Book Reviews

In *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics*, Carol A. Newsom has collected eighteen of her essays that appeared between 1989 and 2016 and one previously unpublished essay. Unlike many volumes of this sort, the whole greatly exceeds the sum of its parts. Apart from its usefulness as a survey to scholars and students, the book advances Newsom's scholarly agenda.

Newsom works with texts circulating in and around Jerusalem during the late Second Temple period. This was a time of intellectual ferment: proto-gnostic sects proliferated; established religious practices were being challenged, defended, and modified. Newsom argues persuasively that these groups were led by sophisticated readers and rhetors. The leaders grasped that the Hebrew Bible, still undergoing canonization, is polyphonic and intertextual. Further, the texts that they created deployed polyphony, enargeia, and other rhetorical techniques to shape communal identity, attract adherents, and help individuals cope with the precarity of their status.

These arguments are advanced in each of the book's four topical sections. First are six essays that explain and apply Newsom's methods of rhetorical criticism. Second are four essays illustrating how the Qumran community—responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls—shaped communal and individual identity. Third are three essays that lay out an ethno-psychological model for mapping conceptions of self and agency across cultures. The essays apply the model to the Hebrew Bible and a variety of Second Temple texts. Last are six reception studies that examine how narratives of the period are taken up and transformed both in antiquity and in modern times.

Newsom, a chaired emerita professor of theology at Emory University, has published on so many aspects of Second Temple literature over her career that she has plenty of essays on method, theory, and application to choose from. As a result, even without additional commentary, the sections build coherent arguments. Each section opens with introductory issues of

theory, method, and scope and develops with close textual analysis and suggestive implications.

The first section on methods reveals what Newsom means by rhetorical criticism and what theorists she relies on most. Like many biblical scholars, her immediate rhetorical touchstone is George Kennedy. But he does not inspire her to read widely in the Greco-Roman tradition. She is not concerned to trace possible cross-influences during the Hellenistic period. Instead Newsom turns to Bakhtin and Burke and the more literary strand of twentieth-century rhetorical criticism.

For Newsom, rhetorical strategies in scripture reflect the identities and ontologies of their compositors and shape those of readers and writers to come. Accordingly, this section accomplishes two tasks for Newsom. First, the section launches Newsom's larger claims that Second Temple communities deployed rhetorical strategies to shape individual and communal identities with case studies of Job (chapter 2), Proverbs 1—9 (chapter 3), Jewish apocalyptic texts (chapter 5), and texts from Qumran (chapter 6). Second, for biblicists new to rhetorical approaches, it introduces concepts and methods of rhetorical criticism, including Bakhtinian polyphony and dialogism (chapters 1 and 3), genre studies (chapters 2 and 4), and a variety of basic rhetorical concepts (chapters 5 and 6) such as epideictics, arrangement, enargeia, and kairos, though she doesn't always employ these terms. While displaying nuanced rhetorical sensibilities, Newsom would clearly benefit from additional reading in rhetorical scholarship, particularly Carolyn Miller's classic "Genre as Social Action"[1] and William FitzGerald's *Spiritual Modalities* for its use of Burke's religious terministic screen to draw Burkean implications for prayer and religious practice.[2]

In Section Two, Newsom argues that the Qumran community—a break-away Jewish sect that deliberately positioned itself against the practices in the Second Temple—was "intentional and explicit in the formation of the subjectivity of its members" (159). First, she argues that the Dead Sea Scrolls served as a library for the community (chapter 7), based on the number of copies of specific texts and in which caves they were found. She infers from this a basic comfort level of the Qumran leaders with recycling texts and arranging passages for persuasive effect. She supports the point with case studies of the Sabbath Songs (chapter 8), the Hodayot hymns (chapter 9), and the polemic apocalyptic texts (chapter 10).

In Section Three, Newsom adapts an anthropological matrix for mapping cultural conceptions of selfhood. The vertical axis represents the locus of perspective from exterior to interior while the horizontal axis represents the locus of control, from perceiving oneself to be in control to seeing

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[1]Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70, no. 2 (1984): 151–67, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638409383686.

[2]William FitzGerald, *Spiritual Modalities: Prayer as Rhetoric and Performance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).

oneself as controlled by other forces. Newsom identifies the dominant view in the Hebrew Bible as granting individuals relatively high measures of agency and free-will as long as these are disciplined by the imperative to follow God's path. In contrast, Second Temple communities each define themselves as the inheritors of arcane wisdom that elevate them above competing groups. Their texts reflect on-going struggles to balance competing yearnings for physical satisfaction, knowledge, and discipline. This section gathers together recent work and points toward a new chapter published in 2020.[3] It will be of special interest to scholars working in comparative and cross-cultural rhetoric.

The reception studies in Section Four reflect the strong interest of biblicists in following the reuse of scriptural texts from ancient times and into the modern age. Three essays concern the Book of Job—the subject of one of Newsom's full-length monographs. The last three essays concern the reuse of biblical narratives in Second Temple texts.

As a Second Temple scholar, Newsom tends to treat the Babylonian Exile as the watershed that elevated rhetorical skill in Jewish writers and redactors. But evidence of earlier skill abounds. The centralization of the cult to the Temple in Jerusalem during the reign of King Josiah required considerable skill. The scribal redactors not only composed and authorized the Book of Deuteronomy and camouflaged their revisions of sacrificial laws in Leviticus but also used I Kings and the Book of Chronicles to credit the centralization to King Solomon some 300 years earlier.[4] Similarly, while I much appreciate Newsom's discussion of how the Qumran community borrowed from the psalms to create their new genre of Hodayot, I credit the psalmists with more rhetorical skill than she does and cite different reasons for why they omit references to sin and repentance.[5]

No doubt Newsom's book will be widely adopted for courses taught by biblical scholars, especially those interested in rhetorical approaches. But the text will also be valuable to rhetoricians studying religion and social movements more broadly.

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[3]C. A. Newsom, "In Search of Cultural Models for Divine Spirit and Human Bodies," *Vetus Testamentum* 70, no. 1 (2020): 104–23, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685330-12341425.

[4]Gary N. Knoppers, "Prayer and Propaganda: Solomon's Dedication of the Temple and the Deuteronomist's Program," *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (April 1995): 229–54, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43722338.

[5]Davida Charney, *Persuading God: Rhetorical Studies of First-Person Psalms*, Hebrew Bible Monographs (Sheffield, GB: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015).