

## REFLECTING ON 'RHETORIC(S) OF BODY POLITICS AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE'

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### Abstract

*In conversation with the contributors to this volume, it is indicated what the regulatory body is, and how the regulatory body functions as the social configuration of meaning and as a site of power relations, not only constituting bodies, but also as the context in which these constituted bodies re-constitute and reproduce themselves. Several rhetorical strategies, such as the operation of the hierarchic principle, the division between "insiders" and "outsiders," and the notion of dissociation in the re-definition of cultural practices have come to light.*

**Keywords:** Rhetoric of the Body, Regulatory Body, Judith Butler, Pierre Bourdieu, Rhetoric and Change, Rhetoric and Politics.

### Introduction

In determining at what moment in intellectual history, cultural theory (or rather the remains of it) finds itself at the moment, Terry Eagleton (2004, 2) points to the popularity of body studies for students of culture. He argues that studies on the body have become fashionable because it has created a "seamless continuity between the intellect and everyday life." According to him "intellectual matters are no longer an ivory-tower affair, but belong to the world of media and shopping malls, bedrooms and brothels. As such, they re-join everyday life – but only at the risk of losing their ability to critique." It is in particular the study of human sexuality which grips the attention of a new generation of students of culture ... and he submits that this is indeed an "historic advance" that sexuality can be "firmly established within academic life as one of the keystones of human culture" (4). Furthermore, it has laid to rest the myth that enquiring into the experience of pleasure cannot be part of scientific enquiry (5) and that it cannot be a serious business.

Although Eagleton is correct in showing how Cultural Studies has diverted its attention from the ideational and canonical to everyday life, and although he correctly expands the creation of moral or political discourse to discovering "how life can become more pleasant for more people" (5), a few aspects should be commented upon since this could help in understanding the concern of rhetoric(s) of body politics. First, his observation that studies on the body primarily focus on the erotic body and not the "famished" body is problematic. The erotic body has undoubtedly received its fair share of attention, but so has almost any other aspect of the body as a quick glance at Roy Porter's *History of the Body* or Amy Richlin's *Towards a History of Body History* illuminate. Studies on the body range from empirical enquiries, such as statistics and measurements of body height, body weight and parts, evidence of food intake, demographical data through psycho-analytical analyses, philosophical musings concerning mind versus body, the interaction between consciousness and social systems to the interaction between body and cultural systems. And with regard to the "famished body" quite a number of publications have appeared concerned with the suffering of the body in one way or the other, such as Foucault's *Discipline and Punish:*

*The Birth of the Prison*, Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, Butler's *Precarious Life* and closer to home Perkins' *Suffering Self*. Although the erotic body has received its fair share in this volume, by far the majority of articles have dealt with other aspects of the body and the "famished body" has found its expression in Viviers' *The Politics of Bodily Disability*, Sisson's *Overcoming the Fear of Death: Physical Body and Community in Hebrews*. As a matter of fact, the diversity of current studies on the body can be seen in, for example LaFleur's article on bodily transplantations. The cultural experience of at least a tradition within Japanese medical circles of bodily transplantations as cannibalism can perhaps be seen as yet another form of "nourishing" the famished body, albeit in a rather twisted manner! Another example of the extremities to which studies on the body nudge us, is the article by Du Preez, analysing the *eXtreme Rhetorics* of bungee-jumping as a "capitalistic flirtation with the sublime." The article by Landman may contain the reference to the erotic body in its title, *Sexuality and Spirituality in a South African Female Correctional Centre*, but its concern is the sheer brutality of a social body's power. But back to Eagleton. While it can be demonstrated that studies on the body have gone way beyond a focus on sexuality, the allure of the sexual should not be denied.

Second then, while his equating of cultural studies on the body with sexuality is restrictive, his allegation to the exclusion of body studies concerned with the experience of pleasure is confirmed also by Richlin. She recalls how it was suggested to Henderson whose dissertation concerned obscenity in Aristophanes to write it rather in Latin (1997, 21)! The number of articles in this volume is evidence of how far body studies have progressed, since quite a number touch on what could be called a "cultural rhetoric of sexuality" (cf. Desjardins, Hester, Jacobs, Landman, Thiem, Vorster and Wanamaker in this volume).

Third however, Eagleton's remark that studies on the body which may contribute to addressing the question how life can be made more pleasant for more people should be taken seriously. His agenda may be different, but in posing this *modus operandi* for morality he aligns himself with Foucault's replacing of a morality consisting of "know thyself" with a morality concerned with "taking care of yourself" (1988, 22).

Several motivations for the emergence of cultural studies on the body may be detected, such as revolutionary movements, that is, the sexual revolution of the 60's, Feminism, the Rights Revolution (Ignatieff 2000), final convulsions of Marxism, or institutional forces, such as the *Annales* school or Classics, or simply prominent persons, such as Bakhtin, Foucault, Laquer, Halperin, and Winkler (Richlin 1997). However, in almost all types of enquiry into the body, the political functions as motivation. The body no longer functions as a site of independent enquiry, but has become a *locus* of political construction. The Cartesian influence which allocated an independent role to the body has gradually been diminished, as the realisation dawns that the body is no longer a self in interaction with society, but is in fact constituted by the cultural codes of society. No aspect of the body, whether part or function, is any longer taken to be a "natural" entity, but is taken to be culturally determined. As a matter of fact, the body's materiality is constituted by the legacy of repetitive cultural practices of society. It is social product, or we could perhaps formulate it in Halperin's words on the cultural origins of the sexual body: "The social body precedes the sexual body" (2003[1990], 150).

Joan Scott (1991, 44) provides different conceptualisations of the term "politics." The first concerns strategies coming from or directed at powerful authorities; a second use of the term politics refers to relations of power in a general sense and the strategies deployed to maintain those relations; the third application denotes an even more general sense and

refers to “practices that reproduce or challenge what is sometimes labelled “ideology,” those systems of belief which form the relations between individuals and collectivities and their world, and which are taken to be natural or normative or self-evident.” Although the first two uses are by no means excluded, it is especially the third which provides the sphere for rhetorics of the body. Porter (1991, 225) writes: “We come naked into the world, but we are soon adorned not just with clothes but the metaphorical clothing of moral codes, taboos, prohibitions, and value systems linking discipline to desires, politeness to policing” and this adornment happens with such powerful, yet concealed force, that we may be quite unaware of the process and regard our clothing as nakedness.

Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin (1990, 4) in situating the sexual body within cultural practice have referred to their project as a “cultural poetics of desire.” Following this cue, it would be possible to refer to the interrelationship of body, discursive practices and persuasion as a “cultural rhetoric of the body.” It was the objective of the 2004 International Conference on Rhetoric and Scriptures to explore how such a cultural rhetoric of the body is constituted. In what follows a frame of reference is constructed, which explains the theoretical context within which the Conference was conducted, but may also function as interpretational site for the reading of the articles published in this volume.

### **The Rhetorical Power of the ‘Regulatory Body’**

Although Pierre Bourdieu’s concern was not a rhetoric of the body, his notion of *habitus* clarifies the manner in which the body functions in the formation of culture. Independent and distinct from Foucault, Bourdieu also takes social “practices” as his point of departure. The logic of social and cultural practices is determined by the key term, *habitus*. *Habitus* can be defined as: “Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, *as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively “regulated” and “regular” without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor*” (1990, 53).<sup>1</sup>

The *habitus* can be seen as a particular society’s configurations of meaning and their discursive practices that have become sedimented over a very long period of time. As such it is a product of history which “ensures the active presence of past experiences” (1990, 54). Originating from very material conditions which may no longer inform them or be subject to scrutiny, these principles generate what is seen as normalcy and natural. They are structured structures, forms of order which render certain practices and actions sensible, providing a logic to social practice. Generative principles should not be seen in an essentialistic, mechanical sense, because they are themselves constructed and produced and were subject to negotiation; yet they have acquired the status of materiality and can as such be described as durable and transposable. If they are depicted as “common sense” knowledge, the reference is not to a representation of reality or an assembled corpus of facts, but it refers to discursive practices that have acquired the status of objectivity within a particular cultural situation. However, it is by virtue of its acquired objective and non-negotiable status that they can also function as principles with generative capacity. As structured structures, they structure structures; as the “regularities” of a community they regulate. As the “common sense” of a society, these structures provide the ready-made processes that

<sup>1</sup> The emphasis via italics in the definition is mine.

regulate practices, the unquestioned points of departure which direct thoughts, the premisses from which further fields of knowledge can be constructed.

It is in the interaction between the *habitus* and the body that a rhetoric of the body originates. Already since the days of Berger (1967), the term "internalisation" has been used in depicting the social processes by means of which social behaviour is embodied. But perhaps it could be a bit further developed, using the notion of *habitus* and taking the body not as a static organism, but as a corporeal field, which incorporates these structured structures.

Besides the collective sense in which the *habitus* can be seen, it applies also to the individual body. As such the *habitus* can be seen as incorporated history. According to Bourdieu, the *habitus* of a society is internalised to become a second nature. Perhaps it should be more radically formulated. The *habitus* is internalised to such an extent as to become what is regarded as nature. Although a historical product, it becomes during the process of internalisation devoid of history and assumes an absolute nature. Without its historical entrenchment it acquires a transcendent and universal character which provides it with the type of power that is without time and boundary. It acquires the power of the "real," the "natural."

This incorporation should not be seen as metaphorical process, but should be seen in analogy to the language acquisition. In the acquisition of language, linguistic structures are not thematised in their use; they function as given; although they govern and rule language usage, they are not made visible or present and yet they control the flow of air as the body gives voice to their instructions, the movement of the tongue, the lips, the jaws as the body cooperates in the formation of words and sentences. To a certain extent, the incorporation of linguistic structures happens so successfully as to gain access to the automaticity of the body. Many of our linguistic capabilities are performed subconsciously by the body. Although language forms part of the *habitus*, they should not be equated. The incorporation of the *habitus* is the process by means of which a logic of societal practices lodge themselves so firmly in the body as to become natural. The "ought to," "ought not to," "should do" and "should not do" conduct of the past is enacted in the present by the incorporation of the *habitus*. As such it provides the body with both perspectivity and modality.

The incorporation of the *habitus* happens in a dialectical relationship with the body. If the body is seen as a multi-dimensional corporeal field it becomes clear why the compelling force of the *habitus* acquires the power of the natural. As a corporeal field, instead of a one-dimensional fixed entity, the body functions as an organised organism. Its parts, processes, organs and functions do not all operate at the same time with the same intensity, but depending on what is required certain organs and functions acquire prominence while others recede into the background (Leder 1990, 24). The domain of the body housing the receding organs, that is our viscera and the physiological processes may be called the "recessive body" (1990, 36-38). For most of the time our recessive bodies function without our awareness, as if they were "absent" which grant them the quality of "automaticity." However, when our recessive body foregrounds itself, it is usually with a compelling force that cannot be resisted and should be obeyed, can be seen in the event of pain and sickness.

Although dysfunction is not the only time during which we become aware of our recessive bodies, it is especially during the phases of dysfunction that we become aware of the recessive body. I may be completely unaware of the automatic functioning of my body, until the moment that a part or process of the recessive body is in distress. The power of the recessive body may then be of such intensity that it may completely absorb my

consciousness, destroy my awareness of time and space and restrict my whole world to the specific part which is subject to the felt-experience of pain (Scarry 1985, 54; Leder 1990, 70-78). Sufficient to recognise that the body does not function on one level only, but is multi-dimensional.

What has this to do with the notion of *habitus* and how does the notion of the body as a corporeal field provide a plausible explanation of sedimented symbolic structures achieving the status of the “natural”?

If certain bodily parts or processes are consistently foregrounded while others are consistently put out of play so as not to allow interference with those required to function, the repetitiveness infuses with power while at the same time diminishes the power of those that are not required. If, in the engagement with the existing social structures of a society, the prominence of bodily parts and functions are consistently or repetitively socially qualified in a specific manner, those structures acquire the status of naturalness. In an inverted fashion, a quality of somaticity is lent to those very social structures.

It seems to me that it is this incorporation of the *habitus* which Judith Butler (1993) expresses with the materialisation of the regulatory norm in the form of an ideal body. Integrating aspects from speech act theory, Butler argues that the problem is not one of referentiality, but rather one of performativity (11). The speech act does not simply inform or refer, but it produces and materialises. She indicates that “construction is ... a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms” (10). The body becomes a “sedimented effect of reiterative or ritual practice” and it “acquires its naturalized effect.” However, it is exactly in this repetition that the potential of modification hides; it is in the repetitive act that the possibility for “gaps and fissures” resides, because just as reiteration grants power to act, it is also never exactly the same. The concern becomes both the materialisation of bodies “governed by regulatory norms” towards a particular hegemony in the production of what counts as a viable body, as well as a materialisation “of the norms in bodily formation” which produces a domain of “abjected” or “deformed” bodies (16).

A rhetoric of the body is concerned with exactly those powerful processes of symbolisation which naturalise over a period of time a “regulatory body.” Although produced by sedimented symbolic configurations, it again governs the formation of the bodies it produces, but in the act of its construction it also defines the non-normative body. Practices, spurred on by repetition, retrenches and reinforces the regulatory body and transform the cultural into the natural. A rhetoric of the body derives its origins from this level of culture. A rhetoric of the body operates and produces where cultural patterning, inscription or even engraving has exerted itself with such a force as to emerge as nature. Culture has to such an extent infused “things” that “cultural” can be read in place of the “natural.” The manner in which it has objectified the things of nature has sedimented in society with such a force as to lend objectivity to its own manufacturings.

Religious discourse is concerned with a production of meanings which may sensibly structure the existence of human beings. Whether or not there are ultimacies in life, religious discourses claim the ultimate, in whatever form, as their concern. As a matter of fact, although a bit outdated and problematic, it would be possible with Burke to find in the term “god” the culmination of a culture’s linguistic hierarchy. The objectifications produced by religious discourses are often so powerful as to be unreflectively accepted and function again as structuring principles. To put it a bit differently: In this competition of powerful sedimented vocabularies on levels of culture that are simply unreflectively assumed, what is the possibility that a rhetoric of the body may function as a catalyst for that part of cultural formation we have dubbed as religious?

### Change and the Rhetoric(s) of Body Politics

The significance of the "regulatory body" for transformation or change should not be underestimated. Repetitively enforced and institutionally entrenched it is a product of power, but since no identical repetitive enforcement can be produced owing to consistently changing contexts, its empowerment through repetition is simultaneously an opportunity for cautionary constraint. In describing the empowered construction of sex, Butler (1993, 10) aptly metaphorises as follows: "As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labour of that norm. This instability is the *deconstituting* possibility in the very process of repetition, the power that undoes the very effects by which 'sex' is stabilized..." The point should be correctly understood: The immense enforcing power of the "regulatory body" can not and must not be denied or belittled – it is indeed the hardened sedimentation of repetitive and ritual practice, and will remain as a constant imperative until completely destroyed. But the possibility of transformation and change on this deep seated cultural level should not be overlooked. The "gaps" and "fissures" may gradually widen, effecting initially alternative versions of the "regulatory body," but eventually opening the possibility for a more radical departure.

If culture is constructed through a construction of the body, and if this constructed body, by virtue of its constructedness is the effect of power which is regulatory, albeit often concealed and invisible, this is then also the sphere where cultural transformation and change can and should take place. When transformation takes place, whether by democratic practices, such as negotiation or constitutional reformation, revolution or even war, but the power of the "regulatory body" has not been recognised, "transformation" has simply become a different codification of exactly the same effects of power (see Foucault 1994, 123; Mills 2003, 37). As a matter of fact, the "discursive regime," the power relations implemented by a State after a revolution, may be exactly the same as those that were identified as and called repressive and may be the conditions upon which it operates.

The question is to what extent do religious discourses function in the formation and maintenance of the "regulatory body"? Since religious discourses are so often equated with the ultimate values of communities, it is usually assumed that its discursive practices form part, if not completely, of the discursive regime governing the construction of bodies. Foucault (1994, 450) also assigns revolutionary uprisings to discourses religions offer their followers and recent experience, such as the September 11 disaster illustrates to what extent bodies are governed by religious discursive regimes. Despite the undeniable power of religious discourses, the question is whether religious discourses can function as agency of change and transformation, and whether these discourses usually do not simply function to maintain, preserve and perpetuate a contextually appropriated politics of the body? Even though completely different terminologies may be used, even though those terminologies may transfer beyond the realm of the historical, borrowing their power from "empty references," were and are they really capable of changing the type of communal sedimentation which can be expressed in the "regulatory body"? Would it not be possible to regard religious discourses as a function of the politics of the body? And if that be the case, should strategies of change not take as their point of departure the rhetoric(s) of body politics and from there work towards a transformation of religious discourses? And if, for a moment, we take the politicality and ambiguity of the terms "religion," "religious" and "religiosity" into account, and locate them within the broader ambit of morality (cf. Vorster 1998), should a

rhetoric(s) of body politics not occupy centre position in the academic study of religion, especially in a country rife with immorality?

## **Rhetoric(s) of the Regulatory Body**

### Introductory Notes

The objective of this section is to show how the immense diversity of the articles in this volume critically cooperates in different areas to enquire rhetoric(s) of the body. The articles published are the product of an open invitation to investigate within the wider framework of a rhetoric of the body, the interaction between configurations of body politics and the rhetorics which may be produced from this interaction. To a greater or lesser degree, all the articles have attempted to show how the discursive body has been put into discursive practices, infused with power. Since religious discourse is taken to be a specific cultural practice, no restriction as to a particular manifestation thereof was imposed; as a matter of fact, one of the objectives was to see how strategies available within and associated with religious discourse may function in the production of a particular rhetoric of the body.

### ‘Making’ the ‘Regulatory Body’

Deriving from a rhetoric of the body, the regulatory body cannot but be contingent to particular contexts. Just as “gender” has been articulated as analytic category, the notion of a regulatory body may allow for enquiry into the paradoxical, dynamic, sedimented, forceful discursive practices structuring communities. The regulatory body is not a clearly defined, stabilised category, but is a particularisation of a rhetoric of the body, recognising the rhetoricity of processes of symbolisation, recognising the empowerment of reiterated processes of symbolisation, acknowledging that its often concealed operation infuses it with an almost complete acceptance. Furthermore, its pervasive rhetorical quality, not only allows for, but compels its reproduction, albeit not always in similar fashion or form. The notion of the regulatory body argues against the easy social opposition or dichotomy which is often made between “mainstream” and “resistant,” or “movement” and “counter-movement.” While difference is acknowledged in each contingent instantiation of the regulatory body, it simultaneously gives acknowledgement to the availability of existing terminologies (seen in the very wide sense to include not only verbal manifestations, but institutions, roles, media, etc.), or discursive practices. As such, what may appear to be revolutionary, may just be a different manifestation of exactly the same power relations created by exactly the same discursive practices. While in no way even inclining towards a smuggling in of Essentialism, the notion of regulatory body allows for enquiry into continuity or discontinuity of culture.

The articles which appear in this volume have been read from the perspective of the notion of the regulatory body. In certain cases some of the authors may feel that they have been imposed upon, that they have been forced into a particular mould of thinking. While I can only plead for “forgiveness” (a practice which I do not really believe in owing to the unaccountabilities it leads to!), the “regulation” into the notion of a regulatory body at the same time invites to a conversation and provides with a shared terminology. It was surprising though, to see how many of the articles included, despite their diversity in topics, dealt with the same problematisation, albeit expressed in a different set of terms.

Certain tendencies have appeared which could provide for further analytic purposes. It would be possible to label these tendencies as strategies making and re-making the

regulatory body. As strategies they form the basis upon which a persuasive appeal can be made. Each of these strategies assembles its own practices, whether that be the terminologies with which discourses are constructed, whether that be in the institutionalisation of discursive practices or in the allocation of roles. And yet, they do not form watertight compartments, but there is a constant exchange of items, a shifting of perspectives and relations. These strategies are the claim on normativity or naturalness, the agonistic, the hierarchic and the symmetrical. The claim on normativity or naturalness has already been indicated and it forms the distinctive feature of the "regulatory body." An essential ingredient of the normativity aspect is its engenderedness. The agonistic principle is concerned with the competitive force infusing practices, and regulating bodies in societies. The agonistic is not only expressed in terms of games, but can also occur in opposing viewpoints. It flourishes on comparison and there is always in it a winner or a loser, a right or wrong, a better or worse. It has also given birth to an enormous wide variety of practices, such as games, economic principles, rewards, heroic roles. etc. The hierarchic should be seen in terms of the Burkeian hierarchic principle, which manifests itself in more forms than specific hierarchies. Burke (1969, 138) explains that the hierarchic principle operates where the principle of gradation is accepted and should not simply be restricted to a material hierarchy. There is a close relationship between the hierarchic principle or strategy and the agonistic, since the winner is simultaneously assumed to be at the top. To an extent, the hierarchic principle prompts the agonistic strategy, but regulating towards competition differs from regulating to maintain hierarchy. Finally, there is the principle or strategy of symmetry which is expressed in the regulatory mechanisms cultivating harmony, balance, cooperation, networking and equality. The symmetrical may be seen to counter the hierarchical; however, the most symmetrical body may simultaneously also be an expression of the culmination of the hierarchic principle.

These strategies of the regulatory body, which both act to inform the regulatory body and enable its externalisation, need not always be present in all instances, and neither will they manifest themselves with equal force. As a matter of fact, the possibility of fissures or gaps in the sedimentation of norms owing to its contingent reiteration, allows for the possibility of a conflict or ambiguity in what is "sensed." It would be quite possible to find both the symmetrical and the agonistic at work in a society, albeit then in a different scale of forcefulness.

#### *Problematizing the 'Natural' or 'Normal'*

In representing from different perspectives the interaction between body politics and rhetoric(s) of the body, several authors have ventured on that specific area where compelling discursive forces, formed over long periods of time via the reiteration of practices, operate to re-enforce, reproduce or regulate practices in societies. In many cases the questions and problems addressed concur with what has here been formulated as the "regulatory body." The "regulatory body" can therefore function as an analytic category, problematising structured structures intent on the structuring of structures! As an analytic category, it refers to symbolisations of the body which have achieved such a state of sedimentation as if to assume the form of reality.

Several authors could be seen as having ventured into those areas counting as the regulatory body. Although not always mentioned as "regulatory body" several authors have in some way or the other problematised what is presented as "natural," "normal" or the "conventional." What is normal or natural is normative. What is taken to be natural or normal is produced, it is made; it does not really belong to the world of how things are, but



rather to the order of how things should be. Yet clothed by the “natural,” normativity or the normative body, assumes a stability, a fixity, a measure which could function as criterion ... and with the stability an almost totalitarian rigidity. Our “clothes” indeed become our nakedness (see again Porter).

### *Rhetoric of Enquiry*<sup>2</sup>

In this volume, Snyman self-critically scrutinises the rhetoric of Biblical Studies and exposes what we could refer to as its regulatory body. Entering into conversation with Kelley, Snyman poses the question whether Biblical Studies has not been so essentially infused with racial bias, via particular philosophical traditions, that there is a kind of entrapment, a surrenderedness to a particular discourse privileging the Western tradition. Within a South African context, emerging from an Apartheid regime, there is an unawareness of the intensity with which the regulatory body has inscribed racial prejudice on to our bodies. He argues, that if we were to take the allegation of racial prejudice, formed by Western philosophical discourses and infusing Biblical Scholarship, seriously, there is a cruel irony in the way many of the critics of Biblical Scholarship actually perpetuates the very object of their criticism availing themselves of Western hermeneutic terminologies. One could even go a little further and illustrate how the regulatory body which has emerged in Africa over centuries reminding us that “white” and “black” are categories of division and conflict, demarcating an “us” and “them,” again resurface in Post-Apartheid South African academic studies of religion.<sup>3</sup> Snyman ponders the possibility that there may be no way out of the racially predisposed cultural incarceration, which signifies the immense perpetuating power of the regulatory body. If one takes into account the intensive, prolonged and aggressive rush for managerial positions in institutions under the banner of an affirmative action programme, quite often in open defiance of a newly accepted Bill of Rights, the hierarchic principle functions in strong competition with the principle of symmetry and one cannot but murmur whether the discursive regime does not closely resemble the one which was identified and called oppressive.

Although completely different in its expression, Craffert’s article is also concerned with the regulatory body operating within the field of academic enquiry. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, 294-331) have taught us, the construction of the past functions in the construction of a person’s image, and we may extend it to include the person’s identity. Identity is a construction based on a constructed past. Using the problem of Jesus’ ancestry and the role of genealogy as point of departure, Craffert problematises the assumptions of traditional historiography in the domain of Historical Jesus research. He shows how enquiry has been regulated by an ontological monism and the myth of realism to produce a Jesus with Davidic descent. Driven by the force of a regulatory body operating on historiographical assumptions of which the origins lie in the eighteenth century, the complexities of genealogical construction are simply not recognised. The necessity of Historical Jesus research is of course in itself part and parcel of a regulatory body whose constitution was

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<sup>2</sup> For the way in which heterosexist ideology compels a particular interpretation of Matt 19:12 see also Hester’s analysis of the rhetoric of current scholarship.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Masenya’s article in Snyman’s bibliography posing the question: ‘Is White South African Old Testament Scholarship African?’ One could only speculate what would happen if the title were to be inverted to: ‘Is Black South African Old Testament Scholarship African?’ See also Snyman’s conversation with Masenya in the article itself.

generated by the hierarchic principle expressed in terms of "canonicity."<sup>4</sup> However, each enquiry into this field is a performance opening the possibility for a fissure and for a change; this is what Craffert proposes by his anthropological-historiographical perspective which takes the genealogical information concerning Jesus to be certificates of honour.

In criticising the negligence of some New Testament scholars to take a history of reading into account in their work on memory and reading, Botha likewise operates within a rhetoric of enquiry. By pointing to the "illusion of continuity" he scratches at the fabric of the regulatory body regulating arguing that the "conventional portrayal" of early Christian authors and readers "is not a historical portrayal." Self-reflecting Botha argues that modern scholarship inclines to make a "connection between education and literacy, which seems so natural," but which is in fact "simply a cultural convention of our own times." The hierarchic principle, differently valorizing the dichotomy between literacy and illiteracy, generates a powerful perspective from which the practices of reading and memorisation in antiquity are interpreted. However, forming contemporary attitudes towards education, the regulatory body obfuscates the complexities of ancient practices, and allows for the coining of terminologies such as "oral tradition," and at the same time prevents the understanding of literacy in terms of the ancients.

#### *Rhetoric of Life-Saving Versus a Rhetoric of Human Dignity*

LaFleur's article is a prime example of how the regulatory body may function as a launching pad for problematising the assumptions on which cultures operate. The medical practice of bodily transplants, apparently so clinical, so subjected to neutrality and objectivity is located within a conflation of cultural rhetorics, body politics, polemic and religious discourses. What appears to be the mechanical insertion of a bodily part of one person into another is disclosed as an ambiguous practice, signifying from one perspective the *ethos* of the "saving of lives," but is experienced from another as "cannibalism." The visible eruption into debate on this issue is evoked by the powerful forces which have formed two different types of regulatory bodies over centuries.

It would be possible to establish behind LaFleur's treatment of this debate between East and West on medical technologies respectively a rhetoric of human dignity versus a rhetoric of life-saving, and more particular the saving of human lives. These rhetorics obviously do not exclude each other, but the focus is different owing to different vocabularies constituting them. Behind the rhetoric of life-saving a fusion is made between a vocabulary of utility or "Utilitarianism" and a vocabulary of salvation. Within the vocabulary of utility, consumerism achieves a prominent position. Medical technology joins consumerist ideology, making it possible for one human body to "feed" upon the other. It literally becomes a matter of what we would say in Afrikaans: "Die een se dood, is die ander se brood" (the one's death is the other's bread), in itself evidence of the macabre utilitarianism regulating the heartbeat of Afrikaner practices. If I may again evoke the senses of the regulatory body, it would be possible to point to the agonistic. Within a rhetoric of life-saving, the objective is to strive towards the conquest of death; it functions along the lines of survival of the fittest.

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<sup>4</sup> Canonicity should here be seen in its general and specific sense. In a general sense the ranking of normative topics within a disciplinary field, such as the study of Shakespeare in English; in a specific sense, the development of a ranking in terms of authoritative authenticity within the history of the Judaeo-Christian canon.

The vocabulary of utility is combined with a vocabulary of salvation, in which a rhetoric of the “saving of lives” legitimates almost any type of medical practice. The technique of the “end justifies the means” functions as the value of life and its extension legitimates the bodily incorporation of an other’s live bodily parts, albeit an “other” who has been declared “brain-dead.” Whether the dominant Western religion, Christianity, initiated this type of vocabulary or whether it sanctions what was already present within Western civilisation’s history, is uncertain. What is less uncertain is the constitutive role Christianity plays in a rhetoric of salvation which functions as generating principle within medical technology. “Life” in Christianity is radicalised to achieve eternal, actually life-transcending dimensions! A strict dichotomy between life and death gives death a quality of revulsion and opens a possibility of which the founders of Christianity have exploited to its absolute limits with the construction of an “eternal life” which signified the conquest of death, the death of death, the liberation from death (see in this regard especially Rom 7:24; 8; 1 Cor 15). The type of sequential argumentation, feeding upon a self-centric ethos of benefit, expressed in “life” as reward, a radicalisation which makes “life” an eternal entity, is kept alive and driven by a devaluation of the other’s body. An “other” may die for me, an “other” may sacrifice him/her for me, an other’s body may be put to use for me, all mechanisms lying at the root of Christianity’s rhetoric of salvation. The “saving of lives” functions at the cost of an “other.” LaFleur refers to Yamaori and Miyazaki (scholars of religion) who have observed the institutional sanctioning by the Roman Catholic Church of plane-crash surviving rugby players eating the flesh of their dead fellow travellers and admitting that imagining the Holy Communion made it easier for them.

LaFleur finds in Japanese culture what could be called a rhetoric of human dignity. The vocabulary enabling this rhetoric appears to be that of Buddhism, avoiding the dichotomy between life and death, making death “intrinsic to the nature of things.” Relating LaFleur’s problematisation of these two conflicting cultures to the notion of a regulatory body, religious discourse once again functions in its composition, but in this instance to regulate and protect bodily integrity within a wider context. It would be possible to find in the Japanese debates on body transplantation an *ethos* of humaneness, a sense of community which finds in body transplantation a threat to the social body itself. Not only is this concern expressed in the public and academic debates concerning body transplants, but also in a type of (con)sequential argumentation insisting on locating the debate within the context of civilization itself. It is possible to find in this rhetoric of human dignity, a regulatory body concerned with the symmetrical.

### *The Rhetoric of the Game*

The articles by Bosman, Du Preez and Sisson are concerned with the practice of sport, albeit in completely different periods. In these cases the regulatory body functions in terms of the agonistic principle. In Bosman’s presentation, however, it also becomes possible to find an interaction of the agonistic with the principles of symmetry and hierarchy. In the case of Du Preez’s *Rhetorics of the eXtreme*, the agonistic principle generates an aspiration for the ultimate tempting of death, assisted by modern technology. The marketing of bungee-jumping joins other extreme adventures in its use of competitive language. Comparison, in particular the superlative abounds as spatiality and temporality are “competitised” in terms of the “longest,” the “tallest,” the “fastest” and the “highest.” And the appeal to join in the act is motivated by religious rhetoric, depicting the reward as a “fully immersive experience,” an encounter with what is really real, or a coming to grips with what “this is what it is about.” The persuasive force of a contemporary Western

regulatory body operating via the agonistic principle appears to be combination of consumerist terminology, modern technology and religious discourse.

From Bosman's portrayal of the interaction between Diogenes and the athletes in *Meat, Muscle, and Mind: Diogenes and the Athletes*, we may also derive a regulatory body where the agonistic principle finds its expression in the conventional admiration for the athletics of the games. Bosman indicates how Diogenes' criticism centres on their excessive diets, which can in terms of the regulatory body in antiquity be seen as a violation of the principle of symmetry, since balance, also a balanced diet functioned as normative requirement. However, the agonistic principle provides the available competitive terminologies when Diogenes, through the technique of ridicule, inverts the role of athlete and philosopher. The "true" athlete is actually the philosopher; "real" hardships are actually suffered and endured by the philosopher and a "real" conquest is the victory "over men," which is the scope of the philosopher, not the inferior conquest "over slaves." We are allowed a glimpse into the functioning of the agonistic principle, albeit in antiquity.<sup>5</sup>

Sisson, in his study of the writing *Hebrews*, refers to the widespread popularity of practices concerned with the spectacle, a concrete expression of the agonistic principle. He demonstrates how the author of this letter availed himself of the *agôn* motif which was "commonplace among Hellenistic philosophers and early Christian writers." Regulating according to the agonistic principle evokes the practices of training, discipline, the suffering and endurance associated with the contest, but also the victory. Although suffering was not a "manly" virtue in antiquity, and although there was hardly a vocabulary available for the experience and structuring of suffering, "endurance" in suffering allowed for a position on the social hierarchy. This could be seen in the paradoxical status of the gladiators, but also in the way early Christian martyr narratives have used it to project martyrs to a prominent position on the social hierarchy. In the *Hebrews* letter, Christ becomes the perfect model in his demonstration of the "endurance of suffering, especially the suffering of death on a cross." If I were to interpret Sisson's article in terms of the regulatory body, in this instance inclined towards the agonistic, it would be probable to point to a rhetoric of competition, of the agonistic, which appeals to its audience that the "fearlessness in the face of death," provided by the Christ option outclasses the option provided by the Graeco-Roman games or spectacles, since he allows for a meeting between a vertical and horizontal space of encounter. Despite the fact that the agonistic as articulated by the author of the letter to the *Hebrews* must be differentiated from the Greek and Roman games (a distinction upon which Sisson insists), the power of the normative regulatory body forces its continuation as it reproduces itself, clothed in the discursive practices of the *agôn*.

#### *Rhetoric of Bodily Concealment*

Nakedness and nudity may to such an extent be loaded with social meaning that a distinction is sometimes made between nakedness and nudity (see Stewart 1997, 25), and it would be quite possible to speak of the cultural dressing or clothing of nakedness (1997, 26). The naked Greek body, for example, so often displayed in its precise symmetry through a variety of media, was what set them apart from the "barbarians" around them, thereby confirming their ethnic and political superiority (1997, 26). Neufeld and Jeal take us into the world of the naked body and the manner in which its covering function as

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's formulation of the argumentative techniques concerned with incompatibility and dissociation are operative in Diogenes' inversion of Graeco-Roman morality.

mechanism of regulation. Neufeld enters from the perspective of Genesis, pointing to the paradoxicality of the naked body, which on the one hand signified an edenic condition, but on the other hand also functioned to portray shame and scandal. Universal significance is given to the act of clothing. God's provision of clothing introduces "power differential and inequality" – hierarchy was born and with it a social control came into existence, grading and ranking bodies. The clothed body became a "template" to delineate those who were now subjected to "live a rule-governed existence."

Although we may speak of fashion in terms of the frivolous and faddish, it functions as cultural signifier, signifying positions of power and status, thereby activating the principle of hierarchy. In what he calls a "rhetoric of clothing," Jeal takes us through the Bible disclosing the persuasive possibilities of this type of non-verbal communication. Using further developments of Vernon Robbins' rhetorical approach, he shows how the language of clothing is used to signify a change in status and identity. He consequently confronts us with the manner in which the perplexing early Christian metaphor, "to be clothed with a person," functioned in the formation of identity.

Desjardins is concerned with Clement of Alexandria's rhetorical strategies pertaining to the covering of women's heads and the veiling of their faces. This may appear only as a particular custom of societies. However, the "regulatory body" one may discern underlying this custom is concerned with what Desjardins has pointed out as the "more onerous" role which has been assigned to women in the curbing of sexual arousal. According to Clement of Alexandria, veiling can assist and strengthen the "noble and majestic part of the soul" in its quest of dominance over those parts pulling away from God. Veiling the face of a woman cannot be a protective measure for women, as is sometimes asserted, especially not when dictated by men. D'Angelo (1995, 152) has indicated that it serves to protect the male from the assumed "sexualised presence of women." On the one hand, it seeks to deny or even erase the presence of the female body, especially her sexuality; on the other hand, where veiling signifies marital status, it subjects the female to that of a commodity, her husband's. But even more, where veiling is required, a rhetoric of the body is activated where a correlation is made between the face of a woman and her genitals. In the context of early Christianity, D'Angelo (1995, 131) writes that "[f]or early Christian men... women's heads were indeed sexual members."

Desjardins locates this engendered practice in a wider framework, spanning from 13 B.C.E. to the 2004 French banning of visible religious symbols from schools. Taking the type of regulatory body into consideration underlying this visible engendered religious symbol it indeed becomes a matter of dispute whether such insistence can be compatible with the notion of equal rights. Ignatieff (2000, 86) argues that the demand for equal rights is simultaneously also a demand for recognition. But recognition means to "emerge from anonymity, to be seen and acknowledge for what you are" (86). To remove a face is to decapitate a body, is to make a no-body. Veiling, whether during early Christianity, or in modern religious manifestations thereof, functions as mechanism to enforce a male engendered hierarchy.

Whereas the practice of clothing may allow for a rhetoric of identity-formation, or differently called, a rhetoric of separation, the rhetoricity of ritual powerfully functions in the making of boundaries between "outsiders" and "insiders." The rhetorical appeal may be invoked in terms of the competitive, when the insider status is defined as better, or even more beneficial; in terms of hierarchy, when superiority and inferiority, when superiority becomes the constitutive agency for identity; in terms of symmetry, when moderation becomes a distinctive boundary marker and the capacity to shun the desire for excess. The

baptismal rite performs a rhetoric which can be seen as a combination of the agonistic, identity upgrading and symmetry.<sup>6</sup> In Van den Heever's article on the rhetoric of early Christian baptismal discourse, the power with which the regulatory body exerts itself through ritual, enables the gradual emergence of a radicalised, differing community of Christian believers. "Givens" were the already existing practice of "water-based purificatory rites," the deeply embedded notion that "dirt" means to be impure, that is outside, the belief that a ritual, such as baptism may constitute a change of identity, and may even provide with protection from evil. Van den Heever writes: "Historically, I would contend, purity and purification as discourses of social formation ... constitute the original meaning of the manifold rites of washing and lustrations or baptisms in late antique cult groups including early Christianity, and this layer of meaning is still visible in some early Christian texts." The available discursive practices were used for the social formation of yet another group, claiming a superior morality, but eventually also a sharing in the divine presence.

### *The Rhetoric of the Perfect Body*

The same polarisation into "insiders" and "outsiders" effected by a criterion of what "ought to be" can also be seen in Van Deventer's contribution. A regulatory body infused with the hierarchic principle operates on the one hand to establish boundaries between "insiders" and "outsiders," but on the other hand, also to offer national or ethnic resistance. The perfect body of the "other," institutionalised through the office of the king and representing the social body of the "other" is de-constructed in a dream, the perfect body of the foreign ruler, partitioned in a hierarchy of body parts, embodying a periodisation equally arranged in a hierarchy, is smashed to smithereens by the divine intervention of Daniel's super power (Dan 2); in a hierarchy of bodies which positioned animals on the lowest level, foreign kingdoms were depicted as resembling "beasts" (Dan 7:4); in a hierarchy of bodies where self-control epitomises manhood, a foreign power loses bodily control. At the same time, "insiders" who, in terms of the foreign power's hierarchy, were regarded as occupying the lowest levels, should in terms of the author *actually* be considered epitomising the perfect body. The *true* regulatory body is that of the "insider," on the one hand regulating what should be actual normativity, and on the other hand, exposing, disclosing, subverting what was to be seen as apparent normativity.

The "perfect body," in this instance the "perfect male body" also appears in the article by Nortjé-Meyer. She illustrates how the author of the letter to the Ephesians availed himself of the body metaphors and how these bodily metaphors are organised by the hierarchic principle. The body metaphors are used to consolidate the community to which this letter was addressed, and the members of the community are exhorted to conform to the regulatory body. In this case the regulatory body is Christ. She writes: "The Church used Christ as the regulatory body to inscribe its hierarchies. He stands at the highest point of the hierarchy of bodies." Nortjé-Meyer argues that Christ is foregrounded as the epitome of the perfect male body. Regulating the "body of Christ" then implies a male controlled hierarchy functioning to the exclusion of women, who were regarded as impure, defective bodies. She problematises the use of the perfect male body as an "image to explain the meta-reality of God."

<sup>6</sup> Van den Heever also refers to the manner in which baptism becomes the donning of new clothes, signifying a different, superior status.

### Problematizing the 'Unnatural,' 'Abnormal' or 'Inhuman'

Making or producing "natural" or "normal" bodies at the same time creates abnormal or unnatural bodies, expressed as incomplete or imperfect. The dichotomy natural versus unnatural also valorizes into positive versus negative, establishing an imbalance in the relation of power. However, exactly by virtue of construction of normativity and by virtue of its imposition on society, a site for the production of alternative knowledge emerges. Mills (2003, 69) explaining the relationship between power and knowledge, which Foucault (1980) has formulated, writes: "Where there are imbalances of power relations between groups of people or between institutions/states, there will be a production of knowledge." She shows how the institutionalised imbalances in power relations between men and women have led to the production of knowledge about women, and the same applied to the relationships between blacks and whites, hetero- and homosexuality, etc. Several articles pay attention to the non-normative body, thereby in themselves functioning as performances opening the possibility of a widened gap, a deepening of the fissure in the sedimentation of discursive practices.

It is in this respect that we need to take notice of the contributions by Maretha Jacobs, proposing the "her-story" of Eve, Annika Thiem, who points to a number of inconsistencies advocated by the Vatican in their position on same-sex relations, Christina Landman, who confronts us with the conflictual value-systems of the female prison, Hennie Viviers, who takes us into the world of the physically disabled in antiquity, David Hester, disclosing the ambiguous constructions of the eunuch identity.

Jacobs shows how Eve's story has functioned to explain disorder, chaos, transgression and evil. Generalised and universalised by the body politics of the early church, the story of Eve stereotyped woman as inferior, while at the same time it confirmed man as superior. Jacobs quite correctly argues that the interpretations of Eve's story function as veils of power, telling us more about hierarchical aspirations of the interpreters than about the story itself. She appropriately uses the term "story," thereby giving expression to the fictitiousness nature of the myth, but at the same time pointing to the tragic fate women have suffered in the "his-story" of the West. If there is a construction of identity through the making of story, the consistent account of woman as responsible for chaos, disorder, transgressions and evil cannot but have become the DNA<sup>7</sup> of the Western social body.

Annika Thiem takes us into the discursive practices that have developed in the Vatican around the issue of same-sex relations. Thiem problematizes the manner in which the social body in its institutional manifestations of church and state, shape and form sexuality- and kinship-relationships by its claims on normality, order and what is regarded as "human" behaviour. What is deemed "normal" and therefore human sexual interaction is restricted to the realm of the marital bond between one man and one woman. According to several statements made by the Vatican, marriage, in its heterosexual, monogamous and reproductive sense, functions as the environment for the expression of normal, human sexual behaviour. Normality is, according to our church fathers, when heterosexual activity happily culminates in genetic procreativity, safely ensconced within the boundaries of matrimonial, monogamous bliss. Vatican's declarations on marriage, excludes any other sexual relations or affections as "inhuman."

The power of the regulatory body can be seen not only in the manner in which the hierarchic principle functions via the institution of the Roman Catholic Church, but also in

<sup>7</sup> I have borrowed this term from Lawrence Berman's postgraduate research on 'Hate Speech and the Bible,' to be completed in 2006.

the desire of same-sex couples for the social recognition of their affective relationships as marriage. Thiem shows that despite of their rejection by the Vatican, gay and lesbian couples desire to be recognised in marital relationships. She argues that the notion of marriage is infused with a particular sanctity, a catalytic power which envelops both church and state and she indicates that there is an almost incompetency in Western societies to structure sexual relationships outside the monogamous marriage. However, the magical power with which marriage is endowed, is an expression of the regulatory body and any threat will indeed be regarded as containing the possibility of chaos and disorder. For that reason, constraining sexual relations to the ritual of the monogamous marriage functions as a mechanism for protecting the ordered function of the social body. It is also for that reason that sexual passion cannot be taken as a "good" in itself, it cannot be taken as an opportunity for the intensification of mutual pleasure, but must be made into a means serving a beyond, whether that be "God's design or plan," "procreativity," the "common good," or "social renewal."<sup>8</sup> The desire of power instantiations, functioning within an environment where the hierarchic principle is operative, whether that be the State, or the Management of a corporate structure (even of a University!), to harness human behaviour into their agendas, rendering them docile bodies, then usually happens by pointing to the "beyond" of the moment.

From the institution of the church to the institution of the prison as Landman very concretely confronts us with the extreme confining effects of the regulatory body. The very real power of the regulatory body regulating bodies, making the female prisoner a "correctee," that is, constructing an identity by virtue of being "in-correct," providing with an identity that is "by nature" out of line, shocks into a recognition of the relentless, mechanical performance of the regulatory body. When one listens to the anguish of a mother, losing her family, her dignity and identity, the impersonal, brutish force with which bodies are "corrected" reminds that very little power exists at the lowest level of the social hierarchy. Interesting that this institution calls itself "Correctional Services." But while the "service" is rendered of being brought into line, her body is subjected to the type of transgressions which the regulatory body, in particular in South Africa, deems "out of line." The correction takes place in the midst of incorrection. Another term used is "rehab" for rehabilitation, that is a re-making or re-integration of the society's *habitus*, but as it happens on one level, it is violated on another and exactly at the point where the "self" is at its most vulnerable, namely her intimacy, her sexuality. An extreme uneasiness hovers around the morality at stake.

Viviers' contribution takes us a little further into the mechanisms of the regulatory body when he illustrates how a link between physical disability and knowledge production was established. He takes as point of departure both the Hebrew Bible, as well as the gods of the Graeco-Roman world illustrating the striving and competition for the perfect body. The physically disabled were seen as "epistemic misfits," and as such by virtue of restricted sensory abilities, were seen as outside the realm of knowledge acquisition. People with a physical disability could not "know," and not sharing in the world of knowledge they were also bereft of an identity.

Following along the same lines we need to pay a little more attention to the work of Hester. Stabilised bodily normality, expressed via the dominant heterosexist ideology, is destabilised by the mutilated body of the eunuch. The multi-dimensionality of the eunuch

<sup>8</sup> See in this respect also Vorster's description of marriage as mechanism of social power, always pointing beyond the couple to objectives and principles formulated by instances of power.



body is described as ambivalent, contested, sexually transgressing, sacred, morally weak, repugnant, even constituting a third sex and it acquires yet another dimension when it is metaphorised. Hester indicates how the mutilated body of the eunuch functions as a site exposing social incompatibilities. Using Matt 19:12 as point of departure and point of closure he argues that the ambivalent, mutilated body of the eunuch, should not be seen as metaphor for celibacy. As a matter of fact, the “ideological misreading of eunucism” characterising the scholarly Christian interpretation of this passage, is premised upon a binary heterosexist ideology constructing sexual normality as the “penetrative act of a male penis into the vagina of a female for procreative purposes.” According to Hester, its appreciation by Jesus allows for a restoration of the eunuch’s body subverting heterosexist ideology with its clear-cut definitions and distinctions of “normal” and “deviant” sexual practices.

Hester’s rhetorical constructions of the eunuch’s body provides with a remarkable example of Foucault’s reference to the manner in which the body is directly involved in a “political field,” how “power relations have an immediate hold upon it” as “they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (1977, 25). The interactive dialectics between power as a strategy exercised upon the body, not simply in the uni-directional manner of oppressor versus oppressed, but as a force which also “invests” the dominated, is extended and transmitted by them as it resists its domination, can clearly be seen in the constructions of the eunuch’s body.

On the one hand, the body of the eunuch functioned as site of loss and deficiency. His inflicted incapacity to procreate within a “one-sex” ideology (cf. Laquer 1990) where reproductivity was promoted and hailed as necessary requirement for sustaining the social body and for signifying successful manhood, turned him into an alien thing, a commodity, an object. The eunuch occupied a position of what Drew Leder termed “social disappearance.” Being in the impotent state of “I-no-longer-can,” the eunuch could be seen as a dysfunctional body (1990, 81, 84, 87, 89) especially in the case of post-puberty eunucism. Where castration was self-inflicted, it signified a deliberate opting out, a deliberate move from a position endowed with masculine capacity. The modality changed from “I can” to “I will not” or to “I do not want to”... and that despite the privilege of masculinity assigned by a one-sex paradigm.

It was probably for this reason that the practice of eunucism was prohibited by Roman law from the time of Sulla (Rouselle 1988, 126; Gardner 1998, 145; see Hester, footnote 12); as a matter of fact, it was exactly the possibility of a dysfunctional penis which made the complete or partial removal of genitals problematic (cf. Gardner 1998, 137). It was the dysfunctional body which turned eunuchs into what was especially associated with discourses depicting the “others,” such as the barbarians (the Persians from the perspective of the Greeks), or also with discourses related to femininity. Dysfunctionality relegates to the sphere of the outsider, to that which is impure or dirty. Gleason (1995, 132-137) provides with an example referring to the debate between Bagoas (suspected of eunucism) and Diocles on the candidacy for a chair in philosophy in Athens. Whether a eunuch is fit for teaching philosophy to the young in Athens became an issue and the matter is problematised by referring to the eunuch’s transgression and confusion of gender categories. Diocles insists that eunuchs also be excluded from all public places and bases

<sup>9</sup> See in this regard Gleason’s discussion of the Phaedrus fable in which the underlying competitive structure of the Graeco-Roman world which generated so many of their practices can be seen. In this instance it is suggested that a *cinaedus* can not even be ‘worthy’ of a particular crime, and it became an almost mental impossibility to think that he could have committed this crime!

his argument on their transgression of gender categories. They are “monstrosities outside the pale of human nature” (Gleason 1995, 133; see Hester especially in paragraph 2). The regulatory body required a particular physicality for its “regulators,” of which the roles of philosophers and teachers would have constituted relevant categories. The physiological disfunctionality of the eunuch’s body, its unstructuredness did not allow for the social mandate of structuring or regulating the young (see Gleason 1995, 137).

On the other hand, there was also another dimension in which the body of the eunuch was embedded and references to this pervade Hester’s essay and may perhaps account for the saying of Jesus in Matt 19. This dimension may be understood when the notion of the regulatory body is taken into account, because it appears to have sprouted from an almost untouchable fixity concerning the constitution of manhood. What pervaded varieties of masculinities, differentiated in terms of empowerment on the social hierarchy, was the notion of male superiority. Foxhall (1998, 4) writes: “The logic of power and its reproduction, entangled as it is with some fundamental, generally agreed concept of maleness (itself culturally specific and not necessarily agreed in all times and places), suggests that within any specific context relative hierarchies will be constructed on the principle of male superiority.” Even male slaves or bandits “were still men, not women” (5) and the same can be said of those with “physical damage or disability,” with different sexual orientation – they “remained men, not women in terms of political hierarchies and social relations of power” (5). Graeco-Roman society was indeed a society modelled on male sexuality; on the basis of what passed for male genitals, public and private rights were assigned to males, expressed in the notion of *potestas* (Gardner 1998, 147).

### Specific Rhetorical Approaches

Robbins, Jeal, Wanamaker and Coetzee followed specific rhetorical approaches. Using more recent developments of the socio-rhetorical approach which Robbins has brought into the world of New Testament scholarship, he illustrates the interaction between bodies and spatiality. A different body politics inverts the traditional roles and functions in the Jerusalem Temple. A correlation existed between boundaries drawn by holy locations and boundaries drawn around bodies. Movements of bodies in and out of holy locations, create different configurations of meaning, eventually changing and “democratising” ideologically restricted space.

Wanamaker uses socio-rhetorical criticism in his reading of 1 Cor 7:1-5. Whether one agrees with the view that Paul argued for the maintenance of marital relations or not, Wanamaker also shows to what extent the problematisation of sexual relations functioned as the discursive setting against which Paul conducted his argument.

Coetzee avails himself of Lakoff and Johnson’s philosophy of the body, in which the body is seen as our source for the creation of meaning, and in which the metaphor functions as the bodily based organising principle. Taking the “bodily image schema of containment” as his point of departure, he shows how the notion of “containment” was culturally embedded and illustrates the role it plays in both the narrated experiences of Jonah as well as in the style of the book of Jonah.

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