

WHERE COULD RHETORICAL CRITICISM (STILL) TAKE US?

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Abstract

This article reflects upon the growth of the method known as rhetorical criticism of the New Testament in the decade since the publication of Wilhelm Wuellner's seminal article, 'Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?' It seeks to address a lack of methodological depth and variety among practitioners of this burgeoning method. The intention is to make critics aware of the plethora of approaches available to them in the literature of rhetorical studies, to offer important examples of each approach, reflect upon their potentially important implications for the study of the New Testament.

1. Introduction

It has been 10 years since Wilhelm Wuellner published his seminal article, 'Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?'¹ Flush with the promise of a fundamental transformation of New Testament interpretation, Wuellner laid before our eyes the new world of rhetorical criticism. He offered us an awesome array of theoretical and methodological insights focusing upon the dimensions of biblical and interpretive power. It set the stage for a potentially remarkable explosion of new methodologies, theoretics and analytics coming to the fore in the discursive strategies of biblical studies as an academic discipline.

For whatever reason, the actors never showed up, the play never opened. Instead, following the lead of Hans Dieter Betz and George Kennedy, article after article, dissertation after dissertation produced in the decade that followed was witness to a slow consolidation of a now nearly universal paradigm of rhetorical-critical interpretation. Antiquarian in aspect (only the handbooks and textbooks of the 2nd century BCE to 2nd century CE are consulted), synthetic in approach (no distinction between Platonic, Gorgianic, Ciceronian, Aristotelian, Isocratean rhetorical theories is made, but all are meshed together and drawn from randomly), tropological in focus (concentration is made overwhelmingly upon arrangement and stylistics, with recourse to the three genres of forensic, epideictic, and deliberative), the new rhetorical criticism has become simply a tool for historical criticism, foregoing altogether its mandate to become a critical analytics.

In contrast, rhetoric and communication departments across the country are generating a plethora of methods and approaches to texts, each of which seeks to

1 Wilhelm Wuellner, 'Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49/3 (1987), p. 448-463.

highlight a particularly unique argumentative or persuasive dynamic through its focus. The overwhelming variety of approaches offers us at least two insights:

- 1) in comparison, the general circumstances of New Testament rhetorical criticism seem underdeveloped and the myriad of possibilities left unexplored;
- 2) as rhetorical critics, awareness of the larger disciplinary context of our method invites us to become conversant with the variety possible approaches that seek to bring about an awareness of the rhetorical dimensions of a text.

It is with these two insights in mind that I wish to present here, in an admittedly limited and incomplete fashion, at least some of the many approaches available to rhetorical critics of the New Testament, approaches currently being practiced by our colleagues in the broader disciplinary field. I offer this survey with the aim of introducing biblical rhetorical critics to the potential of any of these methods to further our understanding and interpretation of the New Testament, but also make suggestive remarks concerning the ways in which new disciplinary practices and methodological foci can be introduced. I include extensive, but not exhaustive, references in case one of these approaches interests a scholar, who might then wish to pursue it further.

2. Rhetorical Criticisms

It is not my intention to lay out a history, of whatever scope and detail, of rhetoric, not even of those movements and developments of the past 50 years giving rise to the contemporary 'state of the Art'. Neither is it my intention to be at all exhaustive in laying out the critical methods, in summarizing the important theories and philosophies, nor in developing a taxonomy of kinds of paradigmata clamoring for attention in the field. Instead, I wish merely to give a selective sample of representative approaches to rhetoric that constitute, perhaps, the more important movements within the field. In other words, the intention here is not to develop a full elaboration of methods, but to awaken an awareness of the myriad directions being taken by rhetorical critics, to develop a sense of the breadth, the variety, and at least some of the fullness of the philosophical, theoretical and analytical explorations being generated in the remarkable resuscitation of the once and future 'queen of the humanities'.

I will touch upon the following major approaches practiced within rhetorical critical studies-at-large: Genre, social-movements, fantasy-theme, socio-linguistics, metaphor, narrative, argumentation, feminist, critical rhetorics and the rhetoric of inquiry. Each approach is defined and outlined, its major methodological are features touched upon, and its potential impact upon rhetorical critical approaches to the Bible is explored.²

Genre Approach

Perhaps the most familiar to biblical rhetorical and literary critics, the modern foundations for the genre approach in rhetoric were laid by Edwin Black in his

2 The following classifications are an amalgamation of taxonomies drawn from Bernard L. Brock, Robert L. Scott and James W. Chesebro, eds., *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth-Century Perspective* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989) and Sandra K. Foss, ed., *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1989).

critique of the adequacy of Aristotelian rhetorical genres.³ Breaking open the field beyond the traditional classifications of *forensic* (guilt or innocence; courtroom), *epideictic* (praise or blame; public games) and *deliberative* (expedient or inexpedient; assembly), critics have gone on to explore the function and identify the characteristics of a wide variety of genres on the basis of the assumption that 'certain types of situations provoke similar needs and expectations among audiences and thus call for particular kinds of rhetoric.'⁴ Thus, the genre approach in rhetorical criticism emphasizes the 'panoramic' in relation to the 'unique', the 'plural' in relation to the 'singular'. Typically, analysis that focuses on genre considers the relationship between social reality and rhetorical act: as conventionalized patterns of response, genres reflect cultural attitudes, beliefs and values giving shape to discourse. As such, genres can also become the touchstone by which to identify unique features of specific rhetorical acts taking place within similar circumstances, thus potentially signaling the development, growth, alteration(s) and decay of genre forms, the presence of significant sub-genres, as well as the mutations that can occur as a result of mixing genres.

The genre approach to rhetorical discourse functions both inductively and deductively: inductively, the collection of rhetorical acts given under similar circumstances can lead the critic to the identification of significant forms that are then used to define the characteristic traits of a genre. Here, not just circumstances of performance, but rhetorical features themselves are important for consideration. Deductively, these characteristics can then be used to identify the classification of a particular rhetorical act, or the similarity of circumstances can be used to anticipate the presence of certain genres of discourse in the particular situation encountered. Finally, the notion of 'anticipation' can also be used critically to compare and judge specific rhetorical performances in light of audience expectations. For example, the presence or absence of expected characteristic traits generates certain impacts upon the audience, and thus participates in the success or failure of a given rhetorical act to meet at least minimal expectations (this is the event of 'speaking out of turn' or 'inappropriately').⁵

Genre approach is quite familiar to biblical scholars who pursue the question of identification, and hence the 'overarching' argumentative intention and

3 Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

4 Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 111.

5 For representative examples of genre criticism, c.f., e.g.: Thomas M. Conley, 'Ancient Rhetoric and Modern Genre Criticism,' *Communication Quarterly* 37/4 (1979), p. 47–53. Walter R. Fisher, 'Genre: Concepts and Applications in Rhetorical Criticism,' *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44/4 (1980), p. 288–299. Jackson Harrell and Will A. Linkugel, 'On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective,' *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 2/4 (1978), p. 262–281. Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, eds., *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action* (Falls Church, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1978); Jamieson, 'Generic Constraints and the Rhetorical Situation,' *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 6/3 (1973), p. 162–170; and Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, 'Rhetorical Hybrids: Fusions of Generic Elements,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68/2 (1982), p. 146–157. Carolyn R. Miller, 'Genre as Social Action,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70/2 (1984), p. 151–167. Herbert Simons, 'Genres, Rules, and Collective Rhetorics: Applying the Requirements-Problems-Strategies Approach,' *Communication Quarterly* 30/3 (1982), p. 181–188; Simons and Aram A. Aghazarian, eds., *Form, Genre, and the Study of Political Discourse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986).

rhetorical situation of primarily the epistles of Paul [Hans Dieter Betz, Margaret Mitchell, James Hestér, Wilhelm Wuellner], but also Peter/Jude [Duane Watson] and Revelation [Elisabeth Schuessler Fiorenza]. It is also pursued by those wishing to identify the generic traditions of Mediterranean narrative literature (histories, biographies, romances and popular novels) in an effort to discern both first-century audience expectations and unique transformations of these traditions offered by the gospel authors [Mary Ann Tolbert].

Unfortunately, except in the case of gospel studies, the identification of possible generic *hybrids* is not often pursued, and the reason for its pursuit in gospel genre identification is due primarily to the lack of common parallels in the extant literature. In a recently published article,⁶ I suggested that in contrast to the traditional classifications of 1 Corinthians as either deliberative or forensic it should be seen as a hybrid of forms whose primary function could best be described as educational. Thus, we see deliberative-epideictic and forensic-epideictic constructions in the argumentative trajectory of the letter, constructions unique in epistolography and ancient rhetorical theory. An awareness of hybrid genres would provide an important corrective to current rhetoric-critical analyses.

Finally, no work at all has been done in New Testament rhetorical criticism that takes seriously the multiplicity of intentionalities, i.e., the role that audiences *throughout time and in different cultures* play in the reception of the text. While it may be of interest to the historian to explore first century Mediterranean literature for generic traditions from which New Testament authors drew their eventual formulations and in which they clothed their works, it would be of some interest to ponder the anachronistic identification of 'genre' with respect to the modern reception of the biblical text as *religious canon*. That is to say, 'genre' research in biblical studies could be used to pursue the impact of the Bible as cultural tradition and societal norm upon contemporary argumentation and literature. This would be particularly important with respect to the developing political and social situation of South Africa, where these changing contexts bring about fundamental stresses upon the adaptation and application of genre to Biblical interpretation.

*Social-Movements Approach*⁷

Rhetorical critics originally concentrated their analytical efforts on the impact of individual speakers and speeches upon a specific audience at a specific point in time, limiting rhetoric's interest to critique of single performances. With the rise of the genre approach, a bigger picture came into view that allowed rhetoric to consider the similarity of argumentative forms over time and given shape by social and cultural factors and expectation. Eventually, the efforts of Leland M. Griffin⁸ led critics to ponder not the traditions of the dominant class or culture,

6 James D. Hester, 'Re-discovering and Re-inventing Rhetoric,' *Journal for the Study of Theology in South Africa* 50 (July 1994), 1-40.

7 The following is a summary of the social movements approach as identified and described in Brock, Scott and Chesebro, *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 219-295.

8 Leland M. Griffin, 'The Rhetoric of Historical Movements,' in: *A History and Criticism of American Public Address*, vol. 1, W. Norwood Brigance, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1943); Griffin, 'The Rhetorical Structure of the 'New Left' Movement, Part I,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 50/2 (1964), p. 113-135; Griffin, 'A Dramatistic Theory of the Rhetoric of Movements,'

but the rhetorical patterns employed by counterculture movements seeking to disrupt and transform the dominant culture. Rhetoricians take note of the *topoi* frequently employed in argumentative strategies, the dramatist emphases and rhetorical visions that a given movement uses in order to enlist supporters, defy the larger culture, codify and solidify their boundaries, and eventually culminate in either institutionalization and absorption into the dominant systems of power on the one hand, or disintegration and/or destruction on the other. While interest in sociological theory and a leadership-oriented analysis of movements continues to play a role in the field,⁹ it is particularly the turn toward rhetorical models and their usefulness in describing stages of argumentative development that is the distinguishing characteristic of this approach,¹⁰ some even arguing that it is the rhetorical construction itself that gives a movement its identifying characteristic and impetus.¹¹

New Testament critics can and have (in the case of Burton Mack, *par excellence*) made efforts similar in scope and intention to those of the social-movements critics, noting stages of social development of early Christian movements as witnessed by changes in rhetorical stance taken *vis-à-vis* not only a given culture (whether 'Hellenism', Palestinian Judaism, Roman imperialism, etc.), social classes and systems, etc., but other religious and social movements as well. More could be done, especially with respect to the transformation of Christianity from a countercultural movement to a dominant socio-political apparatus and the shifts in rhetorical tone, argumentative strategies, values and presumptions that evolved as a result. Such, for example, could be also be seen in 1 Corinthians, where continuing group-identity developments, relationship between group and society, controversy over leadership roles and functions, all testify to an important shift in the movements identity. Indeed, setting 1 Corinthians in the development of the Pauline corpus from 1 Thessalonians through Romans would provide us with important material concerning the rhetoric of Paul's missionary movement and his continuing struggle to learn and adapt his practical ministerial responses not simply to theological issues, but also to significant group developments as the movement (and his own ministry)

in: *Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke*, William H. Rueckert, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969).

- 9 Herbert W. Simons, 'Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56/1 (1970).
- 10 For representative examples of the social movements approach, c.f., e.g.: James W. Chesebro and Caroline D. Hamsher, *Orientations to Public Communication* (Chicago: Science Research Association, 1976), p. 17–29. Dan F. Hahn and Ruth M. Gonchar, 'Studying Social Movements: A Rhetorical Methodology,' *Speech Teacher* 20/1 (1971), p. 44–52. Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede, *The Rhetoric of Black Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Martha Solomon, 'The Rhetoric of STOP ERA: Fatalistic Reaffirmation,' *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 44/1 (1978), p. 42–59; Solomon, 'Redemptive Rhetoric: The Continuity Motif in the Rhetoric of the Right to Life,' *Central States Speech Journal* 31/1 (1980), p. 52–62. Philip C. Wander, 'The Savage Child: the Image of the Negro in Pro-Slavery Movement,' *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 37/4 (1972), p. 335–360. Bruce T. Zortman, 'The Theatre of Ideology in Nazi Germany,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 57/2 (1979), p. 153–161.
- 11 Robert S. Cathcart, 'New Approaches to the Study of Movements: Defining Movements Rhetorically,' *Western Speech* 36/2 (1972). Cf. responses offered by Ralph R. Smith and Russel R. Windes, 'The Innovational Movement: A Rhetorical Theory,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61/2 (1975), p. 140–153.

matures. Additionally, much can be learned if rhetors conceive of the canonical process from Paul to the Gospels, the Petrine tradition, the letters to Timothy and Titus, and eventually Revelations as an aspect of social rhetoric, rather than synthesisist theology.

But the social-movements approach to biblical texts and traditions should not be limited to this particular era of history. Rhetorical critics of the Bible could turn their critical gaze to the rhetoric of Christian social movements of *all* eras and in a variety of cultures: from the Protestant Reformation, to the Evangelical Empire of early American history, to missionary movements throughout the centuries, to millenarian movements, to the shift in certain South African congregations from apartheid-collaboration to post-apartheid theological reconstitution. The rhetorical appeal to biblical texts and traditions made by these, and other movements, is a fertile field of critical analysis waiting for the biblical rhetorical scholar to shed insight into the variety of interpretive approaches to the biblical text taken by these movements.

Fantasy-Theme Approach

Another approach interested in the social dimensions of the rhetorical dynamics helping to shape group identity and cohesion would be Ernest Bormann's fantasy-theme method. Initially developed by Robert Bales and his associates in their analysis of small group communicative dynamics and the process of group fantasizing or dramatizing,¹² Bales noted how '[t]he tempo of [a group's] conversation would pick up. People would grow excited, interrupt one another, blush, laugh, forget their self-consciousness. The tone of [a] meeting, often quiet and tense immediately prior to the dramatizing, would become lively animated, and boisterous, the chaining process, involving both verbal and nonverbal communication, indicating participation in the drama.'¹³ What would be encountered in these phenomena would be the convergence of symbols into a shared narrated reality in which 'characters, real or fictitious, [play] out a dramatic situation in a setting removed in time and space from the here-and-now transactions of the group...A member dramatizes a theme that catches the group and causes it to chain out because it hits a common psychodynamic chord or hidden agenda item or their common difficulties *vis-à-vis* the natural environment, the socio-political systems, or the economic structures.'¹⁴

Bormann elaborated Bales' observations into a theory of *symbolic convergence* that could be extended to include social movements, political campaigns, popular fiction, religious movements, etc.¹⁵ Analysis of *fantasy*

12 Ernest Bormann, 'Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58/4 (1972), p. 396-407; Bormann, 'Fetching Good out of Evil: a Rhetorical Use of Calamity,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63/2 (1977), p. 130-139; Bormann, 'Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Communication Formulation,' *Journal of Communication* 35 (1985), p. 128-138; Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy: Restoring the American Dream* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985). Cf. Robert Bales, *Personality and Interpersonal Behavior* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1970).

13 Bormann, 'Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision,' p. 397.

14 Bormann, 'Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision,' p. 397, 399.

15 Cf., e.g.: John F. Cragan and Donald C. Shields, *Applied Communication Research: A Dramatistic Approach* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1981). Carl Hensley, 'Rhetorical Vision and the Persuasion of a Historical Movement: The Disciples of Christ in Nineteenth

themes centers on identification of settings (from specific locations to general circumstances), characterizations (the presence of specific heroes and villains, or of hero-types and villain-types), and plotlines. A fantasy theme is 'a story that accounts for the group's experience and that *is* the reality of the participants.'¹⁶ If similar scenarios, characters or actions are found to be shared among various fantasy themes to which a group refers, then a *fantasy type* is formed. Fantasy types play an important role in the development and reinforcement of 'community', of 'common-ground', hence are the foundation for argumentation. Often, a group or movement can refer to the fantasy type as a kind of argumentative 'shorthand', the presumption being that members can elaborate for themselves a full scenario (e.g. the 'remnant' or 'elect' in fundamentalist rhetoric). Fantasy types can also be used to help adjust members of the group or movement to encounters with the unfamiliar.

Often, the development of fantasy themes can lead to a shared *rhetorical vision* that provides a coherent interpretation of reality for those subscribing to the terms of the drama. The resulting rhetorical community shares as its motivating foundation this unifying vision (e.g., the motivation for evangelization and proselytizing in fundamentalist movement being the shared rhetorical vision comprised of apocalyptic fantasy themes). Hence, when rhetorical analysts focus upon the role of fantasy themes, they are digging into the motives at work in undergirding rhetorical performances. These motives, however, are not internal psychological states, but are at work in the communicative expression itself, eventually becoming 'embedded in the drama of the fantasy themes that generated and serve to sustain them.'¹⁷

Once again, the potential insight that this approach could bring to the study of early Christian origins could prove fruitful. Indeed, it could well be argued that the early Christian message(s) developed by the various communities (Palestinian Jesus movements, Q communities, family of Jesus, missionary movements, Thomas, etc.) is nothing other than the experimental development of fantasy themes, through to fantasy types, eventually culminating in a variety of rhetorical visions all working to generate meaning and develop group cohesion and identification. Again, 1 Corinthians, especially in chapter 15, could be fruitfully approached as an effort on the part of Paul to build upon earlier fantasy themes in order to present a coherent rhetorical vision, particularly in the face of a fundamentally different understanding of 'resurrection' functioning as rhetorical vision for the community up to the time of the composition of the letter.

But one need not stop there: the rhetorical critic of the Bible who employs the fantasy theme approach could extend the focus of her critical gaze to include not only the variety of fantasy themes and rhetorical visions of these early movements, but also note the development of fantasy types and new rhetorical visions that arose/arise as a result of the continual encounter throughout history

Century American Culture,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61/3 (1975), p. 250–264. Becky Swanson Kroll, 'From Small Group to Public View: Mainstreaming the Women's Movement,' *Communication Quarterly* 31 (1983), p. 139–147. Donald C. Shields, 'The White House Transcripts: Group Fantasy Events Concerning the Mass Media,' *Central States Speech Journal* 27/4 (1974), p. 272–279.

16 Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 290.

17 Bormann, '*Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision*,' p. 406.

of Christians with other cultures, under oppressive regimes, while consolidating political power, through sectarian fragmentation, etc. The same, of course, could also be done with respect to the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic literature (Mishna, Talmud) and Jewish history. Indeed, as South African congregations face a post-apartheid society confronting numerous challenges regarding the redistribution of power and wealth, the biblical rhetorical critic is in the unique position of watching Christians reconstruct whole new fantasy worlds and rhetorical visions based on re-encountering Biblical traditions.

*Sociolinguistics Approach*¹⁸

The 'study of the relationship of language to society' is an intentionally broad classification of methods that takes as its starting point the presumptions that 'symbols - and the society that invents, promulgates, and sanctions them - are determinative of any individual's perception or apprehension of the world, attitudes, values, and behaviors,' and that 'humans are born into, nurtured by, and in large measure controlled through a series of symbolic environments.'¹⁹ Brock, Scott and Chesebro would classify 'any critical application as sociolinguistic if

1. it examines the relationship between language and society;
2. the stress falls on the language itself as the starting point of analysis; and
3. the critic sees language as embodying action, not simply reflecting, presenting or pointing toward action.' This would include efforts drawing not only from ethnographic explorations into communication,²⁰ but also the works of media critics, the General Semanticists,²¹ the Platonic Idealism of Richard Weaver,²²

18 R. A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980). William Labov, *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973); Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973). Stanley L. Deetz, 'Words with Things: Toward a Social Phenomenology of Language,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59/1 (1973).

19 Bruce E. Gronbeck, 'The Rhetoric of Political Corruption: Sociolinguistic, Dialectical, and Ceremonial Processes,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64/2 (1978), p. 155-172: 157-158. Also quoted in Brock *et al*, *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 283.

20 Cf., e.g., Dell Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974); Hymes, 'Toward Ethnographies of Communication: The Analysis of Communicative Events,' in: *Language and Social Context*, Pier Paolo Giglioli, ed. (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 21-44; Hymes, 'On Communicative Competence,' in: *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings*, J. B. Pride and Janet Holmes, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973). Cf. also Gerry Philipsen, *Speaking Culturally: Explorations in Social Communication* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992).

21 Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity* (Lakewood, CT: Institute of General Semantics, 1933). S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964). Irving J. Lee, 'Four Ways of Looking at a Speech,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 28/2 (1942), p. 148-155; Lee, 'General Semantics,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38/1 (1952), p. 1-12.

22 Richard Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948); Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1965); Weaver, 'Language is Sermonic,' in: *Dimensions of Rhetorical Scholarship*, Roger E. Nebergall, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Department of Speech, 1963). Cf. also Richard L. Johannesen, Rennard Strickland, and Ralph T. Eubanks, eds., *Language Is Sermonic: Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970).

Speech-Act Theory of Austin and Searle,²³ the Construction Grammar of Fillmore,²⁴ and explorations into gendered communication.²⁵ The glue that holds this approach together includes:

- a. the focus upon the situation-specific performance that sets language-activity in relief against the broader social ('institutional') 'context' of language,
- b. the rule-governed and goal-oriented 'intentionality' of the performers engaged in the linguistic 'symbolic activity', and
- c. notion that language exhibits propositional, expressive and consequential force, thereby acquiring meaning through its force as 'intention' and 'effect'.²⁶

There is much potential here for the biblical rhetorical critic to explore: South African scholars are picking up on the advances of semantics in their efforts in biblical translation. Wilhelm Wuellner has explored aspects of speech-act theory and deixis and their implications for rhetorical interpretation of the Bible. Construction grammar has been explicitly employed by Paul Danove in his exploration of the rhetorical effects of the ending of Mark's gospel. Ethnography holds promise to bring us insight into the cultural presumptions and 'contexts' of biblical persuasion.

Of course, the 'relationship between language and society' extends itself beyond *koine*, Hebrew and Aramaic of the biblical text to the impact of

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- 23 John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). Paul N. Campbell, 'A Rhetorical View of Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59/3 (1973), p. 284–296.
 - 24 Charles J. Fillmore, 'Frame Semantics and the Nature of Language,' *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Conference on the Origin and Development of Language and Speech* 280 (1976), p. 20–32; Fillmore, 'Grammatical Construction Theory and the Familiar Dichotomies,' *Language Processing in Social Context*, R. Dietrich and C. F. Graumann, eds. (North Holland: Elsevier Publishers, 1989); Fillmore, 'Lexical Semantics and Text Semantics,' in: *New Directions in Linguistics and Semiotics*, James E. Copeland, ed. (Houston: Rice University, 1984); Fillmore, 'The Mechanisms of Construction Grammar,' in: *Papers from the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (1985), p. 35–55; Fillmore, 'The Need for Frame Semantics Within Linguistics,' *Statistical Methods in Linguistics* (1976), p. 5–29; Fillmore, *On Grammatical Constructions* (not published, 1987. For an application of Construction Grammar on a biblical text, cf. Paul Danove, *Mark: A Failed Story But A Successful Plot*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1991).
 - 25 Kathryn Carter and Carole Spitzack, eds., *Doing Research on Women's Communication: Perspectives on Theory and Method* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1989). Anne Campbell, *Men, Women, and Aggression* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language* (New York: Longman, 1993; 2nd ed.).
 - 26 Cf. Frenz and Farrell, 'Language Action,' p. 342. For a select sample of representative works of sociolinguistic approach to rhetorical-critical analysis, c.f., e.g.: Thomas S. Frenz and Thomas B. Farrell, 'Language-Action: A Paradigm for Communication,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62/4 (1976), p. 333–349.; Frenz, 'Rhetorical Conversation, Time, and Moral Action,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71/1 (1985), p. 1–18. Darryl Hattenhauer, 'The Rhetoric of Architecture: A Semiotic Approach,' *Communication Quarterly* 32/1 (1984), p. 71–77. Robert E. Sanders, 'Utterances, Actions, and Rhetorical Inquiry,' *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 9/2 (1978), p. 114–133. Karl R. Wallace, *Understanding Discourse: The Speech Act and Rhetorical Action* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970).

translations and their implicit cultural assumptions that have transformed the biblical text in history and throughout (multi-)cultural space. It also understands the 'situation-specific' performance of a language-act as occurring not just the first time a gospel or letter was spoken, but also the second, third, thousandth, millionth: every time the 'text' is encountered, multiple intentionalities and varying social, cultural and historical circumstances impact upon the 'propositional, expressive and consequential' forces that occur in the communicative event.

Metaphor Approach

Another prominent approach in rhetorical criticism is the exploration into the argumentative dynamics and function of metaphors. Rather than viewing metaphor as a stylistic device or figurative use of language, recent theorists of metaphor, most prominently in the field of rhetoric I. A. Richards,²⁷ have suggested that metaphor is the very foundation of language and knowledge.²⁸ The subject-object split of modernism gives way to a theory of epistemology that suggests language is a determinative force in the construction of ontology. Reality is known and constructed through the language that is used to describe it. This is the idea of metaphor as 'master trope', as opposed to 'rhetorical figure'. As Sonja K. Foss has so succinctly put it:

Metaphor is a basic way by which the process of using symbols to know reality occurs. Whatever language we select as the means through which to view reality, it treats that portion of reality *as* something, thus creating it and making it an object of experience for us. Reality, then, is simply the world as seen from a particular description or language; it is whatever we describe it *as*. Whatever vocabulary or language we use to describe reality is a metaphor because it enables us to see reality *as* something. Phenomena in the world become objects of reality or knowledge only because of the symbols/metaphors that make them accessible to us.²⁹

Critics who focus their analysis upon the role of metaphor in communication understand the metaphor as constructing reality through the selection of terminology, as a structuring principle that creates a 'point of view' thereby effecting our perception of events and circumstances around us. Metaphors thereby also prescribe the ways in which we respond to and/or act upon that 'reality'. As such, metaphors serve to *consecrate* the implicit ideological

27 I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936).

28 For a summary of the history of the concept of metaphor, cf., e.g., Michael Osborn, 'The Evolution of the Theory of Metaphor in Rhetoric,' *Western Speech* 31 (1967), p. 121–131, and Mark Johnson, 'Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition,' in: *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, Mark Johnson, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 3–47. For explorations into the generative function of metaphor in language and argumentation, cf. Michael Osborn and Douglas Ehninger, 'The Metaphor in Public Address,' *Speech Monographs* 29/3 (1962), p. 223–234; Osborn, 'Archetypal Metaphor in Rhetoric: The Light-Dark Family,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53/2 (1967), p. 115–126; Osborn, 'The Evolution of the Theory of Metaphor in Rhetoric,' *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 31/2 (1967), p. 121–131. Cf. also, Group μ, *A General Rhetoric*, Paul B. Burrell and Edgar M. Slotkin, trans. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

29 Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*, p. 188.

relations at work in this description-prescription dynamic.³⁰ Analysis of the function of metaphor in discourse, therefore, is analysis into the ideological dimensions of argumentation: metaphors are not stylistic devices serving to further argumentation, but *constitute* a form of argumentation by employing implicit and covert values and presumptions that serve as foundation for a given perspective or position.

Of course metaphors are subject to 'erosion', eventually becoming 'dormant' and thereby losing their originally active, persuasive force. Nevertheless, while Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca assert that 'the value of the dormant metaphor in argument is so great mainly on account of the great persuasive force it exerts when, with the help of an appropriate technique, it is *reactivated*,'³¹ it might also be suggested that dormant metaphors, precisely because they are dormant, are an insidious force in argumentation: they are 'naturalized' participants in the enforcement of an unquestioned perspective. Metaphors derive part of their force, at least, by being 'overlooked'. Metaphor criticism, therefore, not only concerns itself with the function of 'active' metaphors, but also considers the implications of those that have lost their dynamic function.³²

Since reference to the divine is fraught with metaphor, as there is by definition no other way by which the supernatural might be expressed in limitations of natural language, it is of no surprise to see a plethora of metaphors available for rhetorical analysis throughout the biblical text. 'Kingdom of god', 'son of man', 'Christ', 'new creation', 'new Jerusalem', 'second Adam', 'Abba', 'Wisdom', 'Lamb of god', apocalyptic imagery, even 'god/YHWH': all of these (and many, many others in the Hebrew Bible, apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, New Testament, 'gnostic' literature, etc. and other extra-canonical literature) are no longer the exclusive domain of the theologian to explore in her effort to develop a systematic definitional 'content' to a given metaphor, but can be fruitfully engaged through the distinctively *argumentative* perspective that rhetoric can bring to metaphor research. For example, we see in 1 Corinthians an effort on Paul's part to redefine and clarify, through dissociative argumentation, the metaphors of the 'cross' and 'wisdom' over against this congregation's reception of them from his earlier teaching. His effort is a difficult one, since it is in response to his own previous formulations which he believes have been misunderstood and wrongly adopted, but which could also be seen as entirely possible adaptations whose aspects are in conflict with Paul because they were entirely overlooked by him earlier.

Additionally, this approach can note the changes of argumentative effect, 'intention' and persuasive 'content' of a metaphor throughout time and in the

30 Cf. Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), and Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, p. 398–410.

31 Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, p. 405.

32 For other examples of metaphor criticism, cf., e.g.: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Michael Leff, 'I. Topical Invention and Metaphoric Interaction,' *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 48 (1983), p. 214–229. Andrew Ortony, ed., *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). William Foster Owen, 'Thematic Metaphors in Relational Communication: A Conceptual Framework,' *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 49 (1985), p. 1–13. Herman G. Stelzner, 'Analysis by Metaphor,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 51 (1965), p. 52–61.

variety of rhetorical and argumentative contexts in which a given metaphor might be found. How, for example, is the metaphor of 'neighbor', undergoing argumentative representation in South Africa today?

Narrative Approach

Although Aristotle and Quintilian wrote about narration, it was only in the past two or three decades that a modern interest in the rhetorical function and nature of narrative has arisen. One of the most influential advocates of the narrative approach, Walter Fisher³³ has described its presuppositions as follows:

1. Humans are essentially storytellers.
2. The paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is 'good reasons' which vary in form among situations, genres, and media of communication.
3. The production and practice of good reasons are ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character...
4. Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings - their inherent awareness of *narrative probability*, what constitutes a coherent story, add their constant habit of testing *narrative fidelity*, whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives...
5. The world as we know it is a set of stories that must be chosen among in order for us to live life in a process of continual re-creation.³⁴

The purpose of any narrative approach is to analyze the particularly unique aspects of the argumentative function and impact of narrative (as opposed to logical) reasoning within a rhetoric act.³⁵ By this is not meant that the narrative paradigm limits itself strictly to examples of narrative discourse, but as a 'metaparadigm' it insists that any instance of discourse

...is always more than the individuated forms that may compose it. The central point here is that there is no genre, including technical communication, that is not an episode in the story of life (a part of the 'conversation') and is not itself constituted by *logos* and *mythos*. Put another way: Technical discourse is imbued with myth and metaphor, and aesthetic discourse has cognitive capacity and import. The narrative paradigm is

33 Walter R Fisher, 'Toward a Logic of Good Reason,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64/4 (1978), p. 376-843; Fisher, 'Narrative as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument,' *Communication Monographs* 61/1 (1984), p. 1-22; Fisher, 'The Narrative Paradigm: an Elaboration,' *Communication Monographs* 62/4 (1985), p. 347-367.

34 Walter R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987).

35 Cf., e.g.: *Journal of Communication* 35/4 (1985), p. 73-171, a dedicated symposium entitled, 'Homo Narrans: Story-Telling in Mass Culture and Everyday Life,' with articles by Walter R. Fisher, John Louis Lucaites and Celeste Michele Condit, Thomas B. Farrell, Ernest Bormann, Michael Calvin McGee and John S. Nelson, and W. Lance Bennett and Murray Edelman. William G. Kirkwood, 'Storytelling and Self-Confrontation: Parables as Communication Strategies,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69/1 (1983), p. 58-74. J. T. Marshman, 'The Use of Narrative in Speaking,' *Southern Speech Bulletin* 4/1 (1938), p. 1-6. Robert L. Scott, 'Narrative Theory and Communication Research,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70/2 (1984), p. 197-221.

designed, in part, to draw attention to these facts and provide a way of thinking that fully takes them into account.³⁶

In this way, the narrative approach to the biblical text would be more than an analysis of the rhetoric of the gospel story, more than identification of *narratio* in Pauline argumentation (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:11-12), but would fit these efforts into a broader framework of the biblical (and non-canonical) tradition as a whole and to the underlying myths and stories that constitute the basis of the worldview, presumptions, judgments and values at work in all forms of expression of the life of these communities. Hence, this approach would ponder the continuing story of the people and faith of Christianity and Judaism as they work their way through history, including the stories that shape the tradition but find their origin in the human experience of communities facing a radically uncertain future with hope and fear.

*Argumentation Theory*³⁷

Argumentation theory focuses upon this specific form of communication in order to understand the dynamics of discourse dedicated to reasoned appeal for conviction and/or persuasion to a particular point of view. Recent inquiry into the nature and function of the argumentation, and its subsequent impact upon rhetorical theory, can be traced to two sources: Stephen Toulmin³⁸ and Chaim Perelman/Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca.³⁹ Prior to their efforts, most argumentation theory was driven by formalist, *a priori* assumptions regarding the 'logical' foundations of reasoning, hence the *ac*ontextuality of argumentative form and the belief that Truth 'will out.' The study of argumentation was inherently prescriptive, i.e., it was constituted by 'an application of *a priori* criteria both in forensics pedagogy and in historical-critical studies of public discourse.'⁴⁰ With

36 Walter Fisher, 'The Narrative Paradigm: An Elaboration,' *Communication Monographs* 52 (1985), p. 347-367: 347.

37 For representative examples of argumentation theory, cf., e.g.: William Brandt, *The Rhetoric of Argumentation* (Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970). Trudy Govier, *A Practical Study of Argument* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985). G. Haarscher and L. Ingeber, eds. *Justice et argumentation: Essais a la memoire de Chaim Perelman* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Universite de Bruxelles, 1986). J. Kopperschmidt, 'Bibliographie zur Argumentationsforschung 1966-1978,' *Rhetorik* 1 (1980), p. 153-159; Kopperschmidt, 'Argumentationstheoretische Anfragen an die Rhetorik. Ein Rekonstruktionsversuch der antiken Rhetorik,' in: *Perspektiven der Rhetorik*, W. Haubrick, ed., *LiLi* 43/44 (1982), p. 44-65. Michel Meyer, *Meaning and Reading. A Philosophical Essay on Language and Literature* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1983); Meyer, *From Logic to Rhetoric* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1986). Maurice Natanson and Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., eds., *Philosophy, Rhetoric and Argumentation* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965). Frans H. Van Eemeren, *Handbook of Argumentation Theory: A Critical Survey of Classical Backgrounds and Modern Studies* (Dordrecht, Holland/Providence, USA: Foris Publications, 1987).

38 His major work is Steven Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

39 Their major work is, of course, Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Argumentation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

40 J. Robert Cox and Charles Arthur Willard, 'Introduction: The Field of Argumentation,' in: *Advances in Argumentation Theory and Research*, Cox and Willard, eds. (Carbondale/Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), p. xiii-xlvii: xxii. The following summary draws from this essay.

the rejection of this applied formalism came the rise of interest in empirical studies of reasoning, the role of the audience (and other social factors) in argumentation, and the recognition of the importance of 'values' and 'good reasons' in securing assent to propositions. Concomitant with the formalist rejection also came the fragmentation of the discipline into a myriad of theoretical and methodological forms and assumptions: can argumentation be distinguished as 'products' (hence, result, act, event) on the one hand, and 'processes' on the other (hence, interactive engagement)? Or is argumentation a 'procedure' (hence, constituted by set of rules or conventions of discourse determined by social context and participants in the activity of arguing)? Should the concept of argumentation instead be understood hermeneutically, i.e., as an interpretive perspective from which to analyze discursive means of securing adherence to a position, to engender or maintain belief, to incite (at least a willingness to) action? Answers to these questions have an impact on whether one views an argument as a social interaction (hence, the object of inquiry being the rules, roles, circumstances and results of social activity) or as individual cognitive activity (hence, the object of inquiry being psychological states of participants), or both (in a dialectical relationship).

A major focus in recent times has been upon the role of 'reasons' ('warrants', 'backings') and 'reasonability' in support of a proposition, with the question of what constitutes 'goodness' or 'validity' being described in terms of social constraints, shared beliefs, relevance, etc. The issue here isn't so much argumentation conceived as 'rationality' but as 'justification'. The question that arises at this point, however, is whether argumentation theory should be in the business of exploring justification as the normative end of the discipline, or whether its role is simply to be that of exploring justification as a phenomenon (as something that simply happens, hence as something that can be described). Hence, the troubling question of what constitutes 'persuasion' - 'good reasons' and reasonability, or persuasion and effectiveness.

For the most part, argumentation theory operates at the level of discourse, analyzing both explicit application of argumentative strategies and *topoi*, as well as implicit (underlying) assumptions and values. Its intention is to bring into focus nonformal aspects of reasoning that occur in everyday language and contexts, to reclaim the reasonability of the kinds of justifications offered for belief, conviction and action. As such, it rescues both nonformal reasoning from the blanket condemnation of 'irrationality' and rhetoric from reduction to stylistics.

As Burton Mack has correctly indicated,⁴¹ it was first and foremost the emphasis upon reasoning and the role of argumentation in discourse that transformed rhetoric into the viable discipline we have today. Biblical texts are now seen not as dogmatic proclamations of once-and-for-all 'Truth', but as experiments in persuasion seeking to find the most convincing way to engender conviction, to foster belief among real people confronting real issues under a variety of circumstances in which their faith was tested and strengthened. When consider 1 Corinthians not as a systematic presentation of theological and ethical declarations, but as a series of argumentative trajectories responding to a specific

41 Burton Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 15.

rhetorical situation, important insights into biblical authority and scriptural interpretation are offered [cf. esp. Wire and Fiorenza in this regard].

However, while it is an important part of the study of rhetoric to consider the intentionalities and (reconstructed) effects of argumentative discourse at the time of its original utterance and in the context of its immediate audience, this focus is only one part of a larger spectrum of the function of the 'text' as argumentation in time and through space. An approach to the Bible as argumentation must also confront the multiplicities of intentionalities (implied author, implied audience, actual audiences, critics, etc.) and the text's materiality as an act confronted every time the Bible is picked up and read, performed, depicted. As seen particularly in the congregations of South Africa, argumentation does not cease to be relevant once the original rhetorical situation has decayed, nor does its impact thereupon cease. An argumentation theory approach to the text can just as legitimately function to ponder the resonating 'contexts' that are generated by and through continuing encounters with the text and between the text and new socio-political circumstances.

Feminist Critical Rhetorics

Unfortunately, as with most critical discourse, the advances in rhetorical theory offered by feminist critical theorists in their reconstitution of the discipline and their questioning of inquiry's social location has been only recently and reluctantly noted. Nevertheless, the important works of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell,⁴² Jan Swearingen,⁴³ Karen Foss and Sonja K. Foss⁴⁴ in particular have generated an awareness of the necessity for rhetorical philosophers, theorists, historians, and critics to consider their blindness to the impact of the role of gender socialization not only upon communicative forms and expressions, but upon the whole discipline of rhetoric itself.⁴⁵ The issue that feminist rhetorical critics raise is not simply that women's works (histories, experiences, concerns) need to be addressed and analyzed,⁴⁶ but that gender socialization brings about

42 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, 'The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59/1 (1973), p. 74–86; Campbell, 'Stanton's 'The Solitude of Self': A Rationale for Feminism,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66/3 (1980), p. 304–12; Campbell, 'Style and Content in the Rhetoric of Early Afro-American Feminists,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72/4 (1986), p. 434–445; Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 2 vols. (New York/Westport, CT/London: Greenwood Press, 1989).

43 Jan Swearingen, *Rhetoric and Irony: Western Literacy and Western Lies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

44 Karen A. Foss and Sonja K. Foss, 'Incorporating the Feminist Perspective in Communication Scholarship: A Research Commentary,' in: *Doing Research on Women's Communication: Alternative Perspectives in Theory and Method*, Carol Spitzack and Kathryn Carter, eds. (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988). Foss and Foss, eds., *Women Speech: The Eloquence of Women's Lives* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1991).

45 *Communication Quarterly* 31/2 (1983), special volume entitled, 'Women and Communication: An Introduction to the Issues.' *Communication* 9/3–4 (1987), special volume entitled, 'Intersections of Power: Criticism-Television-Gender.' *Communication* 9/1 (1986), special volume entitled, 'Feminist Critiques of Popular Culture.' *Communication* 10/3–4 (1988), special volume entitled, 'Postmodernism/Marxism/Feminism.'

46 Barbara Bate and Anita Taylor, eds., *Women Communicating: Studies of Women's Talk* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988). Alice Donaldson, 'Women Emerge as Political Speakers,' *Speech Monographs* 18/1 (1951), p. 54–61. Sonja K. Foss, 'Equal Rights Amendment Controversy: Two Worlds in Conflict,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65/3 (1979). Ellen Reid Gold, 'The

important constraints that impact women's efforts at persuasion broadly conceived.⁴⁷ These constraints result in the adoption of different argumentative/communicative strategies that have been ignored in the development of rhetorical theories and canons.⁴⁸ They also result in different responses and strategies on the part of the audience,⁴⁹ as well as a critical recognition of the inherent limitations of the approaches at work within the theoretical elaborations and critical descriptions of rhetorical exchange.⁵⁰

Of course, feminist biblical critics have made a profound contribution to the field of biblical interpretation and are turning with greater frequency to rhetoric as an analytical means by which to make further inroads. Obvious, important contributions have been made by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Antoinette Wire not only to feminist historiography, but to biblical criticism and rhetorical methodology. I Corinthians has been a text profitably mined for insights into the role of women in early church structure, missionary movements and group practices. It has also provided an important arena for methodological reflection upon mainstream rhetorical-critical practices, particularly with respect to the overwhelming habit of rhetorical critics to adopt the rhetorical view and intentions of Paul as touchstone for understanding the circumstances of the Corinthian congregation. Much liberatory potential, as practice and interpretation, can and should be learned from feminist critical rhetorics.

Critical Rhetoric and the Rhetoric of Inquiry

Finally, rhetorical theoreticians, and even the humanities as a whole, are beginning to confront the potential impact of movements known as critical rhetoric⁵¹ and the rhetoric of inquiry.⁵² The initial impetus for the field of the

Grimke Sisters and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement,' *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 46/4 (1981), p. 341–360. Carol J. Jablonski, 'Rhetoric, Paradox, and the Movement for Women's Ordination in the Roman Catholic Church,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74/2 (1988), p. 164–183. Phyllis M. Japp, 'Ester or Isaiah? The Abolitionist-Feminist Rhetoric of Angelina Grimke,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71/3 (1983), p. 335–348. Doris G. Yoakam, 'Pioneer Women Orators of America,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 23/2 (1937), p. 251–259.

- 47 Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocino P. Schweickart, eds., *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). Cheri Kramer, 'Women's Speech: Separate but Unequal?' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60/1 (1974), p. 14–24. Lana F. Rakow, 'Gendered Technology, Gendered Practice,' *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5/1 (1988), p. 47–70.
- 48 Cf. Karen A. Foss and Sonja K. Foss, *Women Speak: The Eloquence of Women's Lives* (Prospect Heights, 1991).
- 49 Sandra E. Purnell, 'Rhetoric/Rape: Communication as Inducement to Assault,' *ACA Bulletin* 16/1 (1976). Julia T. Wood and Charles Conrad, 'Paradox in the Experiences of Professional Women,' *Western Speech* 47/4 (1983), p. 305–322.
- 50 Sally Miller Gearhart, 'The Womanization of Rhetoric,' *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2 (1979), p. 195–201. Carole J. Spitzack, 'Re-Thinking the Relationship Between Power, Expression, and Research Practices,' in: *Women and Communicative Power: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Carol Ann Valentine and Nancy Hoar, eds. (Tempe: Department of Communication, Arizona State University, n.d.).
- 51 Ian Angus and Lenore Langsdorf, eds., *The Critical Turn: Rhetoric and Philosophy in Postmodern Discourse* (Carbondale/Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993).
- 52 Cf. Herbert W. Simons, ed., *The Rhetorical Turn: Invention and Persuasion in the Conduct of Inquiry* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1990). Cf. also Herbert W. Simons, ed.,

rhetoric of inquiry was postmodern discussions concerning the critique of objectivism and empiricism and their foundationalist epistemological justifications/formulations, especially as these helped give shape to and justification for methodological procedures in the human sciences. Philosophers of rhetoric have joined in this argument by suggesting that fundamental to all understanding,⁵³ even fundamental to the existence of life itself,⁵⁴ is the unavoidable activity of rhetoric. By this they are asserting that the rhetorical activities known as 'presence', 'interest', 'motivation', 'interpretation', concern with 'audience' and 'presentation' are all prior to, or at least alongside of, every act of understanding, pursuit of knowledge and communication. Rhetoric of inquiry searches, therefore, for the implications of methodological assumptions on the formation of critical apparatuses of inquiry, for their justifications and the values to which these appeal. It ponders critical presentations and the presence of persuasive and motivational features therein. It considers the implicit role of values in the selection, interpretation, arrangement and presentation of evidence, 'data', 'facts' and 'truths'. Its field includes the human sciences of physics, biology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, but also politics, religion and philosophy. Its focus is not only on academic inquiry, but on expert and civic as well. And while its particular emphasis has tended to be directed at the deconstruction of objectivity,⁵⁵ hence potentially undermining its own conclusions as 'so much rhetoric' and 'just one more opinion', there are those who are beginning to fashion a notion that as a *critical* rhetoric, a rhetoric of inquiry participates in a practice 'that outlines for the subject the conditions of domination' thereby illuminating 'the possibilities of a new existence.'⁵⁶ As a critical rhetoric, a rhetoric of inquiry does not seek to become a totalizing discipline governing individual discourses, but attempts to recover plurality, clarifying the procedures of delimited discourses, at the same time keeping in check any attempt by philosophy, science, epistemology, hermeneutics, at subsuming these discourses under a grand narrative. Hence, as a critical rhetoric, a rhetoric of inquiry recognizes certain important ethical implications of its role: the demand for

Rhetoric in the Human Sciences (London: Sage, 1989). One of the best collections that seems to have begun, or at least been an important impetus in carrying on this discussion, can be found in John Nelson, Allen Megill, and Donald N. McCloskey, eds., *Rhetoric of the Human Sciences* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

- 53 Cf. Michael J. Hyde and Craig R. Smith, 'Hermeneutics and Rhetoric: A Seen but Unobserved Relationship,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65 (1979), p. 347–363. Cf. also Allen Scult, 'The Relationship between Rhetoric and Hermeneutics Reconsidered,' *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983), p. 221–228. Finally, cf. Robert L. Scott, 'On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic,' *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967), p. 8–16 and 'On View Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later,' *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983), p. 258–266.
- 54 Cf. George Kennedy, 'A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric,' *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25/1 (1992), p. 1–21.
- 55 Cf. the warnings sounded by Kenneth J. Gergen, 'The Checkmate of Rhetoric (But Can Our Reasons Become Causes?),' in: *The Rhetorical Turn*, p. 293–307, and by Dilip Parameshwar Ganokar, 'Rhetoric and Its Double: Reflection on the Rhetorical Turn in the Human Sciences,' in: *The Rhetorical Turn*, p. 341–366.
- 56 Raymie E. McKerrow, 'Critical Rhetoric and the Possibility of the Subject,' in: *The Critical Turn*, p. 51–67: 64, 65

tolerance, the necessity of action in the face of uncertainty, and the responsibility for one's actions and their consistency with one's justifications and beliefs.⁵⁷

If, then, 'it is fundamentally an ethical dimension of one's thoughts and actions that rhetoric reveals,' a rhetoric of inquiry focuses upon the ethical, therefore civic and social dimensions of critical inquiry.⁵⁸ For biblical scholars, its efforts are directed at making us aware of the strictures and closures at work in our discipline's discursive practices. Its purpose is to break open new dimensions of biblical interpretation that can take on issues of accountability, of power, of the 'living' interpretation of the Bible and its *civic* (social) dimensions: For South African scholars in particular, the difference between the restrained 'rhetoric *in* the Bible' and the revalued 'rhetoric *of* the Bible', i.e., the 'Bible *as* rhetoric',⁵⁹ at work upon and through structures/systems of power, is a difference with particular poignancy.

3. Conclusion

It is hoped that this survey will generate an awareness of the benefits offered by several of the methods currently being practiced by the greater discipline of rhetorical criticism. These approaches offer some of the means by which to highlight the multitude of argumentative and persuasive modalities of the Bible's rhetorical power. Perhaps New Testament critics will begin to take up these, or other, alternative methods, thereby bringing new voices, insights and ideas to fellow critics. If so, the singularity of antiquarian, synthesist, tropological and historical readings will be accompanied by a plurality of rhetorical *critical*, not just *analytical*, readings.

The vision offered by Wuellner 10 years ago has failed to realize, and the current 'tradition' of New Testament rhetorical criticism is threatening its very usefulness and existence. Wuellner's article was both a celebration and a warning, one that needs to be heeded if we as rhetorical critics are to be active participants in the potential transformation of the humanities and social sciences that rhetoric is signaling. It is up to us as rhetorical critics of the Bible to become aware of, conversant with, and actors in the developing field of rhetorical theory and analytics. This can only be done by revisiting Wuellner's call for the re-invention of rhetoric, its concomitant shift from analyzing the rhetoric *in* the text to the rhetoric *of* the text, and its focus upon the constellation of power generated by and for the Bible.

57 Cf. Scott, 'On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic,' p. 16-17, further elaborated in Scott, 'On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later.'

58 Cf. John S. Nelson, 'Political Foundations for the Rhetoric of Inquiry,' in: *The Rhetorical Turn*, p. 258-289.

59 Cf. Martin Warner, ed., *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990).