

○ HYBRIDITY AND THE RHETORIC OF ENDURANCE

READING PAUL'S ATHLETIC METAPHORS IN A CONTEXT OF POSTCOLONIAL SELF-CONSTRUCTION

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The 'new perspective' on Paul explores Paul the missionary and writer attending carefully to how he is both Jew and Roman citizen. At present, however, very few writers have used tools from postcolonial criticism in analysis of Paul's writings, even on questions of how Paul fashions his own identity from these dual cultural influences. Drawing from Bhabha, Boyarin, and Engberg-Pederson, this essay explores how understanding Paul as 'Jewgreek' – refusing to ask if ideas, language or arguments are either Hellenistic or Hebraic but assuming, instead, that Paul is the synthesis of multiple cultural and colonial identities – affect a reading of Paul's literature. I focus on Paul's, most 'agonistic' or competitive metaphors, his use of athletic metaphors to describe Christian mission and proclamation with a sustained reading of 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

TROUBLE READING PAUL: THE CENTRE OF PAULINE THOUGHT AND BHABHAN HYBRIDITY

There are some things in [Paul's letters] that are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16).¹

In the past twenty years a new understanding of Paul and second temple Judaism has emerged in New Testament Studies.² Inspired by the work of Krister Stendhal, scholarship has become intrigued by Paul's construction of individual and community identity vis-à-vis Messiahship and allegiance/resistance to *kosrut*. This 'new perspective' on Paul explores Paul the missionary and writer with careful attention to how he navigated between multiple ethnicities – both his own and those of his addressees. To date, however, very little work has appeared explicitly applying tools from postcolonial criticism to Paul's writings.³

Of particular value is Homi Bhabha's 'hybrid'.⁴ A literary critic born in India but educated in England, Bhabha, in part, describes himself in the presentation of hybridity, a category he applied to criticism of writing produced in the complex literary exchanges between Britain and colonial India. Hybrids are the product of colonization. Hybrids have no stable cultural identities; they are not completely sub-altern, colonised identities conscripted into and influenced by the values, and in this case rhetoric, of the coloniser. The hybrid, altered but never quite able to attain the status or exact duplication of the coloniser, 'is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects' (Bhabha 1995, p. 34). In Bhabha, identities of both coloniser and colonised are always and irreversibly moved to hybridization through the process of colonization and resulting struggle of subjectivities. 'The effect of colonial power is seen to be the *production* of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions' (p. 35). Through hybridization, new identities are constructed which are both resistant and compliant, which use tropes and selectively

adopt values of the coloniser to construct a third identity, an identity described by Bhabha as 'third-space' or 'in-between' (Bhabha 2000, p. 139).

Hybrids, discourse and function are fashioned through mimicry. Speaking a foreign cultural language, hybrids always have an accent; the culture of the coloniser is taken on in ways simultaneously compliant and subversive. Mimicry becomes mockery, '*a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*' (Bhabha 1994, p. 86. Italics original). Further, the disparity in the attempt, the 'not quite' is not only inevitable, but in some cases may be deliberate.

It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instances of colonial imitation come. What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence (Bhabha 1994, p. 86. Italics original).⁵

As one would expect, what is 'mimicked' is hardly random. In her pivotal essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Gayatri Spivak explores how subaltern communities (particularly women) are perhaps unavoidably constrained to 'speak' through the tropes and conventions of the hegemonic voices that have produced their very subalternity (Spivak 1995). As Sugirtharajah has observed, 'the marginalized can make themselves known only in relation to metropolitan conceptual practices' (Sugirtharajah 2002, p. 22). Sugirtharajah summarises Bhabha:

Bhabha argued that hybridity and mimicry were strategies forged by the colonized as ways of responding to colonial rule. Hybridity is an 'in-between space' in which the colonized translate or undo the binaries imposed by the colonial project (Sugirtharajah 2002, p. 22).

Mimicry, however, not only morphs the subaltern into hybridity, but also fundamentally modifies alterity itself; distinct from an unchanged and unchanging presence and mimesis, mimicry alters both coloniser and colonised. Broadly postcolonial readings can foreground issues of colonial domination, hegemony, compliance and resistance and, in the study of ancient Christianity, this foregrounding reminds the modern critic not only that criticism and scholarship have been affected by these forces but also that the totality of the New Testament and nascent Christian writings (especially the Pauline corpus) arose from a colonial context.⁶ While it may yet prove to be unproductively anachronistic to super-impose all models and methods of a critique of the modern imperial context upon the Roman world, foregrounding these issues is unambiguously fruitful. 'Hybridity' offers three key insights for contemporary New Testament criticism, in general, and Pauline studies, in particular, and the implications of these insights remain largely under-attended.

First, hybrids function as negotiated, altered and altering cultural forces and figures. Hybrids disrupt notions of any isolated, discrete cultural (or sub-cultural) identities within the Roman Empire. There were no 'pure' Romans or Greeks or Jews. Further, a single, systemic taxonomy of cultural tropes portraying any of a host of potentially describable cultural streams (religious groups, philosophical schools, ethnicities, etc.) converging into a single, 'Hellenised', whole is

impossible. We can not say any particular impulse, idea or theme in Paul's writings arises, unmodified, un-hybridised, from Paul's 'Jewishness', his 'Hellenism', or his status as Roman citizen.

Second, approaching Paul as hybrid reorients Paul's language in terms of its resistance and compliance to colonial authority (both political and cultural). Hybridity, fueled by mimicry, establishes a location for, at best negotiated, more often seditious or mocking, resistance to hegemonic powers. Paul's theological convictions are inseparable from his cultural and political dis-sidence; No theological impulse is impervious to political or cultural influence. Further, by definition, the language of hybridity is agonistic and competitive and attuned to the manufacture of identity and the forces of subjectivity, particularly a subjectivity defined on an uneven 'playing field'.

But, perhaps the most fruitful (and least attended?) implication of hybridity is not merely *resistance* to power, but the positive *construction* of the 'in-between' identity of both colonised and coloniser.⁷ '[H]ybridity... not only deflates particularisms but also facilitates redefinitions of identities' (Sugirtharajah 2002, p. 194). Colonial encroachment and hegemony is ambivalent; it brings both oppression and opportunity. Readings that cast the subaltern only as deviant (and not simultaneously compliant and transformative) become a two-dimensional liberationist (or Marxist) campaign that sees only categories of suppression and revolt (and these, mediated heavily, if not exclusively, through material culture) and neglects hybridity's possibility for mutual alteration and mutual co-production of coloniser and colonised. Further, simple language that celebrates an uncritical 'diversity' or 'multiculturalism' is, in turn, challenged; these readings often devolve into notions of mutual (though 'equal') cultural identities which are able to interact while retaining discrete cultural identities. Hybridity and mimicry argue, to the contrary, that every moment of interaction or encounter is a moment of exchange (admittedly within a context of unequal power) that is mutually transformative. This 'positive' function of hybridity acknowledges that, while mimicry marks an instance of colonial domination and coercion, hybrids, in turn, re-script and redefine their colonisers. 'Jews' may be forced to become more 'Greek', yet they also alter, via mimicry and hybridity, 'Greekness' (even if by merely awakening modes of resistance that alter the relevant 'precolonial' status of the coloniser's identity) and co-produce in the process the resulting culture of the colonial interchange.

In *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Daniel Boyarin describes Paul in language reminiscent of Bhabha's hybrid.

It is precisely this ability... to discover and animate the ways in which Hellenistic and (Jewish) biblical ways of thinking could illuminate and enrich one another that constitutes [Paul]'s genius... One could with justice say that in Paul, as in Christ, 'There is no Jew or Greek'. ... [T]his mapping... has become for him the very organic mode of his thinking. Jewgreek is Greekjew (Boyarin 1994, p. 79).⁸

How would understanding Paul as 'Jewgreek' – refusing to ask if Paul's ideas, language or arguments are either Hellenistic or Hebraic but assuming, instead, that Paul is the hybrid synthesis of multiple cultural and colonial identities – affect reading Paul's epistles? One example may lie in one of Paul's most agonistic / competitive metaphors of self, his use of athletic metaphors to describe Messianic mission and proclamation.

PAUL AND THE 'AGON MOTIF'

You were running well; who hindered you from following the truth? (Galatians 5:7)

Using athletic metaphors to describe oneself as patient, strong-willed, and noble in spirit was a common tactic of Stoic philosophers from earliest Stoicism to first century writers such as Epicurus, Seneca, and Philo.⁹ Such usage certainly reflects the real context of athletic development as a sign of status and social achievement. Physical perfection and athletic prowess were key indicators in antiquity of one's birth status by reflecting one's wealth, leisure opportunities, education, personal discipline, and (particularly within contexts that celebrated physiognomy) general inner quality (van Nijf 2001). Virtually all these status markers are also in play when athleticism is metaphorically and rhetorical applied to self-construction.¹⁰

Athletic metaphors and terminology are found with some frequency in the major Pauline writings. In Gal. 2:2, Paul wonders aloud whether or not he 'was running or had run in vain' (*eis kenon trechō ē edramon*), a worry echoed in Phil. 2:16. In Gal. 5:7, he likens the Galatians' initial obedience to 'running well' (*etrexhete kalōs*) and queries, 'who has cut in on you?' (*tis humas enexopsen*), periphrastically, 'who has hindered you', or 'who has crossed into your lane?'). In Rom. 9:16, Paul says righteousness does not arise from individual running (*trechontos*). In Phil. 1:27-30, Paul encourages the Philippians to 'compete as a team' (*sunathlountes*) even as he, himself, 'competes' (*agōnizomenos*) for the Colossian believers (Col. 1:29-2:1; 4:12). Fairly minor uses of athletic language creep into Paul's thought frequently (as in *agōni* in 1 Thess. 2:2; *stephanos* and *emprosthen* in 2:19 and Phil. 4:1; *sunagōnisasthai* in Rom. 15:30; *sunēthlesan* in Phil. 4:3; *katabrabeuetō* in Col. 2:18; *brabeuetō* in 3:15 and *theatron* in 1. Cor 4:9).¹¹

Currently, the leading resource on Paul's use of these metaphors is Victor Pfitzner's *Paul and the Agon Motif*.¹² Pfitzner wrote to correct earlier scholars like Bergmann, Bonhöffer, Sevenster, Spicq, and Stauffer, who read athletic metaphors as one of several stock topoi adopted, uncritically, by Paul.¹³ Pfitzner argues, instead, that Paul transformed the motif (Pfitzner 1967, pp. 202–204). He writes:

We may accept [that Paul draws from conventional use of athletic topoi] if it is limited to the adoption of an image and terminology which had become popularised in Paul's day, but not if it also extends to the adoption of its content and application as well... [I]ts application is entirely different. Seneca and Epictetus wish to glorify the sage with this picture... Paul on the other hand uses the picture to illustrate the humility and indignity to which the apostles, as servants of God, are subjected... The scope of the Agon has been completely changed (Pfitzner 1967, pp. 188–189, 194).

For Pfitzner, these transformations are the result of unique theological assertions which transcend culture. Might there be a way, however, to see a hybrid Paul at work on construction of a new identity or, perhaps, identities fashioned from elements of multiple ethnic and cultural 'identities' which are both unique and communal simultaneously? Further, could this hybrid identity be one that both 'transforms' as well as acquiesces to conventional use of a particular motif? Asking how Paul is integrated into both 'Jewish' and 'Hellenistic' cultures reveals a hybrid

Paul – Boyarin's Jewgreek / Greekjew – engaged in cultural production and cultural transformation simultaneous to his own identity construction and transformation.

Pfifzner begins his study of the 'agon motif' in Paul by positing:

In examining the parallels one may proceed from the question whether there are features in the later Christian usage of the athletic imagery which help to explain the usage of Paul. Conversely it can be asked whether the roots of the picture of the Christian Agon in early Christian literature apart from Paul lie in the thought of the Apostle himself (Pfifzner 1967, p. 8).

Essentially answering both in the negative, Pfifzner argues Paul does not imply all of human life is a struggle (as did earlier Stoics) or that life 'in Christ' is a call to 'triumph' or to competition (as do later Christians). Rather, Paul is consistently making an analogy between athletic training and his own 'training' for mission and witness. Pfifzner concludes his work with a survey of 'certain broad lines of development' intended to 'show Paul's relationship to the further Christian use of the image and its terminology' (Pfifzner 1967, p. 196). Later second century Christian texts compared the suffering martyr with the athlete, specifically the gladiator, to articulate Christian triumph over opposition and as a compensatory move that demanded community loyalty and articulated its means.¹⁴ Pfifzner asserts 'the unique position of Paul within the Agon tradition has been surrendered' by later Christian texts (pp. 202–204). While later Christian use certainly differs from the nascent Messiah communities as represented by Paul, earliest use of the metaphors is not-in its goal or orientation-as fundamentally different from later use as Pfifzner would suggest.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul writes:

Of course you know how all the runners in a race compete, but only one receives the prize. You run so that you might win. Athletes exercise self-control over everything. They do so in order to receive a rotting wreath; we, however, [control ourselves in order to win] a permanent one. That's why I do not just jog around, nor do I box as if I were only beating the air. Instead, I blacken my own eyes and dominate my body, so that, after proclaiming to others, I should not find myself disqualified.¹⁵

Pfifzner begins his analysis of this text (what he identifies as Paul's 'most extensively developed' use of the athletic metaphor) with an examination of form-critical questions (largely influenced by Dibelius. Pfifzner 1967, pp. 76, 82–83).¹⁶ He grants the passage does exhibit, in some respects, Dibelius' criteria, yet also asserts 'Paul's images never stand as isolated units but always serve to illustrate a specific point in hand, even though the logical connection between argument and illustration is often difficult to ascertain' (p. 84).¹⁷ Paul interrupts his discourse, but only to remind the reader of his own moral authority (p. 84. See also Fee 1987 p. 433 or Witherington III 1995, pp. 203–205).

According to Pfifzner, the aggregate elements of the image unify to express the total dedication involved in Christian mission (Pfifzner 1967, p. 87). Paul's rejection of Corinthian financial support is only one of several luxuries Paul has declined in order to remain fit for the Gospel. Since all of an athlete's efforts can be voided by a single moment of weakness or self-indulgence,

self-control must be shown in 'all things'. This, according to Pfitzner, is the exclusive point of Paul's metaphor.¹⁸ Any other reading, particularly one which sees a call for 'the application of the Christian's total strength, of maximum endeavour in the struggle to attain the heavenly prize' is 'possible only by falsely subordinating the *central* theme of enkrateia, and by raising the *preparatory* picture of the striving runner and the *complementary* image of the victor's crown to a position of independent importance' (p. 87).¹⁹ Paul's discipline, argues Pfitzner, is not primarily paraenetic nor should it be understood as an assertion that believers are called to 'struggle' or 'compete' for righteousness; it is unique to his preparation to become a minister, and mainly included as illustration of that preparation.

Paul is, indeed, very concerned with the construction of identity, but is he, as Pfitzner would suggest, primarily concerned with the articulation of his own martyr/minister identity alone, or is he, instead, crafting a new community identity which is intended to be a mimesis of his identity as a martyr and minister? Certainly, Paul seems inescapably concerned with defining and expressing his own sense of self, but his self-construction is not responsible to intra-Christian encounters alone. For Boyarin, in fact, the key to reading texts such as 1 Corinthians lies in Paul's multiform cultural identity – being Jew by birth and religion, being Greek by culture, occupation and education within a complex, colonised environment and with the intention of community construction which is designed, via a form of mimicry, to transform the coloniser even as it articulates the essence of the (hybrid) colonised.

The culture [of Second Temple Judaism] was in tension with itself, characterized both by narrow ethnocentrism and universalist monotheism... [W]hat motivated Paul ultimately was a profound concern for the one-ness of humanity. This concern was motivated both by certain universalistic tendencies within biblical Israelite religion and even more by the reinterpretation of these tendencies in the light of Hellenistic notions of universalism. Paul was, therefore, troubled by, critical of, the 'ethnocentrism' of biblical and post-biblical religion, and particularly the way it implicitly and explicitly created hierarchies between nations, genders, and social classes (Boyarin 1994, p. 52).

Paul found, in Messianism, a means for the redemption and inclusion of non-Jews into the covenant people of God. Paul's 'opposition' to Jewish law focused on those elements most ethnocentric – *kosbrut* and circumcision; he saw these as practices which marked off only a portion of humanity as God's and marked them despite faith or ethics.

For Boyarin, Paul was motivated by a Hellenistic sense of a two-part universe which separated reality into sign and substance and by the (contradictory) desire to attain 'one-ness' or unification of sign and substance. Paul's Jewishness, however, prohibited him from considering sign or matter as evil and discipline as fruitless or irrelevant. In Christ, non-Jews could, via the higher reality of Spiritual Israel, become part of the covenant and, ultimately, the 'saved'. The community of God still possessed boundaries, yet now these boundaries were faith and ethics. Boyarin is very convincing. Certainly Paul's thought is shaped by cultural forces. More significantly, however, Boyarin reveals that Paul is likely not uniquely troubled by these pressures.

Suggesting Paul's tension is not unique may also suggest that his solution is not unique either. In another significant and recent work, *Paul and the Stoics*, Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues Paul

uses a rhetorical model found in Stoic literature (Engberg-Pedersen 2000). This model 'underlies most of Paul's thought and practice in the letters, and pertains most directly to Paul's "anthropology" and "ethics"' (p. 33).

Engberg-Pedersen is concerned with how Paul's rhetoric moves individuals 'from I to we'. According to Engberg-Pedersen, Paul was convinced he had a two part obligation. First, he was to be a missionary to the Gentiles throughout the world spreading the news of Jesus as Messiah. Second, however, Paul felt obligated to ensure the communities he founded would grow to maturity – the point where they were also 'in Christ'.

For Paul's upbuilding task and for that of his addressees focus was on anthropology, on explicating the character of the *involvement* of the addressees... in the two framing events initiated by God. To elucidate this, Paul made use of a comprehensive, but also sharply focused model that had been developed in Stoicism, the I-X-S model (Engberg-Pedersen 2000, p. 293).

For Engberg-Pedersen, the movement I-X-S is a movement away from 'the I-stage' where 'the individual person (i) perceives him- or herself, and (ii) is merely concerned about fulfilling the desires of that individual' and toward the S-stage where 'the individual... still perceives him- or herself as an embodied individual, but now also as one of the others... in a social "We"' (Engberg-Pedersen 2000, p. 34). For Stoics, X was the mastery of the passions by reason, *apatheia*. In Paul, 'X' was faith in Christ. Engberg-Pedersen points out Stoic attainment of *apatheia* was not an end, but a means toward reasoned, successful living and group identity (the self as one of the enlightened). In a similar way, for Paul, conversion to faith in Christ was not the ultimate end but was the means to community. Engberg-Pedersen's model articulates how much Paul's reasoning was conventional. Summarizing his own work, he describes 'a Paul who actively participated in the moral philosophical discourse of his day, though also (as everybody did) with its own special emphases' (p. 301).²⁰

A similar use of Paul's athletic topos is found in Philo. Philo, as Pfitzner and others have noted, uses athletic metaphors more than any other single ancient writer.²¹ 'Words such as *askēsis*, *gymnasia*, *ponos* and *athlēsis* and their related forms, originally at home in the sphere of athletics... now become part of Philo's stock vocabulary in picturing the self-control and renunciation, practice, toil and struggle in the Agon for virtue' (Pfitzner 1967, p. 40). Abraham and Isaac are described as athletes who through Law achieve victory over passion and lawlessness and become integrated in community with God (p. 41). Yet, the wilderness wandering of Israel is likened to an athletic competition with the same emphasis and implication (p. 42).

In Philo, the metaphor of the athlete functions in much the same way as in 'conventional' stoic literature and, if Engberg-Pedersen is correct, with the same end in mind. The means is altered; but the end – a community comprised of individuals exerting *enkrateia* to control personal desires in order to advance a general community of enlightened citizens – is exactly the same. So also in Paul. For Epictetus or Seneca, this end is achieved by disciplined reason and *apatheia*; for Philo, it is obtained via the Law and Jewish identity, for Paul by faith in Jesus as Messiah.

In Philo there is a deliberate desire to present Judaism – a decidedly sub-altern ethnic identity in the Roman empire – using the 'metropolitan' language of Hellenistic philosophy. Philo, the

colonised, mimics the rhetoric and thought of the coloniser and, in the process, creates a hybridised identity, Alexandrian Judaism. The other 'mainstream' (largely 'Stoic') writers who use athletic topoi are, however, also found in ambiguous social and ethnic locations. The anonymous author of 4 Maccabees repeatedly uses athletic metaphors in celebratory rhetoric of Jewish martyrs under the Seleucid kings. Seneca was an exiled noble living in the provinces; Epictetus was a former slave. Each of these cases, admittedly to varied degrees, exhibit a physically subjugated person taking refuge in metaphors that shift the locus of agonistic excellence from the physical (literal athleticism, warriorhood) to the moral domain so that they can claim an excellence and superiority and form a functional, hybrid, mimicked subjectivity. According to Engberg-Pedersen's model, the fundamental concern of both Pauline and Stoic anthropology and ethics was community description and maintenance. Both of these ideas, however, must be matched with an awareness of the real 'borderland' and hybrid nature of the writers under examination; and that awareness must also recall the compensatory quality of athletic topoi and metaphors even from their earliest uses in philosophical literature and the near unavoidable pressure to construct a 'third-space' hybrid self. Can it be coincidental that those with threatened or ambiguous cultural identities are those who choose metaphors rooted in competition in order to demonstrate or articulate a desire for an integrated community – particularly an integrated community that elevates as paradigm the author's own social location? The struggle of the hybrid is the agonistic struggle to fashion an identity in the face of colonization and root that identity in a community; the struggle of the coloniser is to avoid the dilution of hybridization. Both awaken a complex process of adoption via *askesis* and agonistic contest – literally, a 'wrestling' over self-description.

The source of Paul's 'problem' is not unique to Paul. As Boyarin has shown, the tensions surrounding Paul's blended notions of selfhood and identity arise from forces external to Paul, and Paul is not the only writer from antiquity to feel these pressures. Further, Paul's 'solution' is also not unique. Certainly, as Pfitzner has noted, Paul's rhetoric has an independence and a particularity. Pfitzner offers, however, an explanation that is too extreme in its independence. As Engberg-Pedersen suggests, the means of Paul's argument, the underlying logic of Pauline rhetoric, is certainly not unique. The Pauline writings, viewed as mimicked productions of a negotiated self, reveal Hellenism's inherent tensions to and opportunities for self understanding and the hybrid quality of Pauline thought and rhetoric.

Agonistic rhetoric and athletic topoi in nascent Christian literature are (at least part of) the basis of a 'self-fashioning' rhetoric; ancient Messianic movements used athletic metaphors (among other strategies) to ideologically reinforce and define themselves in opposition to a hostile Greco-Roman civil and social order.²² They did this, however, as hybrids mimicking a part of a broader culture. If Paul can be said to 'transform' a conventional motif, he does so only as one part of the broader movement of hybridization that is Hellenism. Paul is one of many hybrid, Hellenistic writers (some 'Christian', some not), all of whom are 'transforming' cultural themes and exploring the possibilities of the construction of identity via discourse--especially biography and autobiography. Described in agonistic metaphors, this transformation is itself agonistic and confrontational.

Responding to Pfitzner directly, his general exegesis of 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 still isolates the text from the broader context of 1 Corinthians; Pfitzner, despite his advances over previous work, still hears an interruption in the argument. More of a concern, however, is his treatment

of Paul's Hellenistic cultural context. Pfitzner has approached Paul deliberately seeking to articulate how he is distinct from his cultural milieu and how Paul expressed unique and uniquely derived theological views. Not surprisingly, he finds a Paul who has 'transformed' a conventional motif. However, taken within his cultural moment and read as hybrid and co-producer of Hellenistic culture, Paul, to the contrary, seems to be – much like his contemporaries – mimicking traditional *topoi* to accomplish particular goals of hybrid self-definition and highly concerned with political/ethnic identity.

THE IMAGE OF THE ATHLETE AS AN ELEMENT OF PAULINE HYBRIDITY

I have become all things to all people so that I might, by all means, save some
(1 Corinthians 9:22).

1 Cor. 9:24-27 occurs within the context of Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church to lay aside individual rights for the good of the entire community, and Paul offers himself as example. Paul's athletic metaphor describes his own mission work, how he struggled and denied himself for the sake of others. That self-denial – a run not conducted in vain – is his goal for the entire community. All who are 'in Christ' are called to renounce – to endure *enkrateia* – for the sake of the community good. In 1 Corinthians, sexual impulses should be curbed (5:1-12; 6:12-20), lawsuits against fellow Christians should be avoided (6:1-11), marriage and family are permissible but should be undertaken only after considering their impact on mission (7:1-28), eating meat should be avoided if it offends the weak, (8:1-13) the wealthy should be mindful of the poor (10:14-22), the spiritual should restrain speaking in tongues (14:1-39), and above all, the community should show self-sacrificing love (13:1-13).²³

Like Paul, the Corinthians are to endure strict 'training' of self-denial in order to keep personal desires from interfering with community harmony. Paul is using himself as a model (a fundamentally paraenetic move) for a new hybrid identity. While Paul likens proclamation to a race or competition, proclamation is not a final end but is a means to effect conversion in others. Having 'run in vain' would then be the failure of Paul's proclamation to effect a transforming conversion in his hearers. Paul may also be concerned that reassertion of his own 'self-centered' desires for comfort, the avoidance of *askesis*, might reflect at least a momentary personal failure to remain at S-stage. Paul as 'Greekjew' is not only deeply immersed in Stoic reasoning and ideology, but is also consumed with the unity of humanity. Paul the 'Jewgreek', however, was deeply concerned with production and protection of community and disciplined piety. Paul the hybrid 'Greekjew / Jewgreek' unified these concerns in Messianic community.

Paul has, in 1 Corinthians, used a metaphor that celebrates, at its base, intense individual competition and struggle in order to articulate a new communal (non-differentiated) identity. Athletic *topoi* in Paul reveal much about his understanding of community identity and self-denial. Paul is utilizing, mimicking, a conventional trope to create a new, communal, hybrid identity. Athletic metaphors refer to the self-denial and struggle necessary for individuals to live in harmonious community. Paul is not limiting this challenge or the metaphor to those, like himself, entrusted with the task of special proclamation or ministry; he is challenging all the community to 'become as he is'. While Paul has tailored a motif to his particular frame, he is not fashioning the motif, whole cloth, into something unique. Athletes, in Paul, struggle against

the 'old man' in an attempt to realise regenerated natures and to exhibit a newly constructed sense of self which is a self grounded in a new community and thus new identity (and remarkably like Paul's own. Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22-24). This new self and community are, however, hybrid constructions that struggle, in turn, with the very cultures of which they are a part, from which they form boundaries, and which they mimic. Paul's rhetoric functions and is fueled by similar cultural forces and anthropologies found in both Hellenistic philosophers and elite Jewish intellectuals and is equally mimicked and transformative of the 'metropolitan' discourse. Later Christian use of Pauline athletic metaphors is not 'abandonment' of Paul's thesis; it is the evidence of its success, the evidence of both its effective mimicry and its transformative mockery.

The category of the hybrid disrupts the binary choices of seeing Paul's metaphors as either compliant or transformative – binary positions which run along a spectrum of uncritical adoption, to adaptation, to transformation. Paul's metaphors, like the metaphors and rhetoric of all of his contemporaries, are rooted in an ambivalence about identity and communal location and rest upon an energetic self-construction; they are mimicked motifs at work in the construction of a hybrid community.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ This article is an abridgment of chapter two of my Ph.D. dissertation, *Running with Endurance: Nascent Christian use of Athletic Metaphors* and an expansion of 'Paul's athletic metaphors for Christian Proclamation and identity: Hybridity and the rhetoric of endurance' which I presented at the 2003 International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature at Cambridge, England. Special thanks are due to Stephen D. Moore, M. Virginia Burrus, Jeffrey L. Staley, Jerry Sumney, Jennifer Glancey, Roland Boer and my anonymous reviewers for *Bible and Critical Theory*. The writing of this essay was facilitated by the bestowal of the status of 'Visiting Scholar' for 2004 at the Rose Memorial Library at Drew University.
- ² Often called the 'New Perspective' on Paul. The basic issues are Paul's relationship to the Jewish thought and biblical exegesis of his day. For an overview see Hafemann (1993) or Matlock (1998).
- ³ By now the language of postcolonial criticism is firmly established in current literary theory and will likely soon be well established in many areas of biblical studies. For an introduction (and partial manifesto) which particularly foregrounds hybridity and surveys work to date, see Sugirtharajah (2002). For a general overview of postcolonialism and biblical studies, see Donaldson (1996), Sugirtharajah (1998a), Sugirtharajah (1998b) and the titles from the series Bible and Postcolonialism published by Sheffield Academic / Continuum / T&T Clark. To date, postcolonial criticism has engaged biblical studies mostly in hermeneutical theory, history of interpretation and text transmission, and the narrative New Testament texts as catalogued in Segovia (2000). For two notable works applying postcolonial theory to Paul (particularly to 1 Corinthians) see Yeo (1994) and Wan (2000). For a particularly intriguing (though not precisely postcolonial) study of Paul and empire see the collections edited by Horsley (2000) and Horsley (1997).
- ⁴ This essay is primarily directed to scholars of Paul who have not yet realised the potential of many postcolonial themes or critical insights for the study of the Pauline corpus. Accordingly, I am far more elementary in my treatment of hybridity than I might otherwise be for a journal such as *Bible and Critical Theory*. Still, however, by reviewing the basic elements of hybridity, I am able to clarify how I am taking the term, what I consider its salient elements, and where I feel there is most potential for New Testament criticism in general and Pauline studies in particular. Hybridity as a concept is certainly neither as simple as I present it here, nor is it un-challenged in current postcolonial literature. For

more complex readings, note the sources by Segovia and Sugirtharajah above as well as a useful generic overview in Beverley (1999).

5 The presence or absence of agency in both mimicry and hybridity is consistently ambiguous. Though the majority of Bhabha's writing on hybridity seems to countermand (at least conscious) agency in the production of hybridity, note Bhabha (1994, p. 193): 'The disjunctive present of utterance enables the historian to get away from defining subaltern consciousness as binary, as having positive or negative dimensions. It allows the articulation of subaltern agency to emerge as relocation and reinscription'.

6 As pointed out by Segovia (1998, pp. 58–63).

7 I am particularly indebted to Virginia Burrus for pointing this out (repeatedly) to me and for her intricate depiction of this very process in her forthcoming chapter on Acts for *The Postcolonial Bible Commentary*. Note, in particular, Burrus (2004).

8 Note that, in essence, Boyarin's language is here citing Derrida who is, in turn, citing Joyce.

9 See, for example, Miller (2004); Miller (1991); Poliakoff (1987) or Seesengood (2004).

10 The relevance of this point is beginning to affect the reading of many New Testament passages which invoke/utilise athletic body image or competition. See, for example, Moore (1996); Seesengood (2002); Frilingos (2004).

11 On several of the above, see, for a selection: Brewer (1954, pp. 76–83); Broneer (1962a, pp. 259–63); Broneer (1962b, pp. 2–31); Broneer (1971, pp. 169–187); Cranfield (1996, vol. 2, pp. 776–777); DeVries (1975, pp. 115–120); Ehrhard, (1957, pp. 101–110); Fee (1987, pp. 174–175, 433–441); Maier (1971, pp. 363–373); Moo (1996, p. 593); Murphy-O'Connor (1987, pp. 14–17); Noack (1970, pp. 113–116); Piper (1983, pp. 132–133); Roberts (1937–38, pp. 325–328); Sevenster (1961, pp. 115–116).

12 Pfitzner (1967). The title refers to the Greek, *agon* ('contest', 'sport', or 'struggle'). Pfitzner's work, originally his dissertation for the Evangelical Theological Faculty of Münster, Westphalia, was itself begun as an updating of Schmid (1921). *Paul and the Agon Motif* is often referenced by works not primarily treating Paul, and its thesis remains highly influential, particularly among American conservative biblical scholarship and commentary. *Paul and the Agon motif* has become a ubiquitous bibliography entry and resource in major reference works and dictionaries for English New Testament exegesis such as *EDNT* and *BDAG*.

13 J. Bergmann (1912); Bonhöffer (1894); Sevenster (1961); Spicq (1937, pp. 209–229); Spicq (1947, pp. 234–258); and Stauffer (1941). Many, as for example Grosheide (1953, p. 215), suggest Paul's choice of athletic metaphors was merely incidental: 'the well known Isthmian games, which were held in the neighborhood of Corinth, may well have induced Paul to the use of this figure'. Fee (1987, p. 434) also thinks Paul may have been led by 'his own personal observation of the athletes'. See Broneer (1962b, pp. 26–30).

14 Briefly, note Eusebius, *Church History* 5.1.40, 42, 47, and 53.

15 The English translation is my own, based on the Greek text of the Nestle Aland 27th edition.

16 This attention is given despite his own lament that 'the interpretation of this passage has often suffered from the outset by treating the verses as a separate unit of general Pauline paraenesis' Pfitzner (1967, p. 82). Perhaps the only rival to Pfitzner's claim of 1 Corinthians 9 as Paul's most developed and sustained treatment of the motif would be Philippians 3:4–15a. I would argue, however, that precisely the same themes and motifs and even motives are present in both passages. I focus on 1 Corinthians in this paper because it most readily illustrates the point at hand. A very similar argument could be made for Philippians 3 (an argument, in fact, that I have made elsewhere, Seesengood 2004).

- 17 He further notes that *ouk oidate* in 9:13 marks a transition to a new argument not to an entirely new thought, a point which 'already suggests that vv.24-27 belong more directly to 9:1-23 than to 10:1ff. which continues the discussion of the problem of eating meat'.
- 18 'In v.25 alone lies the point of comparison' between the life of disciplined witness and athletic competition' Pfitzner (1967, p. 87).
- 19 The 2d plural imperative, *trechete*, would seem to suggest the latter. Pfitzner counters, however, that *trechete* could also be a simple indicative; Paul's use then would be rhetorical (with 'you' as a general impersonal reference, 'one runs in order to win' Pfitzner 1967 pp. 88–89, fn. 2). Pfitzner stops short of asserting that there is nothing in the image that is paraenetic. 'The central tertium is not the full application of energy and the development of strength necessary to reach the goal, but rather the necessity of self-renunciation in view of the goal. Verses 24 and 26 are both introductory, both stress the idea of the aim and purpose which dictate the necessity of "enkrateia".' (p. 92).
- 20 Note, as well: 'I have attempted to show that there is a single, basic thought structure that is formulated in both Stoic ethics and in Paul... Jerusalem and Athens, religion and philosophy, Christianity and humanism – all these supposed contrasts may have been validly drawn in later periods for the purposes for which they were coined. But if we want a truly historical understanding of earliest Christianity, at least as formulated by Paul, we must give them up'. (Engberg-Pedersen 2000 p. 301).
- 21 Poliakoff (1987, p. 143): 'Philo is the single richest source of athletic terminology in all of Greek literature'.
- 22 The same thesis is argued, in part, in two other studies of later Christian martyrdom, Barton (1994, pp. 41–71) and Shaw (1993, pp. 3–45).
- 23 On the integration of 9:24-27 see Orr and Walther (1976, p. 249) or Oster (1995, pp. 223–224).

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