What has Athens to Do with Patmos? Rhetorical Criticism of the Revelation of John (1980 ––2005)

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What has Athens to Do with Patmos? Rhetorical Criticism of the Revelation of John (1980–2005)[*]

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ABSTRACT

While Revelation does not immediately recommend itself for analysis along the lines of Greek and Latin rhetoric, scholars have made considerable progress analyzing the persuasive strategies of Revelation from this methodological orientation. Energetic attention has been given to John's strategies for establishing authority for his message and deconstructing the authority of rival 'orators'. A number of articles have identified and analyzed implicit and explicit enthymemes in Revelation, the deployment of typical epideictic and deliberative topics, and the contributions of intertexture to rational persuasion. Study of John's style has demonstrated John's finesse and purposefulness in deploying standard figures of thought and diction, while investigation of rhetorical arrangement has generally proceeded in ways that have respected Revelation's complexity and its distance from the standard forms of oratory. Although critics generally affirm the importance of John's appeals to the emotions, this line of investigation has been the least developed.

Keywords: ethos, logos, pathos, Revelation, rhetoric, rhetorical criticism.

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At first blush, analysis of Revelation using the tools of classical rhetorical criticism appears to be an ill-conceived union. In a recent assessment of the possibility of rhetorical criticism of Revelation, Dennis Stamps suggested that 'it is unlikely one will find distinct aspects of rhetorical conventions in terms of arrangement, invention and style' (Stamps 2001: 630), as he himself found 'little if any discernible correspondence between Graeco-Roman rhetorical practice and the discourse of Revelation' (Stamps 2001: 631). In spite of such prejudice, however, an overwhelming number of studies have appeared particularly in the past two decades analyzing how Revelation, as an instrument of persuasion, contains effective appeals to the credibility of the speaker, the emotions of the hearers, and rational argumentation. The use of classical rhetorical theory does not necessitate the prior conviction that John actually had rhetorical training, though this has been recently suggested (Diefenbach 1994) and scholars are well cautioned not to 'sell [early Christians] too short as uncultured and uneducated' (Royalty 1997: 600; see also Johns 1998: 763). Rather, it provides a 'vocabulary' for discussing the persuasive strategies of Revelation in terms that correspond to first-century analyses of public discourse.

Classical rhetorical theory has, to a surprising extent, been successful in providing the guiding questions for this investigation as well as the necessary 'tools for analyzing the persuasive power' of this text both in terms of John's goals and the 'literary means by which they are achieved' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 22). This article surveys these developments in the critical analysis of John's rhetoric, particularly in the work of scholars who clearly identify themselves as working from a location in classical rhetorical criticism (whether or not this is supplemented with other critical theories such as sociology of knowledge or literary theory). The work of scholars located primarily in the paradigm of fantasy studies, ideological criticism or post-colonial criticism, though they may be highly interested in the 'rhetoric' of Revelation, is excluded from this present survey (and, indeed, is sufficiently voluminous to provide material for a separate article).

The Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse as 'Apocalypse'

The pioneering insights of Collins (1979) concerning the essential literary features of an apocalypse as the disclosure of otherworldly and trans-temporal realities have been foundational to virtually all rhetorical critical work on Revelation. The painting of this 'larger picture' in terms of time and space provides an interpretative frame for the present, visible realities and challenges faced by the author and reading communities (Collins

1979: 7; see also Snyder 2000; 2004). The analysis of Revelation's rhetorical strategy is further grounded in cultural anthropology and sociology of knowledge perspectives concerning the role of a sacred cosmos (and the ways in which adherents are reminded of this larger canopy, e.g., in ritual) in structuring and providing orientation to day-to-day affairs (Royalty 1997: 602). Schüssler Fiorenza (1985: 187), in many respects the pioneer of the rhetorical analysis of Revelation, draws the attention of all succeeding analysts to John's construction of a 'symbolic universe' as the primary locus of persuasion, calling for study of 'the "evocative" power of its symbols as well as in its hortatory, imaginative, emotional language, and dramatic movement, which engage the hearer (reader) by eliciting reactions, emotions, convictions, and identifications'. Geertz's insight into the functions of religious symbols in ritual, namely that 'the common-sense world…is now seen as but the partial form of a wider reality which corrects and completes it' (1975: 122) becomes the starting point for understanding how Revelation works as a strategic act of framing and interpreting the 'common-sense world' of the seven Christian communities John addresses (deSilva 1993; 1999b: 124; Witherington 2003: 33).

The visions of chs. 4–22, which provide a narrative of the activities in this larger cosmos both in terms of space and time (both recent past and eschatological future), are seen to provide the interpretative lens on the everyday situations encountered by the recipients of the work that will support the rhetorical goals of the seven oracles as well as other exhortations throughout the text (deSilva 1998b: 789; Witherington 2003: 15). This provides the starting point for closer and more detailed investigations of particular facets of the argumentative strategies of Revelation, as well as the more creative work of determining how vision reports achieve what might be called the universal goals of rhetoric—winning a receptive hearing from, stirring the emotions of, and communicating with the minds of the audience.

Rhetorical Genre

A prominent feature of rhetorical criticism is the determination of whether or not a particular speech (or literary representation of oral discourse) should be classified as epideictic, deliberative, or forensic (judicial) rhetoric, or displays some combination of these genres. The quest here is not so much for a label per se as for a grasp of the author's aims for (or the potential functions of) a particular act of communication. Does the author primarily seek to persuade the audience to take or avoid a course of action in the immediate future? Does the author primarily seek a verdict of condemnation or acquittal? Does the author seek to win assent to a proposition, a celebration of some

virtue, or a denunciation of vice? The rhetorical critic looks for signs in the text that point to the author's rhetorical goals, often by identifying whether or not an author is using topics or argumentative strategies more appropriate to one rhetorical genre than the others. Close observation of John's use of epideictic, forensic and deliberative topics, and careful analysis of how these particular topics are orchestrated to serve a more overarching rhetorical goal or goals, can both illumine John's foundational purpose in framing this work (a question directly related to the work's overall rhetorical genre) as well as nuance the picture of the socio-historical situation.

Critics would agree that Revelation does not fall cleanly into one or another rhetorical genre but rather combines elements and topics of all three, just as a complex oration could. Revelation's affinities with epideictic rhetoric are many. The praise and blame of cities (like the description of New Jerusalem and the censure of Babylon) utilize recognizable epideictic topics and forms (like the monody; Royalty 1997: 615-16), as well as the devices of amplification (*ergasia*), vivid description (*ekphrasis*), and comparison (*synkrisis*) typically at home in epideictic speeches (Royalty 1997: 601; Witherington 2003: 216-17). Praise of divinities occupies a prominent place throughout the work, but is especially apparent in chs. 4–5 (indeed, utilizing several of the topics for such praise outlined in Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.6-9; Witherington 2003: 114-15). John also extensively employs invective against rivals and enemies (e.g., Jezebel, the Beasts, Babylon; Johns 1998: 784), and holds up 'models of praiseworthy action for emulation, and anti-models of those whose actions are censurable and lead to disgrace' throughout in order 'to engender a firm commitment to certain values in opposition to other values' (deSilva 1998a: 79).

Significant deliberative elements have also been found at work alongside epideictic features. The seven letters combine epideictic topics (for example, the *oida*-passages, which set out praise and blame for each community; Royalty 1997: 611) with deliberative topics (for example, calls to take action, coupled with considerations of the consequences; Kirby 1988: 200; Witherington 2003: 90). Revelation exhibits deliberative goals (that is, to persuade seven different Christian communities to follow particular courses of action) not exclusively in the seven oracles, but also in the visions of a future 'in which certain actions or alliances' are shown to be 'advantageous and others disadvantageous' (deSilva 1998a: 79). Epideictic and deliberative strains are interwoven and coordinated together throughout Revelation, the former portraying the ideal, the latter steering the audience more directly to choose the path that leads to the ideal (deSilva 1998a: 108-109; 2002: 219; see also Snyder 2000: 409). The multifaceted

rhetorical situations of seven different audiences, moreover, suggests that whether Revelation is heard primarily to effect epideictic goals (viz., continued adherence to cherished values) or deliberative goals (a call to desist from some course of action and/or embrace another course of action) may vary from locale to locale.

If interpreters have been rather clear in regard to the identification and analysis of epideictic and deliberative topics and forms in Revelation, they have shown considerable confusion in regard to forensic rhetoric. In part, this is because true forensic rhetoric—speech with the goal of winning a verdict of condemnation or acquittal from the audience—is very rare in the New Testament. True forensic speeches are narrated in Acts as missionaries defend themselves (and, in one case, a prosecutor accuses a missionary). Paul occasionally engages in true forensic rhetoric as he seeks, for example, a verdict of acquittal from the congregation in regard to the 'charge' that he has not proven reliable in his word and his travel plans (2 Cor. 1.15–2.4; 7.5-16). On the whole, however, the New Testament writings belong to the sphere of moral instruction and exhortation, and so chiefly employ epideictic and deliberative rhetoric, weaving in forensic *topics* where appropriate (e.g., to establish or destroy *ethos*), but not to advance the goals of forensic *rhetoric*.

Two notable rhetorical critics (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 26; Witherington 2003: 15) have suggested that Revelation consists of primarily forensic rhetoric. This claim is highly problematic in many of the particulars that these scholars advance in support of their claim. *Contra* Schüssler Fiorenza (1991: 26), the presence of warnings and promises, and even depictions of *forthcoming* diving judgments, would not contribute to qualifying Revelation as forensic rhetoric. Rather, these are all arguments from the consequences, a typical strategy of deliberative rhetoric. Moreover, the goal of these arguments is to affect the actions that the hearers will take in the immediate and ongoing future.

The misidentification of Revelation as forensic rhetoric leads Witherington into several uncharacteristic missteps. He states, correctly, that 'in forensic rhetoric the *narratio* needed to be told in a fashion favorable to one's client', but concludes from this mandate of classical rhetoric that John will need to tell the story in a manner 'that does not lead his audience to despair', but rather will 'encourage them at the same time he is exhorting them' (2003: 74). But John's visions do not correlate with the subject matter of the forensic *narratio*. A forensic *narratio* weaves together a story of the defendant's past actions that takes account of all the available evidence and puts a past action in the best, least illegal light possible (or the contrary, in the prosecutor's speech). It does not seek to 'encourage'

the client, being 'favorable' to the client in the sense of 'pleasing'. John's narrative concerns God's future actions on behalf of God's honor and the honor of God's clients, not the *past action* of John's audience ('clients') for which John is attempting to provide justification.

Indicting an audience, moreover, as John does in the seven oracles, is also not a property of forensic rhetoric (*contra* Witherington 2003: 15). Such indictments participate instead in deliberative strategies, showing the audience where it has hitherto participated in an unjust course of action (and, indeed, does not ignore topics of security and other components of 'advantage' while doing so), and calling them—in Witherington's own words—'to repent…and behave in light of the coming redemptive judgment', i.e., to adopt a particular (different) course of action. A cause for confusion here is the fact that forensic oratory is quintessentially occupied with the topic of justice and injustice, and we are accustomed to link 'justice' automatically with the law court. But topics of justice and injustice are also central to deliberative oratory. Telling in regard to this confusion is the fact that Witherington elaborates on the topic of justice, which he takes to be a sign here that John is participating in forensic oratory, with a passage from *Rhet. Her.* 3.3.4 on subtopics of 'the just', failing to note that this passage actually comes from a larger discussion of *deliberative* topics (beginning at *Rhet. Her.* 3.2.3), not *forensic* topics. The correspondence he finds between Pseudo-Cicero's discussion of topics of justice and Revelation's goal that 'God be properly honored and served at the expense of other claimants, such as the Emperor' (Witherington 2003: 15-16) provides in fact another indication of Revelation's fundamentally deliberative orientation.

The claim that Revelation is primarily forensic rhetoric is thus also highly problematic in regard to the stated goals of forensic rhetoric, which Revelation does not share. The rhetorical goal of forensic oratory is to win a particular verdict of guilt or innocence from the judge or jury. Here, in the world of the visions, the verdict has already been rendered and sentence passed by God. A more nuanced analysis might look, instead, at Revelation's use of forensic *topics* (which is considerable) and try to ascertain how they contribute to the larger argument that John constructs. For example, forensic topics such as the indictments leveled against 'Babylon' establish the necessity of Rome's (from the perspective of the audience, future) demise, the certainty of God's judgment of this domination system in the future. This, in turn, positions John and his audience to discern 'advantage' in the present (e.g., to accept Rev. 18.4 as the most reasonable, advantageous course of action). The ultimate rhetorical goal of the deployment of forensic topics (for example, the rehearsal of charges against Babylon)

is thus a deliberative goal (deSilva 1998a: 99-101). As in the analysis of other New Testament texts, greater care is required in regard to identifying specimens of forensic rhetoric, and in regard to tracing out how forensic topics are employed within a larger specimen of epideictic or deliberative rhetoric to advance its overarching goals.

Appeals to Ethos

Classical rhetorical handbooks give considerable attention and weight to making effective appeals to *ethos*. A speaker's most essential achievement was to establish his or her credibility in the eyes of the audience. This could involve not only showing himself (or herself) to possess the necessary expertise in the subject matter under discussion, goodwill toward the audience, and moral virtue, but also by undermining the credibility of opponents. Rhetorical critics of Revelation have been especially interested in how John fulfills these foundational tasks in his quest to persuade, and have found John to exhibit many of the same techniques advised in the rhetorical handbooks in this regard.

John's presentation of his message to the churches as an 'apocalypse' and as a word of 'prophecy', together with such scenes as the appearance of the Glorified Christ commissioning John to write this message to the seven churches, has long been recognized as an aspect of the legitimation of the message (Aune 1981: 18; Yarbro Collins 1984: 145; deSilva 1992a: 284; 1993: 49). John's claim to 'charismatic legitimation', together with other aspects of his self-presentation and address of the audiences in the opening of the book, becomes the starting point for investigations of rhetorical *ethos.* Since rhetorical theory places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of appeals to *ethos* at the beginning and end of an oration, it is also not surprising to find initial investigations of appeals to *ethos* in Revelation focusing on Rev. 1.1-20 and 21.6–22.21.

Most rhetorical-critical interpreters agree that John's primary strategy for gaining credibility for his message is his presentation of the same as a divinely revealed word from God, in which his voice becomes submerged beneath the voices of the Glorified Christ, angels, the Spirit, and other supernatural beings who speak through him to the audience, for whom he merely serves as mouthpiece and scribe (e.g., Yarbro Collins 1984: 145; Kirby 1988: 199; Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 115, 137-38; O'Leary 1993: 388; Royalty 1997: 607-10; Knight 2001: 478). This strategy is sustained throughout the work, as John continues to draw attention to the 'fact' that the source of the message is external to himself with every 'I saw' or 'I heard' (deSilva 1992a: 284; 1998b: 789-90; 1999a: 110-11). John also

gains credibility as he aligns his voice consistently with those voices that promote the path to recognized virtues, specifically against generally censured vices (e.g., impiety, lack of exercise of self-control; deSilva 1998b: 790; 1999a: 81). While he gains all the credibility typically assigned to a prophet, he is also able to establish connections with his hearers by speaking of himself as a fellow slave, brother, and partner (Schüssler Fiorenza 1985: 196; Royalty 1998: 144).

Analysts are keenly aware of the presence of competing voices in and around the seven congregations, and therefore of the presence of attacks on the reliability of these other voices within John's rhetorical strategy (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 137). The importance of the re-presentation of the prophetess 'Jezebel' in this regard is universally acknowledged and is foregrounded in several monographs (most notably Duff 2001 [see below]). But John's defusing of the voices of the Christians' idolatrous neighbors and fellow-citizens (deSilva 1998a: 94-97) and of representatives of Roman power (Schüssler Fiorenza 1985: 192) are equally important antidotes to what John perceives to be the challenges facing faithful discipleship among the churches.

The most thoroughgoing study of appeals to *ethos* in Revelation is Carey (1999b). While thoroughly conversant with rhetorical-critical theory concerning the analysis of *ethos*, Carey complements this with literary-critical theory regarding the construction of the 'narrator' (chiefly drawing on Booth 1961; 1983; Snaider Lanser 1981) and postcolonial theory as a means of closing the distance between classical rhetorical theory (and the kind of speech its theorists envision) and a visionary work that largely consists of narrative (1999b: 45-76). From this triumvirate of critical approaches, Carey develops a model of 'narrative ethos' that guides his analysis of Revelation. In keeping with this broader theoretical base, Carey studies 'authority' in regard to Revelation at three levels: (1) John's own attempt to construct, in opposition to the authority of the voice of Rome and her emperors, 'an alternative locus of authority in its vision of the risen Christ' (1999b: 1); (2) the explicit battle between scholarly and popular interpreters of Revelation, in the service of their own 'interests and reading strategies', for the authority to offer the genuine interpretation that ought to be heeded by the laity (1999b: 3; see also Carey 2001: 165-70); (3) the appropriation of Revelation as an authority for challenging and dismantling imperial systems (in some sense, equalizing playing fields) versus the appropriation of Revelation as an authority for 'imposing (usually ultraconservative) values upon their own and others' societies' (1999b: 2). Carey's own focus falls most fully on the first of these levels.

In terms of John's positive construction of his own credibility, Carey focuses on several key factors (Carey 1999b: 99-132; summarized in Carey 2001: 173-77). First, each of John's evocations of *generic frames* in the opening verses of his work enhances John's *ethos*. By presenting the communication as an 'apocalypse' ('revelation') and as a 'prophecy', John claims to impart divine knowledge, while the epistolary greeting of 'grace and peace' familiar from Pauline epistles suggests a 'pastoral' relationship between John and the audience, and hence one marked by both caring authority and goodwill. In an earlier paper, Carey showed at greater length how the literary form of 'apocalypse' itself provides inherent contributions to the construction of *ethos*. While John does not take advantage of pseudonymity and the resources it affords for presenting the speaker to be of a certain character (e.g., through known legends about the figure), John does present himself as having knowledge that is otherwise inaccessible to the audience (Carey 1998: 753).

Second, John also makes *overt claims to authority* in the forms of blessings and curses (Rev. 1.3; 22.18-19) and narratives of prophetic commission (Rev. 1.9-20) reinforced by frequent commands from heavenly speakers to 'write' (Rev. 14.13; 19.9; 21.5). The repetition of *eidon* ('I saw') and *ēkousa* ('I heard') throughout the Apocalypse also serves to remind the hearers of John's importance as mediator of divine revelation, embedding John's authority, moreover, in the authority of those beings whose speech John relates (thus also deSilva 1992a: 284; Royalty 1997: 609-10; deSilva 1998b: 789-90; 1999a: 110-11). Because an apocalypse is largely a narrative of the seer's experiences, the author tends not to address (challenge, rebuke, exhort) the actual audience directly. The speaker, therefore, lessens his or her risk of alienating the audience (Carey 1998: 759), while at the same time allowing more authoritative voices to articulate the essential words of correction and exhortation, often to a character or group within the narrative world itself, again eliminating the risks associated with direct confrontation (Carey 1998: 758-59). Interesting in this regard is the cryptic notice of information John must withhold (Rev. 10.4), which subtly reminds the hearers that John is even more 'in the know' than he can let on (enhancing both authority and the need for trust).

Third, John *identifies* himself with his audience with terms of association (Rev. 1.9) and with other admissions of weakness, error or confusion (1.17; 5.4-5; 7.13-17; 17.7-8; 19.10; 22.8), building connections with them, and *makes associations* between himself, the audience, and figures that are valued within the tradition. Most notable here are the webs of association involving 'witness', connecting Jesus, Antipas, John, laudable figures like

the 'two witnesses', and the audience, as the latter is invited to live in line with the testimony of Jesus themselves in their speech, actions, withholding of association, and the like.

John also prepares—as would any good orator—to cut off objections. Here, Carey perceives the main challenge to be to *justify* John's harsh and uncompromising denunciations. John therefore harnesses heavenly voices to justify the severity of his visions against Rome and the beast worshipers (Rev. 15.2-4; 16.5-6; 16.7; 19.2-5). John is merely the spokesperson for 'a chorus of heavenly witnesses' who, cumulatively, 'protect John from objections that he is rash, violent, or exclusive' (Carey 2001: 175). The voice of the Hebrew Scriptures and other authoritative traditions (Royalty 1997: 605; deSilva 2002) could be added as one more voice (or chorus of voices) that John draws in as a harmonious witness to, and legitimating foundation for, his own voice.

Carey calls attention to the ways in which 'crisis rhetoric' serves the goal of establishing *ethos*. By amplifying the significance of the challenges the 'speech' purports to address, it augments the audience's attentiveness. Further, by framing the speech as an attempt to successfully meet and survive a crisis, a speaker may appear to be offering advice out of pure rather than self-interested motives (Carey 1998: 736, 760). As John looks ahead to escalating conflict between the faithful witness and the forces of the Beast, 'crisis' rhetoric also helps to justify John's severity against Rome. Carey regards this hyper-attention to establishing his own authority as a sign of John's 'anxiety' about his authority and his message being received.

The darker side of the appeal to *ethos* is, of course, the casting of one's rival speakers in the worst possible light for the sake of undermining their credibility and, thus, their 'pull' with an audience (Carey 1999b: 137-63; summarized in Carey 2001: 177-79). An important strategy in this regard is already a feature of both prophetic and apocalyptic discourse, namely bringing other, authoritative voices to bear against opponents. Thus it is Christ's voice that denounces Jezebel and the Nicolaitans, or the voices of murdered witnesses that cry out for vindication, or voices from heaven that accuse and sentence Babylon. Words that might appear self-serving or hate-full if presented as John's own are thus hypostatized and placed on the lips of those whose *ethos* is above suspicion and beyond question.

John also extensively employs '(dis)identification' in the presentation of his opponents. Just as he linked his voice with positive figures (e.g., Christ, Antipas), he associates his opponents with negative characters, e.g., with Jezebel and Balaam, whose status as notorious false prophets will adversely color the perception of John's rival prophets—and their promotion of lower

group boundaries—in the churches. Another face of this involves 'remythologization', seen, for example, in John's re-presentation of imperial power as a mythic monster linked to the ancient chaos myth as a force of disorder and subversion. The characterization of *Roma* as a 'drunken and bloodthirsty Whore' (Carey 2001: 178) allows John to create a new mythology (and destiny) for Roman rule, radically different from the publicly articulated one, and thus promote distance between his audiences and Rome. Alongside explicit criticism, the labels and identifications themselves communicate his 'charges' against these various rivals for the audience's allegiance.

John employs parody and satire, especially with a view to undermining the claims made on behalf of the authority of the emperor and the beneficent character of empire. The long-running investigation of 'polemical parallelism' in the Apocalypse vis-à-vis the ruler cult and Roman imperial ideology is here brought to bear on the investigation of attacks on the *ethos* of rival voices in the situation of the seven churches. The one-upmanship of God and the Lamb in regard to imperial symbols and iconography makes the emperor and his claims seem like a pale shadow or an attempt to usurp God's privileges, as the use of parody 'unmask[s] imperial *hybris*' and reveals 'imperial pretensions' (Carey 1999b: 154).

Among the more morally objectionable techniques stand 'debasing' and 'dehumanizing' opponents, as when John presents 'Jezebel' not just as a teacher of objectionable practices, but as a sexually depraved woman, speaking about her 'fornication' and 'adulteries', or presents Rome as a depraved and self-indulgent prostitute, such that the 'normal' practice of business is overlaid with the negative connotations of playing with a whore (see also Royalty 1998: 191). Another face of debasing is dehumanizing, as when John presents the emperors (human beings) as a monstrous animal (the 'Beast'), obscuring the emperor's humanness and any legitimate claim the emperor might have on the audience's loyalty and gratitude (so deSilva 1998b: 799; 1999a: 109). Debasing signals the recognition that 'other prophets, the synagogue, and the larger culture might attract his audience and draw their sympathy' (Carey 1999b: 159), with John seeking to portray these 'others' as unsympathetically as possible so as to besmirch any appeal they might have and arouse revulsion rather than attraction. It is questionable, however, that John employs 'taunting' as a means of further debasing Babylon; if Revelation 18 represents a taunt, its restraint when compared to actual taunts as represented, for example, in the reported speech of the Psalmist's enemies is extraordinary. Whether or not one hears 'John's glee over the catastrophe' (Carey 1999b: 156-57), moreover, is a function of the emotional tone supplied by the reader/interpreter. One could with perhaps more justification

hear sincere regret over the tragic waste that accompanies Babylon's inevitable judgment, and over the personal tragedies that it entails.

A more recent study by Paul Duff (2001) contributes to the study of appeals to *ethos* by focusing particularly on John's attacks on the credibility of 'Jezebel', the prophet (rival speaker) whom Duff considers to be John's primary target throughout Revelation. John uses a subtle approach, a strategy given significant attention in classical rhetorical theory (e.g., Quintilian, *Inst*. 4.1.42-48), since subtlety or indirectness would often be needed when one's audience has been won over by opposing speakers (Duff 2001: 73). John 'undertakes to malign' Jezebel, 'as Quintilian recommends', crafting his picture of Babylon to resemble Jezebel (or vice versa), so that his condemnation of the former reaches to the latter indirectly (Duff 2001: 75). He also displays how John constructs and praises figures who have behaved in the opposite way (the Woman clothed with the Sun and the Bride of the Lamb), again censuring Jezebel and Babylon by contrast, a strategy recommended in Demetrius, *On Style* 5.292.

Duff's detailed analysis of how John pursues these lines of undermining Jezebel's authority (*ethos*) throughout Revelation is deeply rooted in a close reading of the text of Revelation, making a brilliant (and no doubt a lasting) contribution to the analysis of John's rhetoric. The focus for the analysis is John's creation of homologies (through repetitions of words, phrases, and so forth) throughout Revelation linking Jezebel, Babylon, the Woman, and the Bride—but also including Satan and the Second Beast (notably, the false prophet)—in webs of contrast and correlation that link acceptance of Jezebel's teaching with deception by Satan and his henchmen and with the crimes of the Roman order. The indirect technique of commending or undermining by 'homology' had, of course, been discussed before, for example, as 'identifications' both positive and negative (Carey 1999b: 118-28, 141-49) or under the heading of 'repetitive texture' (deSilva 1998b: 796; 1999a: 73-81), or, more colorfully, as 'tarring with the same brush' (Royalty 1998: 163-64, 210). However, Duff advanced far beyond these incipient insights in both his theoretical work and extensive analysis of the phenomenon in Revelation.

Duff (2001: 98-111) also displays John's deployment of the stereotype of the 'out-of-control female' in his emphasis on the inappropriate sexual activity and indulgence in eating exhibited by Jezebel and Babylon, again contrasted with the activities of the Woman and the Bride in these regards. Homology remains a key device here, linking, for example, Jezebel's indulging in food sacrificed to idols with the far more explicitly offensive fare of Babylon, imbibing the blood of Christian witnesses. Duff suggests that the Eucharist represents the provision by God for the church, in stark

contrast with the tables of idols, and that these represent mutually exclusive alternatives (2001: 105). John's portrayal of Jezebel as the stereotypical female, unable to govern herself, could be filled out by cultural knowledge (e.g., that self-mastery is prerequisite to governing others) that she is thereby unfit to lead (Duff 2001: 112). Creating homologies that link Jezebel with Satan and, more especially, the Second Beast/False Prophet, leaves John in the role of true prophet—in many ways enacting the role of a new Elijah opposing Jezebel (Duff 2001: 128).

A number of problems have been associated, however, with studies that have focused primarily on John's appeals to *ethos* and issues of authority in Revelation. First, several of these studies move from analyzing John's appeals to *ethos* as *part* of the rhetorical strategy of Revelation to mapping the presenting problem as one primarily of competing prophetic authorities to the exclusion of other issues and complicating factors. Duff's otherwise excellent study of John's deconstruction of Jezebel's authority is exemplary of this problem, consistently downplaying or negating a significant body of evidence that would otherwise suggest a more complex construal of the rhetorical situation (e.g., evidence for hostility against Christians in Smyrna and Pergamum; John's elevation of the imperial cult as a significant concern for Christian identity; the issue of wealth and deceptive self-confidence in Laodicea), while magnifying the importance of factionalism in the churches in general, and of Jezebel in particular (an issue that had not been otherwise neglected in studies that sought to explore how Revelation responded to a wider range of concerns; see deSilva 1992a: 292-95; 1993: 55-57; 1998a: 84-86; 1999a: 69-72). In a court of law, a lawyer who had to work so ingeniously and with so much special pleading to dismiss so much evidence would make her opponent's case for him.

Two examples of such misreading of evidence must suffice. In the oracle to Ephesus, Duff finds the accusation that the Christians have 'forsaken their first love' (Rev. 2.4) as a sign that 'the community had fragmented into factions' and 'was no longer as receptive to John *because* it had fragmented into factions, not all of which were open to John's leadership' (Duff 2001: 37), despite the fact that the oracle otherwise gives unequivocal evidence of the congregation's utter resistance to competing teachers and the factionalism that would ensue if they had been received. Second, Duff claims that there is 'no significant elaborations of problems' and 'little, if any, encouragement' in the oracle to the Laodicean community (Duff 2001: 35), so that he can relegate it to the same category of Sardis rather than read it alongside the oracles to Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira—which, notably, provide him with the picture of factionalism that he promotes as

the crisis behind Revelation. However, Rev. 3.17-18 represents a significant elaboration of the problem of being 'lukewarm', and this oracle is usually considered to offer the most intimate encouragement of the seven (Rev. 3.19, 21). It is merely the case that this oracle does not elaborate the problem that Duff foregrounds.

Royalty, who paints John as being chiefly concerned with augmenting the power and influence of his prophetic circle (1998: 245-46; 2004: 286), actually trumps Duff in regard to the oracle to Laodicea. He asserts that 'Christ censures and rebukes the Laodiceans, encouraging them to support John and his prophetic circle in the power struggles within the Christian churches' (1998: 242-43), despite the complete absence of any mention of power struggle or inner-Christian conflict in that oracle (and the text's indications that a particular attitude toward wealth as a basis for self-sufficiency stands at the root of the spiritual malaise in that congregation). Royalty's aggressive promotion of the power struggle itself as the main issue, as opposed to the view that the conflict between John and Jezebel (*et al.*) concerns the stance the churches will take in regard to the larger society in order to resolve the tensions in their everyday existence (deSilva 1992a; 1992b; Knight 2001: 480; rightly, Duff 2001: 59-60), results in a highly tendentious reading of this oracle. It is noteworthy, then, that monographs focused on John's appeals to *ethos* in particular tend to project their own focus on issues of authority in the text more forcefully and uncompromisingly onto their reconstruction of the rhetorical situation and John's intentions.

A second problem involves exaggerating distortions of John's authoritarian stance or claims to unique and exclusive authority—followed by criticizing John on the basis of those distortions for being too authoritarian and exclusive. Royalty (2004: 291), for example, works like a good rabbi to erect a considerable fence around the proscribed actions of John's curse (adding to, or taking away from, his message, Rev. 22.18-19). He claims that John actually forbids 'text criticism, editing, translation, or allegorization', as well as borrowing John's words, for example to keep them alive in the liturgy of the worshiping community (where Revelation has had its broadest and most lasting impact), but then criticizes *John* for that fence!

Duff (2001: 49) avers that 'John's followers accept his leadership to the exclusion of any other person'. Similarly Carey (1999b: 133) cites Rev. 1.1 as evidence that John presents his work as the 'only revelation of Jesus Christ'. But, in fact, John does not even use the definite article to preface his claim: it is simply 'a revelation of Jesus Christ'. It is not John, but the prejudice of the interpreter, that turns this into an *exclusive* claim. In making such statements about John's exclusivity, Duff and Carey (and, all

the more, Royalty 2004) do not give adequate attention to the role of the other prophets whose voices and activity are affirmed (Rev. 22.9, 16).

While John clearly believes that not all prophets adequately represent Christ's intentions for the churches (and this might be the crux of the problem for some modern interpreters), he does acknowledge other prophets who stand alongside him under the authority and guiding norms of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Jesus tradition, who are deeply concerned that the commandments of God, the warnings of the prophets, and the witness of the Psalms (e.g., to God's kingship, to the necessity of acknowledging this kingship above all others, and to the future in which all nations will come and do the same) be preserved and lived out in the churches of Asia Minor (and elsewhere).

Given the Christian culture of 'testing' prophecy (1 Thess. 5.20; 1 Jn 4.1-3; Rev. 2.2; *Did*. 11-13), especially by other prophets (1 Cor. 14.29), one might see John here as being quite anti-authoritarian, submitting his word to the other prophets (and there is no internal or external evidence for regarding these prophets as somehow under John's authority or direction) for testing and verification. This culture creates the reasonable expectation for John that he will be held accountable to standards external to his own speech, thus mitigating his authoritarian strains and 'keeping him honest' in regard to a larger stream of received tradition. John's thoroughgoing alignment of his voice with the 'voice' of the Hebrew Scriptures may, in fact, reflect John's awareness of this need to conform himself to, and to discover and 'invent' his argument, as it were, in line with the greater norm under which he, other prophets, and his audiences stand.

This consideration leads to a variation on this same theme, namely the voice of the Hebrew Bible in relation to Revelation. Royalty makes the sensationalist claim that, by incorporating the words of Daniel and Zechariah into his own speech in Rev. 1.7, John 'announced with divine voice that other books of prophecy are no more' (2004: 293). Similarly, he finds John's urging his hearers to keep the words of '*this* book' (Rev. 1.3) to represent an attempt to exclude 'what God has written before through other slaves and prophets' (2004: 293). Royalty never actually argues these points, however; they remain bald assertions. Less extreme is Carey's observation that, while *4 Ezra* urges the keeping of the Torah, Revelation 'is the first apocalypse to claim that salvation depends upon response to its own message' (1999b: 178).

Such statements raise once again the essential question of John's relationship to the Hebrew Bible and other received traditions of the Christian community. If he does, indeed, seek to replace the received Scriptures with his

own message and call for absolute obedience to his *own* word, John becomes an eerie precedent for many cult leaders who have done the same on the basis of Revelation itself. However, it is hardly likely that John expected his hearers to cease reading and engaging the Hebrew Bible and, increasingly, authoritative Christian texts, so a more balanced assessment must be sought. Indeed, to the contrary, some rhetorical critics have argued that Revelation represents John's attempt to allow the Hebrew prophets (*et al.*) to speak again and afresh as authorities in, and interpreters of, the situation of his congregations (deSilva 2002; Witherington 2003). In essence, the call to 'keep the words of the prophetic utterance of this book' (Rev. 1.3; 22.7) is ultimately a call to 'keep the commandments of God [as revealed and available for review in the Law and the Prophets] and faith with Jesus' (Rev. 14.12), resolving thus the dichotomy Carey (1999b: 178) perceived.

One sub-question here concerns the implications of audience (non)recognition of the allusions. Even Royalty (ironically) expects hearers to recognize the source texts behind Rev. 1.7, and this recognition is what would lend authority to John's word (1998: 143). He rightly questions to what extent, if at all, hearers would recognize allusions in other passages, but it is questionable whether this should be explained as John's attempt to hide the derivative nature of his 'visions' (Royalty 1998: 147). Different levels of recognition of allusions would yield different levels of rhetorical 'payoff', to be sure, and one need not at the other extreme assume that John would expect even most hearers to recall all the prophetic texts and their contexts, though perhaps it would not be unreasonable for them to remember a few key ones, especially those to which John draws repeated attention. Royalty, however, seems to assume that the hearers would *need* to recognize the specific allusions for John's work to have integrity as a creative interpretation and application of those texts, though this is certainly not the case.

This leads, in turn, to the second sub-question: essentially, whether John regards himself as having authority over the Hebrew Bible, to use it at will, or whether John regards himself as standing under the authority of the Hebrew Bible, to discern its guidance for interpreting the realities and challenges in the situation faced among the congregations on whose behalf he exercises his prophetic ministry. Here the longstanding debate concerning whether John uses the Hebrew Bible anthologically, as linguistic or poetic resources to be used (Schüssler Fiorenza 1985: 135; Royalty 1998: 288; Ruiz 1989), or as exegetically, as sacred texts to be faithfully interpreted and applied to new challenges (Bauckham 1993: 38-91; Fekkes 1994; Beale 1999: 98; Witherington 2003: 13), surfaces anew. Further studies of the role played by

the Hebrew Scriptures in John's process of invention (e.g., along the lines of deSilva 2002) can help adjudicate this important question.

While John's weaving of so many phrases and sentences from the authoritative Scriptures into his work certainly invites the older texts to lend their authority to his own message (Royalty 1998: 143; deSilva 2002: 222), those who claim that John (ab)uses the Hebrew Bible solely for the purpose of promoting his authority and silencing other voices may have focused too one-sidedly on the contributions of the Hebrew Scriptures to appeals to *ethos*, and not sufficiently on its contributions to *logos*, where one would indeed be able to inquire into the degree of John's fidelity to the greater tradition to which he regards all prophets—himself and Jezebel equally—accountable.

Appeals to Pathos

The most detailed investigation of Revelation's attempts to arouse emotions in the hearers to achieve the author's particular goals for them—indeed, the *only* such sustained study—remains Adela Yarbro Collins's *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse.* John rouses emulation as he develops his portrayal of the unnamed 'witnesses' of chapter 11, to whose work John wishes the hearers to aspire (Yarbro Collins 1984: 151). John augments his hearers' fear of Roman power and Jewish authorities, presenting both as agents of Satan's hostility against them and using dreadful beasts to represent Roman power in ways 'designed more to evoke terror than to allay it' (Yarbro Collins 1984: 152-53). 'Resentment' (in Aristotelian terms, 'indignation') is also aroused by John's portrayal of Rome's enjoyment of endless wealth and luxury, particularly since this it not the result of virtue but of a variety of vices. Revelation manipulates fear and resentment in much the same way, and to the same ends that Greek tragedy manipulated fear and pity (Yarbro Collins 1984: 152-53).

Collins takes her exploration of emotions elicited by Revelation in an intentionally and explicitly psychological-exegetical rather than a rhetorical-critical direction (although informed as well by Aristotelian theory of drama and catharsis), thinking about the effects of having feelings aroused, intensified, and *released* (as well as the effective containment of aggressive feelings through transference and internalization) rather than aroused with a view to positioning the audience to be more open to the courses of action and adoption of general values that the author promotes. Nevertheless, she has done more to exhibit John's evocation of emotion—and the literary means by which this is accomplished—than any scholar before or since.

Rhetorical critics have remained keenly aware of the *importance* of appeals to the emotions in Revelation and the evocative power of the book's imagery (e.g., Schüssler Fiorenza 1985: 187; Johns 2003: 157-58; Witherington 2003: 90), but an incredible vagueness plagues this area of research. Some scholars will venture to name the particular emotion that is likely to be the goal of particular expressions or images. For example, Kirby (1988: 199) speaks of the vision of Christ evoking 'the *pathos* of awe'. DeSilva posits that the assurance of God's intervention to vindicate God's honor and that of God's witnesses in the public eye (e.g., in Rev. 11.11-13) will potentially arouse confidence (1998a: 98), since the availability of help was a topic associated by Aristotle with the evocation of this emotion. Descriptions of privileged groups (e.g., the subjects of the macarisms, who are elevated as 'blessed', 'favored', 'honored') potentially rouse emulation in the hearers, 'moving them to seek to embody those values which receive approbation and bring honor' (deSilva 1998b: 804). The characterization of Rome's activity as polluting and her imperialism as fornication (Rev. 14.18), combined with the more detailed treatment of Rome's injustices (16.18–19.4), also potentially arouses 'indignation (*nemesis*) against Rome', a feeling Aristotle suggested would accompany the portrayal of some entity enjoying good fortune 'contrary to all merit' (deSilva 1998b: 797). Witherington (2003: 17) also helpfully names anger, fear, trust and love as particular emotions aroused by John, although, unfortunately, without specifics as to where in the text, how, and to what end.

These are merely incipient analyses of appeals to *pathos* in the text. More often, however, analysts seem inexplicably content simply to note that some feature of Revelation 'evokes *pathos*' without ever trying to specify *which* emotion is likely to be aroused by what particular literary means, and how, on the basis of classical discussions of the arousal of that emotion, the analyst *knows* or *suspects* such an appeal to emotion exists, i.e., answering the questions that would make for a deeper analysis of the inner workings of the text, rather than an exercise in labeling rhetorical features (and vaguely, at that; see, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 31, 129; Royalty 1997: 609; 1998: 138, 190; Johns 1998: 763; 2003: 162-63). At other times, analysis of *pathos* is limited by an interpreter's failure to inquire into the rhetorical multi-functionality of particular terms or images. A striking example of an 'either/or', as opposed to a 'both/and' mentality appears in Royalty (1998: 144). In regard to Rev. 1.9, Royalty argues that the first of John's terms of self-reference ('brother') constitutes an appeal to *ethos* while the later terms ('fellow sharer in [the kingdom and] tribulation and patient endurance') shift to an appeal to the hearers' emotions. Aside

from the problem of not specifying *what* emotion would be thus aroused, and to what end, there is the greater problem of considering only one facet of the rhetorical contribution of each image. The description of oneself as a 'sibling' is likely to arouse feelings of 'friendship', a pathetic appeal that becomes, in turn, the means of advancing the ethical appeal. Similarly, the topics of 'tribulation' and 'patient endurance', while potentially arousing feelings of 'pity' or 'partnership'/'friendship', advance the author's *ethos* as well, since these can be understood as signs of John's staying the course of faithfulness to the message of Jesus, the faithful witness, and thus tokens of his sincerity and pure motives—as opposed, notably, to Jezebel and the Nicolaitans whose accommodationist policies position them for comfort rather than tribulation, for pleasure rather than patient endurance.

In sum, the analysis of John's strategic evocation of particular emotions remains an open area of investigation where a dissertation or monograph could make a significant, foundational contribution.

Appeals to Logos

As the representation of an ecstatic experience (genuine or not), Revelation does not recommend itself to readers as a specimen of rational argumentation. There has been, correspondingly, less attention to John's 'appeals to the minds of the hearers' than his appeals to *ethos*. Nevertheless, some noteworthy strides have been made toward uncovering the argumentation that undergirds Revelation's visions. Royalty (1997: 605) and Humphrey (1999: 144) both regard the visions to function as supportive 'proofs', particularly as 'inartificial' or 'external' proofs. John presents his visionary experiences as a *datum* of the case, an 'exhibit "A"' like a bloody knife in a murder case. Humphrey's suggestion that the vision report functions more specifically as 'a type of ancient rhetorical strategy called *demonstratio*' (see *Rhet. Her.* 4.55.68; Quintilian, *Inst*. 9.2.40 on *visio*; also Cicero, *De oratore* 3.202) may, however, be potentially misleading. *Demonstratio* was generally recommended in the context of forensic speeches where bringing the crime vividly before the eyes of the jury would serve some such end as the arousal of pity or indignation; the report of an ecstatic vision, which offers divine authentication for a position urged or rejected, seems to stand apart significantly from the 'vivid depiction' of a past crime.

Several studies have sought to uncover important *topoi*, or argumentative commonplaces, elaborated by John. O'Leary (1993; 1994), whose field of interest ranges from Revelation itself to nineteenth- and twentieth-century manifestations of apocalypticism in the West (based on Revelation and related texts), has identified three major topics at work in Revelation,

and in Western apocalyptic discourse generally—authority, time, and evil. The foundational premise of apocalyptic discourse is that the world as it is experienced is coming to an end (1993: 400; so also Knight 2001: 478). The *topos* of time answers the hearers' question, 'When?' The *topos* of authority answers the question, 'How do you know?' And the *topos* of evil actually gives rise to the entire enterprise, which arises as an attempt to offer solutions to the 'problem' (1993: 400-401). The topic of time is generally elaborated in terms of the 'immediate', which is necessary to hold the hearers' attention. Revelation does not itself attempt to suggest specifically when this 'soon' will be, though this is, of course, a prominent direction for elaboration in the history of interpretation (where calculations are often pursued in the form of mathematical 'proofs'; 1993: 406). Authority is based in 'the prophet's claim to direct apprehension of the sacred' (O'Leary 1994: 53). The *topos* of evil is often developed by means of personification (e.g., the Beast, Babylon) and by 'apocalyptic jeremiad', the catalog of the crimes that 'affront the believing community and its sensibilities' (1993: 407).

O'Leary's study is driven in part by rhetorical criticism, but also by poetic and dramatic theory. Aristotle's *Poetics* is more central to his work than the *Rhetoric*, as O'Leary seeks to establish that the plot of Revelation is essentially a 'comic' one, since everyone gets what they deserve, with 'a quintessentially happy ending' (1993: 391). His insight that the complication in Revelation's plot is essentially 'error' rather than 'guilt', such that the resolution comes about not through victimage, but through 'the exposure of fallibility' (1993: 392), incidentally captures a central goal of Revelation's argumentative strategy, namely removing the deceptive appearances from the realities that surround the seven congregations in Asia Minor (or, perhaps better, asserting that the appearances are deceptive and claiming to name the underlying 'reality' of Roman imperialism). The 'comic' plot of Revelation allows for the possibility of a redemptive change in one's course of action, making room thereby for the many hortatory features in the text (1993: 395), although Revelation is also often read in a 'tragic', deterministic mode by many of its interpreters (1993: 411).

There are problems with characterizing Revelation strictly as a 'mythic theodicy' (O'Leary 1993: 387), since many of John's readers are not asking the question, 'how can God allow so much evil', but rather, 'how much of my former network of social, economic and political associations can I legitimately retain in my life as a Christ-follower and worshiper of the God of Israel?' As with other investigations, it seems to capture, at best, a partial truth concerning Revelation's multi-functionality for a diverse collection of Christian communities. Nevertheless, O'Leary's study is a remarkable

achievement for its identification of major argumentative *topoi* and their means of elaboration in Revelation *and* in the discourse of interpretation spawned by Revelation.

Rossing (1999) also makes a highly significant contribution to the analysis of Revelation's underlying 'logic' in her investigation of John's use of the 'two women' *topos*, a rhetorical commonplace that she establishes through an extensive survey of literature from both the historic Jewish milieu and the contemporary Greco-Roman milieu (especially in the story of the choice of Herakles and its multiple evocations). The essential components of this *topos* include (1) the personification (*prosopopoiia*) of some either/or choice (styles of leadership, choice of career, a life of virtue or vice, etc.) as two female figures, including (2) an elaboration of the physical appearance and manner of these female figures (*ekphrasis* and *syncrisis*) that is designed to guide the audience to respond in a particular way to (3) an ethical appeal to choose one and reject the other (Rossing 1999: 18-25). With or without explicit exhortation, the *topos* implicitly evokes a framework of decision, and the elaborated description of the women steered the hearers to make the preferred decision (1999: 39).

Aided by the tendency in the ancient world to personify cities as women or goddesses, Revelation evokes the 'two-women' *topos* by portraying Babylon as the vice-ridden female and New Jerusalem as the virtuous female. The *topos* itself inherently invites a choice between the two (that is, between participation in the Roman imperial economy and in the *communitas* called into existence around the commandments of God and testimony of Jesus). John utilizes the two-women *topos* to create a contrast between the Roman imperial economy and the community that God is bringing into being by gathering the faithful. The *topos* provides John with a framework both to expose the vice-ridden character of Rome and to affirm the moral and personal dangers of prolonging one's association with Rome. The portrayal of New Jerusalem in the role of the 'good' woman invites the audience to choose to live for *this* goal. That we should lose sight of the female figures and move to direct speech about cities (Rev. 18; 21.9–22.5) poses no difficulty, since the women in the *topos* regularly stood for some other area of interest (ethics, career choice, and so forth). John is the first, however, to employ the *topos* for the sake of political and economic critique rather than personal morality.

Royalty (1998: 114-24) analyzes two speeches on Rome (from Lucian and Aelius Aristides) as the rhetorical background for John's invective against Rome, identifying excessive wealth and its ostentatious display as *topoi* in invective (subtle or overt) against Rome. While it is certainly useful as corroboration that John's was not the only voice crying out against con-

spicuous consumption in the capital of the world, it is difficult to see how 'this rhetoric of blame would have been familiar to Asian audiences when they heard John's attack on Rome in Revelation', since Royalty has only brought forward mid-second century evidence of the same.

Topics can be elaborated by pictorial-graphic description (as is certainly the case in Rossing's analysis of the 'two-women' *topos* in Revelation) and by rational-enthymematic argumentation. Some interpreters rule out the possibility of the latter in favor of the former, as exemplified in the comment by Witherington: 'There is not a syllogistic logic to Revelation, but there is a narrative logic' (2003: 83). Certainly this is true insofar as Revelation exhibits none of the *extended* argumentation that is exhibited in Paul, Hebrews or 1 Peter. However, there is indeed also an enthymematic logic at many points in Revelation that merits, and has to some extent received, careful investigation.

Several scholars have offered helpful starting points for such analysis. Kirby (1988: 203) draws attention to the appearance of inferential particles in the seven 'letters' as an indication of logical appeal underlying Jesus' pronouncements, though he does not himself enter into a detailed analysis of the same. Schüssler Fiorenza (1991: 61-62) has analyzed the song to the Lamb (Rev. 5.9-10) as a claim that the Lamb is 'worthy' to receive rulership of the world followed by three supporting rationales (the Lamb's violent death signals the eschatological Passover; the Lamb ransomed people back for God from every nation, tribe, people, and language group; and the Lamb creates thus an alternative kingdom of priests, whose allegiance will be to God). In so doing, she has alerted interpreters to the potential enthymematic 'payload' of the hymns that run throughout Revelation and are so characteristic of this apocalypse, setting the agenda for further investigation. Similarly, Royalty (1997: 609) discovers an enthymeme in the first macarism of Revelation (Rev. 1.3): 'Those who pay attention to this *apokalypsis* are blessed *because* the time is near'. This, too, orients successive interpreters to the enthymematic texture of macarisms and similar pronouncements in Revelation.

David deSilva has offered several studies that attempt sustained analysis of appeals to *logos* in Revelation (1998a; 1998b; 2002). In the first of these, he focuses on the exhortations and pronouncements made by the three angels of Rev. 14.6-13, which he regards as a kind of summary of the argumentative appeals utilizing topics of honor discourse throughout the whole of Revelation. The focal issue, namely 'who is worthy of worship', 'locates Revelation's rhetoric within the context of discussions of "justice" (*dikaiosunē*) in the Greco Roman world' (Aristotle, *Virt*. 5.2; *Rhet. Her.* 3.3.4; *Rhet. Alex.* 1421b.36-40; deSilva 1998a: 88). Revelation's audiences

are 'invited into a deliberative arena' as they view the relative advantages and disadvantages of the courses of action John holds before them, namely exclusive worship of the One God or participation in the cult of the beast (1998a: 89), aggressively promoting the former course of action.

The first angel's exhortation to honor God and show reverence for God's honor (e.g., through observing God's commandments) is recommended on the basis of two rationales. The first rationale is explicated in the *hoti*-clause of 14.7, and invokes a topic of 'safety' or 'security' (one of the two major categories appropriate for deliberative oratory according to *Rhet. Her.* 3.2.3). God's commitment to hold human beings accountable in judgment and to mete out rewards and punishments accordingly creates a crisis that poses potentially grave danger to all. Acting in a way that shows reverence for God is a path to survival through that crisis (deSilva 1998a: 90; 1998b: 791). The second rationale is presented indirectly in the form of an elaboration of the identity or character of this God who is to be feared, and utilizes the topic of the 'just' (a sub-topic of 'the right', the other major body of special topics appropriate for deliberative oratory). As the Creator of the cosmos, God merits the honor and obedience of all God's creatures, who receive the gift of life and enjoy the bounty of creation (deSilva 1998a: 90; 1998b: 791-93).

The larger narrative context, moreover, elaborates both rationales in scenes of heavenly worship (Rev. 4–5) and in the multiple statements about the necessity and consequences of God's judgment (deSilva 1998a: 91-93, 98). The first rationale is further elaborated in the third angel's announcement of the negative consequences of failing to reserve worship exclusively for the One God (Rev. 14.9-11; deSilva 1998a: 101-103) and pictorial depictions of the same throughout the text. Arguments based on 'consideration of the consequences' were a major strategy in deliberative oratory (Aristotle, *Rh.* 2.23.21; 3.17.4), and John combines the topics of (loss of) honor and (loss of) safety in his portrayal of the consequences of participation in imperial cult (deSilva 1998b: 799; 1999a: 82-83; see also Witherington 2003: 15, 69 on pictorial arguments from the consequences). The announcement of the consequences of worshiping the Beast (Rev. 14.9-11) in close proximity with the narrative depiction of the consequences of *refusing* to worship the Beast (Rev. 13.15-16), moreover, engages the topic of 'relative expediency' of conflicting courses of action, which was commonly required in deliberative oratory (deSilva 1998a: 102; 1998b: 799-800).

The second angel's message announces the fall of Babylon and elaborates Babylon as a shameful figure, association with whom entails dishonor. This announcement implicitly invokes two topics of dissuasion, namely

'dishonor' and '[lack of] security' (specifically, in regard to the sub-topic of 'allies'), the latter being explicitly invoked in Rev. 18.4: 'partnership with Rome offers not security but rather the danger of incurring the wrath of God as Rome's clients are led to participate in Rome's sins against God' (deSilva 1998b: 797; 1999a: 82). Conversely, the voices that speak in Rev. 14.12-13 elaborate on the 'saints' as people characterized by obedience to God's commands, and the 'blessed' as people characterized by lifelong loyalty to God, as honorable models for imitation and self-identification (deSilva 1998a: 103; 1998b: 803). These topics are again reinforced throughout Revelation, notably in the seven macarisms that 'outline for the members of the seven churches the path to honor' (deSilva 1998a: 103-107; 1998b: 803-805).

The investigation of John's appeals to *logos*, however, like the investigation of his appeals to *ethos* (see, notably, Carey 1999b), requires that the analyst combine classical rhetorical criticism with a broader array of investigative tools since 'as John participated in the stage of "invention" of his "arguments" he went far beyond the topics treated in the schools of oratory' (deSilva 1998b: 786). One particularly important aspect of John's 'invention' is his use of the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish and Jewish-Christian traditions, though the rhetorical contributions of the same is rarely analyzed. DeSilva (2002) focuses on uncovering how John employs intertexture to achieve or support identifiable argumentative goals, in particular in regard to Rev. 14.14–16.21 (see deSilva 1999a: 85-93 on intertexture in Rev. 14.6-13).

What is perhaps most distinctive about Revelation vis-à-vis classical rhetoric is that Revelation stunningly attempts to narrate the future (Rev. 1.1, 19; 4.1; 22.6), while Aristotle did not regard this as a viable possibility, and therefore gave *narratio* little place in deliberative oratory (*Rh*. 3.16.11; deSilva 1998b: 785; 2002: 220). Prognostication, however, did play a role as a 'proof' in classical deliberation (Knight 2001: 468), and Revelation represents a narrative elaboration, in essence, of prognostication. As a narration of the future, Revelation can trace out the consequences of future courses of action, 'graphically depicting the incentives and disincentives to either course', as well as display ascriptions of honor and disgrace (deSilva 2002: 221; see also Barr 1984: 50 on Revelation as a display of 'how things work [out] in God's world'; Witherington 2003: 15, 69). The primary rhetorical challenge, then, concerns how to frame a narration of the future that is sufficiently plausible to carry conviction, so that the consequences displayed are accepted as real, and so forth. Notably, how an orator can make his prediction of consequences plausible is a concern in the formulation

of standard deliberative oratory. DeSilva contends that intertexture makes several important contributions to resolving this rhetorical problem.

First, John wants his audience to keep in view the second coming of Christ and the attendant judgment as the 'real crisis' for which they must make adequate preparations and develop the strategy by means of which to encounter that future event advantageously (deSilva 1999a: 68, 109; 2002: 223). John uses older images connected with God's judgment (e.g., Joel 4.13; Isa. 63.2-6; *1 Enoch* 100.3-4) as a means of invoking the traditionally-received conviction that God is committed to judge all people (thus rendering his *emphasis* plausible) and as material for amplification, portraying that event graphically in order to 'impress upon the hearers all the more the danger and horror of that judgment' (deSilva 2002: 223-25). Because the depiction resonates with older, authoritative pictures of God's judgment, the *details* are also rendered plausible rather than fantastic.

Second, John employs extensive recontextualization of Old Testament hymns and prayers that particularly affirm the outworking of God's character (as 'true' and 'just') in acts of judgment on behalf of God's people and against God's enemies (frequently, 'great and marvelous deeds') in the hymns and pronouncements of Rev. 15.3-4; 16.5-7. The poetry and familiarity of these 'old songs' about God's character and activity reinforce a major premise for the implicit enthymeme undergirding the whole of John's narrative of the future: 'since God is just, God intervenes to punish the unjust and the oppressor and to deliver God's faithful clients' (deSilva 2002: 230).

Third, intertexture is employed to provide implicit arguments from example or historical precedent, regarded by classical rhetorical theorists as the primary means by which a deliberative orator could render plausible the consequences he or she alleged to follow upon a course of action. John's extensive, rich and transparent use of Exodus traditions invoke that narrative as a historical precedent. Since God had once before worked terrible (and colorful) plagues to deliver God's people, God could plausibly do so again at a much grander scale (deSilva 2002: 231-34). Labeling Rome 'Babylon' provides another innovative way to adduce an historical precedent that will achieve several rhetorical goals (deSilva 1998b: 795; 2002: 236). It functions as a legal precedent or 'previous verdict' (Aristotle, *Rh.* 2.23.12) that assures the verdict of the heavenly court upon Babylon's newest manifestation (opening up the possibility of bringing the Old Testament prophets' denunciations of historic Babylon and other seats of empire to bear on the new center of domination). It also functions as an historical example that renders the future John portrays for Rome more plausible,

since 'similar results naturally rise from similar causes' (Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.4.9). If the same acts of injustice and oppression are found in Roman rule as were true of Babylon, or Tyre, or other domination systems condemned and eventually overthrown by God, the results will be the same for Rome as for them (deSilva 2002: 230, 236-37).

Despite initial impressions, then, classical rhetorical theory has much to offer the analysis of argument—both explicated and implicit—in Revelation. As with appeals to *pathos*, much investigation remains to be done in this area.

Arrangement

After 'invention', rhetorical theorists give attention to 'arrangement', 'style', 'delivery' and 'memory'—the way one moves from a pile of ideas, as it were, to a polished and perfect oral presentation. 'Memory' rarely comes into play in the discussion of any New Testament text; it is presumed, for example, that Paul's letters were read to the assembly, not memorized for oral performance. The same holds true for 'delivery'. Beyond noting that John does in fact foresee the work being read aloud by one person to the rest of the assembly (Rev. 1.3; Kirby 1988: 198; Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 32), it is quite impossible to recover anything of the gestures or vocal inflection that the lector might have employed.

Scholars generally intuit that it would also be fruitless to attempt to analyze Revelation in terms of the arrangement of the parts of a classical oration (Royalty 1997: 603; deSilva 1998a: 79; 2002: 216), a task that has proven sufficiently controversial even in regard to the New Testament epistles, which resemble classical rhetoric ever so much more closely than does Revelation. An occasional comment betrays too strong a reliance on classical rhetoric in regard to Revelation's arrangement, as for example when Witherington (2003: 17) affirms that ethos is established at the outset, supporting appeals to logos appear in the middle, and appeals to pathos come into play at the end, thus 'in rhetorically appropriate places', when both *ethos* and *pathos* are clearly prominent, and interwoven, at both the opening and closing (and sustained throughout the work). Similarly, while it is true that the opening eight verses of Revelation announce major themes that will appear throughout the work, this is better demonstrated by an examination of the working out of those themes throughout the visions than by a prescriptive use of classical discussions of the *exordium* (Witherington 2003: 74).

Discussions of rhetorical 'arrangement' have centered chiefly on the seven oracles, each of which Kirby (1988: 200) presents as following the standard form for a deliberative oration (proem, or introduction; narra-

tion, or statement of facts; proposition, the major point of the communication; epilogue), and then proceeds to discuss the rhetorical function of each section in terms of the rhetorical function assigned to each part of the deliberative speech (similarly, Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 119; Witherington 2003: 92). For example, the proems establish the *ethos* of the speaker, Christ, 'so that he is then able to administer praise and blame with the authority accorded to divinity', with the force of the theophany of Rev. 1.10-20 evoked with the mention of merely one or two elements of the same (Kirby 1988: 202). Aune (1990: 201-204) takes the model of imperial edict rather than the deliberative oration per se as the template, with similar results in terms of at least the first three parts of each oracle (*praescriptio* or 'introduction'; *narratio*; the *dispositio* giving commands or instructions or decrees; and *sanctiones*, the threats and promises inducing obedience).

To date—thankfully, one might add—no one has attempted to analyze the overall structure of Revelation in terms of one or another kind of oration. Instead, rhetorical critics frequently note the author's 'complicated patterns of interlocking, interwoven, and intercalated visions' (Royalty 1997: 603), use of series of sevens, and other structural devices such as repeated phrases (e.g., 'after this I saw'; Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 33; Royalty 1997: 604) and contrast or comparison (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 33; '*synkrisis*', according to Royalty 1997: 604, though John never draws out the explicit comparisons that are the hallmark of Plutarch's *Lives*, for example, or even Hebrews' use of *synkrisis* in regard to Jesus, the angels, Moses, and the Levitical Priesthood).

John's use of inclusio as a compositional device has been widely noted, if in varying degrees of detail (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991; Longenecker 2001; Witherington 2003). Longenecker (2001) has also drawn attention to John's use of intercalation as a transitional, structuring device. While this had been noted and analyzed by several scholars (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 33, 70; Bauckham 1993: 5; Aune 1998a: 1188), Longenecker identifies this with greater precision as an example of 'a rhetorical device of the ancient world known to Lucian of Samosata as a "chain-link" construction' (2001: 109), and exhibits this device at work in Rev. 3.21-22; 8.1-5; 15.1-4; and 22.6-9. He concludes, as did Nikolakopoulos, that John's grasp of the literary and rhetorical craft 'seems studied and considered, rather than haphazard and confused' (2001: 113).

A number of studies focus in particular on the role of (macro-)chiasm as a structuring device in Revelation (Strand 1978; Welch 1981; Shea 1982; 1984; Schüssler Fiorenza 1991). Strand (1978), Welch (1981), and Schüssler Fiorenza (1991) offer macro-chiastic outlines of the whole book, differing

significantly in the particulars. Shea (1982; 1984) looks for chiasm in Revelation 18 and for parallelism between chapters 5 and 19 based on the parallelism of sections suggested by Strand's macro-chiastic outline. There are, of course, theoretical problems with such endeavors, not the least of which is the lack of discussion of macro-chiasm as a structuring device in ancient texts on rhetoric or literary criticism. *Chiasmus* and its related devices are discussed only with reference to a small unit of two to four lines, normally with actual lexical terms (not synonyms) signaling the members of a chiasm. And the use of *hysteron proteron* is far clearer and intentional in the classical examples used to justify macro-chiastic analysis (Welch 1981: 253-54) than in any of the macro-chiastic analyses themselves.

In practice, these chiastic analyses fall into one or another of the methodological pitfalls so ably outlined by Ian Thomson (1995). Welch, Strand and Schüssler Fiorenza exhibit the danger of formulating chiasms based on selective summary statements of sections of text. The persuasive force in the chiasms they display resides in the correspondence between the summary statements they assign to alleged counterparts within the macro-chiasm. Notably, the summary statements of proposed counterparts are crafted with a view to using as many shared lexemes and syntactical constructions between them as possible—the very things that, if they were actually observed in the text, would give a chiasm the objectivity for which Thomson, for example, calls. These summary statements often fail to represent the greater part of the actual content of the section of text, or smooth over any complications, revealing that they reflect the *analyst's* focus of interest more than *John's*.

Strand offers a secondary chiasm (*hysteron proteron* would be a more correct label) involving the introduction and judgment/disposal of the various members of Satan's party. Here he exhibits the pitfall of selective highlighting of key terms or characters. 'Beast worshipers' actually appear in Rev. 13.8 and 13.12, but Strand highlights their appearance in Rev. 14.9 as their 'introduction', since to do otherwise would interrupt his chiasm. Similarly, he reverses the order of the mention of the two beasts in Rev. 19.20, in effect emending the text, purely for the sake of a cleaner display of the chiasm (the Sea Beast is actually both 'introduced' and named for 'judgment' prior to the Land Beast, resulting in a B-C-B'-C' arrangement, which does not fit Strand's design).

Shea (1982) falls into a trap similar to the 'selective summary headings', this time, however, in regard to representations of alternations between prose introductions and 'hymns' in Rev. 18, and the alleged relationships between corresponding parts. For example, his central sections (D and D') purport

to represent two hymns by the 'merchants of the earth' (Shea 1982: 252), whereas the 'hymn' in 'D' in fact represents the 'voice from heaven' (that utters all of Rev. 18.4-20) speaking in its own voice rather than representing the merchants' lament 'hymn' by prosopopoiia (as is the case in D'). The *lexis* and thematic content of 'D', moreover, is far more clearly related to 18.21-24 (what Shea delineates A') than the material in D'. He similarly overlooks the first 'hymn' of the seafarers in Rev. 18.18b, which would introduce an extra 'hymn' and extra 'prose introduction', throwing the whole scheme off balance. At the same time, he finds no difficulty treating an absent 'prose introduction' as part of the scheme (there is, in fact, no introduction to the speech in Rev. 18.20, and it is a matter of debate whether or not this represents the end of the sailors' speech or the voice from heaven speaking in its own voice again). Shea's second article (1985) offers a much stronger analysis, in part because the author is not trying to match up elements between the two chapters in some kind of forced chiasm (although he does continue to refer supportively to Strand's faulty chiasms), but rather on the basis of literary parallelism with stronger evidence within the text itself.

Attempts to discern John's arrangement of Revelation in terms of an overarching chiasm have, on the whole, obscured other more cogent, and less contrived, observations concerning the rhetorical structure of Revelation based on clear literary markers of transition, introduction of new scenes, and larger sections of well-developed parallelism and parody in contrasting pairs of visions (e.g., the activity around God's throne and the beast's throne in chs. 4–5 and 12–13; the contrast between Babylon and New Jerusalem in chs. 17–18 and 21–22).

Style

Investigations of style from a rhetorical-critical perspective have proven quite fruitful, challenging the old consensus that Revelation exhibits 'the most careless and unornamented language of the New Testament'. In regard to diction, John's somewhat unconventional, Semitic Greek, long seen as a sign of his imperfect grasp of the Greek language, has come to be viewed as a means by which John strives to imitate 'the pungent cadences of the Old Testament', with the result that style reinforces the *ethos* of the work (Kirby 1988: 203) as well as the stance of distance from the dominant culture the author wishes his hearers to adopt (Knight 2001: 476).

Constantin Nikolakopoulos (2001) has especially demonstrated John's mastery of a wide array of figures of speech and figures of thought, including hyperbole (Rev. 1.16; 5.11, 13; 9.6, 16; 20.8), oxymoron (1.18; 2.9; 3.1; 10.9), paradox (2.7 [and par.], 8; 7.14; see also Kirby [1988: 208]

on paradox in 2.9, 10; 3.9, 17 and the way paradox enhances the 'oracular' character of these messages); rhetorical questions (5.2, though Moore [1983] had regarded this as a genuine question; 6.17; 13.4; 15.4; 18.18; Moore [1983] provides a more detailed study of this particular figure of speech and its argumentative contributions); irony (Rev. 16.6; 22.11); antistrophe (Rev. 2.26); chiasmus (Rev. 3.7); and paronomasia (Rev. 11.18; 14.2; 22.18). These rhetorical figures are, moreover, used carefully and strategically to emphasize contents, not accidentally or gratuitously (Nikolakopoulos 2001: 178). Kirby (1988: 203) also notes, though does not analyze, the 'pervasive use…of *metaphor*' throughout the seven oracles, an observation that holds true for the remainder of Revelation as well. A number of scholars have noted John's use of the rhetorical techniques of amplification (e.g., in Rev. 18.12-13), prosopopoiia (especially in regard to Babylon), comparison (*synkrisis*, as in the juxtapositions of Babylon and New Jerusalem), and vivid description (*ekphrasis*) throughout (e.g., Royalty 1997: 601-602; Witherington 2003: 216-17), though only Rossing (1999) has analyzed any of these in significant detail.

Summary

Despite some sweepingly negative claims concerning the promise of classical rhetorical criticism as a methodological location for analyzing the persuasive strategies of Revelation (Stamps 2001), scholars have made considerable progress during the past two decades or so reading Revelation from this very location. There is general agreement concerning the overall rhetorical strategy that one finds at work in the Apocalypse, as with most apocalypses. While some confusion still exists concerning the application of classical discussions of rhetorical genre (the essential goals and character of epideictic, deliberative, and judicial/forensic oratory), it has been demonstrated that Revelation utilizes topics that are familiar to each of these three genres. The most energetic (and, often, ideological) analysis has taken place in the area of John's construction of his own authority and deconstruction of the authority of other prophets (i.e., rival 'orators'), and thus appeals to *ethos* in Revelation. Despite a certain reluctance to investigate appeals to *logos* in Revelation, and even some question as to whether or not John *does* appeal to reason at all, a number of studies have identified and analyzed implicit and explicit enthymemes in Revelation, the deployment of typical epideictic and deliberative topics, and the contributions of intertexture to rational persuasion. Despite unanimity concerning the emotionally evocative power of John's discourse, very little headway has

been made, by contrast, on John's appeals to the emotions of his hearers, which remains perhaps the most pressing desideratum. While attention to diction and style (rhetorical ornamentation) has not been overwhelming (in contrast, for example, to studies of Paul and the Letter to the Hebrews), several significant contributions have been made in these areas as well, demonstrating that readers should not be fooled by John's idiosyncratic Greek into thinking that he is not a master of the art of persuasion.

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