Paul, the 'Real' Man: Constructions and Representations of Masculinity in 1 Corinthians

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Abstract

The search for theological and biblical resources that align with redemptive masculinities is a noble one. In this paper, I show how such a search has to be tempered by a nuanced and careful use of biblical interpretive tools, so that the very constructions, which we wish to destabilise as harmful, are not re-inscribed through a hasty declaration of "redemption" where none exists. The text of 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5 can arguably be used for such purposes. In this text, Paul seemingly draws on a "vulnerable masculinity" by claiming not to employ a sophisticated rhetorical method of speaking, common to the cultural milieu of the time and especially characteristic of a powerful masculinity. He apparently jettisons such rhetorical power for a more embodied and vulnerable masculinity, allowing the embodied crucified Christ to serve as the ultimate display of wisdom. While this theory of "vulnerable masculinity" is certainly appealing in light of the search for redemptive masculinities, in this paper I will show that this text actually re-inscribes notions of dominant masculinities and indeed hypermasculinity.

Introduction

The conviction that "several critical aspects of dominant masculinities are…informed by religious beliefs and practices,"[2] seems to have inspired many scholars in Africa working in critical areas of gender-based violence and HIV to search for alternative theologies that embrace and support more life-giving forms of masculinities – assembled within the rubric of "redemptive masculinities." For example, in their edited collected volume of essays titled *Redemptive Masculinities: Men, HIV and Religion*, Ezra Chitando and Sophia Chirongoma assert that they wish to "underline the importance of religio-cultural resources in the emergence of liberating 'more peaceful and harmonious masculinities.'[3]

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[2] Adriaan van Klinken. "Transforming Masculinities towards Gender Justice in an Era of HIV and AIDS: Plotting the Pathways, in *Religion and HIV and AIDS: Charting the Terrain*, ed. Beverley Haddad (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), 278.

[3] Ezra Chitando and Sophia Chirongoma, "Introduction" in *Redemptive Masculinities: Men, HIV and Religion*, ed. Ezra Chitando and Sophie Chirongoma (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publication, 2012), 1.

One such religio-cultural resource is the bible and biblical scholar, Gerald West has taken up the challenge of using the biblical text as a resource in developing the notion of redemptive masculinities through careful and close reading of biblical texts with communities of faith.[4] The search for theological and biblical resources that align with redemptive masculinities is a noble one. In this paper, I show how such a search has to be tempered by a nuanced and careful use of biblical interpretive tools, so that the very constructions, which we wish to destabilise as harmful, are not re-inscribed through a hasty declaration of "redemption" where none exists.

It has long been established that Paul is not exactly a friend of feminist scholars,[5] but recent scholars researching Paul have tried to "redeem" Paul's masculinity through various attempts,[6] while others have argued that Paul embodies possibilities for alternative constructions of masculinity.[7] The text of 1 Corinthians (especially 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5) can arguably be used for such purposes:

> **18** For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of

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[4] Gerald West, "The Contribution of Tamar's Story to the Construction of Alternative African Masculinities," in Bodies, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible, eds. Tamar S Kamionkowski and Wonil Kim (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 184-200; Gerald West, "The Construction of Tamar's Story to the Construction of Alternative African Masculinities," in Redemptive Masculinities: Men, HIV and Religion, eds. Ezra Chitando and Sophie Chirongoma (Geneva: WCC Publication, 2012), 173-191.

[5] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation. Boston: Beacon Press, (1984a); Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, (1984b); Antoinette Clark Wire, "Prophesy and Women Prophets in Corinth," In *Gospel Origins and Christian Beginnings*, eds. James E. Goehring, Charles W. Hedrick, Jack T. Sanders, and Hans Dieter Betz (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1990a), 134-50; Antoinette Clark Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction of Paul's Rhetoric. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990b.

[6] Brigitte Kahl, "No Longer Male: Masculinity Struggles Behind Galatians 3:28?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 79 (2000): 37-49; Albert Harrill, "Invective Against Paul [2 Cor 10:10], the Physiognomics of the Ancient Slave Body and the Greco-Roman Rhetoric of Manhood," in *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy* Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on his 70th Birthday, eds. Yarbro Collins and Margaret Mitchell (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 189-213; David Clines, "Paul, the Invisible Man," in *New Testament Masculinites*, eds. Stephen Moore and Janice Anderson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 181-92; Jennifer Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004): 85-97.

[7] Joseph Marchal, "Female Masculinity in Corinth? Bodily Citations and the Drag of History," *Neotestamentica* 48, no. 1 (2014): 93-113.

> the discerning I will thwart." [20] Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? [21] For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. [22] For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, [23] but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, [24] but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. [25] For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. [26] Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. [27] But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; [28] God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, [29] so that no one might boast in the presence of God. [30] He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, [31] in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." [1] When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. [2] For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. [3] And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. [4] My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

In this text, Paul seemingly draws on a vulnerable masculinity by claiming not to employ a sophisticated rhetorical method of speaking, common to the cultural milieu of the time and especially characteristic of a powerful masculinity. He apparently jettisons such rhetorical power for a more embodied and vulnerable masculinity, allowing the embodied crucified Christ to serve as the ultimate display of wisdom. While this theory of vulnerable masculinity is certainly appealing in light of the search for redemptive masculinities, in this paper I will show that this text actually re-inscribes notions of dominant masculinities. By paying attention to these re-inscriptions we can avoid an appeal to, what Nadar terms, "palatable patriarchy" which is actually more harmful than redemptive.[8]

[8] Sarojini Nadar, "Who's Afraid of the Mighty Men's Conference? Palatable Patriarchy and Violence against Wo/men in South Africa," in *Redemptive Masculinities: Men, HIV and Religion*, eds. Ezra Chitando and Sophie Chirongoma (Geneva: WCC Publication, 2012), 361, 363.

Methods

In this paper, with Socio Rhetorical Interpretation as an interpretive analytic combined with a gender-critical hermeneutical optic, I will trace out some of the ways masculinity is constituted and performed in the discourse of 1 Corinthians. I demonstrate that normative and normalising engendering is operative in the text and that despite the promise that the text holds out for the possibility of a more vulnerable masculinity, the discourse eventually replicates hegemonic gendered structuring and machinations from the broader social and cultural environment of that milieu. As a result, Christian bodies are scripted to perform according to the dominant cultural protocols and engendering praxes. Because Paul is structured by and functions within the larger discourses of the ancient Mediterranean sex and gender systems, one cannot comprehend the gendered rhetoric of 1 Corinthians without recourse to its interconnections with ancient gender discourses in general.

Rhetography and Rhetology as SRI analytical tools provide a very important link for identifying the performativity of such masculinities. Rhetography refers to the visual imagery or pictorial narrative and scene construction contained in rhetorical depiction.[9] This "progressive, sensory-aesthetic, and/or argumentative texture of a text (rhetology)" allows "a hearer/reader to create a graphic image or picture in the mind that implies a certain kind of truth and/or reality."[10] In a similar manner as in the case of implementing rhetography as a useful analytical category, I will demonstrate that the rhetology of the discourse in 1 Corinthians, in many places constitutes constructions and representations of masculinity in the text, and in so doing replicates a particular gendered structuring and performativity. My concern in this paper is to make visible the constructedness of masculinity, to which end I employ aspects of SRI that assist me with this problematisation without me having to be programmatic in my deployment of it. Rhetography in particular, will allow me to identify the hidden script of gendered machinations, the socio-political structure that configured bodies according to regulatory schemas, and gender normativities that pervaded the ancient Mediterranean world.

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[9] Vernon K. Robbins, "Beginnings and Developments in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," unpublished paper (Atlanta, GA, 2004a), 17–18; Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Series (Blandford Forum: UK: Deo, 2009), 6, 16.

[10] Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, xxvii.

Rhetology refers to "the logic of rhetorical reasoning."[11] It is my contention that a blending of rhetology and rhetography happens in the discourse of 1 Corinthians. Commenting on the Revelation to John, Robbins points to a "merger of rhetology and rhetography" and argues, "[w]hen picture and story become so thoroughly blended with reasoning that the reasoning evokes the pictures and the story, and the pictures and the story evoke the reasoning, then the discourse has become truly remarkable and powerful."[12] This comes about as the gendered language in 1 Corinthians creates a picture in the mind of the Corinthians. Robbins does not, however, directly indicate that rhetology and rhetography in early Christian writings, may also imply a highly gendered and complex intersectionality that blends rhetology and rhetography, and relies upon gendered discourses taken from the sex and gender systems of the ancient Mediterranean to construct its argumentation.[13]

In this paper I will argue that a large component of the argumentation in 1 Corinthians involves rhetography that would have created primarily masculine images in the minds of first century people, whether Christian or not. By doing this, the argument replicates the normative constructions and representations of gender as "truth and/or reality" in the minds of the readers. One such example of how this functions is in the ways in which wisdom and rhetorical performance operate in 1 Corinthians.

Gendered Argumentation and Engendering

It should be noted that the construction and representation of masculinity in 1 Corinthians is not limited only to the sub-section covered in this paper or the passages addressed under this sub-section.[14] In fact,

[11] Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, 16.

[12] Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, 88.

[13] Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, xxvii.

[14] For further discussion of the work done by others who have contributed to investigations that also play a role in constructing and representing masculinity see the following list. In the area of slave imagery and slavery see Ste Croix, "Early Christian Attitudes to Property and Slavery," in *Church, Society, and Politics: Papers Read at the Thirteenth Summer Meeting and the Fourteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 1–38; Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, The History of Sexuality Volume 2, trans. Roberts Hurley (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1985), 187–225; Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 48–85, 132–37; Stephen Moore, *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 99; *God's Beauty Parlor and Other Queer Spaces in and around the Bible* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 150–60; Carolyn Osiek and David Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville, KY:

gendered argumentation and engendering, may be seen in many other texts in the discourse of 1 Corinthians. Furthermore, I do not limit my analysis to texts that only specifically mention "man" as a *topos* of inquiry, but instead, I will look more closely at the rhetorical performances of masculinity within the discourse of the texts. Pauline texts are gendered not merely in the way in which they address "men" and "women" directly, but also in the way arguments are constructed in terms of engendering. The text of 1 Cor. 4:14-21 immediately creates the image of a functioning household of the socially prominent with its παιδαγωγός under the paterfamilias. They are invited through rhetology – the argument of the text – to see Paul as the paterfamilias who has the power over them as their progenitor in the gospel.

In the discussion that follows, I will demonstrate how certain passages within 1 Corinthians script masculinity, very often constructing and representing hegemonic masculinity typical of the Graeco-Roman society. Furthermore, I will argue that the implicit gendered discourse of 1 Corinthians serves only to script bodies to mimetically perform along

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Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 174–92; Stephen Moore and Janince Anderson, "Taking It Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," *JBL* 117, no. 2 (1998): 262; Harrill, "Invective Against Paul," 189–213; Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions.* Minneapolis: Fortress, (2006); Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 85–97; Joseph Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven: Women, Gender, and Empire in the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Benny Liew, "Redressing Bodies at Corinth: Racial/Ethnic Politics and Religious Difference in the Context of Empre," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 137; Jeremy Punt, "Pauline Brotherhood, Gender and Slaves: Fragile Fraternity in Galatians," *Neotestamentica* 47, no. 1 (2013): 149–69; "Identity and Human Dignity Amid Power and Liminality in 1 Corinthians," in *1 and 2 Corinthians*, ed. Yung Suk Kim (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 36–42. In the area of athletic imagery see Victor Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 16–17; Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 214, 215; Marilyn Skinner, "Ego Mulier: The Construction of Male Sexuality in Catullus," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P Hallet and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 111; Bruce Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 170; Stephen Moore and Janice Anderson, "Taking It Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," 253–54, 261, 272; Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 135–46, 165. In the area of body/bodiliness see Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 104, 16–162; Gail Corrington, "The 'Headless Women': Paul and the Language of the Body in 1 Corinthians 11: 2–16," *PRSt* 18 (1991): 223–31; Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Alistair May, *"The Body for the Lord" Sex and Identity in 1 Corinthians 5–7* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 135–43; Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, "Paul and the Rhetoric of Gender," in *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagments of Historical-Critical Discourse.*, eds Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd. Penner (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005a), 287–310.

the lines of the dominant structuring of ideal masculinity. Following a "reading for gender approach"[15] informed by a cultural intertextual optic, I will focus my analysis upon the texts that I deem imperative to the performativity of masculinity. This hermeneutical approach requires a "reading between the lines," with the objective to delineate those conditions that manufacture "the hidden gendered script." In this regard, I will not limit my analysis on texts that only specifically mention man as a *topos* of inquiry, but instead, I will look more closely at the rhetorical performance of masculinity within the discourse of the texts. The former serves only to reinforce androcentric and essentialist notions of masculinity and jettisons to the periphery other more implicit structuring of masculinity that, by their concealment or implicitness, suggest how reiteration has catapulted these to a status of being taken for granted, a status of accepted or given realities. In fact, these concealed aspects operate so much more powerfully exactly because they are concealed and simply taken for granted as "natural" or, as Butler argues, "constituted."[16]

The constructions and representations of masculinity from the ancient Mediterranean was more complex and fluid and not merely limited to fixed categorisation.[17] Commenting on Pauline scholarship in general, Mitchell asserts,[18]

> that the meaning of Paul's letters *is not and never was* a fixed and immutable given awaiting discovery, nor was it transparent in the moment of their initial reading, but it was (and is) negotiated in the subsequent history of the relationship between Paul and those he addressed by his letters, who individually and together wrangle with the text and its possibilities of meaning.[19]

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15. Susan Shapiro, "(En)gendering Jewish Philosophy," in Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth: Essays in Honour of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), 517.

16 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), ix, xii.

17 Cf. Hearon "1 and 2 Corinthians," in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, eds Deryn Guest, et al. (London: SCM press, 2006), 616.

18 Margaret M. Mitchell, "The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics," in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall*, eds. Trevor J. Burke and J. Keith Elliott, NovTSup 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 19–20.

19 Her emphasis. Also see Hearon "1 and 2 Corinthians," 606 who understands 1 and 2 Corinthians from a "location represented by the intersection of multiple identities" that gives rise to a multiplicity of meanings and gendered articulations.

In what follows I will wrestle with the possible negotiated meaning and meaning effects of Paul's texts as they construct and represent masculinity within the discourse of 1 Corinthians.

Wisdom and Rhetorical Performance as Constructions and Representations of Masculinity in 1 Corinthians

In 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5 Paul sketches a sequence of three interconnected arguments (1:18-25; 1:26-31; 2:1-5) that critique the human value system used by the Corinthian Christians under the guise of wisdom (1:20-25). Then in 2:6-16 Paul offers them the Godly alternative, true wisdom, which, by his estimation they were not mature enough to receive (3:1-4).[20] Winter sees the problem of wisdom in terms of rhetoric linked specifically to sophistry and along this trajectory sets out to explain the emphasis by Paul on the wisdom of God versus the wisdom of the world or humankind.[21] Winter surveys how Philo used the term sophist and concludes that it consistently referred to virtuoso orators.[22] According to Winter, Paul deliberately chooses an anti-sophistic approach and shields his church-planting work in Corinth in light of an environment of sophistic "conventions, perceptions and categories."[23] Furthermore, this analysis posits that the Corinthians constructed a sophistic idea of discipleship which made them vulnerable to problems of factionalism and dissension which was often associated with that movement.[24]

Marshall believes Paul's argumentation in 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5 to be in contravention of the normative rhetorical praxis of his epoch and may be seen to carry a fair measure of personal shame for Paul in light of the standard socio-cultural determinations governing rhetorical display.[25] However, neither the Winter[26] or Marshall[27] arguments consider the

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[20] See Charles A. Wanamaker, "A Rhetoric of Power: Ideology and 1 Corinthians 1–4," in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall*, eds. Trevor J. Burke and J. Keith Elliott, NovTSup 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2003b), 125. Also see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 224–25; Hearon "1 and 2 Corinthians," 608.

[21] Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement*, 180.

[22] Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, 59–79.

[23] Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, 141.

[24] Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, 141.

[25] Peter Marshall, Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians (Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 389.

[26] Winter, Philo and Paul Among the Sophists, 141, 143.

[27] Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 389.

gendered nuances implicit in the text given the dominant ancient Mediterranean gendered systems. In fact the rhetorical system that is indicted by Paul according to Winter and Marshall was a highly complex gendered system comprising gender performativity through rhetorical displays and bodily dispositions.[28] As Liew states, "[R]hetoric is about the body of the orator as much as the body of a speech."[29] When Paul is engaged in persuasion through the discourse of 1 Corinthians, gender construction and representation is exactly what is at stake because of the nature of the ancient Mediterranean gendered system and its intersection with rhetorical argumentation and gender performativity.[30] It is my contention that this performative aspect, therefore, necessitates a gender-critical reading of the text.

Paul's discourse in 2:1-5 intentionally evokes a rhetographic image of Paul's initial preaching activity in Corinth as the readers/auditors are invited to picture the nature of his preaching performance with an implicit comparison to the well-known image of sophistic orators in Corinth. Paul's self-portrayal points to an image of him preaching to the Corinthians as a very unimpressive, non-sophistic rhetorician, with a similarly unimpressive message and presentation in comparison to the sophistic rhetoricians who offered persuasive philosophy.[31] As Paul says, he did not approach them with "lofty words or wisdom" (ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας) (2:1). Instead, in his proclamation of the crucified Christ and God's testimony to them, he came in weakness (ἀσθενείᾳ), fear (φόβῳ), and trembling (τρόμῳ) (2:3). He mentions further that his preaching was devoid of the "persuasiveness of wisdom" (πειθοῖ σοφίας) as practised by the sophists. Instead, his public proclamation (κήρυγμα) was founded on "a demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως) (2:4). The reason he cites for this strategy is so that the faith of the Corinthians would be based on God's power (ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ) instead of human wisdom (ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων) (2:5).

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[28] Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, 389.

[29] Liew, "Redressing Bodies at Corinth," 133.

[30] Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele "Unveiling Paul: Gendering Ethos in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16," in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference*, eds Thomas H. Olbricht and Anders Eriksson, Emory Studies in Early Christianity 11 (New York & London: T & T Clark, 2005c), 219–23. Contra Wire "Prophesy and Women Prophets," 137–38 who argues from the premise that Paul is engaged in the art of rhetorical persuasion. She does not, however, see the link between gender identity and rhetorical performance. The result is that her analysis focuses particularly on women and more specifically, the Corinthian women prophets and how they prophesied.

[31] See Mark Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 95–103; Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, 141, 172–79.

In 2:4 Paul asks his audience to picture how he trumped the sophists not by power of his rhetorical performance, which he admits was unimpressive, but by the demonstration of the divine spirit and divine power. Undoubtedly this invited the Corinthians to visualise what they had seen with their own eyes and heard with their own ears when Paul preached, namely, manifestations of the spirit such as are discussed in 1 Corinthians 12. In this instance, Paul's rhetography was intended to persuade the audience that in spite of his shortcomings as a rhetor he had given the Corinthians a demonstration more impressive and powerful than anything the sophists could have offered. Hence rhetography serves Paul's rhetological or argumentative goal in 2:1-5. What is seldom noticed is that in light of the dominant ancient Mediterranean constructions of gender, Paul's depiction of himself and his rhetoric in the way presented in 2:1-5 impinges greatly on his masculinity.

Scholars have demonstrated the importance of rhetorical performance to understanding the argumentative nature of Paul's rhetoric and his relationship with the Corinthians.[32] As mentioned earlier, however, Paul's rhetorical performance is also a performance of gender.[33] Gleason has demonstrated that rhetorical ability intersected with commonplace notions of virility and masculinity in the ancient setting.[34] Any man who had his gaze set on a leadership role in the first or second century would, therefore, have subscribed to copious and seemingly perpetual surveillance of his performance of masculinity by onlookers and rivals.[35]

In accordance with common public speaking protocol in the Graeco-Roman socio-cultural context, honour and shame were antithetical gendered binaries with honour being the domain of masculinity and

[32] Wire, "Prophesy and Women Prophets," 138; Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, "Paul and the Rhetoric of Gender," 289. For a discussion of the importance of rhetoric to Biblical Criticism in general see Pieter Botha and Johannes Vorster, "Introduction," in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference*, eds Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 131 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 17–27.

[33] Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 87.

[34] Maud W. Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E," in *Before Sexuality:The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, eds David M Halperin, John J Winkler, and Froma I Zeitlin (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Unversity Press, 1990), 389–416; Maud. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 82–102, 404.

[35] Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 87.

shame the domain of femininity.[36] Adherence to proper speaking conventions and the use of eloquent oratorical performance could acquire a great deal of honour (male virtue) for a speaker.[37] Whereas poor oratorical performances could result in shame (female virtue) being attributed to a speaker with the concomitant denigration by one's rivals and detractors that accompanied poor rhetorical conventions. According to Winter,[38] the sophists of Roman Corinth, in particular, were noted for their arrogance and intense rivalries. Because of the propensity for bodily surveillance and scrutiny in this ancient context with a keen gaze given to the demeanour of a public speaker, the strength of his voice, and his gestures it was incumbent upon such a person to perform appropriately.[39] Larson notes "[b]ecause performance as a speaker was also gender performance, deficiency in presentation created an opening for a speaker's rivals to denounce him as 'effeminate'."[40] The continual performance of masculinity and the concomitant threat of failure to maintain a masculine status with an ensuing denigration into a (un)masculine or feminine state of being was a very real concern for men during this epoch.[41]

In this gendered context any perception of bodily weakness, would necessarily imply social weakness and the loss of masculinity.[42] Penner and Vander Stichele argue that, "[a]t stake in speaking and acting in the public forum is nothing less than the battle for creating and maintaining one's ideal male identity, often at the expense of someone."[43] Paul's apparent lack of rhetorical skill and weakness of speech according to his own self-claim in 1 Cor. 2:1-5 must be understood in terms of a gendered cultural context that held authority, rhetorical skill, and the construction of masculinity to be almost synonymous. To attack one was to attack the others.

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[36] Cf. Philo (*Special. Laws*. 3.169–175).

[37] See Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*. 11.2.30).

[38] Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, 155–159, 183.

[39] Cf. Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*. 2 12.9–11).

[40] Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," 88.

[41] Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 198.

[42] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 35.

[43]Penner and Vander Stichele, "Unveiling Paul," 8. For further discussion of the hierarchical engendering of the Graeco-Roman world in relation to public speaking protocol and in particular how this was regarded as the domain of the male in which to construct masculine identity see Johannes N. Vorster, "The Blood of the Female Martyrs as the Sperm of the Early Church." *Religion and Theology* 10, no. 1 (2003): 84-85. Here he discusses Quintilian's (*Institutio Oratoria*. 11.3.19-29) prescriptives on gesture, voice and the body of the orator as a construction of masculinity.

What are we to make of Paul's description of his own weakness and lack of rhetorical sophistication in 1 Cor. 2:1-5 given this gendered context then? Indeed, Paul's construction of himself and his speech in the way depicted in 1 Cor. 2:1-5 is very different from what the normative practices of ancient rhetoric, comportment, and masculine performance dictated. Instead of rhetorical prowess, Paul offers a divine wisdom that he regards as greater and as more important than elaborate speech. In his rhetoric in 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5, Paul abandons normative notions of masculinity as traditionally expressed, through persuasive and skilful rhetoric, and calls instead for an alternative construction of masculinity in weakness (femininity). This alternative (un)masculinity is displayed for Paul through divine power and wisdom that is made manifest through weakness in the person of Jesus the crucified saviour (1 Cor. 1:18, 23; 2:2).

According to Punt "Paul's insistence on a crucified Christ (1 Cor. 2:2), created a paradox in combining a Roman punishment executed on mainly politically [sic] subversives and a claim against the absolute power of Rome."[44] Hearon asserts that "Paul's effort to redefine wisdom in terms of the 'weakness of the cross' suggests that the Corinthians, by contrast, understand wisdom in terms of spiritual power."[45] It may well be that the social elite in the Corinthian community were responsible for this claim to wisdom as they would have the financial means to invite philosophers into their homes.[46] Punt argues further, suggesting another important aspect that will be discussed shortly, when he notes,

> In combination with the crucified Christ, Paul ascribed a central role to his resurrection, to a risen Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 15), which signalled God's intervention in current affairs towards a radical alteration of the world.[47]

I agree with Punt's initial assertion of an evident paradox in this text as well as Hearon's identification of Paul's strategy to redefine wisdom. I differ, however, in my articulation of what the meaning of the paradox and redefinition entails and suggest that gendered nuances are also evident.[48] Instead of locating the meaning of this paradox along the lines

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[44] Jeremy Punt, "Paul's Imperium: The Push and Pull of Empire, and the Pauline Letters," in *Paper Presented for the SU and HUB Summer School on Empire Religions, Theologies, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems* (Stellenbosch, 2014), 9.

[45] Hearon, "1 and 2 Corinthians," 608.

[46] Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 73.

[47] Punt, "Paul's Imperium: The Push and Pull of Empire, and the Pauline Letters," 9.

[48] Contra Witherington *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 148 who understands the

of "analogies between Roman and divine empires" linked to the intersection of the political domain and religious formations, or the redefinition of the wisdom tradition in light of an understanding of sophistic wisdom linked with the Hellenistic Jewish tradition,[49] I would like to call our attention to the gendered paradox in this text,[50] paying particular attention to how the crucified and resurrected body of Christ constructs and represents notions of masculinity in the text.

According to the dominant gender ideologies of the Graeco-Roman world, a penetrated body was deemed a feminine body. In the example of Jesus' crucified body, in light of ancient ideologies of gender, his body represents one that was violated, pierced, penetrated by beatings and torture culminating in his death by crucifixion and rendering it effeminate. Cicero noting the indignity and absolute abomination of crucifixion states, "[t]o bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him an abomination, to kill him is almost an act of murder, to crucify him is—what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed."[51]The crucified body of Jesus was, therefore, an (un)masculine,[52] and not inviolable body.[53] Hearon asserts that "the cross is a sign of ignominy (1.22): an instrument of torture reserved for slaves, traitors, and the marginalized, representing the most humiliating form of death."[54] The cross, however, carries with it a set of complex gendered structurings, meanings and meaning effects that are in contradistinction to the dominant notions of masculinity and this emphasis has to be noticed.

Moore,[55] in his investigation of Romans 1:18-3:31 has argued that "the Pauline Jesus' spectacular act of submission [by death on the cross]—

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main assertion of the paradox of the cross to be about God vindicating "human powerlessness" and humiliating a reliance on human power alone. Witherington *Conflict and Community*, 148 states further, "This is what Paul's counter-order wisdom of the cross is all about, and it is radical enough that, if taken seriously, it will require the Corinthians to give up many of the dominant values and presuppositions of their culture about power and wisdom".

[49] Punt, "Paul's Imperium: The Push and Pull of Empire, and the Pauline Letters," 9.

50. Cf. Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 158.

[51] *Against Verres*. 2.5.64.

[52] See Colleen Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*. Oxford: Oxford Press, (2008), 70. She argues for a notion of the "'unmanned' Christ."

[53] Cf. Beverly Gaventa "Mother's Milk and Ministry in 1 Corinthians 3," in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish*, eds. Eugene H. Lovering and Jerry L. Sumney (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 112; Jennifer Glancy, "Boasting of Beatings (2 Corinthians 11:23–25)," *JBL* 123 (2004): 99–135; Conway *Behold the Man*, 67; Liew "Redressing Bodies at Corinth, 136.

[54] Hearon, "1 and 2 Corinthians," 610.

[55] Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 158.

his consummately 'feminine' performance—is simultaneously and paradoxically a demonstration of his masculinity."[56] Given the "broader cultural gender ideology" of the ancient Mediterranean,[57] which epitomised self-control as a main benchmark for masculinity, Moore pictures a transformation of a dominant cultural *topos* of masculinity.[58] He argues that "it is hard to resist reading the Pauline Jesus' submission unto death as a bravura display of self-mastery, and hence a spectacular performance of masculinity."[59] Conway in her investigation of Galatians 3:1 similarly observes that "from a gender-critical perspective, when Jesus is portrayed as one who willingly dies for the good of others, his death becomes a noble, courageous, and thereby manly act."[60] I submit that a similar understanding may be applied to 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5, where Paul "simultaneously and paradoxically,"[61] demonstrates and mimics divine hypermasculinity in his identification with Jesus.[62] In this instance Paul presents himself as weak (feminine),[63] only to claim, on the other hand, that he is actually a real man (*vir bonus*),[64] and beyond that in his

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[56] See Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 163–64; Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 71–78.

[57] See Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 71.

[58] Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 159– 60. Also see Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 82. Conway *Behold the Man*, 71–73 turns to a notion of vicarious death to undo the (un)masculinity of Jesus and redefines his death on a cross as a trait of masculinity in accordance to the broader gendered cultural logic.

[59] Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 159–60.

[60] Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 73.

[61] Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 158.

[62] See Moore *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible*, 99, 139, for the notion of hypermasculinity. Moore *God's Gym: Divine Male Bodies of the Bible*, 139 notes that Jesus "himself is a projection of male narcissism".

[63] It was a common *topos* in the sex-gender system of the ancient Mediterranean for women to be regarded as weak. According to the sex-gender logic of that epoch women were naturally seen as weak, fearful, emotional and uncontrolled (Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus*. 1.8). Cf. Michael Satlow, "'They Abused Him Like a Woman': Homoeroticism, Gender Blurring, and the Rabbis in Late Anitquity," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 1 (July 1994): 2; Martin *Corinthian Body*, 33; *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 44; Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movememnt: A Social History of Its First Century.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, (1999), 361; Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, London: T & T Clark International, (2004), 51.

[64] See Cicero (*De Oratore*, 2.43.184); Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria*. 6.2.18). According to the common stereotypes regarding Roman sex and gender ideologies as gleaned from ancient prescriptive texts the *vir bonus* (good man) was the ideal essence and representation of a dominant/active/penetrative adult male citizen Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P Hallet and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton

imitation of and "cruciformity" with Jesus (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:2) he is in fact a hypermasculine man.[65]

SRI as described by Robbins is helpful here to see the social and cultural intertexture implicit in the text.[66] What appears at first glance to be a subversion of the hegemonic construction and representation of masculinity is in fact a reconfiguration of normative masculinity, with Jesus being the archetypal representation of virile masculinity, or even hypermasculinity for Paul and the Corinthian community to emulate.[67] This then seems to be a Christianising of a dominant gendered script that only serves to re-inscribe normative masculinity.

Paul imbues suffering with power in his articulation of Jesus' crucified body, a body that suffered pain, torture, and effeminisation but is restored to a position of power and authority.[68] This representation of the crucified body of Jesus only serves to authenticate dominant notions of masculinity,[69] and in this way Jesus' body becomes what Butler has called a "regulatory body" or as Foucault would express it, a political technology of the self that merely re-inscribes hegemonic masculinity.[70] As a "regulatory body," Jesus' body also functions to regulate the

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University Press, 1997), 31, 32; Marilyn B. Skinner, "Quod Multo Fit Aliter in Graecia.," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P Hallet and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 14, 15, 24. For further discussion of this term see Gunderson "Discovering the Body in Roman Oratory," in *Parchments of Gender*, ed. Maria Wyke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 170, 171, 183, 185; Penner and Vander Stichele "Unveiling Paul," 223–24; *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2009), 78; and Conway *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 16.

[65] Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 156. In Galatians 2:19 Paul argues that he was crucified with Christ and, therefore, assimilates this crucified identity to himself and in doing so constructs a "cruciformed" identity.

[66] Vernon Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, (1996), 40.

[67] A primary objective of intertextual analysis as posited by Robbins, *Exploring the Texture*, 40 is the delineation of various "processes of configuration and reconfiguration of phenomena in the world outside the text".

[68] See Vorster, "The Blood of the Female Martyrs as the Sperm of the Early Church," 66.

[69] See Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 67–88 and her discussion of masculinity in relation to Galatians 3:1. She asserts, "Paul's own masculine status was integrally linked to his proclamation of Christ, especially with respect to the rhetoric of the cross and crucifixion" Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 68.

[70] Butler, *Bodies,* (19993); Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Sherry Simon and Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 26.

formation and production of the Corinthians' bodies and to script it to perform hegemonic masculinity.[71] As Vorster argues:

> The regulatory body is a site upon which political meaning is inscribed. As such, it is a [sic] not only a product of political meaning, but also enforces and entrenches certain politicalities. It is a product of political power, but its 'regulatory force is [also] made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce, demarcate, circulate, differentiate.' There is therefore a dynamics of political power that forms, infuses and pervades the bodies it controls. The body that it structured serves again to structure bodies.[72]

Lopez[73] calls for attention to be paid to the structuring and performativity of Paul's body or using Glancy again his "corporal vernacular."[74] Lopez asserts, "While there are numerous avenues into the discussion of (re)imag(in)ing Paul, one issue that is particularly worthy of our attention is the manner in which Paul's own body is depicted in his letters."[75] She views Paul's body as a "hybridized body" that is "always negotiating (and

[71]This idea is taken from Vorster "The Blood of the Female Martyrs as the Sperm of the Early Church," 69 in his application of Foucault *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, 26 and Butler *Bodies* to his investigation of early Christian female martyr bodies. According to his analysis the female body that was often "equated with the soil" and a place only to house, grow and nurture "male generative power," is empowered to perform in a masculine way in light of normative cultural articulations of gender. See Vorster, "The Blood of the Female Martyrs as the Sperm of the Early Church," 68. This empowerment, however, serves to subordinate women (femininity) and in so doing merely replicates and supplements the primacy and agency of men (masculinity) which then only re-inscribes hegemonic masculinity as articulated and affirmed in Graeco-Roman notions of gender. Jesus as regulatory body for the Corinthian congregation and his rhetographic image of hypermasculinity also offers a competitive possibility for emperor veneration and may even be seen as eclipsing the emperor as the epitome of male authority and masculinity. This rhetographic image of Jesus by Paul may then be regarded as a possible subversion of Roman imperialism that was punishable by death. This type of conjecture, however, goes beyond the scope and limitations of this paper. For further discussion and interpretive possibilities see; Vorster "The Blood of the Female Martyrs as the Sperm of the Early Church," 75–78; Kathy Ehrensperger, *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged: Feminism and the New Perspective in Pauline Studies.* New York: T&T Clark, (2004); Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven*, (2008); and Punt "Pauline Agency in Postcolonial Perspective: Subverter of or Agent for Empire?" in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 53–61; "Paul's Imperium: The Push and Pull of Empire, and the Pauline Letters."

[72] Vorster, "The Blood of the Female Martyrs as the Sperm of the Early Church," 69–70.

[73] Davina C. Lopez, "Visualizing Significant Otherness: Reimagining Paul(Ine Studies) through Hybrid Lenses," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 90–91.

[74]Jennifer A Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2010), 12.

[75] Lopez, "Visualizing Significant Otherness," 90.

being negotiated by) and mimicking empire."[76] This hybridised body of Paul, as sketched by Lopez, is depicted in relation to postcolonial studies aimed at investigating notions of empire and imperialism. I am interested in investigating Paul's hybridised body, especially in relation to how it performs as constituted by power and the *habitus* of the ancient gendered setting. From this vantage point, Paul has a hybridised, gendered body or a negotiated body that constructs and represents gender in the discourse of 1 Corinthians.

Paul's assimilation of and identification with the crucified body of Christ and his message of Christ's crucified body also carries with it gendered nuances. Commenting on Galatians 2:19 Lopez notes the "stability and impenetrability" of Paul's masculinity.[77] She claims that his,

> 'manhood' is stable neither in legend nor in letter. Paul is vulnerable in a manner that he would not have been as a Roman citizen, a manly soldier and a persecutor imitating Roman hierarchical patterns, or a colonized 'other' fighting for the empire.

Paul in this regard then has a "compromised masculinity that signifies vulnerability" in his construction of masculinity given hegemonic notions of masculinity in that ancient context.[78]

Taking her analysis further, to a discussion of Galatians 4:19, Lopez argues that "Paul transforms his compromised masculinity."[79] In a somewhat comparable way, Martin's argument of hypermasculinity may also be seen then as a transformation of Paul's compromised or (un)masculine body in his depiction of himself in 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5. This comes about as Paul positions himself alongside Jesus' conquering, self-controlled and regulatory body. In so doing Paul assimilates the positive characteristics of Jesus' hypermasculine body onto and into his own body, and transforms his weak (un)masculine body into a dominant masculine image. This construction and representation of masculinity, however, serves only to buttress androcentrism and solidifies hegemonic notions of masculinity that were prevalent in the gendered systems from that context.[80]

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[76] Lopez, "Visualizing Significant Otherness," 90.

[77] Lopez, "Visualizing Significant Otherness," 90.

[78] Lopez, "Visualizing Significant Otherness," 91.

[79] Lopez, "Visualizing Significant Otherness," 91.

[80] Conway *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, 82 argues, "[W]hile Paul may have been anti-empire, it does not follow that he was countercultural or that he subverted basic gender ideologies of his time".

The rhetorical argument or rhetology used by Paul in the discourse of 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5 is based upon and exudes noticeable signs from the secular Graeco-Roman culture of the first century. These implicit signs may be seen in the shape of normative patriarchal understandings of hegemonic masculinity. By his implementation of normative Graeco-Roman cultural practices and values, it seems, therefore, that Paul was totally enculturated within the dominant cultural surroundings in which he lived. As a result he adopted a commonplace cultural understanding of masculinity that linked rhetorical displays to gender performativity. At first glance, it seems that his presentation of himself as weak by standard cultural rhetorical assumptions detracts from his masculinity and in fact renders him (un)masculine and effeminate. At a second glance, however, it turns out to be a rhetorical move in which he manages to assimilate and subsume his deficient (un)masculinity in that of Christ's regulatory body. This in effect, turns out to be a demonstration of hypermasculinity that only re-inscribes andronormativity and patriarchy from the ruling social system. As Butler puts it, there is "no subverting of a norm without inhabiting that norm."[81] Vorster elaborates further, "There is no external vantage point from which the interconnection of discourses can be inquired. The consequence may well be that the subversion of the norm develops into a reproducing or remaking of the norm."[82]

Conclusion

From the discussion of this paper, it seems evident that the discourse of 1 Corinthians is culturally embedded within the patriarchal milieu of the dominant Graeco-Roman culture. Paul directly highlights normative masculinity as an expected and legitimate Christian gendered normativity. The rhetorical argument of 1 Corinthians is based upon and exudes noticeable signs from the "secular" Graeco-Roman culture of the first and second century. These implicit signs, made more evident through intertextual analysis, may be seen in the shape of normative patriarchal cultural values (e.g., the household code system) and commonplace cultural motifs (e.g., males/public/active/generative). Paul used these to construct notions of masculinity which were, more often than not, typical of the dominant masculine stereotypes from that ancient context.

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[81] Judith Butler, "Afterword," in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, eds Ellen T Armour and Susan M St. Ville (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 285.

[82] Johannes N. Vorster, "Introduction: Interconnecting Discourses-Gender, Bible, Publics," *Neotestamentica* 48, no. 1 (2014):8.

The rhetorical argument used by Paul in the discourse of 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5 is based upon and reveals noticeable connections with the secular Graeco-Roman culture of the first and second centuries. These implicit connections are evident in the shape of normative patriarchal understandings of hegemonic masculinity. By his implementation of normative Graeco-Roman cultural practices and values, Paul demonstrates that he was, not surprisingly so, totally enculturated within the dominant cultural surroundings in which he lived. As a result, he adopts a commonplace cultural understanding of masculinity that linked rhetorical displays to gender performativity. At first, it comes across to the auditor of 1 Corinthians that Paul presents himself as weak by standard cultural assumptions about rhetoricians, and this detracts from his masculinity and, in fact, renders him (un)masculine and effeminate. At a second glance, however, it turns out to be a rhetorical move in which he manages to assimilate and subsume his deficient masculinity into that of Christ's, which then turns out to be a demonstration of hypermasculinity. Nevertheless, because this hypermasculinity mimics the culturally dominant regulatory body, it serves only to reiterate the very power that in the first place orchestrated its structuring, thus cementing the existing andronormative, gendered social hierarchy.[83] With regard to 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5 I have argued that Paul simultaneously and paradoxically demonstrates divine hypermasculinity through the person of Jesus. I also have maintained that Paul here constructs himself as weak (feminine), only to state, on the other hand, that he is actually a "real man."

In light of the increasing scholarship around masculinity studies and men's studies, feminist scholars have sounded a warning regarding the ways in which masculinities can be re-inscribed in palatable ways. This has become known, in the literature, as patriarchal bargaining. In this paper, I have shown that what might appear to be a redemptive masculinity or a vulnerable masculinity ends up simply not subverting masculinity, but re-inscribing it. Through rhetography and rhetology, I have shown that sometimes a seemingly redemptive text masks more powerful forms of masculinities, and indeed hypermasculinity that does more harm than good. What we end up with is a masculinity that is all-powerful, and all conquering that can even conquer death. This re-inscription of hegemonic ancient Mediterranean masculinity serves only to further buttress distorted notions of contemporary masculinity, especially in our African contexts. Chitando and others write about the insurmountable burdens placed on men in contexts rampant with HIV, unemployment, and poverty where men are required to succeed at all

[83] Cf. Butler, *Bodies*, x, xii, xviii.

costs even in contexts of death. In these contexts, the hypermasculinity of Paul simply adds to the pressure and simply re-inscribes the idea of men as providers, protectors, priests, and as people all-powerful, instead of recognising the value in men simply being human, which is exactly what the death of Christ has the capacity to envisage. It could even be argued that the death of Christ achieves this humanness. In death, he portrays the possibility to recognise frailty and humanity. In making an appeal to the resurrection, Paul implicitly appeals to a hypermasculinity that is unachievable. This unachievable virile masculinity is hardly helpful in contexts where Black men struggle with the daily ruthlessness of life where they are called on to be economic providers, to earn more, to do more and to be "the man." Paul, the "real man" hardly serves to problematise this masculine ideal. In fact, it merely concretises this ideal of masculinity and makes it even more unachievable.

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