

An Alternative Ideology Relating to Difference as Hidden Polemic in the Book of Judges: Judges 4-5 as an Illustration¹

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ABSTRACT

In the book of Judges we come across the literary depiction of a corporate body (tribe or a group of tribes) consisting of individuals seeking to survive in the midst of threatening danger. The reader would, therefore, expect to find the literary depiction of Israel's survival being produced by ideal bodies (whole male warriors) in the book, as this reflects Israel's dominant body ideology related to good order. However, contrary to the expected literary depiction, it is the unwhole, different-functioning body, which is depicted as producing survival for the corporate body. This is further emphasised by the fact that the whole, functioning bodies are depicted as jeopardising the survival of the corporate body. The hypothesis of this article is that the paradoxical depiction of bodies in Judges serves as counterculture rhetoric in the form of a hidden polemic to advocate an alternative body ideology of difference. This hidden polemic criticises both the dominant body ideology of the whole body and the idea of good order, which go hand in hand. The alternative ideology proposes that difference is not threatening, but is in fact beneficial to society. Judges 4-5 is used as an example to highlight this counterculture rhetoric in the form of a hidden polemic in the book of Judges. It is of vital importance for the church and biblical scholars to take notice of such hidden polemic in the Bible, especially with reference to body ideology and the treatment of so-called unwhole bodies in society.

A INTRODUCTION

In the book of Judges we encounter a literary portrayal of human bodies which is an indication of Israel's cultural perceptions of and prescriptions concerning these bodies.² The book of Judges mirrors a variety of bodies and all these per-

¹ This article emanates from the doctoral thesis of Natashia van der Merwe, submitted to the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies of the University of Johannesburg in 2009 with Prof J. H. Coetzee as promoter.

² Body symbolism and the process of defining the human body is a social and cultural matter. See J. L. Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality. The body and the household in Ancient Israel* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 6.

ceptions will not necessarily be the same in the book. The opinion of the author/redactor might differ from the dominant body ideology of the implied readers. In this article Judges 4-5 will serve as an illustration of this. In order to accurately capture these multi-dimensional opinions in the text, a methodology relating to rhetoric and the social context of the time of writing/editing of Judges will be employed (see Robbins 1996).

Such a socio-rhetorical approach will enable us to identify (1) the rhetorical strategies the author(s)/editor(s) of Judges used in relation to bodies, and (2) the social representations, prescriptions and ideologies prevalent in this text concerning the ideal and non-ideal bodies and their prescribed functions within society.

By means of narrative criticism the characterisation of different bodies in Judges 4-5, their juxtaposition and their depiction to convey a specific ideological message in relation to dominant body ideology, will be compared. The book of Judges is approached with the awareness that it developed over time, was edited and compiled by author(s)/editor(s) who represented various ideologies concerning different aspects, including that of body ideology within Israel's society.

In what follows a study of the literary techniques implemented by the author(s)/redactor(s) as counterculture rhetoric will lay the basis for a discussion on the counterculture rhetoric as hidden polemic. This is followed by an analysis of a few pericopes from Judges 4-5 to illustrate the occurrence of such a polemic, which is implemented to advocate an alternative ideology relating to difference and different-functioning bodies in society.

B LITERARY TECHNIQUES AS COUNTERCULTURE RHETORIC IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Biblical narrators are artful ideologists (Sternberg 1985:38). The juxtaposition of "different-functioning" bodies with "normal" bodies occurs throughout the book of Judges. This technique is implemented by the author(s)/editor(s) to displace the dominant cultural and social prescriptions and ideology relating to difference and different-functioning bodies. The technique of combining juxtaposition and displacement creates ambiguity. Hauser and Watson (2003:143) says that ambiguity is an intentional narrative technique as it structures opposing systems with one another in order to provide rhetoric. A brief discussion of these juxtaposed literary depictions is in order.

The juxtaposition of ideal and non-ideal bodies in Judges produces both ambiguity and irony as the non-ideal female continually produces survival for

Israel, while the ideal male produces threat resulting in shame.³ This is contrary to the dominant ideology relating to the ideal body, which should be honoured and which produces survival. Thus, two opposing ideology systems (different views about the whole and the unwhole body) are juxtaposed to produce a counterculture rhetoric aiming at displacing the dominant ideology of the whole body throughout the book. This counterculture rhetoric is further accentuated and developed in the book by depicting the unwhole male body favourably, namely to produce survival (e.g. the left-handed Ehud in Judges 3), instead of the ideal (whole) male body.⁴

Often the threatening ideal male body is developed into an unwhole body favoured by the aesthetic element⁵ in a narrative (e.g. Judges 13 where Samson is favoured by God despite his disobedience). The opposite also occurs, namely that the unwhole body is often depicted positively, which is developed into an ideal body and eventually depicted negatively (e.g. Judges 6-8 in the case of Gideon; Judges 11 in the case of Jephthah).

This counterculture rhetoric is further developed as the author(s)/editor(s) continually displace(s) dominant ideology with regards to good order by displacing the normally positive effect of oath-making and the ideal body. Ironically, oath-making produces threat.⁶

It is thus not only the juxtaposition of the non-ideal female bodies with the ideal male bodies, which produces counterculture rhetoric, but also the juxtaposition of the unwhole male body with that of the ideal, whole male body. In addition to this the expected affect of good order is also displaced by the displacement of the effect of oath-making. These various narrative techniques produce irony and ambiguity in relation to dominant ideology throughout the book of Judges, which can be identified as counterculture rhetoric advocating an alternative ideology. The fact that the body rhetoric presented by the author(s)/editor(s) throughout the book recurrently displaces the conventional dominant ideology regarding the function, purpose, and role of bodies

³ See Judg 1:14-15 in the case of Achsah and Othniel; Judg 4 and 5 in the case of Deborah, Barak, Jael, and Sisera; Judg 9 in the case of Abimelech and the women; Judg 11 in the case of Jephthah and his daughter; and Judg 19 in the case of the concubine and the Levite.

⁴ Left-handedness was perceived as “unwhole” – Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality*, 33-35.

⁵ The “aesthetic element” as narrative technique refers to the depiction of God’s involvement and sanctioning of a person’s conduct (M. Sternberg, *The poetics of Biblical narrative: Ideological literature and the drama of reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 44).

⁶ For example Judg 11 where Jephthah lost his daughter through oath-making; Judg 20-21 where the Benjaminites were almost wiped out), whereas breaking the oath would produce survival in some cases (e.g. Judg 11 and 20-21).

within the society of Israel, does not necessarily mean, as some scholars assume,⁷ that this kind of rhetoric was merely implemented to bring about a positive portrayal of unwhole bodies. As texts are ideological and also polemical, these techniques were used in order to promote a counterculture rhetoric in which dominant ideology was displaced polemically to advocate an alternative ideology, which no longer regarded difference and different-functioning bodies as threatening.

C THE COUNTERCULTURE RHETORIC AS HIDDEN POLEMIC IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

LaCocque (1990:23, 38) asserts that irony and the paradoxical manner in which an author structures his narrative, point to the fact that he is a polemicist and the text is a polemic. Amit (2000:6) defines polemics as confrontation. Amit also views the biblical texts as polemical texts – texts with confrontation as content. The biblical texts were formed by ideological schools of thought in their struggle with reality (Davies 1992:44; Amit 2000:3). As these schools had different opinions, there were different ideologies concerning reality and concepts on reality (Exum 1996).

Texts, therefore, reflect ideological textures, which are often in conflict with one another (Robbins 1996:95). The Bible originated within communities that struggled with understanding reality and, in the context of this study, with understanding difference and different-functioning bodies in daily living conditions. The consequence is that various opinions and ideological streams of thought resulted in confrontation (Amit 2000: 3), which can be detected in the Old Testament as a whole and often in one single text as well (Davies 1992:44). It is our contention that the book of Judges reflects such confrontational, polemical rhetoric, criticising the dominant ideology of whole-bodiedness and the perception that difference is threatening.

According to Amit (2000:3) one specific book in the Bible can contain different polemics due to its development within the social, political and religious contexts of ancient Israel. She identifies three types of polemic found in texts, namely explicit, implicit and hidden polemic. As Judges was compiled

⁷ See O. A. Bellis, *Helpmates, harlots and heroines: Women's stories in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 3; P. L. Day, *Gender and difference in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 109; J. H. Otwell, *And Sarah laughed: The status of women in the Old Testament*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 17; D. F. Sawyer, *God, gender and the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 65; R. Schwartz, *The book and the text: The Bible and literary theory* Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 37 and M. Sjöberg, *Wrestling with textual violence: The Jephthah narrative in antiquity and modernity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 55.

over a period of time reflecting many opinions regarding various concerns, it is obvious that the book will also reflect various types of polemic.

- *Explicit polemics* entail the explicit mentioning of the particular polemic by the author. For example, in Judges explicit polemic with reference to idolatry would entail the author's continual reference to God "selling" his people (e.g. Judg 2:14; 3:8) into the hands of the nations because of their idolatry.
- *Implicit polemic* is when the author indirectly refers to his polemic. An example is when the author wants to stress the fact that God is merciful, he does so by only mentioning that God sends Judges to relieve Israel's distress without explicitly saying that He is merciful.
- *Hidden polemic* is when, in Amit's words (2000:94)

through various hints, the reader is left with the feeling that a double effort has been made within the text: on the one hand to avoid its explicit mention and on the other to leave traces within the text that will lead the reader to the hidden subject of the polemic.

The author will use narrative techniques as signs to guide his reader towards this polemic without mentioning it. The author also makes use of other implicit and explicit polemics within the text to conceal the hidden polemic. While the hidden polemic is never mentioned, it is recurrently alluded to.

According to the above definition, the counterculture rhetoric and the techniques used to produce this kind of rhetoric in Judges 4-5 reflect the nature of a *hidden polemic*. The implied reader is guided by techniques producing displacement throughout the narrative, which serve as signs to direct the reader towards a hidden polemic. The result is that the reader can begin to align him/herself with the specific hidden polemic.

The hidden polemic can easily be overlooked, while the text will still make sense to the reader, due to other implicit (e.g. on retribution) and explicit (e.g. on idolatry) polemics present within the text. Thus, in the past it could have been easy for commentators and scholars alike to identify the implicit and explicit polemics in Judges as, for example, being pro-monarchic, pro-Judean; advocating retribution, God's mercy, God's sovereignty, or God's use of the weak. In so doing such commentators and scholars could have overlooked the *hidden polemic* advocating an alternative ideology in relation to difference and different-functioning bodies.

Finally, there are two reasons as to why an author would place a hidden polemic in a text. Firstly, to use it as a persuasive technique. With the use of concealment and landmarks in the text that allude to the hidden polemic, the reader is constantly reminded and persuaded to find this polemic for

him/herself. This process of concealment with signs prepares the reader to become open-minded enough to change his/her view.

The second reason concerns “censorship.” The author at times might not be allowed to directly say or voice his/her contradictory or critical opinion concerning a specific dominant ideology in a society. Hidden polemics is an effective tool used by biblical authors to convey their opinions concerning reality and its functioning in such circumstances. The more concealed a polemic, the more controversial it probably was. One can only imagine how controversial an alternative body ideology and an alternative to the dominant ideology of good order could have been within Ancient Israelite society.

E JUDGES 4-5 AS AN EXAMPLE OF A HIDDEN POLEMIC ADVOCATING AN ALTERNATIVE IDEOLOGY RELATING TO DIFFERENCE

Amit (2000:96) suggests four criteria for testing whether there is a hidden polemic in a biblical text. They are:

- a) There is no explicit mention of the polemic, which the author is trying to condemn or advocate. Something is being concealed.
- b) The author uses a number of signs or techniques in the text to direct the reader towards the hidden polemic. Despite the concealed polemical subject the reader must be able to find sufficient landmarks to uncover it.
- c) There are other biblical texts that possibly contain the existence of a polemic on the same subject.
- d) Possible references or interpretations of this hidden polemic exist in exegetical and extra biblical texts.

Concerning the first criterion, in Judges 4-5 there is no *explicit* mention about an alternative ideology relating to difference and different-functioning bodies. The reader is led to find the hidden polemic for him/herself. We do not find direct mention of the fact that the non-ideal female body is beneficial for the survival of the corporate body in contrast to the ideal male body as threatening.

With regard to the second criterion, Amit (2000:95) says the signs very often are the narrative techniques the author uses within a particular writing. We have already discussed that the author used various techniques to intentionally produce a counterculture rhetoric. This was particularly done in relation to bodies and the displacement of the social and cultural prescriptions of such bodies according to dominant ideology. In Judges 4-5 the author dislodges this

dominant body ideology by using the techniques of juxtaposition and displacement, so as to produce paradox, ambiguity and irony.

With reference to Judges 4 there are four bodies (Deborah, Barak, Sisera and Jael) depicted in this narrative and these are juxtaposed with one other. The first is Deborah (4:4) who is referred to as a prophetess, a wife, and a judge. These descriptions depict her social status and function within Israelite society to the implied readers and hence bring the readers' expectations and opinions relating to dominant social and cultural prescriptions of Deborah to the fore. As a woman she is non-ideal and as a wife she has childbearing responsibilities (Sivan 2004:98). However, the readers are taken by surprise, because she has no children, but judges (leads) Israel instead. This unconventional role is used by the author to create ambiguity, which serves his purpose of writing, namely to introduce a counterculture rhetoric to advocate an alternative body ideology.

Although she is a female body (hence non-ideal), she is the unconventional female figure. Klein (1989:41) points this out when she says,

Like Othniel and Ehud, Deborah is an unexpected choice for a judge. A woman judging Israel, to whom the "sons of Israel went...for judgment" (4:4-5), is at least as much an improbability in patriarchal Israel as a younger son or left-handed warrior.

The conventional female figure is one who is a wife, bears children and nurtures those children (Sivan 2004:98). Her role as a prophetess and a judge was contrary to what is expected of her role as a women and a wife,

Deborah is depicted as a female body that extends her boundaries beyond her social and cultural prescribed functions. Her announcement, "has not the Lord, God of Israel commanded you..." (4:6) is used by the author to legitimise her role as judge as she is depicted while questioning Barak's disobedience to God's command (Sternberg 1985:44). Sternberg refers to this introduction of God into the argument as the author's use of the aesthetic element as narrative technique, which produces an "all knowing," divinely sanctioned aspect to Deborah, which lends authority to her unconventional social reference as prophetess. The author uses this aesthetic technique to legitimise her accuracy as prophetess and in this way dispels any negative attitudes the implied readers might have towards her because of her unconventional social status according to dominant body ideology.

She is contrasted with Barak who, as an ideal, male warrior, is dependent on Deborah for guidance and protection (4:6-8). As a result Barak is depicted as a whimper, a male who is not the ideal warrior to have in an army. His silence to Deborah's rhetorical question creates further discrepancy between Deborah and himself. This silence portrays the supposedly ideal male warrior, Barak, to be silenced by the non-ideal female. He is passive and she is

active, contrary to the conventional expectation of the implied readers concerning the roles of these bodies according to good order.

According to Sternberg (1985:478-82) authors use the displacement of conventional patterns to produce dissimilarity and in this way rhetoric becomes communication with persuasive intent. The aim is to bring the implied reader's viewpoint in line with the author's own viewpoint. As the author continually displaces dominant ideology, his viewpoint seems to be different to those of his implied readers with regards to the dominant ideology. The author of Judges 4-5 is persuading the readers through displacement in his counterculture rhetoric that the non-ideal body is more beneficial than expected, as Barak is now challenged by Deborah's rhetorical question.

By means of the challenge-response communication (see Robbins 1996:80) between Deborah and Barak the author aims at shaming Barak and producing a more positive depiction of Deborah. Deborah's question, with aesthetic legitimacy, challenges Barak who, as ideal body, is expected to have fulfilled the aesthetic request in order to maintain his honour. The author portrays him to have neglected the aesthetic request, hence Deborah's rhetorical question. Barak's honour is at stake. In this case a divinely sanctioned prophetess challenges Barak, and if he remains silent he will lose his honour.

His reply in Judg 4:8 is an attempt at regaining his honour, but in the process he places honour upon Deborah, and shames himself anyway. Hence, the author uses this challenge-response communication to persuade the implied readers towards a negative portrayal of Barak and a positive portrayal of Deborah. This serves the author's alternative body ideology, which is strengthened when Deborah replies that the victory will be at the hands of a woman. Ironically this woman is a foreign non-ideal body, Jael (4:22).

The implied readers are now further to be persuaded that a non-ideal body (different-functioning body) is in fact beneficial to the survival of the corporate body, contrary to the expected ideal male body. What better way is there to do this than to depict a foreign, non-ideal body like Jael as unconventionally producing Israel's survival.

Jael initially seems to be more conventional in 4:17 than Deborah. She is referred to as the wife of Heber, a Kenite (foreigner). As wife, the implied readers conventionally expect her social function to be that of a nurturing mother. There is, however, no reference to children but her hospitality towards Sisera (4:18) is in compliance with her social role as wife (Malina 2001:43). The implied readers are set at ease, as she seems not to infringe her prescribed boundaries as Deborah and Achsah do. As foreigner and women she is a non-ideal, unwhole body.

However, in Judg 4:21 the implied readers' perceptions of her are challenged and displaced. She is in fact now depicted as a temptress, sly in approach and a murderer in disguise (Bal 1988: 24), in contrast to her depiction in Judg 4:7. This is not the passive, hospitable and nurturing wife society would expect. The narrator's reference to her as wife once again (4:21) causes discrepancy with her actions to follow and with the expectations of the implied readers, which are again challenged by the author as Jael displays unconventional behaviour.

In Judg 4:22 Jael is contrasted with both Sisera and Barak. The author's exclamation, "and behold," calls for the readers' attention at what is to follow. The immediate reference to Barak and the elaboration of the fact that he did not make it in time to slay Sisera, allow the author to remind the implied readers that Barak again is the shamed ideal body, while Jael is the challenger and unconventionally gains honour.⁸ The honour gained by Jael is completely contrary to the expected order within society (Malina 2001:37), as, according to good order, she should not be a viable challenger.

The fact that Jael challenges Barak produces further shame upon Barak, since he was initially shamed by Deborah, who is an Israelite woman, and now also by Jael, a foreigner. The author clearly uses a rhetorical strategy of displacement in relation to the conventional good order (Sternberg 1985:478) to advocate his alternative body ideology as part of his criticism of the conventional good order. Eventually the author aims at promoting his idea of the benefit difference and different-functioning bodies might have for society.

In Judges 5 the author continues with his counterculture rhetoric by depicting an autobiographical account on behalf of Deborah and Barak (Gunn 2005:52). The author continues to contrast the bodies with one another. Jael is referred to as the most blessed of women in v. 24. The unconventional, social honour bestowed upon a childless, foreign wife is again used by the author to cause displacement of conventional good order and in this way it forms part of the counterculture rhetoric, persuading the implied readers towards an alternative body ideology. The perceived threatening, foreign, non-ideal body is ironically the most blessed of all the female bodies (and implicitly of the male bodies) depicted. Contrary to the dominant ideology she has benefited Israel and produced its survival.

Jael's hospitality in chapter five is also elaborated upon as in Judg 4:18, but with the sly and devious way in which she affects survival for Israel (as in Ehud's case). The poetic portrayal of her hospitable answer to the request of

⁸ According to V. K. Robbins, *Exploring the texture of texts: A guide to socio-rhetorical interpretation* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996), 76 acquired honour is honour actively sought and gained most often at the expense of one's equals (or even superiors – NvdM) in the social contest of challenge and response.

Sisera in v. 25 emphasises the extent of her conventional hospitality as wife. This sets the tone for the author to further displace this conventional hospitable behaviour in v. 26, using the challenge-response transaction in v. 25.

The initial stages of her hospitality are coherent with the expected honour and shame as a common social and cultural topic (Malina 2001:35). The narrator's use of the word "asked" portrays Sisera requesting (challenge) and Jael submissively "giving" (response) and appropriately "bringing." Jael has met this challenge with respect and fulfilled it according to good order. She then breaks this by becoming the challenger. She sends her hand to the nail, Sisera has requested nothing and Jael is acting. She is challenging him to the extreme. This is unconventional.

She is now the challenger and Sisera is left with no response. This reversal of the honour and shame social status, even though contrary to good order, has in fact affected survival for Israel (as in the case of Othniel and Achsah).⁹ She has unconventionally crossed her boundaries of good order, but yet she is blessed (5:24) and not cursed. The implied reader is left unconventionally praising Jael for her boundary crossing, who in reality, according to Malina (2001:38), "has undermined the honour of another" (in this case Sisera and Barak).

The effect of this boundary crossing is elaborated upon in v. 27 where Sisera is portrayed to be at her mercy. The parallelism used in this verse further depicts Sisera to be weak and vulnerable within this challenge by Jael: "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down. At her feet he bowed, he fell. He bowed, he fell down dead." The words "bowed" and "fell down" are repeated twice, consecutively. The third time that "bowed down" is used, we would expect "fell down," but it has now progressed to "he fell down dead."

This indicates progression and depicts the displacement of the conventional honour and shame (good order) status more clearly. The constant repetition of "bowed down" emphasises the shame of Sisera bowing in front of a woman, thus emphasising the reversal of the social order. This is then further developed by the author until the implied reader is aware that Sisera is dead and Jael has in fact, through this crossing of her social boundary – contrary to good order, brought survival for Israel.

In conclusion, the author uses the narrative technique of displacement to dislodge the conventional pattern of honour and shame related to good order to advocate an alternative ideology. This alternative ideology entails that the non-ideal body is not as threatening as might be imagined; it is in fact beneficial. The author persuades his readers of this alternative ideology by juxtaposing the

⁹ See N. C. Van der Merwe, The identification of whole and unwhole bodies in the book of Judges (DLitt et Phil thesis, University of Johannesburg, 2009), 50-51.

non-ideal bodies of Deborah and Jael with Barak and Sisera. The narrative has clearly shown what Sternberg (1985:142) refers to when she says,

The Biblical storyteller is a persuader in that he wields discourse to shape response and manipulate attitude. This response is geared to an ideology designed to vindicate or inculcate it.

With regards to the third criterion, namely that there are other biblical texts that possibly contain the existence of a polemic on the same subject, an intertextual investigation of the book of Judges, and of chapters 4-5 in particular, will now be performed in order to identify the author's techniques of displacement. Only a few examples will be highlighted. This will be done with reference to the social and cultural texture in Judges and in other biblical texts. The purpose of this intertextual approach is, as Robbins (1996:40) indicates, to identify configurations and reconfigurations of bodies with regards to social and cultural texture outside the text. Thus, the purpose is to identify the manner in which the dominant body ideology (conventional configuration) and alternative body ideology (reconfigurations) identified within the book of Judges come across in other biblical texts as well as in extra-biblical interpretations of Judges as text.

Deborah's positive function as a prophet is not the only ambiguous reference to a female acting as a prophetic voice in biblical literature. In 2 Kgs 22:14-20 reference is made to the prophetess Huldah. During the reign of Josiah, the "book of the law"¹⁰ was found and Huldah was consulted concerning this book. She, therefore, acts as a prophetess contrary to the normal male figure expected in that capacity and her prophecy has far reaching consequences for the people of Israel. Reeve (2005:4456) states that

[t]he standing and reputation of Huldah in the city are attested by the fact that she was consulted when the Book of the Law was discovered. The king, high priest, counsellors, etc., appealed to her rather than to Jeremiah, and her word was accepted by all as the word of Yahweh (2 Ki 22:14-20; 2 Chr 34:22-29).

In Judges 9 the unfamiliar killing of a man by a woman also comes across intertextually, which is a clear example of the author's displacement of the honour of the male character. There a woman kills Abimelech, and the author makes it clear that it was a shame for him to die at the hands of a woman (9:54). In both Judges 9 and 4:9 the author displaces the social status of the whole bodies as in Judges 1 with Achsah. This is an indication that the tech-

¹⁰ According to Bellis, *Helpmates*, 174, H. Sivan, *Between woman, man and God: A new interpretation of the Ten Commandments* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 57, and E. T. Mullen, *Narrative history and ethnic boundaries* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 4, this forms part of the Deuteronomistic History and its first redaction.

nique of displacement is intentional and that it forms part of the author's counterculture rhetoric.

As the third criterion entails an intertextual search, the Septuagint translation of Judges will also be investigated in order to establish whether the Septuagint translator identifies the author's displacement of dominant ideology as subtle landmark for an alternative ideology.

In Judg 4:8 the Masoretic text depicts Barak asking Deborah to go with him into battle, and his added reluctance to go without her is clearly used as a displacement technique by the Masoretic author with reference to honour and shame. The Septuagint version has an extended phrase in v. 8 and depicts Barak giving a reason for relying upon Deborah's presence: "For I never know what day the Yahweh angel will be with me."

Boling (1975:96) says this implies that Barak was positively in pursuit, but seemed to fail in getting hold of Sisera and thus asks for Deborah's prophetic guidance on the day in which he can pursue Sisera. In this light the Septuagint rendition then attempts to shed Barak in a slightly positive light Burney (1970:89), contrary to the Masoretic text's negative depiction.

The above examples highlight the fact that the Masoretic text's primary rendition placed Barak in a negative, unfavourable light according to dominant body ideology, while the variant reading¹¹ followed by the Septuagint was introduced in order to ease the discrepancy of Barak's behaviour according to dominant body ideology. The fact remains that the discrepancy was identified in the Masoretic text of Judges by the Septuagint translator, Masoretes and commentators, and instead of being interpreted as part of a counterculture rhetoric advocating an alternative body ideology, was slightly amended in the variant reading and in the Septuagint, in order to avoid discrepancy to dominant ideology.

However, because Judg 4:8 forms part of the author's counterculture rhetoric relative to the entire narration, the editors' and translators' initial attempts to avoid this discrepancy, are unable to prevent the further discrepancy and displacement the author creates with Jael. The narration, therefore, still depicts Barak negatively, only shamed this time by a foreign, non-ideal body.

¹¹ According to C. F. Burney, *The book of Judges with introduction and notes on the Hebrew text of the book of Kings with an introduction and appendix* (The Library of Biblical Studies. New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1970), 89, the Septuagint translator must have had a Hebrew original of the section he added before him. His argument is that the Greek is "clearly an incorrect translation of **הָצְלִיחַ מִלְאָךְ יְהָוָה אַתִּי**" (for I know not the day whereon the Angel of Yahweh shall prosper me) "probably a gloss in the original he had in front of him. In a footnote Burney explains that "[t]he translator reads **מִלְאָךְ** (st. *absol.*) and treats it as object of the verb, making **יְהָוָה** the subject; while regarding **אַתִּי** (accus. 'me') as the prep. 'with me.'"

This is further accentuated with Jael's killing of Sisera and the consequent shame it places upon Barak and Sisera.

The implication is that, although certain textual emendations that serve as reconfigurations of Judg 4:8 produce a positive depiction of Barak, it is evident that the hidden polemic of an alternative body ideology is intentionally woven into this entire narration and not just in v. 8. The displacement affected with Jael, therefore, serves an alternative ideology, which forms part of a hidden polemic in the entire book of Judges.

It also highlights that later translators and commentators did indeed identify the discrepancies created by the Masoretic text of Judges. Consequently attempts have been made to iron them out in order to bring them in line with the dominant body ideology without weakening their purpose. The author's persistent use of the technique of displacement allows the hidden polemic to remain intact and the author's polemical purpose is carried further into the narration.

The fourth criterion entails the identification of similar counterculture rhetoric in extra biblical literature. This investigation will include the extra-biblical book of Judith¹² and the identification of the author of Judges' countercultural rhetoric and the author of Judith's interpretation thereof.

Judith exhibits the same narrative techniques of the displacement of honour and shame as Judges 4-5 with reference to its juxtaposition of bodies (DeSilva 2002:99, 105). As the account concerns the death of Holofernes (an ideal body), at the hands of Judith (a non-ideal body who saves Israel), it significantly echoes the biblical account of Jael and Sisera in Judges 4-5 (Stocker 1998:14; DeSilva 2002:95).

DeSilva (2002:95) goes as far to say that Judith was most probably influenced by the Judges 4 narration: "Perhaps the most immediately obvious inspiration is the story of Jael and Sisera in Judges 4-5." Stocker (1998:14) identifies the echo and shows how many people have confused the two figures (Judith and Jael) with each:

Given the similar scenario, it is not surprising that representations of Jael often portray her as if she were Judith, and in literature and art the two have often been confused or compounded into a single figure.

¹² See H. Efthimiadis-Keith, "Text and interpretation: Gender and violence in the Book of Judith, scholarly commentary and the visual arts from the Renaissance onward", *Old Testament Essays*, 15/1 (2002): 64-84, on the depiction of Judith within the book of Judith as well as its interpretation in the past.

The fact that these two figures have been confused or compounded highlights the similarity of their literary portrayals. The implied readers of Judith, who were acquainted with Jael in Judges, most definitely identified this narrative echo used by the author of Judith. The likelihood exists, therefore, that a similar counterculture rhetoric as found in Judges can be traced in Judith.

Since ambiguity and irony form part of the counterculture rhetoric as polemic of alternative ideology in the book of Judges, the reader needs to be attentive to the double meanings and irony that run through Judith. One such example is Jdt 9:10 claiming that God can also save Israel through a non-ideal body, that is by “the hand of a woman” (Jdt 9:10).

The recited reference in Judith to the “hand of a woman” reminds the implied readers of Deborah’s words in Judges 4 concerning Barak’s incompetence. The writer of Judith uses this echo to remind the implied readers of the unconventional displacement and irony associated with Deborah/Jael in Judges in relation to honour and shame and applies this to Judith. The implied readers are provided with an informational gap and are left to draw similarities with regards to Judith as non-ideal body and Judges. The implied readers of Judith are in this way led towards an alternative body ideology. This also highlights the writer of Judith’s identification and interpretation of the counterculture rhetoric in Judges as advocacy of alternative ideology and he thus utilises this in Judith to affect similar displacement.

The Deuteronomistic notions of sin, punishment and oath-making are also central to the book of Judith and are also displaced (5:17-20; 8:18-23). In Judith we have the same ambiguous irony created as in Judges due to juxtaposition of the ideal and non-ideal body: the displacement of honour and shame and the use of deceit (the unconventional) to effect survival. “Deceit and violation of hospitality ... play a crucial role in both” (DeSilva 2002:95).

Judith, like Jael, kills Holofernes by chopping his head off in the tent (Jdt 13:8). This is once again an echo of the Jael account in Judges 4, only this time Holofernes is drunk and decapitated. Her prize (his head) is put in a bag and she takes it back to the camp and hangs it on the wall for the Assyrians to see (Jdt 14:1). As Achoir sees the head, he ironically faints (14:6), which is unconventional for an ideal male. Once he awakes he declares to Judith (14:7), echoing Judg 5:24: “blessed art thou in every tent of Judah.” Only this time, in contrast to Judges, it is an ideal male and not a female like Deborah confirming the victory over the enemy at the hand of a non-ideal female: “One Hebrew woman has brought disgrace on the house of King Nebuchadnezzar” (Jdt 14:18).

The writer of the book of Judith clearly utilises Judges’ counterculture rhetoric intentionally for the purpose of his writing and in so doing creates space for an interpretation of an alternative body ideology in the book of Ju-

dith. Apart from chapter 4 and 5 of Judges, the similarities with the entire book of Judges show that the writer of Judith was clearly aware of the juxtaposition of the bodies in Judges as a counterculture rhetoric and uses it here in a similar manner to advocate a similar polemic.

DeSilva (2002:62) highlights this alternative ideology as polemic in Judith as plausible in relation to the socio-historical unconventional strategies of the Maccabees' foreign policies:

These surviving members of Judas Maccabees' family may not have been as "manly" and direct in their dealings as "the Hammer," but their strategies certainly consolidated and expanded the gains of Judas' military victories for the benefit of the whole people.

Their foreign allegiance would certainly have been deemed a threat to the corporate body. However, polemically the book of Judith could show that the unconventional foreign policy, or as DeSilva (2002:62) puts it, "sleeping with the enemy," is not necessarily a threat to the survival of a corporate body. It could produce benefit. This implies that the book of Judith not only advocates an alternative body ideology but also, similar to Judges, advocates an alternative ideology as polemic in relation to difference and the unconventional.

The book of Judith would then serve as polemic for an alternative ideology in first century B.C.E. Judaism, for which the writer uses the book of Judges to substantiate his alternative ideology. "The story of Judith might have shed a new and more positive light on their use of deceit in foreign affairs and their shifting of allegiances so as to benefit the people" (DeSilva 2002:92). The writer of Judith interpreted Judges' counterculture rhetoric as proposing an alternative ideology relevant to first century B.C.E. as well. This is clear proof that Judges does contain an alternative ideology as hidden polemic.¹³

Finally, by taking one example from the book of Judges and testing it against Amit's criteria, we can now with certainty deduce that Judges 4-5 clearly meets all the above-mentioned criteria. When taking the other narrations of Judges into account, the book of Judges clearly exhibits a hidden polemic advocating alternative ideology. This is produced with the author's counterculture rhetoric in order to criticise the dominant ideology of difference as threatening.

F CONCLUSION

¹³ In the doctoral thesis (Van der Merwe, Whole and unwhole bodies, 203-204, the extra-biblical investigation extends further into Pseudo-Philo and Josephus' interpretation. Both these sources yield a positive depiction of the fact that they identified the Masoretic author's displacement of dominant ideology and consequently reconfigured their accounts so as to avoid the criticism of dominant ideology.

Due to the fact that the biblical text of Judges is rhetorical and therefore polemical, the hypothesis of this study is that the juxtaposition, displacement and irony as narrative techniques found in the book of Judges, and also specifically in Judges 4-5 as an example, were implemented by a polemicist as counterculture rhetoric to advocate alternative body ideology. This alternative ideology entails the acceptance of difference and different-functioning bodies as beneficial to society.

By using the example of Judges 4-5 we proved this hypothesis by applying the criteria proposed by Amit (2000:90) for testing whether there is a hidden polemic in the biblical text. This includes the identification of such a polemic as alternative and critical of dominant ideology by the early Greek translators (LXX) of the Hebrew text of Judges, as well as by the extra-biblical use of such a polemic in the book of Judith, relating to Judges. With reference to Judith, the polemic serves as counterculture rhetoric proposing that difference can be beneficial to society also in the first century B.C.E. context.

The presence in Judges of an alternative ideology to that of the dominant ideology, namely that difference and different-functioning bodies are a threat to society, has important implications for the manner in which the Bible has been interpreted in this regard in the past and how it should be interpreted in our context today as well as in the future. As biblical interpretation influences society,¹⁴ it is important to seriously take notice of the negative influence a one-dimensional reading of the Bible can have on society. The traditional interpretation of the church that ancient Israel's dominant ideology is authoritative and the only meta-discourse in the text, has led to the dominant ideology flourishing through the ages. However, the presence of an alternative body ideology in the biblical text as multiple discourses can now challenge the dominant ideology.¹⁵ Difference and different-functioning bodies *can* be beneficial to society. A correction has already been introduced by incorporating this principle into the South African Bill of Human Rights, namely that an alternative body ideology is beneficial to non-discrimination and the tolerance of difference on various levels within society today.

¹⁴ Also see F. Klopper, "Interpretation is all we have," *Old Testament Essays*, 22/1 (2009): 88-101 and M. Masenya, "For better or for worse?"- the (Christian) Bible and the Africana women," *Old Testament Essays*, 22/1 (2009): 126-150, for the manner in which biblical interpretation has had an influence upon society, especially within the South African gender context.

¹⁵ In this regard, J. N. Vorster, "The body as strategy of power in religious discourse," *Neotestamentica*, 31/2 (1997): 408, identifies the manner in which the languaged body plays an important role in religious discourse. Vorster also relates the languaged body to the South African context.

It has also implications for the interpretation of difference and different-functioning bodies for the Christian church. It implies that the dominant body ideology that faith communities have held as authoritative is not the only authoritative ideology regarding bodies and difference within the biblical text. The presence of alternative body ideology in the biblical text enables such communities to regard alternative body ideology also as authoritative, as its presence is prevalent in the canon. It will be very liberating for the church in South Africa and abroad to realise and accept this.

Biblical scholarship and faith communities need to re-evaluate their theoretical underpinning regarding their traditional biblical interpretation. My proposal is that ideological criticism, as part of an inter-disciplinary socio-rhetorical approach, be used to identify and interpret alternative body ideology in the rest of the Bible. Our South African society with its formal policy of non-discrimination will welcome biblical interpretation reflecting alternative ideology relating to difference, especially because, as this study points out, the biblical authors, redactors, and later interpreters have criticised the dominant ideologies of their time. Such authoritative criticism has been incorporated in the canon and it is of great importance that it is recognised.

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