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Observations on the Rhetoric of Gender in the New Testament Letters

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An analysis of the rhetoric of gender in the New Testament letters cannot be primarily concerned with the content of gender-relevant deliberations. It needs to focus rather on the ethics of language, on the way in which gender issues are presented or should be presented according to theorists of rhetoric. Both aspects, the descriptive and the normative, are relevant. When the Pastoral Epistles, for example, talk about women in the style of a satire, as we will see, this reveals something about the rhetoric of gender in these writings, and the question arises of whether this would meet good rhetorical standards, that is, good language-ethical standards in antiquity and today.

How should an orator present gender-relevant issues according to ancient or modern theorists of language and rhetoric? Although there are no ancient theories of how one ought to talk about *gender* issues, we can apply some principles of good rhetoric to gender-relevant early Christian texts and ask whether these texts lived up to such more general rhetorical standards. This essay will only deal with five examples; more needs to be done, for example, work on the relationship between prescriptive and descriptive language and on metaphors of femininity and masculinity.[1]

1. Other-Attentiveness and Empathy?

Quintilian considered it good rhetoric to be Other-attentive, that is, to walk in the shoes of others, especially when preparing for court situations at the forum. In this way, Quintilian held, orators are put in a position to plead their case more successfully:

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[1] See Beate Kowalski's illuminating study of metaphors of femininity in this volume.

> When I engaged in forensic disputes I made it a point to make myself familiar with every circumstance connected with the case.… When I had formed a general idea of these circumstances, I proceeded to consider them quite as much from my opponent's point of view as from my own. (*Inst.* 7.1.4)

> The orator must place himself in the position of a third person, namely [in this example], in the position of the judge, and imagine that the case is being pleaded before *himself* [that is, before the orator], and assume that the point which would have carried most weight with *himself*, had *he* been trying the case, is likely to have the greatest influence with the actual judge. (12.8.15)[2]

Thus, empathy with the other parties involved is a prerequisite for good rhetoric. Paul Ricoeur emphasized the same point of empathy when he coined the concept of *linguistic hospitality*.[3] By using the language of the Other, trying to walk in her linguistic shoes and thus to understand her on her own terms, orators, writers, or (what Ricoeur's essay is mostly concerned with) translators welcome the Other in her Otherness. They may even take pleasure in her language, her perspective. At least, they pay respect to the Other by trying to walk in her shoes for a while during their writing or speaking.

The difference between the ancient theorist Quintilian and Ricoeur, however, is that the former used empathy and change of perspectives to optimize his plea in court—not in order to be linguistically hospitable to the Other. The change of perspectives rather enhanced the lawyer's capability to argue more effectively, while Ricoeur aimed at more pleasant, hospitable interactions.

Does the apostle Paul live up to the standard of empathy and changing perspectives when he, as a male, deals with controversial gender issues? Seen theologically, the weakest text Paul ever wrote is the first half of 1 Cor 11, where he deals with covering one's head during worship: all the reasons he puts on the table to support his idea that women ought to cover their heads during worship quickly fall apart when scrutinized closely.[4] He does not even *try* to discover the point of view of the Corinthian women, to walk in *their* shoes. Instead, he walks in the shoes of an easterner from Tarsus in eastern Anatolia, where the women wore burka-like clothing at his time, according to Dio Chrysostom (*1 Tars.* 33.48). Apparently suffering a cultural shock in Corinth, Paul reveals his real motivation behind advocating head coverings for women in his last verse (11:26)—finally letting the cat out of the bag. With his primary motivation not being theological, he categorically states: we do not have this custom (in the East), and neither do God's congregations. *Basta, causa finita*. One cultural setting trumps the other, without even listening to what the others may have to say in favor of their position. This is a case of cultural bias without linguistic hospitality. All other reasons—theological-exegetical reasons—that Paul brings to the table, apparently *after* he had made up his mind about the issue, are secondary reasons that the Corinthian women could have easily picked apart if they had been asked.

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[2] Translations from Quintilian largely follow Harold E. Butler, trans., *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1922).

[3] See Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 10 ("'linguistic hospitality': where the pleasure of dwelling in the other's language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one's own welcoming house"), 23–24, passim.

Two brief examples may suffice.[5] While 1 Cor 11:3 (Gen 3:16) ranks men over women as their "head" (κεφαλή),[6] a few chapters earlier, in 1 Cor 7:1–5, Paul presents a wonderfully crafted picture of reciprocity, putting women and men at exact eye level with identical rights and duties, balancing men and women as equals. Not a tinge of hierarchy is felt, which is in line with Gal 3:28 ("there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus").[7] Thus Paul, in 1 Cor 11:3, contradicts himself when falling back into patriarchal exegetical patterns regarding Gen 3:16. Second, the Corinthian women could have contested Paul's exegesis of Gen 3:16 by quoting not only 1 Cor 7:1–5 and Gal 3:28 but also other authoritative texts. The woman is not *man's* "image" (1 Cor 11:7) but God's, just like the man: according to Sir 17:1–3 (see the plural αὐτούς), Wis 2:23, and Gen 1:27 in the LXX, the ἄνθρωπος, that is, man *and* woman, is created as

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[4] See, in detail, Peter Lampe, "Paulus und die erotischen Reize der Korintherinnen (1 Kor 11,2–16)," in *Männerspezifische Bibelauslegung: Impulse für Forschung und Praxis*, ed. Andreas Ruffing and Reiner Knieling (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 196–207; https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/25278.

[5] For the remaining material, see the previous note.

[6] In 1 Cor 11:7–9, Paul also bases his subordination of women on Gen 1:26–27 (man is God's image) and on Gen 2:18–23 (Eve was created from Adam's rib and not vice versa; she was created for his sake and not vice versa).

[7] All Bible translations are my own.

God’s image. LXX Genesis 5:1–2 attributes the name Adam to both man and woman created in the image of God (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ). In *this* sense, the woman is *similar* to the man (ὅμοιος αὐτῷ) according to the LXX (Gen 2:20). The Corinthian women could have argued with the LXX in their hands, accusing Paul of one-sidedly reproducing a patriarchal exegesis, similar to what we find later, for example, in the Babylonian Talmud (b. Ketub. 8a).

The Corinthian women could have challenged the rest of Paul’s flimsy arguments about women’s head covering just as easily,[8] whittling away at his reasoning until only one reason remained: an Eastern cultural setting, a dress code for women in the East of the empire that Paul wants to export to Corinth (1 Cor 11:26).

2. Generic Masculine Forms

We have just construed ἄνθρωπος as gender-inclusive. Is this justified, or is this an anachronistic interpretation? According to LXX Gen 5:1–2, it is justified. Our second part deals with other generic masculine forms in the letters (e.g., ἀδελφοί) and their capacity or incapacity to be gender-inclusive. Male exegetes in particular hasten to assert that the early Christian authors expected the recipients of their texts to envision all genders when reading generic masculine terms. There is no way to verify this, except for those cases in which generic masculines *explicitly* encompass at least one woman, as in LXX Gen 5:1–2; in Gal 3:28, with εἷς explicitly including women; or in Rom 6:7: Andronicus *and* Junia (ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνίαν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, οἳ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ). The same is true in Rom 16:3: Prisca and Aquila τοὺς συνεργούς μου; or in 1 Cor 1:2, where women clearly are included, as the reader finds out later in the letter, for example, in 1 Cor 7 and 11. However, in Titus 2:9, it is debatable whether the author also thought about women when using the generic term δοῦλοι. If the answer were yes, the author would exhort that both male *and* female slaves be “submissive in *everything* to their own masters; they are to be well-pleasing, not contradicting.” Could the author have been that cynical? Maybe, because male slaves were also exposed to potential sexual harassment and rape by their masters.

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[8] See note 4.

Whatever the authors' intentions might have been, we can move away from author-centrism and ask whether the *recipients* also envisioned women when reading a generic masculine. It is almost impossible to figure this out with regard to ancient recipients, but we can investigate this question empirically with regard to today's recipients of generic masculines in a language that is more similar to Greek than English. I report some research results from German-speaking recipients, since German is closer to Greek in its specification of three genders and in the capacity to generate female forms of nouns and adjectives, something the English language in most cases lacks. The results are discouraging. Already in 1996, Lisa Irmen and Astrid Köhnke found that 80 percent of test subjects (*N* = 45) did not associate women when a generic masculine in the singular form was used, but 85 percent associated men with it.[9] In 2000, Elke Heise published an analogous study (*N* = 150) using generic masculines in the plural. Children or employees (*Kinder*, *Angestellte*), for example, terms for which one cannot generate female forms, were mostly imagined as male persons (in about 62.5 percent of the cases). However, when explicitly inclusive "slash versions" were used, such as *Vegetarier/innen*, female persons were imagined in about half of the cases. And when the capital-*I* version was used instead of a slash (*VegetarierInnen* with a capital *I* in the ending), mostly females were imagined (about 62.5 percent again). These figures were based on the averages of *all* test subjects. As can be expected, when averaging the female and male test subjects separately, the females imagined more female persons than male test subjects did.[10] Congruent results were published by Dagmar Stahlberg and Sabine Sczesny in 2001.[11]

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[9] Loisa Irmen and Astrid Köhncke, "Zur Psychologie des 'generischen' Maskulinums," *S&K* 15 (1996): 152–66. *N* refers to the number of tested persons.

[10] Elke Heise, "Sind Frauen mitgemeint? Eine empirische Untersuchung zum Verständnis des generischen Maskulinums und seiner Alternativen," *S&K* 19 (2000): 3–13.

[11] Dagmar Stahlberg and Sabine Sczesny, "Effekte des generischen Maskulinums und alternativer Sprachformen auf den gedanklichen Einbezug von Frauen," *PsychR* 52 (2001): 131–40. For further literature, see, e.g., Caroline Criado Perez, *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* (London: Random House, 2020) (unfortunately her perspective only is binary, as the studies in the previous two notes are); Veit Dinkelaker and Martin Peilstöcker, eds., G**tt w/m/d: Geschlechtervielfalt seit biblischen Zeiten* (Oppenheim: Nünnerich-Asmus, 2021); Todd Penner and Caroline van der Stichele, *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Moisés Mayordomo, "Von Androgynen, Weichlingen und Kastraten:

The results become even more eye-opening when we look at a study by Lera Boroditsky and colleagues (2003).[12] They investigated nouns denoting objects that have a grammatical gender, such as *bridge*, which is female in German and masculine in Spanish. Their study showed that the conceptualization of these objects very much depended on their grammatical gender. German test subjects looking at the female German *Brücke* ("bridge") associated adjectives such as *beautiful*, *elegant*, *fragile*, *peaceful*, *pretty*, and *slender* with it, while Spanish test subjects associated *big*, *long*, *strong*, *sturdy*, and *towering*. One can only imagine what happens when objects denoted by Greek words such as the feminine πόλις ("city") are conceptualized; for example, they are envisioned as being animated with a protective Hellenistic city goddess or personified like the πόλις of Jerusalem. The latter becomes a bride adorned with precious jewelry (Rev 21:9–11) or is identified with mothers such as Hagar or Sarah, who in turn represent certain groups (Gal 4:21–31).[13]

Would it be going too far to suggest that it was not coincidence that the masculine οἶκος ("house"), not the feminine οἰκία ("house"), was chosen to denote a place of hierarchical power structure where the husband instructs his wife (1 Cor 14:35) and the man presides (1 Tim 3:4–5, 12)?[14]

The bottom line of these empirical studies is that linguistic categories such as grammatical gender shape our thinking more than we realize. This is not only a widely shared hunch of theorists but is proven empirically. Especially the generic masculine makes women disappear more than the wishful thinking of well-meaning people might recognize. If one takes ninety-nine ἀδελφαί ("sisters") and one ἀδελφός ("brother"), then one ends up having ἀδελφοί ("brothers"). This is the math. The generic masculine, widely used in the New Testament letters, is averse to the inclusion of women (let alone diverse persons), as the studies on recipients demonstrate. Today, we are still struggling with this issue.

Transgressive Männlichkeit im frühen Christentum," in *Jesus und die Männer: Impulse aus einer Fachtagung zu theologischer Männerforschung*, ed. Martin Fischer, Theologie und Geschlecht 2 (Vienna: Lit, 2014), 97–114.

[12] Lera Boroditsky, Lauren A. Schmidt, and Webb Phillips, "Sex, Syntax and Semantics," in *Language in Mind: Advances in the Study of Language and Thought*, ed. Dedre Gentner and Susan Goldin-Meadow (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 61–79.

[13] For a convincing new interpretation of Gal 4, see Heidrun E. Mader's study in this volume.

[14] See also 1 Pet 4:17: the community of believers as οἶκος (household).

3. The Linguistic *Ordo* in Mentioning Women and Men

Quintilian (*Inst.* 9.4.12) calls it a "natural order" to say "men and women" ("est et alius naturalis ordo, ut 'viros ac feminas …' dicas potius"). For him, this was as natural as the natural law, although it simply reflected the *societal* convention of ranking. Correspondingly—and concurrent with the explicit ranking of men over women in 1 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:11–14, and Titus 2:5—when the letters do not use generic masculines but gender-specific expressions, they usually name the males first (e.g., Rom 16:7a; Phlm 1–2; 1 Tim 2:8–10; 5:1–2). The latter text reads, "Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all chastity." The example mirrors a hierarchical structure in which age outranks youth and male outranks female. A similar order can be seen in Titus 2:2–6: old men, old women, young men.[15]

Taken together, these two examples (1 Tim 5:1–2; Titus 2:2–6) show that there was some indecision about the ranking of elderly women in relation to young men; one time, the young men are mentioned before the old women; another time, it is the other way around. Overall, however, the societal hierarchy of men being placed over women is maintained in the mirror of the linguistic order.

That the linguistic *ordo* in the letters reflects different ranks of gender roles in real life also becomes plausible when comparing the linguistic *ordo* of societal roles in the Pastorals: in 1 Tim 3, the ἐπίσκοποι ("bishops/overseers") are treated before the διάκονοι ("deacons/servants"), and slaves are dealt with at the very end, in chapter 6, just before the despised heretics.

Apart from the semantic content of words, the mere choice of language forms, in this case the linguistic *ordo*, conveys information about society. Is this good rhetoric? The orators were divided. Despite his allegedly natural male-female linguistic *ordo*, Quintilian insists that the linguistic *ordo* should not only be ruled by real-life priorities but also by other criteria, for example, by the wish to create a climax in a sentence by placing the most important element at the end instead of at the beginning, in order to be rhetorically effective (*Inst.* 9.4.25–27). By and large, our letters did not care about this latter advice. They—probably ignorantly—conform to the Greek rhetorical maxim of Dionysius of Halicarnassus that language should follow the order of reality. However, even Dionysius admits that often other linguistic orders are as beautiful and as effectual (*Comp.* 5). That the linguistic *ordo* reflected real-life priorities is probably also true for the mention of Prisca *before* her husband. This sequence, an exception to the usual male-female linguistic *ordo*, appears to indicate that Prisca's role in the church was more active and prominent than her husband's (Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19; Acts 18:18, 26).[16] She seems to have outranked him in church life.

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[15] Regarding young women, the linguistic order of these verses (old men, old women, young women, young men) deviates from the real-life ranks. The young women are treated together with the old women because the latter are supposed to instruct the young females (2:4–5), who are last in the hierarchy (2:5) and not considered worthy of being taught by Titus himself.

4. Satirical Elements

The letters at times use satirical elements when treating gender-relevant issues. First Timothy 5:11 excludes young widows categorically from the list of widows for whom the congregation cares. The reason given for this is that they do not need it: "They want to marry when they will grow wanton/lascivious against Christ" (καταστρηνιάω τοῦ Χριστοῦ). For the author, there is no question of *whether* they will grow wanton; the only question is *when* they will.[17] The temporal ὅταν ("whenever") phrase with subjunctive intends to describe a *fact* that is expected to happen in the future. In Rev 18:7, 9, the simplex στρηνιάω ("to grow wanton") is used in a satirical caricature of Roma. The comic Athenian poet Antiphanes uses this verb, as do the comedy writers Sophilus and Diphilus.[18]

First Timothy 5:13–15 continues by stating that young widows become nonworking idlers (ἀργαί), going about from house to house, engaging in silly talk (φλύαροι; cf., e.g., LXX 4 Macc 5:10), being meddlesome (περίεργοι), and saying what they should not. The author concludes, "So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan." Menander, for example, as representative of the Athenian New Comedy, uses περίεργοι ("meddlesome") repeatedly (*Sam.* 85; *Epitr.* 45). First Timothy 5 presents a clearly misogynistic satirical text about young, single women, while two older women beyond menopause are praised for their faith (2 Tim 1:5). That *men* may grow lascivious, particularly when *they* do not work, as in 2 Thess 3:6, 10–11, 15, does not enter the horizon of the Pastorals.

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[16] See further Peter Lampe, "Prisca," *ABD* 5:467–68. However, the article also shows why Prisca did not have a higher socioeconomic status than Aquila.

[17] Similarly, only young women are exhorted to be chaste (ἁγνός, Titus 2:5–6).

[18] See Antiphanes 182 = frag. 3, Sophilus 6, and Diphilus 132 in John Maxwell Edmonds, ed., *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1959–1961).

Instead, the clichés about women resurface in 2 Tim 3:6–7. The passage caricatures women as eager to learn, calling them "little women." The belittling *γυναικάριον* is also used by the comedy writer Diocles.[19] Second Timothy 3:7 reads, "They are always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth," which in its generalization is a categorically sexist statement. However, *before* their desire to learn is mentioned, they are introduced as "burdened with sins as well as driven by various yearnings" and easily "captured" by "those who creep into households" (3:6). "Yearnings" (ἐπιθυμίαι) especially evokes the association of sexual desires, as can be seen, for example, in Democritus,[20] who also uses the plural, and Plato (*Phaedr*. 232b, see also *στρηνιάω/γαμέω* in 1 Tim 5:11b). Thus, at least part of the audience, after having seen 1 Tim 5:11 and 2 Tim 3:6, first is misled by getting the impression that these are gullible and promiscuous women, until in verse 7 they unexpectedly discover the nature of these women's desires, their passion for learning. The mere order of sentences ensures that the readers are biased against these women before they even learn about their passion for education. Rhetorically, this an effective way to smear and defame; in terms of linguistic ethics, it is deplorable.

However, the discriminating repertoire of the Pastorals is not exhausted by these texts. According to the Pastoral Epistles, old women not only have the tendency to tell profane fables (1 Tim 4:7) but are also suspected of being slanderous (διαβόλους, Titus 2:3; see also 1 Tim 3:11; about women *and* men 2 Tim 3:3), a term also used in comedy (Aristophanes, *Eq*. 45), in Menander also in reference to old women.[21]

This satirical material reminds us, for example, of Juvenal's sixth satire on women. Juvenal mocks women's (1) promiscuity; (2) quarrelling; (3) drinking; (4) gossiping and longing for news; (5) desire for high education and speaking in front of an audience, which he considers a decomposition of gender roles; and (6) jewelry, makeup, and fancy hairstyles. Very similar motives also surface in the Pastorals.

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[19] See Diocles 11 in Edmonds, *Fragments of Attic Comedy*.

[20] See Democritus 234 in Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951).

[21] See Menander 878 in Edmonds, *Fragments of Attic Comedy*. Furthermore, while both sexes are admonished to stay sober (*νηφάλιος*, Titus 2:2; 1 Tim 3:2, 11), only old women are warned not to become addicted to alcohol (*μὴ οἴνῳ πολλῷ δεδουλωμένας*, Titus 2:3).

A few examples suffice to gain an impression. (1) "It is modern," Juvenal says, "to rock another one's bed" (*Sat.* 6.21–22).[22] "Will Hiberina be satisfied with one man? Sooner compel her to be satisfied with one eye!" (6.53–54). "So few are the wives worthy to handle the fillets of Ceres, or from whose kisses their own father would not shrink!" (6:50–51). (2) "There hardly has been a case in court in which the quarrel was not started by a woman" (6.242–243). (3) A tipsy woman "does not know the vagina from the head" (6.301). (4) In 6.402–412, Juvenal frowns at a woman longing for information; "she knows what is going on all over the world: What Thracians and the Serer people [in Africa] are after … she is the first to notice the comet threatening the kings of Armenia and Parthia; she picks up the latest rumors at the city gates.… How the Niphates has burst out upon the nations and is inundating entire districts; how cities are tottering and lands subsiding, she tells to every one she meets at every street crossing." Here the motif of gossiping surfaces, with Juvenal even insinuating that she "invents some [of these reports] herself." Moreover, her desire to learn world news is belittled by putting the world news in the same sentence as neighborhood gossip: she knows "what has passed between the stepmother and the stepson. She knows who loves whom, what gallant is the rage. She will tell you who got the widow with child, and in what month; with which words and in how many ways every woman has intercourse." All in one breath—the micro- and the macrocosm. (5) In 6.434–456, the satirist is disgusted by a woman giving a highly educated speech at a dinner party. Juvenal considers high education of women a decomposition of gender roles:

> She lays down definitions, and discourses on morals, like a philosopher; thirsting to be deemed both wise and eloquent, she ought to tuck up her skirts knee-high [this would be a man's tunic], sacrifice a pig to Silvanus [which only men do], and take a penny bath. Let not the wife who reclines next to you [at the table] possess a special [writing] style of her own; let her not hurl at you a crooked enthymeme in sinuous speech! Let her not know all histories; let there be some things in her reading which she does

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[22] Quotations from Juvenal largely follow George G. Ramsay, trans., *Juvenal and Persius*, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1917). However, at times his translations needed to be adjusted.

> not understand. I hate a woman who is forever consulting and poring over the “Grammar” of Palaemon, who observes all the rules and laws of language, who quotes from ancient poets that I never heard of and corrects her unlettered female friend for slips of speech that no man needs to care about; let husbands at least be permitted to make slips in grammar!

(6) Last, as in 1 Tim 2:9 and 1 Pet 3:3, Juvenal sneers at jewelry, makeup, and fancy hairstyles (*Sat.* 6.457–507). Juvenal indulges in all of these themes for pages. Exaggerations and generalizations make up a satire.

Why are such misogynist caricatures and clichés echoed in the Pastorals? There are at least two rhetorical goals. In 1 Tim 5:11–15, the argumentative goal is to make sure that young widows remarry in order to be provided for economically and thus not burden the church budget. However, it is difficult to see why this topic could not have been argued in a more reputable way, without satirical slandering. The satire does not contribute to the argumentative goal but appears to cover up the author’s general weakness in reasonable argumentation. The author of the Pastorals hands out decrees, but he rarely struggles with giving respectable reasons and proof—contrary to most authentic Pauline texts (aside from 1 Cor 11:1–16 above).

In addition, the satirical elements entertain chauvinistic male readers, in this way discrediting women as agents of learning, teaching, and speaking in the public sphere of Christian congregations. This seems to be the rhetorical goal of a text such as 1 Tim 3:6–7 about allegedly futile educational desires of women and of texts about women being slanderous, telling profane fables, and being meddlesome and engaged in silly talk. In this flimsy polemical way, the author paves the way for his ruling that women ought to remain silent in the congregational meetings, subordinate to men (1 Tim 2:11–12, Titus 2:5).

The bitter irony of these satirical texts, apparently unnoticed by the author, is that they reproach women for being slanderous and yet use slander themselves. They represent populist rhetoric—far removed from the Socratic rhetorical tradition to which Paul appears (or at least tries) to adhere, claiming that he does not want persuasion (πειθώ) with all the glitter of the sophists but ἀπόδειξις, the showing of proof (1 Cor 2:1–5).

5. Normative versus Descriptive Language

The rhetorical goal of silencing women in the congregation and bridling their educational aspirations was part of a larger normative program that presupposed *opposite* real-life conditions. Otherwise, the Pastoral Letters' prescriptive language would not have been necessary. The Pastorals in prescriptive language held up the family morals that the *Roman government* propagated. Especially the role of women intended by the Pastorals mirrored ideology of the empire from Augustus all the way up to the time of the Pastorals, as Mary R. D'Angelo adeptly shows.[23] In this way, the Pastorals provided a particular "variant" of Other-attentiveness (see section 1 above), speaking the prescriptive language of the empire to prove that Christianity is a stabilizing factor in society, supporting it and its order. Thus, the propagation of family morals in the Pastorals was an apologetic response to imperial propaganda, or better: the behavior intended by the Pastorals was supposed to have an apologetic effect.

These family morals included women's modesty not only with regard to their desire to be educated (1 Tim 2:11–12: learning in silence, no teaching) but also with regard to their outer appearance (1 Tim 2:9–19: dress codes, jewelry). Women were supposed to produce offspring (1 Tim 2:15), abstain from promiscuity, and submit to men who teach them.

All of these morals reflect imperial ideology, as it can be seen in Augustus's Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis, which tried to prevent adultery and promiscuity (ca. 18 BCE), in the Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus[24] (ca. 18 BCE), and in the Lex Papia Poppaea from 9 CE, according to which all citizens of a certain age had to enter a marriage befitting their social status. More contemporary with the Pastorals, Trajan depicted his wife and sister, Plotina and Marciana, and himself as ideals of modesty (Pliny, *Pan.* 83.7–8; 84.1). Trajan also prided himself on instructing his wife. The imperial laws aimed at controlling female sexuality in order to prevent promiscuity and to increase the birth rate of citizens (who then were potential recruits for the army).

It is ironic that many Christians of today follow values of the Pastorals that reproduced imperial Roman ideology and thus promoted living a quiet life in this empire without hostile interference by the government or pagan neighbors (1 Tim 2:2, 3:7, 6:1, Titus 2:7–8, 3:1–3). These Christians of today consequently follow an ideology from two thousand years ago that was supposed to produce more children for Roman citizens and proportionally more soldiers for the legions. There is some irony in this hermeneutical situation, which calls for a critical assessment of biblical traditions. What biblical fundamentalism has been doing to humanity could be studied during the last years of American history—and unfortunately not only there.

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[23] Mary R. D'Angelo, "Eusebeia: Roman Imperial Family Values and the Sexual Politics of 4 Maccabees and the Pastorals," *BibInt* 11 (2003): 139–65.

[24] See Ernst Baltrusch, *Regimen morum: Die Reglementierung des Privatlebens der Senatoren und Ritter in der römischen Republik und der frühen Kaiserzeit* (Munich: Beck, 1989), 163–78; furthermore, Angelika Mette-Dittmann, *Die Ehegesetze des Augustus: Eine Untersuchung im Rahmen der Gesellschaftspolitik des Princeps* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991).

My effort to stake out five fields of rhetorical exploration of New Testament letters may invite further research in these fields and motivate the discovery of additional ones.

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