

Rhetoric, Violence and Evil: Connections, Reflections and Responses  
A Conference of the Centre for Rhetorics and Hermeneutics  
University of the Redlands  
January 2004

“Military Images in Philippians 1-2:  
A Feminist Analysis of the Rhetorics of Scholarship, Philippians, and Current Contexts”

Joseph A. Marchal  
Graduate Theological Union

Since a turn to rhetoric can, by some estimates, be seen as an alternative to violence, the occurrence of violent images (and possibly even threats) presents unique problems for rhetoricians, especially those interested in biblical studies.<sup>1</sup> Taking Philippians 1 and 2 as a test case, this paper will examine the role of military images in the letter and in scholarship on the letter. Seeking a way to engage potential violence in these rhetorics, the paper desires to step beyond mere identification of these rhetorics, integrating identification into a series of feminist responses, including suspicious caution, analysis of domination, ethical evaluation, resistance, and creative goals/hopes for change.<sup>2</sup> Such a project has clear resonances with the work of rhetorical scholars Lucie

---

<sup>1</sup> Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca and Chaïm Perelman wrote that “[r]ecourse to argumentation assumes the establishment of a community of minds, which, while it lasts, excludes the use of violence.” See Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 55. For more on violence and argumentation, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*, 54-59. Typically, Perelman is credited with the work of the New Rhetoric to the exclusion of Olbrechts-Tyteca. Though all indications lead to their full partnership in the conception, research and writing of *The New Rhetoric*, Olbrechts-Tyteca’s name and role are literally being written out of the history of rhetoric. It is for this reason that this project lists the two authors in reverse order to the “normal” references, which is also the alphabetical order of their last names. For more on Olbrechts-Tyteca’s background, contribution to this tome, and later work, see Barbara Warnick, “Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca’s Contribution to *The New Rhetoric*” in *Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women* (ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 69-85. For more on the prominent role assigned to Perelman in North American and European scholarship, see *Practical Reasoning in Human Affairs: Studies in Honor of Chaïm Perelman* (ed. James L. Golden and Joseph L. Pilotta; Dordrecht, Netherlands; D. Reidel, 1986); and *The New Rhetoric of Chaïm Perelman: Statement & Response* (ed. Ray D. Dearin; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> These responses are suggested by the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (among others). For the most recent elaboration of these steps for feminist biblical interpretation, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), 165-190; *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 48-55. It should also be noted that this paper’s

Olbrechts-Tyteca, Chaïm Perelman, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (among others), and could prove to be oddly relevant to current contexts of military declarations and strategies.

### *Overview of Military Imagery in Philippians*

The examination of military images in Philippians has been a provocative development for recent studies of the letter, particularly topical since it calls attention to Philippi's significant history as a colony and area of veteran settlement.<sup>3</sup> Edgar Krentz's initial study on military language in 1:27-30 surveyed the importance of this language as a *topos* in many areas of Greco-Roman society: politics, biographical writing, and philosophy (in particular, ethics).<sup>4</sup> Both Krentz and his student Timothy Geoffrion read the letter with this ethical backdrop, where the faithful soldier is the example for the ethical life.<sup>5</sup> These initial forays into military imagery in the letter has provoked further

---

feminist interpretation of Philippians is not made in a vacuum, but has developed in many important ways in conversation with (and occasional contradistinction to) the work of Cynthia Briggs Kittredge. See Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> For more on the Roman colonial background of Philippi, see Lukas Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Craig S. de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationship of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 233-250, 275ff.; Lilian Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts As Received by First-Century Philippian Women* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988), 59-60; Paul Collart, *Villes de Macédoine: depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin de l'époque romaine* (École Française d'Athènes: Paris, 1937); Peter Pilhofer, *Philippi I: Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995); Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-54.

<sup>4</sup> Edgar M. Krentz, "Military Language and Metaphors in Philippians," in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Bradley H. McLean; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 105-109. Though primarily focused upon "celestial citizenship," Lilian Portefaix's study (which predates Krentz's offering here) on the reception of Philippians by first-century women offers several initial points about the potential military connotations in the letter. See especially Portefaix, *Sisters*, 140-141.

<sup>5</sup> Krentz, "Military Language," 109; Timothy C. Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose and the Political and Military Character of Philippians* (Lewiston, ME: Mellen, 1993), 38. Geoffrion calls this the *topos of militia spiritualis*, see Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 38-42. See also David McInnes Gracie, "Introduction" in Adolf von Harnack, *Militia Christi: The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries* (trans. and intro. D. M. Gracie; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 19-20.

consideration by Craig S. de Vos, Raymond H. Reimer, and John Paul Schuster.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond pointing out the rather obvious uses of military terms in the letter, such as *prait\_ri\_* (1:13) and *systrati\_t\_s* (2:25),<sup>7</sup> these studies also argue that the military imagery plays a more direct role in the purpose of the letter: to exhort the Philippians to stand firm.<sup>8</sup>

Following Watson's division of the letter's rhetorical structure, Krentz, Geoffrion, and Reimer focus on 1:27-30 as the section that establishes the purpose of the argument.<sup>9</sup> By paying close attention to the wording and argument of this section, they find that a number of the terms are found in speeches of encouragement given by commanders to their troops when they seem discouraged or intimidated. For example, the verb *politeuesthe*, especially when paired with *euangeliou* in 1:27, recalls the proper way to live out one's obligations to the imperial cult.<sup>10</sup> The second allusion to this good news in

---

<sup>6</sup> Craig S. de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 277ff.; Raymond Hubert Reimer, "'Our Citizenship Is in Heaven': Philippians 1:27-30 and 3:20-21 As Part of the Apostle Paul's Political Theology" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997); John Paul Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in Philippians" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Von Harnack, *Militia*, 36; Portefaix, *Sisters*, 140; Krentz, "Military Language," 109-110. See also Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 45; Reimer, "'Our Citizenship,'" 191-192, 201-202. Reimer, in particular, emphasizes that the prosopographical studies show that many of the Macedonian soldiers in the Praetorian Guard can be identified as from Philippi. See Theodoros Ch. Sarikak\_s, "Des Soldats Macedoniens dans l'armée romaine," *Ancient Macedonia II: anakoin\_seis kata to Deutero Diethues Symposio, Thessalonik\_, 19-24 Augoustou 1973* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1977), 431-464; Davorlin Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 164.

<sup>8</sup> Krentz, "Military Language," 113, 115; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 23; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 278-279.

<sup>9</sup> Krentz, "Military Language," 113; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 25, 35-82; Reimer, "'Our Citizenship,'" 136. Here they follow Duane F. Watson in identifying 1:27-30 as the letter's *narratio*. See Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *NovT* 30:1 (1988): 60, 65-67.

<sup>10</sup> Krentz, "Military Language," 115-116; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 45-47; Reimer, "'Our Citizenship,'" 144-146. See also R. R. Brewer, "The Meaning of *politeuesthe* in Phil. 1:27," *JBL* 73 (1954): 76-83. Schuster argues for the importance of the use of *politeuesthe* as an alliance term in a treaty between Rome and Maroneia; see Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 53, 64, 70-72, 177-178. While Krentz and Geoffrion attempt to establish that military terms were generally "in the air" for ethical topics, Schuster's comparative thesis is often premised upon the letter *directly* alluding to such sources as Appian's and Dio Cassius' accounts of the battle of Philippi (see Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 114). While such a thesis

the verse (*t\_pistei tou euangeliou*) could then be referring to a soldier's pledge of allegiance to the general and the emperor.<sup>11</sup> Even the adverb *axi\_s* (1:27) can be used to denote excellence in combat.<sup>12</sup>

The military imagery extends beyond the initial clause of this verse, though. The theme of absence and presence is important for military situations, since a commander's presence in battle is often depicted as a necessary positive example for the troops (1:27, see also 1:7-8, 19-26; 2:12, 24, 28).<sup>13</sup> The third clause (*st\_kete en heni pneumati, mia psych\_synathlountes*) summons the image of soldiers standing in line side by side in proper formation.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, *st\_kete* is an antonym for fleeing (*pheugein*) as well as an important aspect of how to live worthily as citizens of the empire (*politeuesthe*), especially in times of war.<sup>15</sup> The unity and togetherness of the clause (*en heni pneumati, mia psych\_synathlountes*) is also the desired mental attitude for the army, since group action is the hallmark of a successful campaign.<sup>16</sup> The rest of this section only seems to

---

is problematic and difficult to demonstrate, Schuster's study does further demonstrate the wide semantic field for military language and is therefore useful for the purposes of this overview.

<sup>11</sup> Von Harnack, *Militia*, 28-29; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 62-65; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 149-150. In the imperial context *euangelion* frequently referred to the good news of an important military victory or the rise of a new emperor (who often bears the title *s\_t\_r*, see 1:28; 3:20). See Krentz, "Military Language," 117-118; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 49-50; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 175-177; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 274; Krentz, "De Caesare et Christo," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 28 (2001): 343-344.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 44-45; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 143-144; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 278.

<sup>13</sup> Krentz, "Military Language," 119.

<sup>14</sup> Portefaix, *Sisters*, 140; Krentz, "Military Language," 120; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 60-61; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 147-149; Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 79-81; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 277-278.

<sup>15</sup> Krentz, "Military Language," 121; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 24, 36, 55; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 146; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 278. Hawthorne notes that *st\_kete*, as well as *synathloun*, *ag\_n* and *paschein*, could be either military or athletic terms. See Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 54.

<sup>16</sup> Krentz, "Military Language," 122-123; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 59; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 148; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 277-278. The image of "contending together" might be especially potent for veterans to recall as a group; see Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 53. Three of the key terms here (*st\_kete*, *synathlountes*, and *politeuesthe*) are also repeated in 3:17-4:3; see Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 25.

reinforce the battlefield imagery, as the audience is exhorted not to be intimidated (*m\_ptyromenoi*, 1:28) with a term typically reserved for frightened and disorderly horses in the midst of a battle.<sup>17</sup> The antithetical language of destruction (*ap\_leias*) and salvation (or safety, *s\_t\_rias*) in the next clause emphasizes the potential outcomes of any military conflict.<sup>18</sup> One of the soldier's expectations going into battle would certainly have been the possibility of suffering injury (*paschein*, 1:29) from another combatant.<sup>19</sup> Finally, the use of the term for opponents (*antikeimen\_n*, 1:28) among this dense cluster of military terms seems to confirm that *ag\_na* (1:30) should be read primarily as a military, rather than an athletic, term.<sup>20</sup>

Those arguing for the importance of military images in Philippians need to show that such language plays a major role in the organization of the whole, not just one of its parts. It is essentially this endeavor that Geoffrion's monograph takes up, expanding upon Krentz's initial article by analyzing the other sections in relation to the dominant purpose of the letter as argued in military terms: steadfastness. Such steadfastness is demonstrated by the military images of both staying in line (three forms of *men\_* in 1:24-25) and advancing or making progress (*prokop\_* in 1:12, 25).<sup>21</sup> The community's shared identity is required to remain steadfast together, as the *koin\_nia* language (1:5, 7; 3:10;

---

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 66; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 150-151; Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 83; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 278.

<sup>18</sup> Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 155-156.

<sup>19</sup> Krentz, "Military Language," 126; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 71-77; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 156-158.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Dibelius, *An die Thessalonischer I-II; An die Philipper* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1925), 71; Portefaix, *Sisters*, 140; Krentz, "Military Language," 126; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 69-70; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 152, 159-160; Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 84. Appian used *ag\_n* to describe the battle at Philippi; see Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 88-89.

<sup>21</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 59; Reimer, "Our Citizenship," 190; Schuster, "Rhetorical Situation," 58, 62.

4:14, 15) and the frequent appeals to joy are meant to reflect.<sup>22</sup> The exhortations to joy reflect the expectation that a good soldier would do his duty joyfully, just as Paul does, even while suffering (1:18; 2:17-18).<sup>23</sup>

The role of examples is vital both in military situations and in the organization of the letter to the Philippians. Since the army requires submission and obedience, the Christ hymn could function as a model of such humble obedience (2:7-8).<sup>24</sup> Paul seems to be playing the role of both a model and an authority figure (like a military commander), since he calls for obedience from the audience (2:12) without grumbling (2:14), having the same conflict (1:30), even in his absence (1:27; 2:12).<sup>25</sup> Clearly, Timothy and Epaphroditus (the *systrati\_t\_n*, “co-soldier” in 2:25) are also presented as models of steadfast devotion.<sup>26</sup> The description of Timothy as *isopsychon* (in 2:20) to Paul might reflect the role of “a confidant” serving especially in military situations.<sup>27</sup> The presentation of their positive models only heightens the contrast between the negative models (1:15-17; 2:14-15) and the positive one of Paul. If one finds this polarization between enemies and allies to be reminiscent of the sides lined up in

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 82-84, 105-117. Schuster sees *koin\_nia* as an alliance term in Josephus and Appian; see Schuster, “Rhetorical Situation,” 50-53, 177. *Chara* (joy) and related words appear 21 times in the letter (1:2, 3, 4, 7, 18 twice, 25; 2:2, 17 twice, 18 twice, 28, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 4 twice, 6, 10, 23).

<sup>23</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 41, 118-120. According to Geoffrion both joy and steadfastness are part of the *topos* of *militia spiritualis*.

<sup>24</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 41, 134-140; Reimer, “Our Citizenship,” 197-199; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 280-281.

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 85, 100-104, 129-133. In a similar vein the letter uses many imperatives and refers to Paul’s *stephanos* (4:1); see Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 101, 206-207; Reimer, “Our Citizenship,” 206-207; A. H. Snyman, “Persuasion in Philippians 4:1-20” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 333-334; Krentz, “De Caesare,” 344. Phil 1 and 2 seem to be arguing from the model of Paul throughout, yet as a strategy it will come explicitly to the fore later, as in 3:17 (*symmin\_tai* and *typos*) and 4:9.

<sup>26</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 140-146; Reimer, “Our Citizenship,” 201-202; de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 278.

<sup>27</sup> Reimer, “Our Citizenship,” 201. See also Panayotis Christou, “ISOPSYCHOS, Phil 2:20,” *JBL* 70 (1951): 293-296; Peterlin, *Paul’s Letter*, 163.

formation in 1:27-30, then the imagery seems to be even more forcefully pointing the audience in only one direction.<sup>28</sup>

As a result of the prominence of military imagery in 1:27-30 and its argumentative compatibility throughout the rest of the letter, scholars arguing for the relevance of this set of images maintain that the letter is meant as an encouragement for steadfastness.<sup>29</sup> Most of the time, these scholars cite the heritage of military colonists in Philippi as one that would give added credence to the importance and persuasiveness of such images, since they would be familiar as well as favorably viewed.<sup>30</sup> In this regard Paul plays an important and “peculiar” role as one with authority, but apparently limited authority, in these exhortations, as he presumes that calls for steadfastness and obedience will be followed.<sup>31</sup> Thus, scholars interested in the military imagery in Philippians hold that the audience was receptive to the means, the message and the sender of the letter.

*Feminist Assessment: Reconsidering the Scholarship on Military Imagery in Philippians*

Having surveyed the strengths and descriptive power of those scholars who have found military images in Philippians, this study begins differently, namely with suspicious caution.<sup>32</sup> Acknowledging that biblical texts have been used as support for oppressive practices throughout the centuries, we carefully enter into an evaluation of these images, initially dubious about the positive view of the soldier as an ethical ideal

---

<sup>28</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 152-158. This contrast between model and anti-model is also particularly evident in the following chapters (3:2-3, 18-21; 4:2-3, 8-9).

<sup>29</sup> Krentz, “Military Language,” 115, 127; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 115.

<sup>30</sup> Krentz, “Military Language,” 127; “De Caesare,” 344; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 25. Geoffrion maintains that the audience would have consisted of “citizens or residents of a Roman colony,” both of whom (he presumes) would receive a letter with such images quite amicably. See Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 23.

<sup>31</sup> Geoffrion repeatedly emphasizes this “limited authority figure” conception of Paul. See Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 85, 100-104. Here he is following the thought of Wayne A. Meeks (among others) who see Paul as being “suggestive rather than prescriptive.” See Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 139 (whom Geoffrion cites approvingly in this section).

<sup>32</sup> On the hermeneutics of suspicion, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom*, 175-177; *Rhetoric*, 50-51.

promoted by Philippians' scholarship. This response of suspicion is only further fueled by the lack of analysis as to how military images and models function in an order of domination (for both Greco-Roman antiquity and Western modernity/postmodernity).<sup>33</sup> The scholars of military images surveyed above do not make use of any feminist or liberation oriented approaches in their interpretations, while they rarely (if ever) even refer to these critical interpretive perspectives.

As a result, it should not be surprising that these evaluations of Philippians fail to take up any kind of systematic analysis of domination, though they might be especially relevant in the case of military images in a letter within an imperial setting. In this way this study again proceeds differently, implementing *kyriarchy* as a descriptive analytic concept to help in our analysis of military imagery in interpretation and in the letter itself. The term *kyriarchy* is here preferred over *patriarchy* since it emphasizes a more comprehensive view of how oppression functions.<sup>34</sup> Rather than a simplified, dualistic analysis of power in gendered terms, *kyriarchy* highlights how multiple and mutually influential structures of domination and subordination function together, evident not only in sexism, but also in racism, classism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, colonialism, nationalism, and militarism (among others).

Though the importance of the colonial status of the city of Philippi is often noted in these studies,<sup>35</sup> it has yet to lead to even a cursory suggestion for postcolonial interpretations of the letter, either by these scholars interested in military images or by

---

<sup>33</sup> On the analytic or hermeneutics of domination, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom*, 172-175; *Rhetoric*, 50.

<sup>34</sup> The term "kyriarchy," based on the Greek word for lord, has been coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza to treat exactly this phenomenon. For an introductory definition to this neologism, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom*, 1, 118-119, 211; *Rhetoric*, ix. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (rev. ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 211 n. 6; and *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 8, 117.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Krentz, "Military Language," 111-112, 127; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 23.

anyone else in the field.<sup>36</sup> Since the military is one of the most obvious wings of a colonizing regime, postcolonial concerns seem to be most certainly meritorious of consideration once one identifies the prevalence of military imagery in the letter. By noting the socio-political context of the letter's writing (the presence of veterans at Philippi, its status as a Roman colony), scholars focused upon military imagery have reminded interpreters of an oft-neglected factor in the interpretation of Pauline letters.<sup>37</sup> Though they have thus far not taken on this task, their work invites and encourages the approach of this study (and hopefully, many more to come).

Military images are also connected to violence. While this might be a rather obvious observation to be making, it is one rarely (if ever) made by scholars who propose the relevance of military imagery for the letter to the Philippians. The use of such images would not have been any less connected to violence in the Greco-Roman period. One of the virtues of the military scholars' explanations has, at times, been the vivid visualization of the images in the letter. Both Krentz and Geoffrion, for example, write of the battle lines being drawn, as they swing to face each other. The letter seems to point out to these "soldiers" the opposition, naming them the enemies (3:18, see also 1:15-17, 28; 2:15, 21). There is even some brief discussion of suffering (1:29; 2:17, 27-28). Yet, remarkably, there is very little acknowledgment by scholars that these

---

<sup>36</sup> For brief introductions to postcolonial analysis in biblical interpretation (especially as it is partnered with feminist analyses), see Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000); Kwok Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995). See also Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000); R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> For recent efforts to correct this lack in Pauline studies, see, for example, a number of studies collected in: Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).

machinations involve, or serve as preludes to, actual violence. The hearkening towards military images stops short, and the considerations are, as a result, quite bloodless.<sup>38</sup>

Ironically enough, it has been precisely this issue of bloodshed that has been at the heart of previous debates among scholars of “early Christianity,” as to whether participation in this movement could have been compatible with Roman military service. While some have explained the incompatibility of military participation for early believers by reason of the potential for idolatry, others maintain that it is specifically the violence and bloodshed that would have been especially prohibitive for them.<sup>39</sup> If there is any doubt as to whether images of the military or the ideal soldier are strongly affiliated with acts of violence, one can simply survey materials describing the training and enlisted activities of a Roman soldier (*miles*).<sup>40</sup> When one thinks of a soldier in the Roman army, the essential traits include being in a physical condition and having the facility with weapons so as to inflict harm and cause (mostly mortal) damage to other human beings.<sup>41</sup> If one cannot meet this qualification for committing acts of violence, one cannot effectively be a soldier in both his violent and threatening roles. Thus, when language recalls the formations and encouragement of soldiers engaged in a battle (as the letter of Philippians seems to do), it implies and anticipates an impending violent, bloody, and (for some) mortal resolution.

---

<sup>38</sup> The analogy here to the terms of discussion for modern warfare (especially as it has been described of late by and for U.S. armed forces) is irresistible. Similarly, conversations stop short of speaking of blood and death, offering, rather, obfuscations and circumlocutionary descriptions, such as surgical strikes, precision targets, smart bombs, and collateral damage.

<sup>39</sup> Jean-Michel Hornus, *It Is Not Lawful for Me to Fight* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980); and C. John Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War* (London, 1918). See also Gracie, “Introduction,” 14.

<sup>40</sup> Roy W. Davies, *Service in the Roman Army* (ed. David Breeze and Valerie A. Maxfield; New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 3-15, 26, 41-43. See also Antonio Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens: Soldiers, Emperors, and Civilians in the Roman Empire* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 16-22, 89-116.

<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the medical service in the field was mainly set up in anticipation of casualties in the Roman army. See Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A. D.* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969), 250-253.

Because of the limited reach of the studies examining military images, the considerations of the audience have also been, in the end, partial and brief, especially in regards to the potential for a number of possible attitudes about or reactions to military images (since, as these scholars *have* acknowledged, these images could be connected to Philippi's multiple colonizations).<sup>42</sup> Perhaps this can begin to explain why most scholarship on the military images in the letter has not questioned the valence of such images for an audience among a subject people (a task this study will briefly attempt to address below). Scholars assume a positive reception for these images in the letter of Philippians because of the settlement of veterans at Philippi during the civil wars. This assumption overlooks several factors in terms of the community at Philippi and its relation to the structures of domination in the Roman Empire.

First, it seems unlikely that veterans (or their descendants) were members in any significant way of the relatively small audience Paul was addressing in the Philippian community. In general, the appeal of this movement was not to elite members of society, but to an ethnically and socially diverse mix of subsistence-level (or lower) populations. More recent scholarship that has attempted to model the "church" community at Philippi confirms that this tendency would have been operative at Philippi as well. De Vos writes that it was "unlikely that there were any in the church who were descendants of the original colonists. Certainly nothing remotely hints at his [Clement, 4:3] being a member of the ruling elite."<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> By the mid-first century CE, Philippi was under the authority of the Roman Empire and designated a *colonia iuris Italicum*. For more on this kind of colony, see De Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 112-115, 246-247; Barbara Levick, ed., *The Government of the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 73-74, 316; and Adrian N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 316-319. For an overview of the Thasian, Macedonian and Roman colonizations of Philippi, see the resources in fn. 3.

<sup>43</sup> De Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 255. See also Oakes, *Philippians*, 57-61.

Peter Oakes estimates that if there were any descendants of veterans in the community, they would have been farmers who had fallen on bad times economically, having lost their land.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Oakes could have been writing about scholars interested in military images in his assessment: “It is characteristic of much of scholarship that Karl Bornhäuser can look at a letter, two out of three of whose named addressees are Greek women, and take as his exegetical foundation the idea that the recipients are Roman, male, ex-soldiers.”<sup>45</sup> Oakes’ comment lays bare the scholarly tendency to take one factor (Philippi as a Roman colony) and read it in a rather limited fashion into all situations for the letter, ignoring especially the role of women (an issue to be taken up in more detail shortly). This tendency that Oakes so explicitly names also shows how traditional biblical and classical scholarship has identified first with elite men, who produced and preserved most of our sources for the ancient world. This history of scholarship, then, also demonstrates the necessity of the feminist analytic of domination as an accompaniment to any accounting of the impact of the veteran settlement in and colonial status of Philippi.

Secondly, even if veterans were present or somehow affected the reception of such images at Philippi, there are no assurances that this reception would have been positive (as presumed by scholars of military images in the letter). Veteran loyalty to the emperor was less than assured in the century leading up to the composition of this letter, because of the frequent shifts at the top of the socio-political and military hierarchies during and after Rome’s string of civil wars.<sup>46</sup> It was these wars that brought veteran

---

<sup>44</sup> Oakes, *Philippians*, 60-61. Oakes also notes: “there was probably a negligible proportion of veterans among the hearers of the letter.” See Oakes, *Philippians*, 53. For the city of Philippi, “the proportion of veterans in the population was extremely small.” See Oakes, *Philippians*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> Oakes, *Philippians*, 63-64. Here he is referring to D. Karl Bornhäuser, *Jesus imperator mundi (Phil 3, 17-21 u. 2, 5-12)* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1938).

<sup>46</sup> For shifts in veteran loyalty during the civil wars, see Keppie, *Making*, 104, 115, 121-128; Santuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 39ff.

settlers (primarily from Antony's losing side) to Philippi in 31 BCE.<sup>47</sup> Occasions for veteran dissatisfaction at settlement were not rare,<sup>48</sup> a phenomenon advanced perhaps by conscription,<sup>49</sup> frequent delays in land allocation,<sup>50</sup> or by failure to deliver upon promises of reward expected for service.<sup>51</sup>

Turning to the specific situation of Philippi, veterans were more likely to be unhappy if settled there, since its location (far from Italy) was not preferred.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, many could have been settled at Philippi as a result of being "on the wrong side at the wrong time," and, for this reason, would have had no lingering affection for the reigning administration that placed them there. These events present problems to scholars who wish to portray veterans (and their descendents) at Philippi as a monolithic entity, sharing the same positive outlook on their time in the Roman military and the resulting colonization and settlement.

Third, even if one were to assume that military imagery would have some inherent appeal to the veterans of Roman campaigns, it does not explain why scholars have presumed that the military language as a rhetorical practice would have had an appeal across the diversity of the Philippian community. Such scholarship has not adequately explained why those groups aside from former veterans (including women, a

---

<sup>47</sup> Keppie, *Making*, 128-129; *Colonisation*, 76; G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 65.

<sup>48</sup> Keppie, *Colonisation*, 36; *Making*, 110, 135. On the importance of settling these "near-mutinous soldiers," see Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Early Principate: Augustus to Trajan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 8. The late republic, in general, shared this problem that "a large and increasing proportion of discharged veterans had little or no property to support them when they returned to their homes." See G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 357.

<sup>49</sup> Keppie, *Colonisation*, 37-40; A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 618; P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower, 225 B.C.-A.D. 14* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 391ff.

<sup>50</sup> Keppie, *Colonisation*, 70, 87.

<sup>51</sup> Keppie, *Colonisation*, 41; *Making*, 144.

<sup>52</sup> Keppie, *Colonisation*, 32, 59-76. For Antony's own preference for Gaul rather than Macedonia as a power base, see Keppie, *Making*, 114.

range of native peoples, and various sub-groups among the majority lower class) would be inclined to think upon such terminology or events favorably.<sup>53</sup> For the most part the people of the Greco-Roman world would have experienced the military (in general) as a wing of dominating rule, most recently in the form of Roman imperial government, with its accompanying requirements of subordination and obedience.<sup>54</sup> In terms of the colonization of Philippi by the Romans, residents were more likely to resent the military because of the wholesale confiscation of land and the overall exploitative conditions of their settlement.<sup>55</sup> To the extent that the colonization increased the exploitation of the indigenous populations, an undue amount of that most likely fell upon women. If there were any members of Philippian society who would have gained socially or economically from Roman rule, women were the least likely to have enjoyed such benefits.

Since scholars interested in military images did not develop a full acknowledgement of the violence of these images, they also elided the significantly gendered aspects of military violence.<sup>56</sup> Feminist scholars and allies have asked “what

---

<sup>53</sup> This is a particular weakness of Schuster’s thesis, as his study presumes that the military families will recall specific speeches and accounts of the military history in the language of Philippians; see Schuster, “Rhetorical Situation,” 141. For an audience-oriented approach to the letter that considers the way women would have received the letter, see Portefaix, *Sisters*. For the prominent role of women in Philippi’s cultic activities (all but ignored in many of these studies), see Valerie Abrahamsen, “Women at Philippi: The Pagan and Christian Evidence,” *JFSR* 3 (1987): 17-30; “Christianity and the Rock Reliefs at Philippi,” *BA* 51 (1988) 46-56; *Women and Worship at Philippi: Diana/Artemis and Other Cults in the Early Christian Era* (Portland, ME: Astarte Shell Press, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> On the importance of the imperial control of the military in order to increase the exploitation of the majority, especially as Rome’s principate arose from the republic, see de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle*, 374ff.

<sup>55</sup> Keppie, *Colonisation*, 61, 87, 101. Veteran settlement would only exacerbate any lingering enmity in general between civilians and soldiers. See Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 51. As Badian comments: “No administration in history has ever devoted itself so wholeheartedly to fleecing its subjects for the private benefit of its ruling class as Rome of the last age of the Republic.” See Badian, *Roman Imperialism*, 87. Again, this misunderstanding of a subject people’s potential attitude to a military force’s intrusion and occupation is chillingly analogous to current American misunderstandings of how Iraqis would react to their “war of liberation.”

<sup>56</sup> For the examination of gender, violence and/or war in the context of biblical interpretation, see the collection of articles in Claudia V. Camp and Carol R. Fontaine, eds., *Women, War, and Metaphor: Language and Society in the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (*Semeia* 61; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993). See

could be more acutely gendered than war, an activity historically described as performed by men only, in a space containing nothing but men?”<sup>57</sup> Scholars have not explained how a letter exhorting one to be a “good soldier” would have appeal to women in the Philippian community, a group who would not have shared this experience in the Roman military. Perhaps even more critically, these women would have experienced military figures as perpetrators of violence directed against them. Rape has so frequently accompanied war through the centuries that it stands as “part of a soldier’s proof of masculinity and success, a tangible reward for services rendered.”<sup>58</sup> These connections to military imagery would create major obstacles for the letter’s ability to communicate to women.<sup>59</sup> This is not insignificant for the audience, because as Oakes’ quote above makes clear, women were central to the community at Philippi. Euodia and Syntyche

---

also Alice Bach, “Rereading the Body Politic: Women and Violence in Judges 21,” *Biblical Interpretation* 6 (1998), 1-19; Yani Yoo, “Han-Laden Women: Korean ‘Comfort Women’ and Women in Judges 19-21,” *Semeia* 78 (1997): 37-46; Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); and Harold C. Washington, “Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach,” *Biblical Interpretation* 5 (1997): 324-363.

<sup>57</sup> Washington, “Violence,” 329-330. Washington notes that the above question is posed in the terms given by Miriam Cooke, “Wo-man, Retelling the War Myth” in *Gendering War-Talk* (ed. M. Cooke and Angela Woollacott; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 177.

<sup>58</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Bantam, 1976), 33. On the pervasiveness of violence against women as part of warfare across the centuries, see Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 23-118. As Alice Bach comments: “rape in war is a familiar act with a familiar excuse.” See Bach, “Rereading the Body Politic,” 10. For an example of some of the challenges entailed in reconstructing the contours of violence against women in antiquity, particularly from archaeological remains, see Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 208-211.

<sup>59</sup> As Washington commented: “even vicarious identifications with texts like these is problematic for a female-identified reader, who soon finds herself aligned with the object of violence. The male is by definition the subject of warfare’s violence and the female its victim.” See Washington, “Violence,” 345-346. Washington’s comment is based upon Teresa de Laurentis’ assertion that “the subject of violence is always, by definition, masculine” in de Laurentis, “The Violence of Rhetorics: Considerations on Representation and Gender,” in *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence* (ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse; London: Routledge, 1989), 250.

(4:2-3) are specifically addressed in the letter, and there are strong indications that they played a leading role in the community.<sup>60</sup>

Scholarly investigations into the range and impact of military imagery could benefit from some methodological expansions as well as some further consideration of the Roman military and its impact. Their inquiries have commendably noted the relevance of Philippi's status as a colony within the Roman Empire to the interpretation of the letter. However, they have yet to investigate the role of "empire" as the location for the rhetorical production and reception of these images, a task with which feminist, postcolonial, and other liberation-oriented critics of biblical literature could be of immediate and fruitful aid. While some of the interpretations have been evocative and visual, they have rarely (if ever) made note of the clear implications of violence (against the "enemy" and against women) and mortal threat involved with these images. A soldier is trained to deliver effectively violent blows so as to defeat an enemy, primarily by causing serious to mortal damage to as many enemy combatants as possible. This fact most likely would not have been lost to an ancient audience living at the site of battles of historical significance for the Roman Empire (such as Philippi). Thus, one who calls up the images of soldiers, enemies, and combat lines, while contrasting destruction with safety (or salvation), is interacting with an entire thought-world that also involves bloody suffering, death, and assaults against women. Describing scenes like this is, rhetorically speaking, not too far a-field from actually threatening an audience.

---

<sup>60</sup> On the basis of the description of Euodia and Syntyche as "co-workers" and "those who struggled with me in the gospel" in 4:3, many scholars argue for their prominence and possible leadership roles in the community. For further considerations of their roles, see Kittredge, *Community*, 90-94, 96, 98-110; Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," *JFSR* 6 (1990): 65-86; and Portefaix, *Sisters*, 135-154.

*Feminist Analysis: Reconsidering Military Imagery in Philippians 1-2*

The use of these military images is tied up in the letter's overarching techniques of argumentation.<sup>61</sup> Throughout Philippians 1 and 2 Paul works to establish himself and those compatible with his ideas for the communal identity (Timothy, Epaphroditus, and a particular version of Christ) as models for the audience.<sup>62</sup> According to this letter Paul thinks/feels (*phronein*) the right way about the community (1:7-11), brings about progress (1:12-14), sacrifices himself for them (1:21-26; 2:16-18), and is engaged in the conflict that they should be sharing (1:29-30). This argument attempting to establish Paul as a model for the audience is then utilized in the first half of the letter in a two-fold manner. First, it supports his calls, accompanied by a dense cluster of military images in 1:12-30, for them to live a particular way in conformity to Paul's ideas. Second, it clarifies that the exhortation to obedience following the Christ hymn in 2:6-11 is an argument to obey Paul (2:12-13), their model and their "commander."<sup>63</sup> The military imagery in the letter is part of the letter's attempt to construct a reality where the Philippians will take Paul as their authority and obey him.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> "Techniques of argumentation" refer to the terminology and functional descriptions Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman have established in *The New Rhetoric*, 185-459.

<sup>62</sup> On argument from a model as a relation establishing the structure of reality, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*, 362-368. In many ways the argument from a model overlaps with or is premised upon the relation between a person and her/his acts. On the relationship between person and act in argumentation, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*, 293-305.

<sup>63</sup> As noted above by scholars interested in military images, arguments by model are common for military contexts and vital for rallying troops to follow orders. It is here that this study parts ways with the analysis of the hymn offered by Kittredge (*Community*, 99-100, 110). Though the hymn might have offered a pattern of reversal as a hope to those oppressed in various ways by the kyriarchal culture, its imagery and vocabulary are still embedded in this kyriarchal matrix of slave-master (2:7) and subject-ruler (2:9-11). For a similar view, see Sheila Briggs, "Can an Enslaved God Liberate? Hermeneutical Reflections on Philippians 2:6-11," *Semeia* 47 (1989): 137-153.

<sup>64</sup> For a convincing and important elucidation of obedience in Philippians, see Kittredge, *Community*, 1-110. The idea that kyriocentric texts *construct* a particular view of reality, rather than simply reflect it, in order to produce (or continue producing) kyriarchal power arrangements is inherent to the hermeneutics of suspicion, as described by Schüssler Fiorenza. See, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric*, 50-51.

The depiction of sides lined up against each other as if in combat formations, articulated by scholars of military images, fits well with the letter's contrastive and dualistic style. Paul often evokes a group of anti-models (1:15-17, 28; 2:15, 21) to serve as opponents or foils to the models presented on "his side" of things.<sup>65</sup> Their deployment as anti-models is often accompanied by examples of Paul's dissociative rhetoric; these anti-models cause divisions (1:15-17) and bring destruction upon themselves (1:28).<sup>66</sup> That Paul also often finds a way to provide backing to these arguments through an appeal to divine authority (1:8, 28; 2:13) only underscores the "all or nothing" tenor of the letter.<sup>67</sup> As mentioned above, when accompanied by allusions to potential destruction with divine approval ("and this from God," 1:28), these exhortations to obedience and adherence to a particular course of action veer quite close to threats.

By presuming a positive reception to Paul's arguments and not engaging with any feminist or liberation oriented considerations of biblical literature, scholars interested in Philippians' military imagery have not been able to recognize how one set of hierarchical or authoritative arguments (military rhetorics) overlapped with another set of arguments (modeling, obedience, and dualistic rhetorics) to work for a common purpose. Through

---

<sup>65</sup> On the use of anti-models and their relation to models, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*, 366-368.

<sup>66</sup> Dissociations as arguments function to alter the very structure of how two elements were once associated. The classic example for Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman would be the dissociation between appearance and reality, expressed in the form term I/term II (appearance/reality), where now term II is preferred over term I. For more on dissociations and the appearance/reality pair, see *The New Rhetoric*, 411-436. In these cases within Philippians, Paul is arguing in terms of division/unity and destruction/safety dissociations, among others. For how division/unity might be characteristic of traditional dissociative pairs, see *The New Rhetoric*, 420-421.

<sup>67</sup> On the argument from authority as an argument based on the structure of reality, see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*, 305-310. Indeed, "the extreme case is the divine authority which overcomes all the obstacles that reason might raise" (*The New Rhetoric*, 308). One of the virtues of argumentation as described by Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman is the emphasis on its interactivity; that is, a rhetorical act works best when it integrates different kinds of argumentative techniques from more than one category so that they build upon or complement each other. It is in this "interaction of arguments" that the rhetoric becomes convincing and can produce different effects based upon the difference in interaction. For more on the interaction of arguments, see *The New Rhetoric*, 460-508.

the elucidation of kyriarchal structures and arguments, feminist interpretive work emphasizes that military images can and do collaborate in an interlocking fashion as part of an overarching system of subordination and control. Their implementation is not an isolated phenomenon, but it is linked with a system of power that the audience would have experienced. Nor is this implementation isolated in the letter, since it works with the various modeling and authority arguments.<sup>68</sup> By implementing these images in his arguments, Paul makes clear that though he might be seeking to replace the military, he expects similar kinds of obedience from the community and authority for himself (and those most like him). Thus, whether one is considering these images together or on their own, it is vital for any interpretation that is intended for the liberation of all people to recognize, name and analyze how military images function to oppress the vast majority of people.<sup>69</sup> Interpreters of Philippians have rarely scrutinized these images for signs of an exploitation and domination that would be deeply troublesome to modern audiences of this letter.<sup>70</sup> It is hoped that this study, among others, might begin to remedy this gap in

---

<sup>68</sup> This kind of rhetorical overlap fits with the perspectives of all three scholars highlighted in this paper (Schüssler Fiorenza, Olbrechts-Tyteca, and Perelman). The collaboration of two different kinds of authoritative rhetorics within the letter very much resembles Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman's "interaction of arguments" (elaborated above), while demonstrating how various oppressive power structures are found intersecting in a pyramidal arrangement of rule, that is, kyriarchally (Schüssler Fiorenza's neologous heuristic concept).

<sup>69</sup> For examples of biblical interpretation concerned with the role of violence (and especially violence against women) in interpretive contexts, recent and historical, see Bach, "Rereading," 1-2, 4-5, 16-18; Yoo, "Han-Laden Women," 37-39, 41-45; Washington, "Violence," 324-326, 329-330, 332-342, 348, 355-356; Camp and Fontaine, *Women*, vii, ix-xii; Niditch, "War, Women, and Defilement in Numbers 31," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 39, 42-43, 49; Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "'You May Enjoy the Spoil of Your Enemies': Rape as a Biblical Metaphor for War," *Semeia* 61 (1993): 59-61, 71-73. These articles address themselves to issues ranging from (though not limited to) Korean "comfort women," Puritan efforts against Native Americans, German militarism, the rape camps of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the conflict in Rwanda, and American actions in Viet Nam, the Philippines, and the Middle East. It would not be difficult to add relevant situations for today, from war situations in Burundi and Liberia to a military training grounds' treatment of women (as at the U.S. Air Force Academy).

<sup>70</sup> Again, the notable exception among Philippians' scholarship would be the work of Cynthia Briggs Kittredge. See Kittredge, *Community*. In a secondary fashion, since the work does not focus on Philippians as a whole, see also Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

current scholarship, paying attention to this letter's potentially oppressive and threatening argumentative techniques.<sup>71</sup>

As hopefully it has become clear, if these kinds of argumentative techniques (model, divine authority, dissociation) were associated with the military imagery presented in the letter, this could only be more of a liability, rather than a virtue for the development of Paul's argument as a "limited authority figure."<sup>72</sup> One has to wonder how effective calls to obedience through military steadfastness would have been, given the variegated context of Philippi and the role of women in the community. Yet, for the most part, it is precisely this rhetorical success that has been presumed (rather than argued for or explained) by scholars interested in military imagery in Philippians. Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman have described the creation of a rhetorical act as prominently involving an "adaptation to the audience," since argumentation requires that a rhetor find a way to appeal to the audience's reasonableness.<sup>73</sup> This orientation toward the audience requires that the rhetor actually care about and in some way esteem or value the other person's (or people's) opinions and reactions. Since audiences are normally composite, the rhetor will have to use a multiplicity of arguments to convince.<sup>74</sup> While it seems that Philippians 1 and 2 have used a number of different arguments, it seems that Paul might not have

---

<sup>71</sup> On the hermeneutics of ethical and theological evaluation, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric*, 51; *Wisdom*, 177-179.

<sup>72</sup> Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 85, 100-104. For a similarly defensive view of Paul's modeling, see Frederick W. Weidmann, "An (Un)Accomplished Model: Paul and the Rhetorical Strategy of Philippians 3:3-17," in *Putting Body and Soul Together: Essays in Honor of Robin Scroggs* (ed. Virginia Wiles et al.; Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997), 245-257; Andrew D. Clarke, "'Be Imitators of Me': Paul's Model of Leadership," *Tyndale Bulletin* 49 (1998): 329-360. Weidmann's article is, in part, in response to Robert T. Fortna, "Philippians: Paul's Most Egocentric Letter," in *The Conversation Continues: Festschrift for J. Louis Martyn* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 220-234.

<sup>73</sup> "There is only one rule in this matter: adaptation of the speech to the audience, whatever its nature" (Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*, 25). On "adaptation to the audience," see Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*, 14-26.

<sup>74</sup> Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*, 21ff.

valued the perspectives of at least some members of the potential audience, seeking authority for himself and obedience from them.

While it may not be surprising that Paul the rhetor does not stand up to the standards and ethics sought by modern rhetorical scholars, it does not help to rule out (as scholars interested in military images have appeared to do) the possibility that audiences (now or in the mid-first century) could be prone to resisting Paul's arguments. Given the factors sketched out above, it is not hard to imagine resistance to a message couched in terms of military and other hierarchical arguments.<sup>75</sup> The violence implied, the potential bitterness of veterans, and the consequences of colonial exploitation for the majority of the populace (both women and all of the lower classes) could be factors, again, for audiences both ancient and modern. By advocating for an authoritative arrangement similar to (rather than running counter to) military imagery of his time, Paul could have invoked a range of ambivalent to negative reactions from his audience at Philippi. Indeed, it seems he might have anticipated or even already experienced such a reaction, as instructions like "do all things without grumbling or questioning/arguing" (2:14) seem to indicate.<sup>76</sup>

By approaching the letter as an *attempt* to construct such a particular authoritative relationship, rather than a reflection of an apparently-already-accepted authoritative position for Paul, we can also note how much effort the letter seems to be expending on arguing for the Philippian community's obedience and Paul's model status. Realizing

---

<sup>75</sup> Resistance seems to play a role within both the hermeneutics of suspicion and the hermeneutics of ethical/theological evaluation. Feminist interpretation seeks to dislodge and challenge rhetorical practices that help to produce the marginality of those oppressed by kyriocentric texts and in kyriarchal societies. See, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza *Rhetoric*, 51; *Wisdom*, 175-177.

<sup>76</sup> In fact, this could be an instance of where Paul *does* seek to adapt to his audience in response to or anticipation of less-than-positive reactions. Ironically enough, it is also a moment where the letter is arguing for the audience to not participate in certain rhetorical activities ("questioning," "considering," "debate," or "argument" all being ways one could translate the Greek noun *dialogism\_n* in 2:14).

that this letter and its sender could be marked as “not yet authoritative” only increases the possibility that the combination of military and other hierarchical rhetorics here, as a way to recommend Paul and other models like him, would have met with limited success.

Thus, contrary to the assumption and occasional argument of most Philippians’ scholarship, one must at least consider the strong possibility that Paul’s arguments were resisted in the community that received the letter. Given the explicit mention of Euodia and Syntyche later in the letter and the exclusive use of male models (Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and a specific version of Christ),<sup>77</sup> the possibility of resistance can be more easily associated with at least some of the women in the community.

Though it was not necessary to show this possibility in order to proceed to the final reflections of this paper, it does lend further credence to the following imaginative turns in creative hopes for change.<sup>78</sup> Operating with suspicious caution and a desire to critically evaluate the arguments in the biblical tradition in terms of a feminist scale of values, this paper has highlighted some of the kyriarchal implications of the letter to the Philippians. To the extent that the letter’s military and modeling rhetorics partake of a kyriarchal mindset and reinforce such interrelated oppressive power arrangements, it is

---

<sup>77</sup> Most scholarship on Philippians have acquiesced to Paul’s division of authority in this manner, thus, assuming that the call in 4:2 to “think the same thing” portrays a conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, rather than a difference between Paul and the two women. See among the most recent examples, Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: Hendrickson, 1998), 238-242; Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 167-171; Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 146ff.; Oakes, *Philippians*, 114, 123-124; Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 110-113; and Peterlin, *Paul’s Letter*, 101-132. As on previous occasions, Kittredge’s argument is unique and convincing in her view that Euodia and Syntyche are not in a conflict with each other, but with Paul. See Kittredge, *Community*, 105-108. Perhaps it is not coincidental that one of the studies interested in military images in the letter (that does not address its gendered aspect) is particularly derogatory toward these “notorious” women, arguing that Paul “names them because their behavior is reprehensible and he shames them as an example to others.” See de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 255-256.

<sup>78</sup> On the hermeneutics of creative imagination and the hermeneutics of transformation, see Schüssler Fiorenza *Rhetoric*, 52-54; *Wisdom*, 179-183, 186-189.

vital for a feminist interpretive project to not only address their oppressive function (as we have done above), but also seek a shift in our approaches. This shift involves responding creatively and developing aids for change, rather than simply re-legitimizing the text as static authority.

Though the final step in this instance is in some ways speculative, it is nonetheless crucial as an attempt to bring about just such a shift described above. When we read the arguments for making Paul (and those like him) models for the community, we can do so *with* “grumbling and questioning.” Assuming that the letter is just one part of an ongoing rhetorical exchange aids us in our desire to *dialogizesthai* (“question,” “consider,” or “argue,” 2:14) with the letter of Philippians. We question whether we should imitate anyone claiming to be our leader who “plays” the role of a military figure (whether as a “commander” or a fighter pilot).<sup>79</sup> We consider and re-consider whether it is best to present arguments in terms of a dualistic rhetoric (safety vs. destruction, us vs. them; you’re either with us or with the terrorists). We argue over whether there can ever be only one model for our way of life, one perspective for the resolution of issues within our communities (providing us with unity, 1:27-28; 2:1-4, or a new unilateralism). We wonder if “progress” (1:12, 25) can ever be delivered, rhetorically or materially, on military terms.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> The use of military images here is not dissimilar from the ancient rhetorical practice of *prosopopeia*. For the interpretation of Paul as analogous to a “general” or “commander,” see Krentz, “Military Language,” 114-115, 127; Geoffrion, *Rhetorical Purpose*, 28, 54, 85, 100-102.

<sup>80</sup> Developing rhetorical methods and modes of analysis in terms of just such contextual issues is not a new phenomenon. Feminist (and most liberation-oriented) approaches develop in response to critical reflections upon one’s experience and social location; see Schüssler Fiorenza *Rhetoric*, 49-50; *Wisdom*, 169-175. See also fn 69 above. To a great extent, the New Rhetoric, as Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman (and others) developed it, was a response to the crisis in Europe after the Second “World War” as to why rationalism and empiricism had not helped to foster greater understanding between human beings. Two multi-continent wars, the Holocaust, and a range of ethically-troubling instances of injustice and violence caused them (and other rhetoricians) to seek the grounds of understanding, beyond the realm of formal logic. For

Turning the calls to imitation on their head, we can imitate those signs of the struggle in the letter (whether they preceded Paul's arguments, or those arguments anticipated such resistant response). Rather than unquestioningly assent to Paul as authority and final arbiter, we can imitate the grumblers and dissenters, those people less convinced about Paul's role in their community, quite possibly including women like Euodia and Syntyche. This orientation towards Philippians demonstrates that *identifying* the military or modeling rhetorics of the letter (as this paper has attempted to do) does not necessarily mean we must, or even can, *identify with* Paul as model or military figure (as many Pauline scholars have previously done).<sup>81</sup> Just as the conversation likely continued beyond this letter in mid-first century Philippi, so our conversations about our models, our methods of liberation, and the authority of our received traditions must continue today.

---

more on the background and relevance of their work, see Golden and Pilotta, eds., *Practical Reasoning*; Dearin, ed., *The New Rhetoric*; Thomas H. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 285-310; and Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, ed., *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1990), 899- 923, 1066-1103; and Sonja K. Foss, Karen A. Foss, and Robert Trapp, *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2002), 81-115. For a feminist response to the events of September 2001 and the war in Afghanistan, see Mary E. Hunt, "War: A Feminist Religious View," *JFSR* 18 (2002): 51-52; Betsy Reed, ed., *Nothing Sacred: Women Respond to Religious Fundamentalism and Terror* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002).

<sup>81</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza succinctly examines this issue of scholarly (mostly malestream scholarly) identification with Paul in "Paul and the Politics of Interpretation" in Horsley, ed. *Paul and Politics*, 40-57.