, receiving pardon of their past sin and avoiding all sin in the future (Dial. 111:4).  

It seems that the colour and the function of the sign within the story was a decisive factor in establishing this association according to the typological pattern: the type is the scarlet cord, which refers to the antitype: the blood of Christ. Also, Jerome recognizes a similar relationship when pointing out the scarlet cord as the mystic presage of the blood of Christ. He writes: ‘the harlot Rahab [Raab meretrix] also, who typifies the Church, fastened a scarlet cord to her window in mystical reference to His bloodshedding, so that she might be saved from Jericho’s downfall’.  

Hence, in the Christian “rumination” on the Rahab story, the red cord which Rahab hung on her window after the departure of the spies became a type of the salvific event which is fulfilled by the Christ sacrifice. Thus, the Rahab story, or rather some precisely selected elements of that story, served to reveal the centrality of Christ’s salvation as fulfilled in his Church. As a matter of fact, the message(s) of the OT was relevant only when it could be presented in Christological perspective. In this sense the Rahab story was again archetypical because it offered some dynamics that, under the pressure of interpretative exertion, could be re-employed and presented in the new theological perspective. This, in turn, ensured that the Rahab story was evergreen for new generations of readers/hearers.

As I opened the rabbinic section by referring to some singular interpretative ‘sparks’ which indicated the vast range and peculiar interests of interpreters, such as an appearance of Rahab or the fanciful explanation of grammatical error in the Hebrew text, I would like to conclude this unit with one particular reference which overall does


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not go against the mainstream interpretation, but is odd in the sense that it evidently forces the text to the theological assumption of the interpreter. Irenaeus of Lyons writes:

Thus also Rahab the harlot, while condemning herself as a Gentile guilty of all sins, nevertheless received the three spies and hid them at her home. These three were a type of the Father and the Son, together with the Holy Spirit (Haer. 4.20).448

Thus, the two spies from the Rahab story now became three and thenceforth perfectly prefigure the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The number of spies seems just a detail which should not distort a well-constructed theological argument, which again confirms and sanctions the new theological horizon for the Rahab story in the Christian interpretative tradition for centuries to come.

4.3 Rahab in the “Sphere of Venus”

The rabbinic and patristic reinterpretations of the Rahab story had a great influence on its further reception in literature and art. As a matter of fact, over the centuries, the theme of the prostitute Rahab recurred frequently in various artistic representations. The issue is so extensive that it could easily be the subject of a specific enquiry, since there is a great amount of data to examine, ranging from the Byzantine illuminated manuscripts, through medieval art and literature, to the modern adaptation of the Rahab story in literature, paintings and even in a science fiction film.449 From the broad overview of the literature on this subject it clearly appears that such popularity, especially in Christian artistic representations, of the Rahab story owes its existence precisely to the fact of its Christological and Ecclesiological re-interpretations.450

In the following, I will focus only on a single but exemplary adaptation of the Rahab theme, that of Dante Alighieri in his The Divine Comedy: the masterpiece of

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Tu vuo’ saper chi è in questa lumera che qui appresso me così scintilla come raggio di sole in acqua mera. Or sappi che là entro si tranquilla Raábà, e a nost’ ordine congiunta di lei nel sommo grado si sigilla. Da questo cielo, in cui l’ombra s’appunta che ’l vostro mondo face, pria ch’altr’ alma dei trionfo di Cristo fu assunta. Ben si convenne lei lasciar per palma in alcun cielo de l’alta vittoria che s’acquistò con l’una e l’altra palma, perch’ella favorò la prima gloria di Josüè in su la Terra Santa, che poco tocca al papa la memoria.

You wish to know who is in this light here beside me that sparkles as if it were a sunbeam in pure water. Know, then, that within it Rahab finds her peace, and, joined with our order, she is its highest seal. Into this heaven, where the shadow of your world shrinks to a point, she was taken up before any other soul in the triumph of Christ. Fitting indeed it was to leave her in one of the heavens as a palm of the great victory acquired by his two palms, because she aided Joshua’s first victory in the Holy Land, which touches the pope’s memory

But little.

In his journey through three realms of the dead: Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, Dante, guided now by Beatrice, arrives in the third sphere of Heaven.\footnote{Broadly, the astronomic references in Dante are based on the Ptolemaic view of the ancient cosmos. For more specific study cf. Alison Cornish, *Reading Dante’s Stars* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2000).} It is the sphere of Venus, where the spirits of lovers appear to Dante in celestial harmony. After a glimpse of Charles Martel and a meeting with Cunizza da Romano, Dante meets another blessed soul who turns to be Folco of Marseilles, who in his youth lived a worldly life as a troubadour, but eventually repented and became the Bishop of Toulouse.

As Dante wonders about the identity of another mysterious figure standing at a distance, Folco immediately reveals her identity. She is Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho who saved the spies sent by Joshua to Jericho. Since Rahab does not speak to Dante, Folco continues his argument, revealing that Rahab is placed in Heaven because she helped Joshua to conquer the Promised Land hence, in turn, she is saved and redeemed now by another Joshua, Jesus Christ, through his triumphal victory on the cross. As a matter of fact, she is the first trophy ‘palma’ of Christ, who during his descent to hell
liberated Old Testament worthies. Hence, now she can enjoy the salvific effects of Christ’s redemption.

Rahab’s redeemed and perfectly harmonious state is even expressed by the sounds and rhythm of words, which at least in the original evoke delightful peacefulness. Peter Hawkins’ comment gets to the heart of the matter:

Though her sins once were scarlet, like the cord hung from her window, she appears in Venus as purity itself, “like a sunbeam on clear water.” Rahab is at once sparkling and tranquil - and like the rhyming words “scintilla” and “tranquilla,” she resonates in perfect harmony with the music of this sphere, with the “osanna” (Par. VIII, 29) that is sung by all. Indeed, she seals the company she keeps “nel sommo grado,” in the highest degree.

As the whole poem draws on Medieval Christian theology, it is not surprising that Dante’s vision perfectly combines the biblical data with its Christological and ecclesiological re-interpretations into an outstanding poetic picture of Rahab doubly saved: first by Joshua and then by Jesus, who by his death and resurrection redeemed and cleansed her of all her sins. As Auerbach rightly notes, ‘both entities in the figurative relationship are equally real and equally concrete; the figurative sense does not destroy the literal, nor does the literal deprive the figured fact of its status as a real historical event.

The reference to Rahab and her role in conquering the Promised Land was not then entirely casual, as it finally allowed for criticism against the Pope’s negligence toward the Holy Land, which was under occupation by ‘infidels.’ In fact, the reference to Rahab clearly served to raise a contemporaneous issue which might have troubled the author, such as the withdrawal of the Pope from the effort to recapture the Holy Land. Perhaps there is here an even more threatening reproach of the Pope and the clergy for neglecting not only the earthly Jerusalem, but also the ‘eternal Jerusalem’ which is to come.

To sum up, Dante’s reference to the Rahab story perfectly reflects the idea of how a particular tradition, here the patristic interpretation, may influence the perception of this biblical story by later generations, but at the same time it reveals that every new

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re-elaboration of the story is highly marked by the individual skills and concerns of the author, as well as the historical circumstances of his/her community/world.

4.4 Mental Library (II) of the Perplexed Reader

In the above survey I aimed to portray how the Rahab story was interpreted by Rabbis and Church Fathers by quoting essential samples of their readings. This was a partial and selective overview, which nevertheless allowed for the individuation of their interpretative threads. While rabbinic efforts were focused on portraying Rahab as a model proselyte abundantly rewarded for her choice, the Church Fathers read the story as an allegory of the Church and Her mission in the world. These ecclesiological and highly spiritual readings were also preferred in the Middle Ages, as evidenced by the reference to Rahab in The Divine Comedy. Such interpretation continued up to the dawn of modern biblical criticism, which imposed on biblical exegesis an alternative set of methodological assumptions which, in turn, re-directed the interpretative interest of the exegetes (cf. Chapter Two). Moreover, the above discussion has demonstrated a certain “airiness” of the ancient readership toward the integrity of the story. In fact, those interpretations or adaptations were far from “close readings” of the story, but consisted rather of selecting key information (textual and extra-textual) and combining them into new arguments, which were constructed to be meaningful for their audiences.457

It was important to outline those preferences because the mental library of the perplexed reader is comprised of the voices from the past tradition, which may or may not influence the reader's strategies of interaction with this story. As mentioned in the first chapter, the awareness of the variety of historical-empirical interpretations of the Rahab story illustrates the potential of the text to generate multiple interpretations and

457 Unexpectedly, in the modern and post-modern exegesis which strongly distances itself from the “pre-critical interpretations”, similar techniques can also be perceived. Some scholars readily ‘plunder’ the text in research of some transportable principles to construct or support their beliefs. For example, they return to the archetype of “Rahab-the proselyte”, changing only her appraisal from positive to unfavorable. Gordon Matties reproves the technique of ‘digging for transportable principles’ and insists on the active reading of the story as the means to accommodate it in the new socio-historical context. The following quote develops this idea. He writes: ‘Those questions lead me to suggest that biblical narrative must be considered an interactive medium of communication. Like an interactive game, what happens in the reading often depends on the predispositions, the character, and the assumptions of the reader (or reading community) […] The “usefulness” of narrative is discovered in the reading, not simply by looking for abstract principles that can be applied elsewhere’. Gordon H. Matties, ‘Reading Rahab’s Story: Beyond the Moral of the Story (Joshua 2)’, Direction 24/1 (1995), 57-70 (p. 58).
reveals a pattern of active interaction of readers with the text. William L. Lyons concludes his brief survey with a pertinent remark:

The history of Christian [not only] interpretation of Rahab clearly demonstrates that the art of biblical interpretation is not an exact science. Each exegete working through the centuries believed that he or she was reading the biblical text closely. Each struggled to make the ancient story address the concerns or issues of his or her day–addressing perceived lacunas in previous interpretations while raising concerns common to his or her time. Thus via multiple avenues of interpretation, the Bible could speak to those of antiquity and those of every subsequent age.458

Undoubtedly, the ultimate goal of the majority of the ancient and contemporaneous readers was and still is to adapt the Rahab story to new socio-historical circumstances. This was done by various hermeneutical principles, from the ancient and allegorical to the post-modern contextual readings. Hence, the goal of the final section of my enquiry on the literary communication between the biblical sample text and the hypothetical model of perplexed reader will be to propose a reading of the Rahab story that encompasses three poles generally separated by academic tradition: the analysis of text, the history of interpretation and the modern adaptation of the story.

CHAPTER 5: “RAHAB IN 3 D”

In the First Chapter, the concept of the perplexed reader was defined and presented in the broader context of the linguistic communication process. Then, the syntactical-literary analysis was conducted according to the principles of the text-linguistics elaborated by Niccacci, which allowed me to single out linguistic codes relevant to the process of communication because they are designed to steer the reader’s vantage point in the process of reading and interpreting the story. Subsequently, the analysis moved from the internal-literary to the external-historical context, revealing not only some ancient ruminations on the Rahab story, but confirming the assumption that the interpretative communities had a vital role in the interpretative process.

The following section marks the transition to the final stage of the inquiry, which is the multi-dimensional analysis of the Rahab story offered by the hypothetical model of the perplexed reader. The following diagram, elaborated in Chapter One, recalls the essential components of this analysis:

Three linguistic levels of Joshua 2: the linguistic attitude, the linguistic prominence and the linguistic perspective have their particular means of displaying the textual world. Together, they also form a textual backbone (the encoded reader), which now becomes the blueprint for the perplexed reader’s involvement in the world of the story. As is apparent from the above diagram, this will not be a linear reading but rather a three-dimensional, “broken-up” analysis. Each dimension will reveal a particular perspective
of the story, which will eventually help develop a more thorough insight into the relationship between the text and the reader.

Describing the Rahab story from three different perspectives may recall the fundamental assumption of Cubism: to represent the subject from different perspectives in order to capture better its nature. In some way, the three dimensions of the Rahab story, although inseparable, in the following analysis will be artificially “dismembered” to better penetrate the meanderings of the story and its interaction with the reader. More specifically, this model will offer insight into ‘what the reader lives through under the guidance of the text and experiences as relevant to the text’. As was already stated, the “narrative empathy” will be the inherent attitude of the perplexed reader in such dialogical interaction. This ideological stand will result in deep processing of the various levels of the story and will be a decisive factor in shaping the affective responses of the perplexed reader.

Moreover, in the case of traditional texts, the awareness of a long and complex history of interpretation is particularly relevant. Hence, the mental library of the perplexed reader encompasses the outcomes of historical-empirical interpretations of the Rahab story, both ancient and modern. This data allows not only appreciation of the potential of the biblical story, which has challenged widely differing audiences throughout the centuries, but also allows interplay with the tradition, whether it is ancient or modern exegesis. Yvonne Sherwood aptly remarks:

New interpretations in biblical studies have always involved some kind of excavation of the past, which tend to be respectful to venerated scholarly figures, even while their purpose is to critique their readings, reduce them to rubble, and so clear the ground for a new construction.

Finally, this section will also address the question of the relevance of the Rahab story to the contemporary world. The following analyses will envision a possible way this biblical story can be employed by the postmodern reader as a pattern for a cross-cultural dialogue, which demands many vital compromises to establish any lasting agreements.

459 ‘In cubist artworks, objects are broken up, analyzed, and re-assembled in an abstracted form–instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to present the piece in a greater context’. ‘Cubism’ in New World Encyclopedia. <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cubism> [accessed 22 May 2015].
5.1 Chronology of the Rahab Story

A critical dimension of the story is the temporal organization of events. An author can adopt various techniques to interrupt the chronological order. The act of postponing, anticipating or omitting certain information stimulates the curiosity of the reader, who must constantly assume a state of alertness to reconstruct them in order. Undoubtedly, this is one way to involve the reader in the story. Similarly, repetitions and other rhetorical devices, such as chiastic structure, may distort the perception of the narrative chronology. Therefore, it is crucial to have recourse to some steady criteria while reading biblical narratives. As has been argued, the Hebrew verbal system provides substantial assistance in identifying the temporal arrangement of the textual information. However, it should be pointed out that such assistance is not utterly effective in smoothing all tensions. Conversely, very often, these criteria reveal structures which are disturbing, as they are far from the modern conventions of narration, to say the least. Although problematic, they will become now the subject of enquiry.

5.1.1 Asynchrony of Joshua 2

One of the incongruities which can be hardly “ironed out” is the chronological incompatibility between the three initial chapters of the Book of Joshua. For modern scholars this was a challenging biblical phenomenon which, in the case of Joshua 2, was the key argument for the idea of its later interpolation into the Book of Joshua.

In the first chapter, Joshua announced the crossing of the Jordan in three days (cf. Josh 1:11). Presumably on the same day, he sent the spies, who in the late afternoon ended up in Rahab’s house where they spent one night. After leaving Jericho, they stayed in the mountains for the three days (cf. Josh 2:22) and only then returned to Joshua. This implies that their mission has taken at least three days. Surprisingly, in the third chapter the reader is informed that the Israelite camp is still in Shittim, as if time had stopped, and will move next day to the riverbank and eventually cross the river again only after three days (cf. Josh 3:1-3). Clearly, the second chapter interferes with

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the linear, chronological progress of events described in Joshua 1-3, making the Rahab story ‘stick out like a sore thumb’.\textsuperscript{463}

There have been different attempts to solve this problem. Some scholars resorted to diachronic solutions, arguing for various sources or traditions, some others preferred synchronic readings, privileging the text as it is.\textsuperscript{464} All of them were intrigued by this arrangement of events, which unarguably steers the reader’s attention.\textsuperscript{465}

In this respect, the Hebrew system presented above perpetuates the nuisance. As has already been remarked, two narrative wayyiqtols occur in Joshua 2:1 and Joshua 3:1, which link together the first three chapters of the book. This, in turn, presupposes a linear sequence between them.\textsuperscript{466} Hence, despite the chronological mismatch between Joshua 1-2-3, the syntactical linkages between them impel the reader to place them in precisely that sequence. Why then is this a deviation from the chronological structuring?

For a long time the Rabbis have maintained that ‘there is no chronological order in the Torah [en mukdam u-me’uhar ba-Torah]’.\textsuperscript{467} In effect, the easiest solution of the chronological interference of the first three chapters is to acknowledge the fact that to a certain extent, the Book of Joshua reveals the episodic structure of the plot, which is to highlight the thematic rather than chronological structuring principle.\textsuperscript{468} Such recognition stimulates the reader to examine the importance and function of the Rahab story in its literary context.

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\textsuperscript{464} The methodological preference for a synchronic solution is not meant to diminish the importance of diachronic studies, which follow different methodological assumptions. Even if one assumes conflicting sources, the editor had to have some sort of structuring concept in presenting them exactly in the order in which they appear. Thus, the simple statement that there are contradictory sources or traditions involved is not sufficient. In the following, the goal is not to reveal the editorial intention but rather the impact of the present texture of the story on the perplexed reader’s perception of it.

\textsuperscript{465} As already noted, Wilcoxon detected two overlapping ‘seven days periods’ in Joshua 1-6 which reflected the celebrations in the sanctuary of Gilgal but now, in the literary representation, are overlapped. Wilcoxon, ‘Narrative Structure’, pp. 43-70. Instead, Howard argues that one seven day period is assumed in Joshua 1-3. His counting is possible only with the assumption that the execution of the Joshua’s first command (Josh 1:11) ‘happened sometime during the three-day absence of the two spies’, and that the letter commands (Josh 3:2-4) are an entirely new set of instructions. Cf. Howard, ‘“Three Days”’ in Joshua 1-3’, pp. 539-50.

\textsuperscript{466} Martin holds a different opinion considering the wayyiqtol in 3:1 as a ‘pluperfect’, hence a mark of a ‘dischronologised’ narrative, in the sense that the events described in Joshua 3:1 form a kind of flash-back. Cf. W. J. Martin, ‘“Dischronologized” Narrative in the Old Testament’, VTSup 17 (1969), 179-86. In the light of the above presented syntactical principles, such a solution is questionable because there are no sufficient criteria to consider any of wayyiqtols in Joshua 1:11; 2:22; 3:1 as non sequential.

\textsuperscript{467} Angel Hayyim, ‘“There is no chronological order in the Torah”: An axiom for understanding the Book of Joshua’, \textit{JBQ} 36/1 (2008), 3-11 (p. 3).

\textsuperscript{468} Stek, ‘Rahab of Canaan’, p. 30.
5.1.1.1 Structural Function of the Rahab Story

The Rahab story is located in the Book of Joshua (Josh 2:1-24), which therefore determines its immediate literary context. The Book of Joshua itself falls basically into two distinguishable parts and ‘a postscript’. The first part (Josh 1-12) sets forth the story of the conquest of Canaan. The second part of the book (Josh 13-21) is concerned mainly with the division of the Land among the tribes. The last chapters (Josh 22-24) depict ‘the departure of the Transjordanian tribes and the last days of Joshua’. 469 The first part of the book confronts us with narrative episodes that vary in length, and which gradually develop the theme of the first part of the book, i.e. the conquest of the Land. Instead, the second part consists mostly of lists of the tribal borders and towns. Structured in such a way, the Book of Joshua occupies a strategic position in the mega-narrative Genesis-Joshua-2 Kings as it describes the realization of repeatedly foretold promises of the Land. 470 Hence, in the broader perspective, the Rahab story at the beginning of the Book of Joshua occupies the “key position” just before that promise becomes true. In other words, the Rahab story in its present context marks the boundary between the promise of the Land and its fulfillment.

As noted above, the conquest of the Land is the main theme of the first part of the book, and again the episode in Jericho plays a substantial function in the unfolding drama of the conquest. The Rahab story, in fact, opens a whole series of events which, at least for a modern reader, touch a sensitive issue: that of the relationship between conquerors and conquered. The latter are represented by the following characters: Rahab the Canaanite (Josh 2:1-24); Amorites and Canaanite kings (Josh 5:1); kings from beyond the Jordan (Josh 9:1-2); Gibeonites (Josh 9:3-15); Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem and his coalition (Josh 10:1-5) and finally Jabin the king of Hazor (Josh 11:1-5). Among them, only Rahab and Gibeonites decided to ally with Israelites, while the others resist. Lawson Stone, who described this thread more thoroughly, claims:

These six passages display consistency in content, formulation and diction. These texts, all so similarly formulated, deserve more attention than they have received. Their role in the Book of Joshua may be analyzed under their structural, thematic, and redaction functions. 471

In this light, the Rahab story appears not simply as a latter interpolation but as one of the pillars of the actual “literary building”. It emerges that it is a particularized story, one of several in the book that reveal the autochthon perspective to Israel’s presence in the Land. As a matter of fact, Joshua 2 is not the only instance when a similar pattern of ‘report-response’ occurs. Stone extracted all similar occurrences, arguing that the expression “to hear the report” and the response to it could be the structural pattern of the first part of the Book of Joshua. 472 Here are the recurrences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character(s)</th>
<th>Formula</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rahab (2:10)</td>
<td>וּכִּי שָמַעְנ (For we have heard)</td>
<td>Oath with the spies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amorites and Canaanites kings (5:1)</td>
<td>שָמַע (When heard)</td>
<td>General Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings from beyond the Jordan (9:1-2)</td>
<td>שָמַע (When heard)</td>
<td>Alliance against Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibeonites (9:3-15)</td>
<td>שָמַע (When Gibeon heard)</td>
<td>Alliance with Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adonizedek and his coalition (10:1-5)</td>
<td>שָמַע (When heard)</td>
<td>Fear and alliance for war against Gibeonites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabin the king of Hazor (11:1-5)</td>
<td>שָמַע (When heard)</td>
<td>Alliance against Israel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each stereotyped formula “to hear” then introduces different objects of what exactly have been heard and hence caused a specific response. There is a certain progression from the events which had happened in the remote history to those more recent in relation to the hearer(s). The following table captures this progression. 473

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character(s)</th>
<th>Object of hearing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rahab (2:10)</td>
<td>Crossing of the Red Sea and victories beyond the Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amorites and Canaanites kings (5:1)</td>
<td>Crossing of Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings from beyond the Jordan (9:1-2)</td>
<td>General reference which can apply to the conquest of Jericho and Ai or to the reading of the law in Joshua 8:30-35.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibeonites (9:3-15)</td>
<td>The conquest of Jericho and Ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adonizedek and his coalition (10:1-5)</td>
<td>The conquest of Jericho and Ai and the alliance of Gibeonites with Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabin the king of Hazor (11:1-5)</td>
<td>General reference which apply to diverse victories of Joshua.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be clearly seen before each of Joshua’s campaigns, “the story” forges ahead to tell how God assisted and led his people from the crossing of the Red Sea through the crossing of the Jordan and beyond. The story is like a “pile of fire” or “hornets”, which wreak more havoc than the troops of Joshua. It was the story/report which polarized hearers and pushed them either to ally with Israel or fight against it. It was also the story which compelled Rahab to seriously rethink her social status in Jericho and undertake an adventurous challenge.

Hence, the Rahab story is one of those episodes in the Book of Joshua which allow the reader to experience the progress of the conquest from the perspective of the insider. Undoubtedly, looking at the events described through the eyes of both “insiders” and “outsiders” is much more advantageous than the layering of the narrative because of the chronological mismatch.

The following analysis is foreshadowed by the table from the conclusion of the Third Chapter, which recalls the previously established structure of the Rahab story and specifies the various perspectives within the story, which will become now the blueprint for the interpretative reading.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I part (vv. 1-5)</th>
<th>Dramatic Pause (vv. 6-8)</th>
<th>II part (vv. 9-24)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>→ wayyiqtol (v. 1)</td>
<td>→ waw-x-qatal (v. 6a)</td>
<td>→ wayyiqtol (v. 9a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N: The sending of the spies by Joshua (1a)</td>
<td>Clarification about hiding of the spies (6a-b)</td>
<td>N: Introductory formula (9a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: The discourse of Joshua to the spies (1b-c)</td>
<td>Movements of the pursuers and closing of the gate (7a-b)</td>
<td>D: Rahab’s confession (9b-13b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N: Arrival of the spies into the harlot’s house (1d-e)</td>
<td>Rahab’s coming up to the roof (8a-b)</td>
<td>N: Introductory formula (14a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑ C: Rahab’s name (1f)</td>
<td></td>
<td>D: The spies’ agreement (14b-e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N: The repose of the spies in Rahab’s house (1g)</td>
<td></td>
<td>N: Releasing the spies (15a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: The report to the King (2b)</td>
<td></td>
<td>↑ C: Position of Rahab’s house (15b-c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N: Sending of the message to Rahab (3a)</td>
<td></td>
<td>N: Introductory formula (16a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: The King’s message to Rahab (3b-d)</td>
<td></td>
<td>D: Rahab’s further advice (16b-f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N: Hiding of the spies by Rahab (4a-c)</td>
<td></td>
<td>N: Introductory formula (17a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: Rahab’s speech to the King’s messengers (4d-5f)</td>
<td></td>
<td>D: Further conditions of the spies (17b-20c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N: Introductory formula (21a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D: Rahab’s agreement (21b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N: Dismissing of the spies and their departure (21c-d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N: Tiding of the scarlet cord (21e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N: Hiding of the spies in the mountains (22a-c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>↑ C: ‘Unil the pursuers return’-a comment (22d)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N: The chase of the pursuers (22e-f)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N: Returning of the spies to Joshua (23a-e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N: Introductory formula (24a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D: Final report of the spies to Joshua (24b-c)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.2 The Prolepsis in Joshua 2

At the beginning of the story, the reader is informed of the carefree repose of the spies in Rahab’s house by the narrative wayyiqtol (v. 1g). This form is especially problematic when confronted with v. 8a, where the information is given that the spies are still awake. Once again, it raises the issue of the chronological alignment of events or the semantic range of the verb: שָכַב. Certainly, the easiest solution will be recourse to the double source, but there is another way to look at this tension. Moran has indicated that in v. 1g the reader is confronted with the literary technique of anticipation. This phenomenon is not isolated in the biblical literature. Very likely, a similar technique is employed in the Joseph story (cf. Gen 37:21-22) and perhaps also in the story of Jael and Sisera (cf. Judg 4:18-19).

The acknowledgement of a similar technique at the beginning of the Rahab story might remarkably influence the experience of reading, since from the very beginning, in some measure, the reader knows about the happy ending of the story, as if to say: despite all the threats around them, the spies just slept there. Once again, Moran suggests an even farther-ranging metaphor when he writes:

One may ask if the image does not go still deeper, and functioning as a symbol of Israel suggest the deepest truth of the Conquest ahead: the people so passive, contributing so little, achieving

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474 Many scholars follow the LXX and translate this verb as ‘lodged there’. This solves the tension, but as Moran rightly observes it would assume two semantic meanings of the same words just within few lines. Cf. Moran, ‘The Repose’, p. 277. Nevertheless, BDB distinguishes those meanings. Cf. BDB, § 9918.

475 First, he exposes and discusses six possible solutions which summarize the debate: (1) the contradiction is evidence of the joining of two sources; (2) v. 8 should be understood in context simply in the sense of “before bed-time”; (3) in v. 8 the verb retains its usual meaning of “lie down (and/or go to sleep)”, but in v. 1 it means “lodge”; (4) the wayyiqtol-form in v. 1 has the modal nuance of wishing or intending; (5) in v. 1 it means “lie down, rest”, but in v. 8 “go to sleep”; (6) the spies lay down (v. 1), but aroused by the events of vv. 2-7, they had not had the time to do so again before Rahab came up to see them on the roof (v. 8). Moran, ‘The Repose’, p. 275. In the course of his study, he excludes each of the above possibilities (no. 4 and no. 6 with certain hesitation) and proposes his own solution. According to Moran, in v. 1d we are dealing with the literary technique of anticipation or prolepsis. In his own words, the expression: יָשָׁכַבְו in v. 1 d ‘is not in its proper place from the point of view of chronology, but is anticipatory’. Finally, to satisfy the curiosity of the modern reader, he suggests that in the actual sequence of events, the repose of the spies is to be located somewhere between the Rahab speech in v. 9-13 and spies descending from her house (v. 15). Cf. Moran, ‘The Repose’, pp. 278; 283.

476 In Genesis 37:21-22, first of all, the intention by his brothers to kill Joseph is reported. Immediate after, the author states by the narrative wayyiqtol that Reuben rescued him out of their hands (v. 21). Surprisingly, after that, the direct speech is reported in which Reuben is still negotiating how to save his youngest brother (vv. 37:22 ff). It seems that the author has anticipated the conclusion of the intrigue to highlight Reuben’s intention to save his brother and only then explained how the things had happened. Similarly in Judge 4:18-19, the same action, namely that Jael covers Sisera, is narrated twice within just two lines. A possible solution is that the wayyiqtol in v. 18 anticipates the actual course of events. Cf. Niccacci, Lettura Sintattica, p. 157; Tadiello, Giona tra Testo e Racconto, pp. 14-15.
what it does only through the intervention and protection of the God of the exodus, be it found in a spectacular crumbling of walls or in the quiet miracle of a Rahab’s faith.\textsuperscript{477}

Such literary anticipation not only makes possible a disjunctive way of narrating, the aesthetic value of which is particularly appreciated by the perplexed reader, but most of all affects the experience of reading, as from the very beginning it redirects the interpretative interest to the thread other than that telling the fate of the spies. Overall, the anticipation in v. 1g suggests that the main thread of the story is not about the survival of the spies, hence from the very beginning they are “put to sleep”. This, in turn, invites the perplexed reader to explore the story from a different perspective. More explicitly, it means that the narrator lets the reader look at the events from the insider’s perspective, i.e. that of the residents of Jericho and particularly Rahab.

5.1.3 Flash-back in Joshua 2

The \textit{waw-x-qatal} structure in v. 6a was a decisive factor in considering this piece of recovered information, which is further prolonged by the continuative \textit{wayyiqtol} (v. 6b). Therefore, the identification of retrospection in Joshua 6a-b mitigates the repetition of data from v. 4b, often perceived as an incongruence and consequently as a sign of editorial activity. In fact, to solve this problem, some scholars translate the \textit{waw-x-qatal} construct as if it was the \textit{wayyiqtol}: ‘Then she brought them up to the roof’ (cf. WBC 7, 24). According to this reading, firstly, Rahab had hidden the spies somewhere in the house and only later on brought them up to the roof. It is worth noting that this rendering assumes two distinct actions, while the \textit{waw-x-qatal} prevents us from developing a similar understanding. Thus, the \textit{waw-x-qatal} continued by the \textit{wayyiqtol} construction alerts the perplexed reader that there is an asynchrony in the plot development, so as to read that Rahab had hidden the spies earlier, but only now, i.e. after it really happened, does the author return to this fact, revealing the place and means of hiding. This is perhaps the most evident example of how the Hebrew verbal system assists the reader in arranging events of the story.

As a matter of fact, the first part of Rahab’s story (vv. 2-5) unfolds very quickly. As soon as the spies enter the house of Rahab, the King is informed of their suspicious presence. Immediately after that occurs, he sends his messengers to Rahab with the

\textsuperscript{477} Moran, ‘The Repose’, p. 284.
intention of capturing them. Then, the reader is informed that the woman had hidden the spies. Indeed, this was essential information without which the reader would not be able to realize and fully enjoy the situational humour when Rahab dupes the King’s messengers. At that point, all other details were unnecessary. Slowing down the steady rhythm of action by the reporting of secondary details would be highly inappropriate, especially when the messengers from the King were coming to Rahab’s door. Once the dialogue between them is finished, the narrator pauses to clarify the information already mentioned: Rahab hid the spies (vv. 6a-b).

Additionally, this allows the narrator to initiate a longer off-line section which constitutes a dramatic pause in the story (vv. 6a-8b) and whose function will be assessed later. At this point it is necessary to highlight that the flashback in vv. 6a-b captures the cognitive interest of the perplexed reader, focusing his attention on the action of hiding the spies, which is recounted twice from two different perspectives. While the first time the narrator mentions it from the “distanced” point of view (wayyiqtol), this time it allows the reader to assist events, almost over Rahab’s shoulder: (waw-x-qatal): ‘Now, she had brought them up to the roof, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof’ (vv.6a-b). By such a rapprochement the narrator allows the perplexed reader a closer association with the character in order to ponder her motivations, which at this point in the story are still obscure.

5.1.4 “Dismembered” Order
A similar case where the presence of the explicit verbal form is an obstacle to smoothing out the puzzling chronological shifts, is found in Joshua 2:15-16. From the immediate reading of this section, it is clear that Rahab let the spies down from the window (v. 15a) and then starts anew to converse with them (v. 16a). Once again, there have been different attempts to understand this displacement, as it would seem to be more logical to set the whole conversation in the house and only then let the spies go away. Martin’s comment is a good example: ‘the situation, the sleeping city, the silence of the dead of night, makes it evident that Rahab’s instructions must have preceded the descent from the wall’. As has already been mentioned, the NIB translation also opted for that solution, rendering Hebrew wayyiqtol by the English past perfect: ‘Now

478 Martin, ““Dischronologized” Narrative”, p. 182.
she had said to them’, indicating in this way that Rahab spoke to the spies while there were still in her house (cf. Josh 2:16 NIV). Nevertheless, the wayyiqtol form in v. 16a, which frames Rahab’s discourse, displays it as a sequential event, preventing us from such back-transporting of the conversation.

One plausible solution would be to consider the wayyiqtol (v. 15a), which carries the information of lowering down the spies, and next two clauses specifying this information (vv. 15b-c), functioning as the rhetoric technique of anticipation similar to that from the above case (v. 1g). In other words, instead of moving back the extensive rest of the conversation (vv. 16a-21b) a more plausible solution would be to consider a brief narrative section (v. 15a-c), which divides the two parts of the discourse, as a use of the literary technique of anticipation. If this was the case, this stylistic measure would spark an insinuation that, at that point, the pact had already taken effect and the final agreement on further conditions is only a matter of timing. In fact, this is the solution of many scholars, including Niccacci.479 Another example is the voice of McCarthy, who considers wayyiqtol in v. 15a as an ‘inchoative futurum instans’ indicating the beginning of an imminent action: ‘She was about to let them down’.480

There is however a “snag” in the above rendering, noticed by the 19th-century commentator Karl Friedrich Keil. He writes:

In the passage before us such an assumption, plausible as it seems on the first reading, is shown at once to be inadmissible by יָרָדָתָן (‘thou didst let us down,’ v. 18), which proves that the spies had been already let down, at the time when they gave the promised token to Rahab.481

Thus, the section 15a-c can be hardly considered the prolepsis, because from the following discourse of the spies (vv. 17-20) it is clear that they are already down below the window. Hence, it seems that another principle must be at work in this section of the narrative. One possible explanation of the narrative alignment, which is plausible to the perplexed reader, is the literary “dismemberment” of the narrated event to represent better the dynamic and the nature of the pact, which is displayed in two parts from two different perspectives, that of Rahab and then that of the spies.

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In fact, the first and decisive section takes place in Rahab’s house while the spies are still relying on her benevolence. Perhaps taking advantage of that situation when they are under her protection, she makes a plea for the oath (vv.12-13). In this entire section, the reader follows Rahab’s point of view of the whole situation: her deepest motivations, fears and great expectations for the future. When the oath is concluded by the concise and forcible formula of the spies (v.14), Rahab releases them through the window. Their movement from inside to outside of Rahab’s house can have a double meaning. In fact, it is considered by the perplexed reader as an emotional as well as physical distancing from Rahab, in the sense of freeing themselves from her overpowering authority. Once they are outside Rahab’s house, as well as outside the city walls, and after obtaining additional coordinates about where to go without meeting the pursuers (v. 16), they load the oath with a set of specific conditions (vv. 17-20). This time the reader is invited to ponder the nature of the oath entirely from the spies’ perspective.

The content of both scenes will be duly analyzed in the later section; now I would just like to indicate that the peculiar organization of the plot focuses the attention of the perplexed reader on the oath as if it were a written document coming from both parties. Undoubtedly, such literary dismemberment strains the fluency of the action, which is considerably slowed down, but in return, the reader obtains a detailed insight into the negotiating process.

5.1.5 Until the Pursuers Returned

The final chronological strain is caused by the comment in v. 22d, which interferes with the chronological order of an otherwise linear unfolding of events.

First, the reader is informed about the escape of the spies to the mountains (v. 22a-b), then the exact time of their concealment is reported (v. 22c) and finally further specification is offered, namely, that they were hiding ‘until the pursuers returned’ (v. 22d). At this point, the narrative withdraws to inform the reader briefly about the fruitless mission of the pursuers (v. 22e-f), and only then are the movements of the spies again followed (v. 23a-e).

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482 This scene may recall the story of Michal, who saves David by letting him down also through the window (cf. 1 Sam 19:12).
The Greek translator of the LXX already realized the problem, completely omitting this comment. Theo van der Louw justifies the omission by suggesting two logical problems here, namely: ‘(1) how could the hiding spies know that the pursuers had returned?, and (2) the search is mentioned after the return of the pursuers’. Nevertheless, once again, this discrepancy can be obviated by referring to the convention of biblical style, which tightly binds the event with its circumstances even if to do so further disrupts the chronological array. It seems that an analogous phenomenon can be individuated here. Its effect is similar to the “tiling technique” where “two narrative segments overlap like tiles on a roof”. The following table attempts to visualize such a “tiling” arrangement:

(v. 22 c) (the spies) stayed there three days → (v. 22 d) until the pursuers returned,

→ (v. 22 e-f) and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing

As was argued previously, such an arrangement with the narrator’s comment in v. 22d is designed to assist the reader in realizing the fact that the spies faithfully followed Rahab’s suggestions. This idea will be developed, as this verse also falls into the category of comment. Nevertheless, by the use of this narrative order, the perplexed reader is again invited to notice something far more important for the understanding of the plot, namely, that the spies dance to Rahab’s tune and, although they have left her house, they still have confidence in her words.

5.1.6 Narrated Time and the Perplexed Reader

As has been clearly seen, an author/redactor can adopt various techniques to interrupt the chronological order or even completely reject it, emphasizing in this way another structuring principle for the narrative. This creates suspense and stimulates the

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484 Cf. Keil, Commentary, p. 90.
486 The useful distinction in the narrative analysis is that between the fabula e sjužet, which was introduced by the Russian formalists and continued by several authors with different terminologies. While sjužet is the actual text that is before the eyes of the reader, the fabula is the reader’s reconstruction of the story during the reading process. Cf. Ska “Our Fathers Have Told Us”, pp. 5-6. Here, I will be using, however, the distinction between the ‘narrated time’ and the ‘narration time’. While the first term indicates the time as arranged within the story, the second one reveals the time outside the story in relation to the reader. Cf. Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art, p. 142.
curiosity of the reader, who must constantly remain alert to reconstruct information in chronological order or to detect another structuring principle in the story. Hence, the way in which the reader obtains certain information is crucial for the experience of reading because it involves the reader in the world of the story. The underlying idea of this thesis is that the verbal structures are preliminary but important signposts that inform the reader about the temporal order of the narrative and guide him/her through the world of the story. Hence, in the above analysis, the previously established and discussed system was a way to approach the Rahab story. Nevertheless, this was not a one-directional and confined dynamic, because in reconstructing and interpreting the flow of the narrative, the perplexed reader also had an active role in selecting, analyzing and interpreting those phenomena. For example, the choice of method, which involves some indispensable assumptions, is the first and foremost domain of the perplexed reader in such a process.

In total, the Rahab story is mismatched with its context, allowing perception of it as a particular event, one of many in the Book of Joshua, when the insiders’ view/response to the conquest is presented. The perplexed reader has a strong feeling that the conquest is seen not only as a military campaign but also as an ideological battle in which the story/report forces the insider to take a stand. This story is the dynamic force which “melts the hearts” and “takes away the courage”, but at the same time it is the story which can give hope and comfort when the world is falling apart.

The story itself then presents a non-linear plot, which invites the reader to focus on the salient twists within the narrative. Each twist almost urges him/her to look at the events from different perspectives. Consequently, it confounds or rather redirects the readers’ expectations by linking the flow of the narrative to the position of different characters. Thus the prolepsis in the v. 1g redirects the reader’s interest from the mission and fate of the spies, since they will be sleeping safely in Rahab’s house, to the situation in the King’s court and, broadly, in Jericho. In fact, by this rhetorical device the narrator invites the reader to glimpse the atmosphere that was rapidly developing after the spies’ mere appearance in the city, and perceives clearly a caricature of the King, who is jumping at his own shadow. Finally, abandoning the spies’ thread, the relationship between the
King and Rahab acquires an appropriate focus. If Rahab’s decision is daring courage or an act of treachery will be decided in the final part of the analysis.\textsuperscript{487}

The flashback in v. 6a-b links the event which has happened in the past to the present narrative situation (dramatic pause), which represents a kind of a general overview of the location of the spies and pursuers and assists the reader in focusing on Rahab’s role in such an arrangement. The representation of the oath stipulation in two sections separated spatiotemporally allows the reader to better penetrate the nature of this pact, which is presented from both perspectives. Finally, a little comment in v. 22d, which spoils the chronological order, pulls the reader's attention to the surprising fidelity with which the spies execute Rahab’s instructions.

To sum up, the chronological arrangement of the story with different phenomena interfering with the linear unfolding of the plot stimulates the interpretative interest of the perplexed reader, who was expected not only to acquire information, but also to delight in exploring the “architecture of the Rahab story”. Most importantly, however, the manipulation of the narrated time produced a response from the perplexed reader, interpreting those phenomena selected and elaborated above. Hence, again the principal assumption is confirmed: that the temporal arrangement of the events in the story is an important mode of communication with the reader.

\textbf{5.2 Comments in Joshua 2}

As I have often repeated, in the narrative, all forms and constructs that are different from 	extit{wayyiqtol} indicate the transition from the principal to the secondary line of the narrative.\textsuperscript{488} Once again, this criterion is a valuable tool for the reader to perceive the arrangement of the textual information. The break means that the new information provides circumstantial information related to the main action (explanatory gloss). It is a sort of reflection or explanation related to the facts presented in the main line of the narrative. Precisely in these shifts it is possible to detect more clearly how the function of the narrator changes from that of “storyteller” to that of “commentator”. The

\textsuperscript{487} Many postmodern readers see this confrontation as an act of treachery, as their interpretations are strongly influenced by postcolonial ideology.

\textsuperscript{488} As the concept of background loses its depth in the straightforward communication guaranteed by direct speech, the focus will be on the narrative sections.
following section registers the breaks in the main line of the narrative and clarifies their significance for the perplexed reader’s experience of reading the Rahab story.

5.2.1 From Shittim to the House of the Prostitute

After the brief scene of commissioning the spies (vv. 1b-c), the reader is informed that they do as Joshua commands, fulfilling immediately the first part of the mandate: לֵךְ → והלכו (go! → and they went). In line with the guiding principle of Niccacci’s Syntax, this is the foreground information. At the same level, subsequent action is presented, informing the reader that the spies entered (ותבואו) the house of the prostitute (אישה הזונה). From a broader perspective, a certain ironical analogy can be perceived at this moment because Shittim, from where they departed, was also the place where Israelites had earlier had sexual relationships with Moabite women, showing in this way disobedience to God (cf. Num 25:1). Thus, now, the spies move from the place where Israel “played the harlot” to the house of the harlot who will praise their God.

After this realization, the name of the woman is conveyed as background information. In this moment, the reader can sense how the narrator switches the register from that of the “story teller” to that of the “commentator”. The brief pause serves to

489 Some seek to endow the verb נבוא, here, with sexual connotation, especially as this information will be repeated again by the king’s messengers in the next verse and then by Rahab with the proposition בוא (to you) in Joshua 2:3 and בוא (to me) in Joshua 2:4. It is hard to deny completely the ambiguity conveyed by these expressions especially as they appear in the context of the prostitute’s house. Cf. Hawk, Joshua, p. 40. Nevertheless, in this specific case when the verb is additionally followed by the complement of place, there is no grounds to turn movement, such as entering into the house, straight away into sexual activity. In fact, in those remote times the house of the prostitute was considered sometimes as a strategic and ideal shield for those who try to go unnoticed. Cf. Bird, ‘The Harlot as a Heroine’, p. 128.

490 The meaning of the Hebrew term אישה הזונה is not unequivocal. As has been mentioned previously, this ambiguity about Rahab’s “profession” has become apparent from the early stages of the reception history. The debate is continued by modern scholars. Wiseman considers that the apologetic sense might be due to the parallels with the Babylonian practices where ‘the inn (bît sābî (ti)) was kept by a man or woman who was required to notify the palace of any stranger, especially one engaged in hostile activity, who might come to it’. D. J. Wiseman, ‘Rahab of Jericho’, TynBul 14 (1964), 8-11, p. 8. Wiseman’s comparative study further mitigates Rahab’s ‘shameful ascription’. He writes: ‘It is also possible that znh, in some of its earliest occurrences, as in the Rahab reference, may be a biform of znû “to provide food or sustenance” (Akkad. zanānu is used in this sense, as well as to provide a city or temple with means of support)’. Wiseman, ‘Rahab of Jericho’, p. 1. Hölscher, Gressman and Mowinckel went in another direction, and although Hebrew distinguishes between אישה (harlot) and קדש (cult prostitute cf., for example, Gen 38:21), advocated the second possibility. Cf. Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, p. 107. Recently, Phyllis Bird strongly supported the plain meaning of “harlot”, stressing additionally that this pejorative image of Rahab as the prostitute is essential for the plot development of the story, which is built on the principle of the ‘reversal of expectations’. Cf. Bird, ‘The Harlot as a Heroine’, pp. 119-139. This plain sense of the “prostitute” or “harlot” is also assumed by the perplexed reader.
introduce circumstantial information to the action-centred plot: the name of the prostitute. It gives the perplexed reader an opportunity to ponder and perhaps to “play” with the semantic range of the name “Rahab” (רָחָב) and its function within the story.

5.2.1.1 A Heroine with a “Thousand” Faces

Rahab and Joshua are the only characters whose proper names are explicitly mentioned in the story. In biblical convention, the fact of giving a name to the female character while other, male characters are unnamed clearly indicates that she will play a prominent role in the story. Hence, it is not surprising that from the earliest stages of the story’s reception to the modern and postmodern exegesis, different and divergent interpretations of that name and its function were advanced.

As has already been mentioned, the connotation of the name’s root Rahab (רָחָב) fluctuates between ‘wide’ and ‘opened’. This overtone in association with the woman’s profession makes a pretty perfect play and may be perceived as an “ironic provocation” of the narrator to underline the shameful profession of the Canaanite woman. However, it can be also paraphrased as ‘the god N has opened/widened (the womb?)’. This rendition would invite the reader to see this name in relation to the woman’s fertility, which would be closely associated with divine intervention. Although this thread is ignored by the story, it is interestingly taken up by the rabbinic tradition, which provides Rahab with an extensive family tree. However, according to Noth, the proper name comes from the earlier term ‘house of Rahab’ which might originally have meant ‘the public square house’ בֵית רָח (bīṯ ṭḥāḇ) and later gave rise to a proper name. In this light, the name “Rahab” perhaps will evoke the idea of the shelter and hospitality that can be found in that place, which in turn will be easily reconciled with another rabbinic tradition that consider Rahab to be an innkeeper. Stek, in his interpretation, instead combines two semantic values which can come from the root letters of the name Rahab, i.e. ‘wide, broad or expansive’ and ‘the arrogant one’ or ‘the surger’, referring, as Jerome did, to the “Rahab” used as the poetic symbol of Egypt and the mythical sea monster. Hence, his perception of this name in the story leads him to link together two

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events: the crossing of the Reed Sea and the entrance into Canaan. In both events the power of Yahweh is highlighted because He ultimately overcomes “Rahab”, whether it indicates Egypt or Canaanite woman.495

Thus, even as small a detail as the name of a character can drive the reader in many different interpretative directions. The name can be linked with the woman’s profession, since the reader is informed about her name immediately after being informed about her profession. On the other hand, it can underline interior qualities of the character such as openness, kindness and hospitality. The plurality of the different views and perspectives each contributing to the overall portrait of the heroine are clearly appreciated by the perplexed reader, for whom the name “Rahab” becomes a metaphor for what became of the story itself after centuries of its interpretation. In fact, from the perspective of the postmodern reader, the Rahab story was and still is a “wide” and “open square” for different methodological queries, which inevitably leads to divergent responses, each contributing to the overall portrait of the heroine with a “thousand” faces, as she would have been painted by Picasso.

Nevertheless, the response of the perplexed reader is not just an eclectic openness to a multiplicity of interpretations; there is also one function of this name that is particularly cherished by the perplexed reader. As a matter of fact, the name Rahab can be perceived as the “hermeneutical key” to disclose both the character’s interior world as well as the function of this story in the context of the Book of Joshua. In fact, ‘names have a peculiar bearing on many biblical narratives. Often they have a “proleptic” function in the stories where they appear’.496 The proleptic function of the name of Rahab can be seen from the perspective of the character’s profile as well as the story’s function in its literary context of the Book of Joshua.

At the level of the character, the name Rahab defines the heroine’s interior profile as it foreshadows her “openness” to take into consideration new possibilities in her life. This openness allows her to pay close attention to the particular story about the new nation and their God, which allows her to imagine at least survival in the upcoming new socio-political situation. This “openness” motivates her to help the spies, whom she recognizes as the presage of imminent appraisal. Finally, her “broad-mindedness”

allows her to recognize and praise the omnipotence of their God and obtain from the spies the promise of salvation.

In the postcolonial context, this attitude of openness toward an invader can be vulnerable, as it may insinuate an attitude of submission or even collaboration with the assailant. However, as will be revealed later on, the world of the Rahab story probably presupposes a more complex socio-political situation in which Rahab could have been trapped between two oppressive groups: one being the upper class of Jericho, represented by the King and his militia, and the other being Israelites, represented by Joshua and the spies. If alienated in such an “othered world” and left “high and dry”, her struggle and desire for survival, new identity and perhaps faith should not be harshly condemned.

At the level of the story as read in the broader perspective of the Book of Joshua, the name of Rahab can hide also a certain ironical prolepsis, as it reveals the deepest theology of the Book of Joshua, i.e. that the land “lies opened” for Israelites. In fact, the verbs built from the same letters as Rahab’s name were used *inter alia* to describe the expanse of the land. For example, in Genesis there is an explanation of the name Rehoboth: ‘Now the Lord has made room for us [הִרְחָבֵן]’ (Gen 26:22 NRSV), while in Exodus the reader is informed of the Lord’s promise: ‘For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge [וְהִרְחַב] your borders’ (Ex 34:24 NRS). As has been previously mentioned, the Book of Joshua is all about the conquest of the land and its borders. Before taking it, Joshua sends two spies to view the Land. They come and meet Rahab from whom they learn that the land, in fact, is now “wide” and “opened” for them. In this light, the very name of the woman is already the answer for their mission to spy on the Land, as it foreshadows the outcomes of the conquest. This interpretation is not very explorative, because in different ways many scholars share a similar conviction.

There is, however, another side of that prediction, which the name “Rahab” insinuates to the perplexed reader and which can be easily overlooked. The case of Rahab, who negotiates a tough pact with culturally and religiously distant people, prognosticates that the Land is also “wide” and “spacious” to accommodate both parties within it, though only if they come to terms. The case of Rahab and the Gibeonites clearly shows that it is

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possible. Undoubtedly, such a covenant requires many compromises from both parties and indeed both parties paid the price for it: Rahab, who appears to be a very independent woman, by living in the outskirts of the male-dominant society, but also Israelites who had to reformulate their ancient law to accept the presence of foreigners among them instead of annihilating them.

The search for a compromise when two parties claim the right to the same Land is always and everywhere desirable, but perhaps nowadays particularly relevant for the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. In this context, the Rahab story impels the necessity of negotiating, and her name foreshadows perhaps the long-awaited conviction that the Land is “wide” and “broad” for all of them.

5.2.2 Dramatic Pause

After the series of reported speeches skillfully woven into the main line of the narrative by the wayyiqtol forms, another noteworthy interruption occurs in vv. 6-8. The syntactical analysis revealed that the whole unit has been considered as the background communication. In fact, the waw-x-qatal (v. 6a) disconnects the main line of the narrative and launches the secondary line, which is continued to the end of v. 8. From the literary point of view, this break of the linear plot is considered as a “dramatic pause”, which slows down the rhythm of the narrative. As a matter of fact, the unit is well-structured by a concentric chiasm according to an A-B-C-B’-A’ pattern. It is worth looking at this section again to better reveal the key terms:\textsuperscript{499}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A: Rahab</th>
<th>B: Pursuers</th>
<th>C: Gate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>והיה חַלָּה הָנָּה הַשֵּׁמֶשֶׁת בַּעַד הָנָּה כַּתּוֹרָה לְחַלָּה מִינָה</td>
<td>והמשרחרים סְפִּיר אֲמַרְיִים זֶרֶד זֶרֶד עָלָיו הָעָבָדִים</td>
<td>והמשה כָּרָר קָסֵר מִכְּשָׂר יִשְׂרָאֵל הָעָבָדִים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B’: Spies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>והָאִילֹּתִים עַל הָלָּיִלְתָּן</td>
<td>והָאִילֹּתִים עַל הָלָּיִלְתָּן</td>
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\textsuperscript{499} The table represents the analysis advanced by Klassen. Cf. Klassen, \textit{A Reading of the Rahab Narrative}, pp. 77-78.
The above table captures the structure of this section, which is to give the narrator’s concise overview on the situation just before the main revelation of Rahab. In this sense, the dramatic pause slows down the narrative rhythm, preparing the reader for the climax of the story. Nevertheless, this section is far more important for the reader, as it also reveals the narrator’s evaluation of the events it displays. The narrator uses this background line of communication to manifest his wonder about what has happened and how.

Thus, Rahab’s preponderant role and her merit for the actual state of affairs are highlighted by the force of the inclusion: A-A' constructed by a personal pronoun אֲהֵי (she) in v. 6a and v. 8b. In this way, ‘the paragraph emphasizes that she is the initiator and that the men who have come into contact with her are where she wants them. She has orchestrated the events’. ⁵⁰⁰ Then, a certain evaluation can also be perceived in a situational irony, which also reveals the attitude of the narrator toward the narrated occurrences. Once more, Klassen’s observation is appropriate. First, he draws attention to how “the gate” is at the centre of the structure separating the pursuers and the spies spatially. Then, he concludes that: ‘this serves to emphasize the irony of the situation that Rahab’s earlier actions (v. 4) have effected, namely that the insiders are outside and the outsiders inside’. ⁵⁰¹ In the broader context of the Book of Joshua, such irony might again have the proleptic function of foretelling that Israel will become eventually the “insider” in the Land, but it will happen thanks to a quirk of fate (meaning God’s providence) rather than their military competence.

In sum, this section is meant not only to increase expectations or satisfy the reader’s curiosity about the course of events, but to draws his/her attention to the one who “plays the first fiddle”, revealing thereby the narrator’s admiration for her. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, the long traditions of both Rabbis and the Church Fathers shared an admiration for Rahab, eulogizing her and praising her to the skies for what she did and even for what she did not do. This positive attitude toward Rahab was somehow shaken only by some postmodern interpretations, which tend to present her as an opportunist, counting always on profits. As the reader may or may not follow the narrator’s leading voice during the interpretative process, it is difficult to

⁵⁰⁰ Klassen, A Reading of the Rahab Narrative, p. 79.
⁵⁰¹ Klassen, A Reading of the Rahab Narrative, pp. 78-79.
argue with any of those conclusions. Instead, the perplexed reader values the narrator’s positive evaluation and accepts his voice in the construction of the overall portrait of Rahab because, as will be revealed soon, this positive opinion of Rahab and more importantly the realisation of her decisive role in ‘orchestrating events’ is essential for the coherence of the forthcoming events in the story and allows the perplexed reader to ‘feel with’ Rahab according to the principle of “narrative empathy”.

5.2.3 Rahab’s House

Another brief comment is found in vv.15b-c. After Rahab’s long argument (vv. 9b-13b) and the oath by the spies (vv.14b-e), the reader is informed about Rahab’s letting the men down through the window (v. 15a). At this point, the narrator conveys two lines of necessary comment about the position of Rahab’s house: כִּי בֵיתָהּ בְקִּר הַחוֹמָה (vv. 15b-c).502 Again, in this instance, the narrator is perceived as the commentator. As a matter of fact, the explicative gloss assists the reader in realizing an important narrative conjuncture. As Rahab’s house was on the city wall, lowering the spies down from the window placed them outside the city. Such awareness, however, leads the reader to another contingency, namely that the spies are finally beyond Rahab’s influence, hence unrestricted and able to set their terms to the just-established pact, which will actually take place later (vv. 17-20). Finally, this inconspicuous comment, omitted by the LXX, may also inform the reader about the social status of Rahab in Jericho. The narrative pause in the story and an attempt by the narrator to situate Rahab’s place in the city invite the perplexed reader to do the same and imagine what Rahab’s life on/between the walls might be.

5.2.3.1 Reader “Between the Walls”

In antiquity, the city wall had a primarily protective function but also constituted the line of demarcation. It marked a certain frontier or borderline between insiders and outsiders. To this day, the wall is the best metaphor, and unfortunately not only a metaphor, of division and separation. It is indicative that the negotiation between Rahab

502 Boling explains the meaning of the gloss: ‘literally, “in the wall of the wall.” The expression seems to refer to defensive fortifications of the casemate type, in which parallel walls are divided by cross-walls into chambers which may be rubble-filled for added strength or to be used for residence and storage’. Boling, Joshua, p. 148.
and Israelites is depicted in that scenario around the city walls. Kramer rightly suggests that: ‘Rahab’s residence, having been located inside the city wall, could symbolically have been construed as her having been poised or caught between her own people and outsiders’. It is possible to increase even more the dramatic situation in which Rahab found herself. In fact, such a location of her house may indicate that she belonged to a very low social class in Jericho. This conviction can be also supported by some other textual data, such as references to her profession and the extensive family clan, which seems to be dependent on her. Thus, it is a very plausible conclusion that Rahab might have been a marginal figure living at the edge of the society of Jericho. Hence, the house between the walls could be also a synonym for Rahab’s existential anxiety at living “in-between”.

At this point, the perplexed reader is also trapped “in-between” two currents in evaluating Rahab’s decision to ally with with Israelites. On the one hand, there is a long tradition, beginning with the early stages of the reception of this story, which is unanimously favourable and totally uncritical toward Rahab’s choice. On the other hand, some postmodern voices threaten this spotless image by blaming her for her favorable attitude toward invaders against her own nation. McKinlay’s rhetorical question can serve as an example of this trend. She writes: ‘So I would ask not whether Rahab was a hero/ine but whether Rahab the Canaanite survived without bleeding and whether she came to realise that she bled’. She, then, like probably many postmodern readers, recognizes that the narrative is not interested in such a question, which however does not prevent her from positing it. But the question can be also reversed, and the reader might also wonder whether or not she was “bleeding” all those years, living as a prostitute in the chamber on the wall, presumably to support her extensive family. In fact, there are many other questions of this type about which the reader might wonder while reading that text. Nevertheless, the story is mediated by the narrator’s voice, which does not give clear and easy answers to similar questions, but instead develops a narrative perspective in which Rahab simply decided to help “others” and to establish a

506 McKinlay, ‘Rahab: A hero/ine?’, p. 56.
pact with them to protect her family. Like every life-changing decision, that of Rahab also probably necessitated a sort of “bleeding”, but the reader is not informed about it, and so different scenarios can be imagined.

5.2.4 Until They Return (II)

The last brief comment is found in v. 22d, which informs the reader that the spies were hiding in the mountains until the pursuers gave up on chasing them. It slightly disrupts the chronological arrangement already analyzed, so at this point, it is necessary to expose the effect it may have on the reader. The juxtaposition in the table below portrays how the narrator’s comment in v. 22d makes from this unit a faithful “calque” of Rahab’s directions given to the spies earlier.507

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rahab’s Indications</th>
<th>Spies’ Fulfillment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16b-c) ‘Go toward the mountain lest the pursuers meet you, and you will be hidden there three days until the pursuers return’.</td>
<td>22a-d) ‘And they went and came unto the mountain, and stayed there three days [narrator] → until the pursuers returned’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the comment here is meant to explain the length of time the spies hide in the mountains, and, in this sense, functions as a brief explicative gloss, nevertheless it also reveals the narrator’s attitude to highlight the absolute dependence of the spies on Rahab’s directions.

Therefore, Rahab is portrayed as clearly dominating all other male characters in the story, first the King with his messengers who followed her suggestion and now the spies who literally obey her directions: where to go, how long to stay there, and finally when to return. This insistence of the narrator on the spies’ subjection to Rahab’s words can be ironic, especially in a patriarchal society in which the main and dominant roles were reserved almost exclusively to the male heroes. Hence, once again, the narrator persuades the perplexed reader that the Rahab figure is exceptional, with a strong personality, who despite all the anxieties of her life is able to fight for her survival and in the narrator’s view becomes the means of salvation for others.

5.2.5 Narration vs. Comment

The syntactical-textual analysis of Joshua 2 has brought to light a correlation between narrating and commentating. In the above four instances, the narrator interrupts the sequence of events with further comments. Although all of these fall into the category of “glosses”, whose primary function is to explain the aspects of the story, they are also devices by which the narrator’s evaluation is articulated more perceptibly and invite readers to make their own evaluation.

This was, in fact, the strategy of the perplexed reader who took advantage of all the pauses in the story, first of all, to listen intently to the narrator’s voice and hence learned to value its guidance. That was evident especially in the dramatic pause (vv. 6-8) and in the brief comment in v. 22d, which is constructed in such way as to lead the reader to realize not only the course of the action, but far more importantly, Rahab’s active role in causing and steering the events. Nevertheless, these shifts in the story were also perceived by the perplexed reader as the means by which the narrator involves the reader in bringing his/her comments to the story. This contribution may vary from reader to reader because of the many factors discussed in Chapter One. The perplexed reader’s participation consisted in pausing with the narrator and envisioning some interpretative directions that emerge beyond the bound of the story. Necessarily, these directions are validated by textual references, but at the same time reflect an individual perspective of the perplexed reader in construing the key viewpoints of the story.

Thus, the comments in v. 1f, which reveal the name of the heroine, as well as the reference to the location of her house in vv. 15b-c, were processed to envision a profile of the character who experiences the frontier life between insiders and outsiders. Instead of making discriminatory comments about the woman trapped in between life and death, the perplexed reader, motivated by empathy, seeks to establish the pattern of the character's behaviour, which in the modern-day framework can provide a means of challenging one’s thinking.

This pattern will be integrated and eventually completed only when dialogue scenes are examined. In fact the dialogues in biblical storytelling are privileged instances when one can discover the character’s inner motivation, as well as the most effective device by which the narrator involves the reader in the story. Hence, the
analysis of the following ten dialogue scenes of the Rahab story will be the third perspective from which the perplexed reader looks at this story.

5.3 “In Their Shoes”: Dialogues in Joshua 2

In the dialogues the reader is invited to enter into the shoes of the characters and participate with them in the story. In Biblical Hebrew language, this is already perceived at the linguistic level when the selection of certain constructs denotes the involvement of the author and hence requires similar direct involvement of the reader. In other words, by the constructs of direct speech, the reader is addressed more directly than by the “distant” narrative form of wayyiqtol, which displays more detached information.

Dialogues are one of the forms of ‘direct speech’, which prefer to operate in the foreground and form a direct relationship with the receiver. In dialogues, in fact, the reader gets a real-time experience and has a more direct access to the biblical character’s interior. In a certain sense, by dialogues, the reader is invited to go through the incident with the characters (cf. narrative empathy). Metaphorically speaking, he/she is put in the character’s shoes and invited to assess the events from their perspective (slant).

Nevertheless, such rapprochement not only allows for an insightful analysis of the story world but also invites the reader to bring his/her ethics to the story. As a matter of fact, in dialogues, the clash between the character’s world and the reader’s world is the most direct, because it lacks the mediation of the narrator. When the reader is put directly before the characters, he/she is necessarily engaged to experience the events through their conciseness, but at same time, that experience encourages them to construe the narrated event from their own perspective. This will now be the dynamic of how the perplexed reader looks at the Rahab story.

5.3.1 Scene 1: Joshua the Leader (vv. 1b-c)

At the beginning of the story, the reported speech is presented in which Joshua, son of Nun, issues his command to the spies: ‘Go, view the land and Jericho’ (v. 1b-c). Even without this section, the knowledge of the reader would not be greatly affected, as he/she has already acquired it from the narrative part (v. 1a), which roughly narrates
who sent the two men and why. Nevertheless, in the reported speech, the reader obtained not only the plain information about the fact of sending the spies but, most of all, gains direct insight into the scene, allowing him/her to realize perhaps the most important clue, namely, the authority of Joshua.

Moreover, the scene in which the leader initiates the spy mission is evocative and not without precedent in the biblical literature. The reader is thus invited to the literary contextual reading. As a matter of fact, the concise words of Joshua reported at the beginning of the chapter may easily recall a similar scene when Moses was commander and Joshua one of the twelve spies (cf. Num 13:1-20). In contrast to that public and pompous ceremony, this one was humble and private to the extent of being considered by some as unprofessional. Nevertheless, while the first mission ended disastrously (cf. Num 14:1-25), this one will turn out to be successful. It is hard not to notice an antithetic parallelism that exceeds the boundary of the narrative unit.

At this point, another question may bother the reader, which again rises only from the broader literary perspective in which the narrative unit is actually situated. The question is why Joshua decided to spy the land and Jericho. Just a few lines back, he was firmly assured that he would succeed in conquering all the land (cf. Josh 1:1-9), but still he launches the strategic mission before the campaign against Jericho. As a matter of fact, the whole enterprise may be interpreted as the manifestation of lack of faith, which collides with the overall portrait of Joshua that emerges from the whole book. Certainly, it tints the very transparent character of Joshua with the blot of “opacity”.

For the perplexed reader this is the irresistible opening scene, portraying Joshua as the leader who combines trust in the Lord with human prudence. John Lange’s assertion captures the point. He writes:

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508 The insistence in vv. 1; 23 on Joshua’s patronymic name may remind the reader that in the context of that first mission Joshua received such a name (cf. Num 13:16), which can be another argument for juxtaposing two episodes.
511 This opaque note is even increased by the hapax legomenon: שֵׁרַש (secretly) from the introductory formula, which can be syntactically read in two ways. First possibility is to connect this adverb with the verb to “send,” which will insinuate the idea of secret mission which in the overall context will be redundant as the spying presupposes the secrecy. The second possibility is to connect the adverb with the verb “saying” which sparks the idea that Joshua is commissioning the spies secretly from his own people. Cf. Sherwood, ‘A Leader’s Misleading’, n. 24, p. 50.
The use of human prudence, with all trust in divine providence, is not only allowable, but often also a binding duty. Joshua ought not, in his position as general, to enter a strange and hostile land, without having explored it first. He proceeded in full conformity with the example of Moses in Numbers XIII. It may seem, in fact, that the promise given to Joshua in the first chapter does not exclude him from performing his professional responsibilities while carrying them out. He still needs to balance trust with human insight and freedom. This tension between faith and reliance on his own discernment make Joshua, as a character, more rounded for the postmodern audience, as it may insinuate that biblical heroes of unshakable faith and unquestionable obedience were not free from the perplexities of average believers. Finally, by the force of the direct speech: "וּלְכוּ רְאוּ" (go and view), which in the story is addressed to the spies, the reader may also be persuaded to “go” and “see” what will happen next. Just by means of two verbs: "וַיֵּלְכוּ" (they went) and "וַיָּבֹא" (and they came) the spies ended up in the house of the prostitute where they will sleep peacefully, while the reader is taken for a moment to the Royal court in Jericho.

5.3.2 Scenes 2-3: In the King’s Court (vv. 2-3)

This scene is built from just two “camera shots”, both taken in the palace of the King. The first part of that scene (v. 2) reveals the vantage point of the inhabitants of Jericho, who rush to inform their King about the suspicious visitors. The introductory formula (v. 2a) in the passive form, ‘it was told to the King’ (v. 2), focuses on the information rather that the informant. Then, the reader-orientated function of the particle הננה that introduces the statement also enhances the emphasis on the message, tinting it perhaps with an aspect of eager expectation for the King’s decision. In fact, as expected, the second part of that scene (v. 3) records the message issued by the King. Also in this case, the introductory formula (v. 3a) does not inform the reader about who and how many are the emissaries. It focuses entirely on the King's request from Rahab. Skilful reorganization of the message allows highlighting not the fact but the purpose of Rahab’s guests' visit: ‘to search the land they came’ (v. 3d).

The result of such an organized scene is that the reader does not know who found “the nest of spies” or how they did it. He does not even know who is speaking to the King and who he sends to Rahab. The scene allows him only to hear “with” the

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King this threatening news, and then to listen to his command. It seems that instead of informing the reader about what, why and when it happened, the reader is directly confronted with the deliberations of the King, who unquestionably is at the centre of this scene. Such a concise style of conveying information considerably speeds the course of action, which may express the panic at the Royal court.

At the same time, however, such a restrained style produces many ‘blanks’ in the story to be wondered about by readers. Since the narrator does not satisfy the reader’s curiosity, this might give free rein to the reader’s imagination, as happened in case of the Rabbis and especially of Josephus Flavius, who remodeled this part of the story with his personal assumptions (cf. Chapter 4). Hence, in Josephus’ reconstruction of the story, the reader is additionally informed that the King was at supper when he got the news about the strangers who were lodging in Rahab’s inn. Furthermore, in Josephus’ version the King also sent to catch the spies with the intention to torture them to learn their real intentions.

The strategy of filling the gaps and blanks of the story is certainly not reserved only to the ancient interpreters, but to a different degree, is practised by all readers. For example, Zakovitch suggests that Rahab herself informed the King about the spies to trick both the King and the spies. As a matter of fact, each reader could convey his/her version of events, but the truth is that they are unimportant in the narrator’s view, hence simply omitted.

As the perplexed reader follows the narrator’s view, his attention is rather fixed on the portrait of the fearful King who, without a second thought, sends his messengers to capture the strangers in Rahab’s house. There is, however, a whit of irony or even disdain toward Rahab in his words. In fact, his command is built from two clauses: the first states: ‘Bring out the men who came to you’ (v. 3b), and the second one clarifies: ‘who entered your house’ (v.3c). One clause, either the first or the second, would be enough to let Rahab understand the request, but it seems that they may have a slightly different undertone. As has already been mentioned, the Hebrew verb בֹּא (to come in)

513 Meir Sternberg distinguishes ‘gaps’ from ‘blanks’. He writes: ‘To make sense is to make distinctions between what was omitted for lack of interest: between what I called, for short, gaps and blanks. Only the former demand closure, while the latter may be disregarded without loss, indeed must be disregarded to keep the narrative in focus’. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 236.
followed by the proposition קֵן (to you) may have a sexual connotation. The King does not fail to notice Rahab’s profession, referring to her inferior status as a prostitute. The presumptuous tone of the King’s request confirms the conviction of the perplexed reader that Rahab’s life in Jericho was not a “bed of roses”. Moreover, such a forceful command makes both the King and the reader believe that there should not be any problems with its execution. Consequently, it also increases the narrative tension, as the reader suddenly realizes that the spies in Rahab’s house are in serious danger.

5.3.3 Scene 4: Rahab and the King (vv. 4d-5f)

Two narrative clauses (vv. 4a-b) inform the reader that Rahab hides the spies. Immediately after that, another reported-speech scene opens and confronts the reader with Rahab’s answer to the King’s runners (vv. 4c-5f). As has been previously argued, the moment of delivery is omitted. The narrator could have reported the full process of delivery in the form: ‘the sender speaks words to his messenger, and the messenger speaks the same words to the recipient of the message’. This does not occur here. The narrator registered only the moment of the King issuing the command, and the reader must presume that it was faithfully delivered to Rahab. Such an arrangement is not without significance for the reader. In fact, by bypassing the moment of delivery, the narrator accelerates the action and enhances the reader’s instantaneous impression that the matter is playing out directly between Rahab and the King.

Rahab’s speech is then perfectly crafted, presenting her as being very clever and maintaining a healthy distance from herself as a woman. First of all, she does not deny the fact of hosting the strangers. The Hebrew adjective: קֵן (right, correct, true, yes) initiating her speech, sounds almost like captatio benevolentiae, aiming to capture the goodwill of the messengers. Then, she also takes up and confirms the King’s presumption that the men entered her house to benefit from the obvious service: ‘Yes, the men came to me’ (v. 4d). Hence, her further suggestions that she did not know (לֹא יָדַעְתִּי) about the strangers’ provenance, identity and intentions might have sounded

516 Cf. Hawk, Joshua, p. 40.
518 At the end of Rahab’s speech, the agency emerges more clearly when she addresses the messengers directly: ‘Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them’ (vv. 5e-f).
519 Cf. BDB, § 4382.
convincing enough. Finally, by suggesting a quick chase after the intruders who have just slipped away, she dismisses any suspicion, affirming her loyalty to the King.

From the reader’s perspective, however, this scene also reveals a large dose of irony. The skillful changing of perspective between the narrative that informs the reader about Rahab’s hiding the spies and the following speech, which presents her camouflaging this fact from the King’s men, tints the story with humor as it allows the reader to realize and perhaps enjoy the moment when Rahab is fooling the royal militia. As a matter of fact, informing the reader about a fact which is unknown to the King’s messengers creates a dissonance between the knowledge of the characters within the story and the reader’s knowledge in the sense that the second knows more. This dissonance constitutes the source of dramatic irony.\footnote{Cf. Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, \textit{Handbook of Biblical Criticism}, 4\textsuperscript{th} edn, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), pp. 88-89.}

The narrator does not pose the question very often asked by historical-empirical readers such as Augustine and Chrysostom about the moral value of Rahab’s lie. Regardless of whether one tries to justify or condemn Rahab’s behaviour, this reasoning is circumscribed to the domain of a reader who for specific reasons might want to question the story. The perplexed reader’s attention, instead, is captured by a suggestive and humoristic force of this scene in which Rahab is able to stand up against the King and send his messengers “on a wild-goose chase”. By pretending to be an unperspicacious woman, she turns out to be more eloquent and smarter than the male representatives of the “upper class” of Jericho, which may evoke, and indeed has evoked, the admiration of many readers.

5.3.4 Scene 5: The Climax of the Story (vv. 9b-13b)

The quite long dramatic pause (vv. 6-8), slows down a rapid rhythm of narration, hence preparing the reader for the highest tension in the narrative progression. This is the climax of the story (vv. 9-11) which appears in the form of reported speech and thereby bridges the distance between the character (here entirely Rahab) and the reader. Actually, the immediacy of the scene may produce in the reader the impression of almost assisting the religious ceremony where, first, the “novice” reveals her acquaintance with God’s almighty deeds and then recognizes Him as the sovereign God.
The peak of the story demands a more insightful look because it is the key to the story’s interpretation. As the syntactical texture of this section has already been presented, in the following the focus will be on its literary features. The whole scene (vv. 9b-13b) occurs in two parts. The first one can be called Rahab’s “confession” (vv. 9b-11e) and the following is the request of the oath (vv. 12a-13b). Crucial is the first part, which presents the concentric structure: A-B-C- D- C’-B’-A’. Here is the table which captures this stylistic principle:521

A: ‘I know: that the Lord has given you the land,
   B: and that your terror has fallen on us,
   C: and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you.
   D: For we have heard the fact that the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea
      before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of
      the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, namely that you
      utterly destroyed them.
   C’: and when we heard it our hearts melted,
   B’: and there was no spirit left in any man because of you,
   A’: because as for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth below’.

First of all, the above structure reveals that the whole of Rahab’s argument is framed by her personal testimony: A) ‘I know’ → A’) ‘the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth below’. Stek aptly comments on this design by declaring that ‘the whole is framed by Rahab’s faith confession, a confession that accounts for her action’.522 In other words, the recognition and praise of the Israelite God springs from her personal deliberations and becomes the driving force of her endeavours.523 Rahab’s very personal announcement is also strengthened by the absorbing interplay between personal pronouns: ‘We have heard’, but ‘I know’ which unravels Rahab’s inner state and her personal conviction, which does not recur frequently in the biblical literature.

521 The above table is adopted from Winther-Nielsen. Cf. Winther-Nielsen, A Functional Discourse Grammar, p. 154. However, most scholars recognise a concentric structure of this unit. For example, slightly different, but also confirming the concentric pattern of this section is the structure presented by Stek. Cf. Stek, ‘Rahab of Canaan’, p. 40. Also cf. Klassen, A Reading of the Rahab Narrative, p. 85.
523 The rhetoric figure of merism is used here, which contrasts two extremes of space, “heaven” and “earth”, to underline the omnipotence of God over the universe and other gods.
There is however, one detail which deserves to be better articulated. At the centre of the above structure is the reference to the mysterious “story/report” that had a devastating impact on the inhabitants of the whole land. It is introduced by the formula: וַיִּשְׁמַעֵן, ‘for we have heard’ (v.10a), and reinforced by the following expression וַנִּשְׁמַעֲנוּ, ‘when we heard’ (v. 11a), which reveals the force and consequence of that story for the morale of the people. Thus, only at the very centre of the story, without the mediation of the narrator, but directly from Rahab’s mouth, the reader gains the crucial information about the real cause of the panic in Jericho. Only now can the reader better understand why the King was so frightened by the appearance of insignificant strangers in the city. This is also a decisive piece of information which explains Rahab’s behaviour. In fact, at the centre of Rahab’s argument is the reference to the “story/report” which has motivated her to such confession. It is not the audacity or eloquence of helpless spies, but the “story” which persuaded her to dream about a different future: ‘I know’ ← ‘for we have heard’. As this assertion is at the heart of the central part of the unit, it is worth a closer look, as it can be the interpretative “key” of the whole story.

Rahab’s report (v. 10) consists in recalling the two most glorious events of the Israelite past, i.e. the Crossing of the Sea and the defeat of the Amorite Kings. Most commentators draw attention to the Deuteronomistic style of such a proclamation, which leads to the intriguing exchange of perspectives when the foreign prostitute invites the Israelite spies to re-consider their most cherished memories from the past. Undoubtedly, in such a combination there is a heavy dose of irony, which steers the reader’s attention.

Rahab’s discourse, then, smoothly develops into the request for an oath (vv. 12-13). The particle כְּכָל: ‘now then’ (v.12a) neatly transforms her from an eulogist into a demanding partner, simultaneously bringing the spies out of the dramatic shadows. The request itself revolves around the key terms of the covenant stipulation: חֶסֶד (mercy), and אֱמוֹת הַעָנָה (sign of the oath). It is also worth noting that Rahab’s argument is more pragmatic than ideological, hence she does not adduce to her belief, but rather to her assistance in the deliverance of the spies. To sum up, the whole scene, structured in the way preamble (vv. 9b-11e) → request (vv. 12a-13b), reveals that Rahab’s decision to help the spies was not made according to her mood at the time. Assuredly at this point,

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the reader is led to realise that Rahab’s argument looks like a consciously and well-crafted elocution, additionally hinted by the Deutoronomistic style, rather than the colloquial speech of a frightened woman.

The formal style of Rahab’s speech being brought firmly to the foreground may also have a strong impact on the reader, since ‘the way in which the characters speak is indicative of their inner life, their point of view, their personality, and their status’.\textsuperscript{525} Sophisticated structure and particularly selected terminology from covenantal context is the mark of the legal register of Rahab’s argument.\textsuperscript{526} First of all, it creates an irresistible impression of the esteem that Rahab has for the spies and those whom they represent. This respect is further enhanced by the colloquial and ironic style of Rahab’s answer to the King (vv. 4d-5f). Furthermore, the legal register of her discourse emphasizes that the eventual agreement is a legally binding relationship. In fact, at this point, the reader is gradually redirected from the perception of the story as a popular tale to read/hear it almost as the report of a covenantal treaty. However, it should be clarified that before shaping that bilateral commitment, there was a “story” spreading among the people of Jericho about the powerful God who assists his chosen people in their march toward Canaan. In fact, this story captivated Rahab’s imagination, allowed her to understand her existential crossroads and encouraged her to make her decision. It is hard to decide if that decision was the manifestation of opportunism or courage. As the history of reception and the history of modern research revealed, there is no consensus on the matter, although the majority follows the narrator’s view in presenting Rahab as a courageous woman. Most likely, Rahab’s character is a mixture of both opportunism and courage. However, the point is not to simply typecast her as one or the other, but to perceive the dynamic of her metamorphosis. In fact, the perplexed reader’s concern is captured by the issue of the storytelling in shaping Rahab’s life decision and eventually how this pattern may be relevant for any reader.

5.3.4.1 *Fides ex Auditu*

The literary portrait of Rahab is ingeniously crafted to impress the reader, putting him/her close to a main character of the story. Although Rahab turns to the spies (v. 9a), they are “latent” and passive, as if the style of narration reflects their predicament. This creates a rapprochement of the addressee and the reader, who by the force of the direct speech is firmly engaged by this discourse. The immediate effect of such a strategy is that the reader can not only follow Rahab’s deliberation but is also “forced” to bring to the narrative his/her own ethics. In other words, the foregrounding of Rahab’s argument is designed to confront the reader’s point of view. As a matter of fact, that was the case in the long history of the reception of that story. Almost unanimously, readers (from Rabbis to the modern exegetes) pointed out this section as the climax of the story and considered it the decisive moment that allowed them to articulate an appropriate evaluation of the character and to illuminate the overall interpretative process.

Also, the above analysis revealed Rahab’s “confession” as the climax of the story in its reference to the mysterious story/report which paralyzed the citizens of Jericho. In fact, it was the same story/report which pushed Rahab to recognize Yahweh as the ‘God in heaven above and on earth below’ (v. 11e). Hence, it is possible to affirm that the story/report transformed Rahab’s worldview and had shaken her previous reliance on the local deities. Her faith and dream about a different life was shaped by actively listening to that story, which later pushed her to ally with newcomers. Moreover, as was revealed previously, the pattern “story/report → response” is not isolated, but occurs repeatedly in the first part of the Book of Joshua, suggesting that the military campaign of Joshua was preceded by the paralyzing story, which was challenging people even more effectively than the swords of the Israelite army. It is plausible that the Deuteronomistic author/redactor developed this thread within the Book to give weight to his version/story of the conquest. The written version of that tradition should be equally effective, and most importantly, a non-military way of challenging readers’ beliefs. The example of Rahab would be particularly exhortative because if she, the Canaanite prostitute, was able to understand and draw conclusions

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527 A similar technique is often employed by cinematography when an actor or actress is framed in such a way that it gives the impression that he/she engages directly with viewers. In such cases, the addressee is usually faded or out of frame.

528 In Joshua 6:27; 9:9, this spreading news is defined as מַעֲרָבֶנ: ‘a report of him [of God]’. It can be also translated as the ‘rumor’ or ‘fame’. Cf. BDB, § 10101.
from what she heard about their God, the heirs of that tradition not grasping that crux would be ironic.

Nevertheless, as the reception of Rahab’s story has revealed, not only could the authorial audience have been compelled by this story, but a multitude of readers were also provoked to reflect on their identity and the means to create committed communities of faith. Indeed, for the perplexed reader, *fides ex auditu* (‘faith comes by hearing’ Rom 10:17). Hence, the way of challenging an other’s point of view through biblical stories like, say, Rahab’s story can still be a thought-provoking means to stimulate reflection about social loyalties, faith tradition and God. These are, in fact, actual existential issues for believers from every epoch.

5.3.5 Scene 6: The Oath

The next scene focuses entirely on the spies’ answer, which again is couched in formal and highly-cultivated language. As the syntactical analysis revealed, the whole speech is composed of the two double-element constructions (vv. 14c-e) with the formula of the oath in the first place, ‘our life for yours’ (v. 14b), which is then sealed by the two richest Hebrew expressions חֶסֶד וֶּאֱמֶּת (v.14e). Thereby, the spies assure Rahab of her safety during the conquest of the city, but only if their business remains secret. Again, the formal and covenantal language employed here gives the impression that the spies, despite Rahab’s status and gender, acknowledge her as an equal partner. It also emphasizes that a legal boundary has been just established. This, in turn, gives an opportunity for the reader to reflect on the applicability of their ancient Law.

As stated, there is a clash between the command of ḫērem and the rescue of Rahab, as total annihilation was the fate reserved by the Deuteronomistic code for all conquered populations (cf. for example, Deut 7:2; 20:16-17; Josh 6:18-18). In order to perceive this tension, the broader context of Deuteronomistic History must be presupposed, because in the context of the story alone, the rescue of Rahab can be explained by the pact *quid pro quo*. However, in the broader context, the reader realises that this act is against the Deuteronomistic Law. Hence, as Polzin rightly noted, one of the functions this story could be to open the dialogue between ‘authoritarian
dogmatism’ and ‘critical rationalism’, the dialogue which consisted of the new understanding of the Mosaic Law.\textsuperscript{529}

In this light, Rahab’s case, in a certain sense, unravels Israel’s struggle for a new identity in completely new socio-historical circumstances. First of all, Rahab’s case threatens their law by indicating that extermination of an entire local population is not the best way of preserving their faith tradition, as the woman foreigner revealed herself more sincere in praising their God than certain Israelites, such as Achan. Apparently, the survival of Rahab’s clan (also the Gibeonites) had shaken the belief in the necessity of ethnic homogeneity and exclusiveness to live as God’s covenant people in the Promised Land. Secondly, Rahab’s femininity and independence could also threaten their clearly male-dominated communities, as will become more apparent in the following speeches. Hence, at this point of the story, assisting the solemn oath which guarantees the woman foreigner’s survival and coexistence in the Land even against their secret law, is quite a surprise, certainly reserved not only for the authorial audience.

\section*{5.3.6 Scene 7: Rahab’s Further Indications}

After the narrative information about the releasing of the spies (v.15a) and further comment about the location of Rahab’s house (vv.15b-c), the reader has an insight into the next direct scene, in which Rahab conveys precise coordinates for the spies’ withdrawal (v. 16). The syntactical analysis revealed that the whole utterance is well articulated, stressing first of all where the spies must go, then how long they must stay there, and finally when they can return to the camp.

In the light of the basic assumption of this section, Rahab’s hints are more meaningful and expressive when presented as reported-speech communication. In fact, couched in this way, they can be more easily associated by the reader himself with a previous scene (vv. 4d-5f) when she fooled the messengers of the King. This again tints the story with an element of humour, but ultimately is far more revealing about the character’s attitude. Indeed, Rahab’s speech emphasizes her forceful character and underlines her firmness. She sticks to the decision previously taken, a fact which may reassure not only the spies, but also the reader not to expect further twists in the action.

\textsuperscript{529} Cf. Polzin, \textit{Moses and the Deuteronomist}, pp. 84-91.
Rahab’s character, which at the beginning of the story was so enigmatic and unpredictable, now becomes transparent.

At the same time, her speech casts two men who are supposed to be spies in the negative light, as they appear to be totally disorientated and hence completely rely on her clues. Such a dominant role for a woman can imply ridicule, especially when read by a patriarchal audience. However, it can also imply that the spies owe their eventual safe return to everything except their military skills. It sounds for the perplexed reader almost like a forecast of the imminent conquest.

5.3.7 Scene 8: Further Conditions

The pact is concluded and the spies are outside the city walls. Thus far reticent, they now take the initiative, and their speech is slightly longer than the previous concise oath. In fact, the scene adds further conditions to the newly concluded pact. As was already extensively discussed, the visualization of this scene is slightly puzzling, as the negotiations take place in the middle of the night under the city wall.

The syntactical analysis then revealed the intricate structure of the whole argument. It is sealed by the inclusion, which highlights the eventual exemption from the oath (vv. 17b-c; 20a-c) while, in between, precise conditions validating it are introduced (vv. 18a-19f). Such a sophisticated rhetoric and thematic structure, edited by several complex syntactical clauses, resembles more a discourse from a scribal desk rather than the speech of the fleeing spies. Again, the awareness of such stylization helps one grasp the internal logic of the whole story. What then is the effect of the reported speech, which reads like a judge’s appeal in the court?

First of all, as Winther-Nielsen rightly observed, the spies ‘carefully explain how the courses of the oath may apply to Rahab’s family […] or themselves’. Then, again, by the force of the scene not being mediated by the narrator’s voice, the reader witnesses the establishment of the legal boundaries. This time, however, the oath is presented from the perspective of the spies. Only when outside the walls, that is to say, beyond Rahab’s direct influence, can they freely express the viewpoint of those whom they represent. The idea becomes increasingly forceful that the organizing principle of the central part of the story (vv. 9a-21b) is to reveal the bilateral development of an

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argument, namely the oath, rather than to construct a linear action. Hence, this scene
draws the attention of the perplexed reader to the process of marking the boundaries of
relationship between Rahab’s clan and the Israelites during the conquest rather than to
the spatial settings of that scene.

Instead, the spatial setting of this speech, which presupposes Rahab up in the
window of her house and the spies down below it, can only increase the perception of
negotiating mutually acceptable compromises. In fact, there is one distinctive detail in
the spies’ speech with respect to Rahab’s previous request. In wording her request,
Rahab hopes that they will spare her father, mother, brothers and sisters (v.13a). The
spies in presenting their conditions, require that Rahab shall gather in the house, her
father, mother, brothers and father’s household (v.18d). Thus, the ‘sisters’ from Rahab’s
request have been replaced for the patriarchal society by the more acceptable expression
‘father’s household’.\footnote{Kramer considers this omission as ‘unusual’. Cf. Kramer, ‘Rahab
from Peshat to Pedagogy’, p. 158.} Once again, this is just a small detail, but one that can be
indicative, reaffirming that around the walls of Jericho two different worlds were
colliding.

Finally, the sign of the scarlet cord cannot escape the attention of the perplexed
reader, as it is one of the most discussed props of the story. The history of reception and
modern research offer a variety of interpretations in this regard. Was it the sign to
protect Rahab’s house during the invasion, or rather the sign meant to indicate the way
for the military campaign? By the way, the campaign did not take place, as the walls
collapsed to the sound of trumpets (cf. Josh 6). Or, perhaps, it should be seen as a
metaphor referring to the blood of the Lamb during the Exodus (cf. Ex 12:7) or even to
the blood of Christ (cf. Fathers of the Church)? As a matter of fact, various associations
can be established around that symbol and, in accepting either one, the reader can be
easily influenced by previously established associations.

The perplexed reader resorts to the technique practised by Rabbis and Church
Fathers, namely wordplay. Rahab requested from the spies אֹת אֱמֶּת: ‘sign of good faith’
(v. 12d). Hence, the spies offer her such a sign in the form of תִּקְוַת חוּט הַשָנִּי הַזֶּה: ‘this
scarlet cord’ (v. 18b). Interestingly, the word תִּקְוָה has a double meaning. It can mean
both “cord” and “hope”.\footnote{Cf. BDB, §§ 8466-8467.} Perhaps, for, Rahab, “this cord” becomes also the “hope” for

\footnote{Kramer considers this omission as ‘unusual’. Cf. Kramer, ‘Rahab from Peshat to Pedagogy’, p. 158.}
\footnote{Cf. BDB, §§ 8466-8467.}
the future and a promise of the spies’ good will. Hence, her final answer will be brief and unreserved.

5.3.8 Scene 9: Rahab’s Agreement

This scene consists only of one short sentence which, however, has a powerful effect on the reader. It looks like the signing of a life-saving document: כְּדִּבְרֵיכֶּם כֶּן־הוּא ‘According to your word, so be it’ (v. 21b). Rahab’s agreement is short, clear and indisputable. Since reported speech is the privileged mode for reveal the interiority of a biblical character, to the “ears” of the perplexed reader it appears that Rahab is now a convinced woman, determined to fulfil all requirements, but at the same time she is assured that the spies’ promise to spare her and her family was not just their pulling the wool over her eyes, but assuming the serious and far-reaching commitment to share the Promised Land with foreigners.

5.3.9 Scene 10: Glorious Return

After the narrative depiction of the return of the spies, the reader is allowed to witness the final report of the spies (v. 24b-c). To the reader's great surprise, it almost verbatim repeats Rahab’s daring vision:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rahab (vv. 9c-e)</th>
<th>Spies (v. 24b-c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘(I know) that the Lord has given you the land [...] and that all inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you’.</td>
<td>‘Truly, the Lord has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melted away before us’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such a realization, which occurs without any explicit evaluation of the narrator, once more confirms to the perplexed reader who the real heroine of God’s unpredictable designs is. Rahab became the spokeswoman of God’s long-predicted promises. The belief in the omnipotence of God, which should be so obvious for the people of the promise, became clear only when reflected on and recounted to them by the woman foreigner. In fact, it appears that the story/report of the prostitute convinced the spies that God would fulfil the long-awaited promise. In other words, they had to hear it again to believe it.
The scene of Joshua receiving the final report skilfully unites the whole episode, marking the dramatic boundaries of the story. The mission is successfully accomplished. Joshua heard from the spies what he had already heard from God: that the land lay open “broad” and “wide” before them. Hence, the framing inclusion confirms the prediction and promise of God, but at the same time validates the choices of the leader, which seems not without significance in recounting the story of his fulfilling task of leading the people into the Promised Land. Finally, it is important to notice that, in this precise case, the choice of Joshua resulted in his sparing and not destroying Rahab’s extended family. Possibly, the story promulgated a more realistic model of the conquest in which the encounter of two different cultures was not necessarily solved by slaughter.

5.4 The Power of Storytelling

The destiny of the world is determined less by the battles that are lost and won than by the stories it loves and believes in.\(^{533}\)

Despite the literary complexity and the variety of the threads that are found in the Rahab story, there is a fundamental idea that crosses and unifies it. It can be expressed with the generic phrase “the power of storytelling”. This phrase will mark now the perspective from which the perplexed reader looks at the main character's resolutions to expose the forceful pattern in the structure of the story itself.

As a matter of fact, the Rahab story is primarily about the power of storytelling. This is the thread which is generally unnoticed, which, however, is very suggestive, as it is the story that allowed Rahab and her family to survive in the changing geo-political situation and to accept a life with unexpected turns. At the same time, it is the story Rahab recounts to the spies which allowed them to strengthen their faith in the credibility of God’s promises. Finally, “the Rahab story” included in the Book of Joshua, which is an integral part of the Canon for both Jews and Christians, became the paradigmatic story which confronted and still confronts a multitude of readers with some far-reaching questions.

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5.4.1 The Power of the Story

The Rahab story discloses the internal states of the heroine, undermining the convention of the biblical narrative, which is generally very restrained in revealing the emotions of the characters, focusing rather on their actions. Instead, in the Rahab story, the reader faces the internal deliberation of Rahab, who depending on the circumstances, declares emphatically: ‘I do not know’ or ‘I know’. These are more than rhetorical expression. They are the nodes which gradually lead the perplexed reader into Rahab’s internal world. It can be assumed that such externalization of her internal world brings the empathic reader to participate in her existential struggle about her own identity. Thus, Rahab critically evaluates the world in which she has lived so far, expressing insidiously her disloyalty to the King. The perplexed reader does not know why she has undertaken such a decision. Perhaps she was enslaved by the rules imposed in Jericho and therefore looked for the opportunity to break the city's social, political and cultural customs. In fact, many details in the story, such as reference to her profession or the location of her house, can suggest her marginalized status in Jericho. Instead, what becomes gradually clear for the perplexed reader is that she consciously participates in the creation of the new order which must inevitably come. In fact, it is her attitude toward the future that affects her actual decisions, and at the heart of her struggle was the story that redirected her expectations completely.

Assuredly, the story which she has heard allows her to recognize the identity of her guests. She knows that they are Israelites, who years ago were liberated from Egypt. She even knows the theological interpretation of that event, as evidenced by her reference to the drying-up of the Sea by their God. She knows then how the same God led them to the borders of Canaan, defeating the Amorite Kings, Sihon and Og. Finally, she experiences the lethal effects of that story, which literally dismantled the citizens of Jericho, headed by their King. This commonly spread rumour (‘we have heard’) became the ground for Rahab’s personal considerations (‘I know’). As a result of that story, she recognises the uniqueness of the Israelite God, before whom all nations tremble. Thus, it is the story which ultimately allows her to acknowledge the decisive role of God in Israelite military successes and, consequently, to predict the outcomes of the upcoming events, which will shake the existing socio-political order in Canaan. Finally, the story Rahab has heard allows her to develop and demonstrate a new dimension of femininity,
one that is strong and self-confident, ready to confront not only the adversities of life, but also culturally distant people.

5.4.2 The Power of the Woman’s Story

As the previous detailed analysis revealed, the words of Rahab were very influential and had a powerful effect on the spies. First, she showed an unexpected acquaintance with some of the most glorious events from their history. Then she made a meticulous analysis of the current situation in the city. Finally, she was able to relate all occurrences to the providential assistance of their God, who is unique and greater than all other gods.

Her story must have impressed the spies since, immediately and almost unquestioningly, they accept the oath with her and then paraphrase her words to Joshua as the prediction of the successful conquest. Rahab’s retelling of their most cherished beliefs perhaps mirrored their hidden fears and perplexities. The retelling of the story by the woman foreigner allowed them to re-discover anew the richness and strength of their faith.

Rahab heard the story which saved and changed her life. Her retelling of that story, in turn, strengthens the faith of Israelites, perhaps Joshua’s faith in particular, in all the promises that God foretold to them. Most importantly, the story retold by Rahab put her in a different light. She was the foreigner who, in advance, was supposed to be condemned to death because of Israelite laws. She was the woman who was supposed to be disregarded because of their male-dominated customs. She was also the prostitute who was supposed to be despised and exploited because of their dismissive attitude to such a profession.

Yet, Rahab is the woman foreigner and prostitute whose powerful story neutralized and turned upside-down all pejorative presumptions about her and impelled the spies to protect her with the obliging oath. It can be argued that in the broader perspective, the story which Rahab recounted engaged the spies and those whom they

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534 In the context of the narrative theory a literary device that includes “the story within the story” is called ‘embedding’. From the reader’s point of view, the relationship between the two stories is meaningful ‘as the reader can hardly fail to speculate about the dramatic and the thematic connections between two distinct yet conjoined stories’. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 134.
represented, to the point of reconsidering their seemingly unchanging laws, imagining, at least in some cases, a different scenario of conquest than that accomplished only by “fire and sword”. Indeed, the story Rahab declaimed on the roof of her house and her further coherent attitude was an effective tool to pave the way for the settlement and mutual compromise.

5.4.3 The Power of “The Rahab Story”

The story of the God who leads his people is the “silent hero” in the Rahab story and perhaps in the first part of the Book of Joshua. It spreads before the Israelite army, polarizing the inhabitants of the Land. Either it amplifies their fears, consolidating their extremely adverse point of view, or enthuses them by the idea of dialogue and coalition. By hearing it, Rahab and the Gibeonites were motivated to establish a relationship with Israelites and in this way to re-shape their perspective of life in the Land, which must now be shared with others.

This pattern of powerful storytelling was then enclosed in and revealed by the Rahab story itself. In fact, when the Rahab story was integrated into the Book of Joshua and consequently became a part of the sacred writings, first for Jews and then for Christians, it continued to exercise its influential power on a multitude of readers from different epochs, cultures and religions. As the brief survey on the history of reception revealed, each reader or community of readers looked at this story from a different perspective and with different methodological assumptions, which resulted in many re-interpretations (mega-stories). Nevertheless, at the basis of this interpretative dialogue was always the story, revealing itself as an effective vehicle of creative conversation with its readers, always raising valid questions about loyalties and disloyalties of ethnic relationships in pluralistic societies, about daring faith which implies life-changing decisions or about the boundaries of cultural and religious identity during clashes of civilizations.

5.5 The Perplexed Reader and Biblical Storytelling

Stories achieve their effect only when the reader engages with them, creating, or better to say, co-creating a network of meaningful impressions, associations and interpretations. The process of literary communication becomes effective only when the
narrated world “clashes” with the world of the reader. As this research has confirmed, there are, and perhaps there should be, various points of entry by which the reader may approach the biblical narrative. As was also revealed, these ways of approaching considerably influenced the experience of interpreting the same narrative. It may seem axiomatic, but at this point it is important to assert that the choice of the way in which the text/story is approached, in other words, the methodological interest, is the first and primary contribution that the reader brings to that text, as it defines the degree of his/her further participation in the narrated world.

The model of communication adopted as the methodological framework, in which the hypothetical construct of the perplexed reader was defined as the recipient but also as the co-creator of the linguistic message, was aimed to envision the process in which the text/story provokes a response from the reader. Inevitably, such a dialogical relationship also revealed the perplexed reader’s response to that story. The conclusive effort will now consist in better articulating the perplexed reader’s contribution in the process of interpreting the Rahab story.

5.5.1 From the Story to “the Rahab Story”

Like Rahab, who heard the story and engaged with it, so also the perplexed reader was invited to interact with “the Rahab story”. Undoubtedly, they are many possible ways and angles of such interactions. As Rahab and the spies made compromises to establish a common ground of coexistence, the perplexed reader also has to accept various compromises to establish the leading pattern of interacting with the story. In fact, as every response is, the perplexed reader’s response was guided by the methodological assumptions that circumscribed the processing of the linguistic and literary data.

The research started from the analysis of the “ink strokes” of the Hebrew Masoretic text, which involved the perplexed reader in the narrated world as much as the syntactical criteria allowed, describing more precisely various rhetorical phenomena and establishing the pattern for the literary analysis of the Rahab story. In turn, such a three-dimensional and dismembered analysis allowed the reader to picture in more detail the world represented in the Rahab story and to explore the perplexed reader’s journey through this world. An insight into some stages of the reception history raised an awareness of the polyvalence of the narrative and confirmed the assumption that the
reader is a vital element in the process of interpretation. It also validated the perplexed reader’s singular experience of reading the Rahab story. Thus, for the perplexed reader, the Rahab story is all about the power of storytelling.

As was demonstrated, the reference to the story that profoundly influenced Rahab is at the centre of the narrative. It constitutes both the structural and thematic climax as it reveals Rahab’s deepest motivations which, in turn, explain her previous and subsequent behaviour, granting it coherence. It is assumed by the perplexed reader that the story Rahab heard allowed her to realistically assess her existential situation in the changing socio-political situation and motivated her to take the appropriate steps to protect her family. Moreover, it was the story which was commonly spread among the citizens of Jericho that allowed her to verify her religious beliefs, recognizing the omnipotence of the Israelite God. Although apparently so inconspicuous, the story which preceded the Israelite army had to have a colossal strength, either spreading paralyzing fear among the people or, as in the case of Rahab, inspiring a new resolution in life.

As was also mentioned above, there is another instance of powerful storytelling hidden in this narrative. It is the story recounted by Rahab to the spies on the roof of her house. Hidden on that roof under the stalks of flax, the spies could expect anything but a story about their history and their God. The story recited by Rahab mirrors, even literally, their Deuteronomistic credo, inviting them to rediscover it anew and apply it to new historical circumstances. In fact, the story recounted by Rahab was so suggestive that it forced them to accept her as an equal partner despite her status as a woman, prostitute and foreigner.

Finally, looking beyond the internal-literary context, it is possible to notice the third facet of the powerful storytelling expressed by the Rahab story itself. To perceive this dimension, the outline of the history of the ancient and modern reception was crucial, as it revealed how the story continued to influence diverse audiences, invoking the variety of responses that the present thesis attempted to disclose.

To sum up, the Rahab story is not simply a set of truths expanded for the reader to accept or to reject, but depicts “the world” in which characters are involved in specific activities and form a web of relationships gradually developed to engage the reader. Hence, as with every story, so also the Rahab story can make the empathic
reader experience something unique from the complexity of experiences in which characters are involved. This may turn out to be the most powerful “weapon” of the story, as it can influence, or even alter, the reader’s perception of the real world. Assuredly, the story can be a means for indoctrination, but it can also open up the opportunity for dialogue and challenge the reader’s habitual views of the real world. Perhaps the realization that the Rahab story is evergreen in every historical context and can be a pattern for a dynamic conversation that involves both the text and the reader should be the most articulated contribution of the perplexed reader.

The perplexed reader is the hypothetical subject of that dialogical partnership which allowed the development of one of many possible approaches to that text. This approach registered the possible interaction between the narrative and the reader on many layers, beginning with the text and moving through its syntactical and literary structure to some stages of its historical-empirical rumination, which provided insight into the long and rich heritage that constitutes the database of those endless re-readings. Hopefully, the perplexed reader’s contribution fits in that extensive database, offering an alternative view on the Rahab story revealing the power of the biblical story in challenging human existential dilemmas, beliefs and relationships.

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535 Matties, ‘Reading Rahab’s Story, p. 62.
CONCLUSION

The approach to the Rahab story carried out in the course of this study was defined by a model of literary communication (Chapter 1) that presupposes three basic entities in the linguistic communication: the author, the text and the reader. Since the author in the case of the Rahab story is a highly elusive category, the main focus was on the interaction between the text of Joshua 2 and the hypothetical model of the perplexed reader, who was specifically defined to enable such an inquiry.

The first dimension of the interaction was described at the internal-linguistic level (Chapter 3). The Hebrew Masoretic version of Joshua 2 was adopted as the basis for the syntactical analysis, according to the principles of the text linguistics developed by Alviero Niccacci. More specifically, the syntactical-textual analysis of Joshua 2 has brought to light an interesting correlation between direct speech scenes and narration. From the macro-syntactic point of view, the text of Joshua 2 presents the sequence of direct speech in the form of dialogue and narration. Thanks to the wayyiqtol verbal form, the parts in direct speech are set within the narrative line, which therefore proceeds and develops in a continuous way. In fact, the only considerable interruption of the main line was detected only in Joshua 2:6-8, where all forms and constructs are different from the narrative wayyiqtol and hence indicate the transition of the narrative line from the principal to the secondary level. This system allowed me not only to describe more precisely the syntactical texture of the unit, but also to individuate the three-dimensional internal textual perspective (the encoded reader), which subsequently became the means of involving the perplexed reader in the world of the story (Chapter 5). In fact, such a three-dimensional analysis revealed in more detail the narrative meanderings of the Rahab story, which has many gaps and blanks, repetitions, and chronological twists, which are not without significance for the aesthetic response. The perplexed reader’s preference for a synchronic-rhetorical approach allowed an assessment of those “discrepancies” which have been commonly noted in the scholarship, and to propose some plausible solutions coherent with the assumption of the adopted method. Finally, the linguistic and literary analysis revealed different points of view from which the story is narrated, either directly by the narrator or through the main characters (slants). Those narrative perspectives not only reveal various degrees of
the involvement of the narrator, who may recount the events by a series of “distanced” wayyiqtolts, by commentating on them or by letting them be revealed by the characters themselves, but they also exert a significant force on the perplexed reader, since the latter was coded to accept the narrator’s persuasion.

As the result of this analysis, I contend that the textual offerings cannot be utterly dismissed from the interpretative process and that the concept of the encoded reader, conceptualized as the entity embodying textual perspectives of the biblical Hebrew text, can be an advantageous device in establishing a communicative interrelationship with its readers. In fact, the necessity of the inquiry for the encoded reader consists in the basic fact that ‘inner texture is the texture of the medium of communication’. Therefore, it has an important task in engaging the reader in the world of the text, steering his/her vantage point, creating the space for emotional, i.e. empathic, ambiguous or reluctant connection with the characters and thence to compel the reader to bring his/her own ethics to the text. Without such deep engagement with the realm of the text, the process of literary communication would be considerably blurred. Ultimately, such a text-oriented stance of the perplexed reader reveals how the inner workings of Joshua 2 guides, or at least may guide, the process of interpretative communication. However, this was not an absolute or one-way supremacy of the text over the perplexed reader, because the latter also was actively involved in decoding and interpreting the linguistic and literary codes of Joshua 2. The following metaphor splendidly captures the autonomy of readers in their journeys through texts.

Far from being writers–founders of their own place, heirs to the peasants of earlier ages now working on the soil of language, diggers of wells and builders of houses–readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves. Such a voyage, in fact, requires a “compass” to orientate the reader in his/her navigation through the vast and unforeseen, although not infinite, world of the story. The interpretative interest of readers is such a compass. It sets them on the journey, gives purpose to it, and then guides them in a specific direction. The interpretative interest of a reader is a very complex and occasionally perplexing dynamism. Apparently, it might seem that it is a unique and subjective entity intrinsic to the personality of the individual

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536 Robinson, Exploring the Texture of Texts, p. 7.
reader, influenced by their scripts. Nevertheless, in many instances of this research, as has been highlighted, empirical readers are very much connected to their surroundings and more or less consciously share, or are influenced, by contemporaneous interpretative conventions. The construction of the perplexed reader’s mental library revealed and confirmed such an assertion. The modern and postmodern scholarly literature review (Chapter 2) and some stages from the story's ancient reception (Chapter 5) clearly showed how historical-empirical readers were rooted in their cultural environments and how their interaction with the Rahab story was “coloured” by their worldview orientations. This in turn, was the basis of how they responded to the Rahab story in such a way that not only the original communicative situation might be reproduced, but also, perhaps primarily, that some sensitive issues featured by this story may be pertinent to a new socio-cultural context.

In fact, this implies that the reception history of the Rahab story should be integrated as an ‘interpretative analytic’ into the communicative circuit ‘which includes an understanding of the dynamic relations of voices past and present’. In fact, that was my intention in circumscribing the mental library of the perplexed reader, which was not meant to reflect a static space storing a vast range of unrelated voices from the remote or nearby past, but was meant to provide the intricate web in which these voices combine or intersect, agree or disagree, confirm or contradict, but eventually communicate with each other. As a matter of fact, the mental library governed the perplexed reader’s conversation with the Rahab story and ultimately was essential in perceiving the external-historical dimension in which this story has functioned as a powerful communicative pattern. Moreover, it is precisely the insight into some stages of the ancient reception and modern study of the Rahab story that was an empirical means to realize the undeniable role of readers in its interpretative processes throughout the centuries. Theoretically, it is possible to immobilize the reader’s faculty in such a process, but the history of reception and interpretation of the Rahab story proved otherwise. Even selective insight into the reception process reveals the complexity of the interaction between that story and various kinds of readers.

Perhaps, the most obscure issue still remains the question of the authorial audience. As a matter of fact, any text arises in the particular socio-historical context in

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538 Gowler, ‘Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation’, p. 196.
which real authors had a precise image of their audience for whom they were composing. Certainly, this knowledge of “who” and “how” will receive their message (perhaps “by ear” rather than “by eye”) influenced them to choose and implement in their compositions those structures which presupposed a commonly shared system of conventions in that particular context. In order to grasp that original communicative event, it is necessary to reconstruct the presumed audience and to understand the various codes and conventions in receiving the written texts in that precise context. It is an awkward and elusive, although not impossible, endeavor since the historical critical method has pursued this goal for many decades.

The first part of the extensive Chapter 2 dealt with such questions. And it has been concluded that the text of Joshua 2 most likely presupposes the effort of multiple editors whose activity could span even a long period of time (roughly: pre-exilic, exilic, post-exilic periods) and inevitably had involved various re-adaptations of that story to the new literary and socio-historical contexts. As the origin of the Rahab story and its path to final literary composition is still unclear and very much a matter of conjuncture, it has also been concluded that instead of freezing the interpretative process in the almost unreachable historical past, it is not advantageous for any present-day reader to look for the locus of meaning exclusively in the world behind the text. In other words, instead of chasing after a unique historical communicative event between the author(s) and the original audience, it is advantageous to imagine the possibility of reproducing those events when the text is received by subsequent generations of readers. As a matter of fact, with the passing of time the original audience had irrevocably passed away while the Rahab story continued to exert its influence for subsequent generations. In that dialogical conversation both the text and readers played their vital roles.

In fact, already at the level of ancient translation, the active role of the receiver (the translator) was slightly perceptible. Some notes related to the text criticism, especially the comparison between the MT with the LXX, revealed that such an interpretative dialogue began at the very early stage of the story’s translation. Perhaps it began even earlier, at the stage of copying it, as the hypothesis of slightly differing Hebrew versions of the story cannot be completely discarded. As was indicated in Chapter 3, some deviations can be simply attributed to the lack of the translator’s competence (cf. Van der Louw), but in some other instances we face the phenomenon
which Tov calls a ‘midrash-type of exegesis’ or, in Butler’s terms, ‘homiletic interpretation and exegesis,’ both presupposing not only linguistic but also theologically-motivated intervention in the text. In that sense, the varied versions and translations became for us the first “Blackwell Bible Commentary”, since the plausible divergences between those versions and translations initiated a long and intricate dialogical process between the text and readers.

Nevertheless, real inflation of the interpretative creativity and dominance of readers over Rahab’s story was detected in the early centuries of the Common Era. Chapter 4 captured all the major trends in the Rabbinic and Patristic ruminations on the Rahab story, which stretched the boundaries of its plot to the limits, revealing how the way of approaching the story the Rahab story, or socio-historical and interpretative contexts, filter and bend the inner texture of the story to its readers’ interpretative interests. The icing on the cake was the appropriation of the previously “Christianized” motif of Rahab by The Divine Comedy.

A new dawn for biblical studies came with the advent of the Enlightenment, which brought a new way of questioning the ancient text. In fact, initially Biblical criticism froze the reader’s claim to participation in the interpretative process, focusing on the authorial intention as the primary locus of meaning. As Rosenblatt’s quotation visually described, this phase did not last forever, and eventually the focus on the author gradually passed to the text and again to the reader, bringing him/her out from the shadow of the stage on which the drama of the Rahab story is still played. Chapter 2 registered these shifts in approaching the Rahab story, confirming once again how deficient, even if definitely valuable, a one-dimensional approach to the Rahab story can be. Such a realization pushed me to undertake a tortuous project to bring together various dimensions of the Rahab story into an interpretative focus in which the perplexed reader response was coordinated first by the inner layer of the story in its broad literary context, but then also by the external-historical dimension of its reception, and finally by some contemporaneous perspectives such as feminism and postcolonialism, which have recently been brought to the study of biblical texts.

This does not mean that the perplexed reader response is purely the mixture of leading trends in various approaches that can be applied to the study of this story. Certainly, one of the perplexed reader’s faculties was intended to gaze at those data in
order to make creative connections between them, but at the same time, the perplexed reader was meant to offer a particular, three-dimensional interpretative strategy of reading the Rahab story, in which each linguistic-literary perspective contributed to closer engagement with the texture of the story, its spatio-temporal settings and especially with its characters. Such deep immersion into the story world, but at the same time an awareness of its multithreaded external-historical context revealed, generally overlooked, a trait of storytelling as the powerful pattern within, and mediated by, by the Rahab story. Undoubtedly, storytelling is an ambivalent tool, as it can serve as the ground for inter-cultural dialogue, but at the same time it can be used in the service of ideological enthrallment. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her inspiring talk: ‘The danger of a single story’, the title of which I could have adopted as my conclusive remark, captures the point when she says:

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity. 539

Similarly, the story Rahab heard could have terrified her as it did her fellow citizens, but instead the story which she heard opened up for her a new perspective in life. Also, the story the spies heard from Rahab could have made them suspicious of such a resolute foreign woman, since by believing and accepting her story, they were acting against their laws. Nevertheless, they believed and accepted the challenge. And finally, the Rahab story, drifting through the centuries can also be used ‘to dispose and to malign’, but can also be used ‘to empower and to humanize’. Everything depends on the readers’ conceptual frameworks.

To sum up, the scale of the above research was extensive and multifaceted. As a direct consequence of this methodology, many interpretative horizons of the Rahab story were envisioned revealing the polyvalence of the text, but at the same time exposing the dynamics of how dogmatic/ideological perspectives of the readers influenced its reception and interpretation.

However, as the perplexed reader was imbued with narrative empathy, such a policy, which is a sort of ideological stand in itself, the study encountered also a number of limitations. For example, the Rahab story as an ideological composition could

become the subject for further research. Such an enquiry would necessarily demand a more thorough inspection of the socio-political context(s) of the story’s origin and its rhetorical strategies as a tool and token for specific social ethics promoted by this story. In the case of the Rahab story, this kind of quest is very intricate and often elusive, but it might have been profitable to reveal the power of narration in perpetuating the dynamics which might not necessarily be readily accepted in postmodern culture. The appropriate tool for this kind of study could be, perhaps, the socio-rhetorical criticism designed by Vernon K. Robbins and then followed and developed, *inter alia*, by David B. Gowler.\(^{541}\)

Finally, exploring the Rahab story from the specific socio-geographical context, as was accomplished by Dube or McKinlay, could also be profitable and help to avoid another frequently pointed out vulnerability of any hypothetical models and classical methods of interpretation, i.e. generalization. For example, a very promising and stimulating interpretation of the Rahab story could be carried out from the perspective of the actual Israeli-Palestinian context. The question has been already mentioned, but since the near future of the author of this dissertation may take place in that region, perhaps, one day, it will be properly expanded and, in such a way, another fibre will be woven into the expanding fabric of the Rahab story’s universe.

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\(^{540}\) For example, in line with ideological criticism as practised by David J. A. Clines. ‘Reading from left to right’ is his metaphor to approach biblical text in order to reveal the control which ‘the texts try to assert (and are often successful in asserting) over their readers’. Cf. David J. A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 205 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), pp. 20-21.

\(^{541}\) Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*; Gowler, ‘Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation’.
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