

Book reviews

What Does Paul the Apostle have to do with Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian? About the encouragement of the Thessalonians

Ezra JaeKyung Cho, *The Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians: In Light of Ancient Funeral Oration* (Pickwick Publications, Eugene, OR, 2020)

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Can we take into consideration new approaches in the field of biblical interpretation, nowadays? Ezra JaeKyung Cho, member of the teaching staff at Washington University of Virginia and the first Korean student with a Doctorate of Philosophy in Biblical Studies at The Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary Wilmore - Kentucky, proves, in his first published book - *The Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians: In Light of Ancient Funeral Oration* - that the answer to our question is an affirmative one.

The book, which is, in fact, the Ph.D. thesis of Dr. Cho, was published in October 2020 in Eugene - Oregon, by Pickwick Publications. Initially, as the author acknowledges in the preface of the book, he tried to interpret 1 Thessalonians - a Pauline letter - by an epistolary approach. Unsatisfied with this convenient methodology and influenced by that of Dr. Witherington's, he finished his work approaching the text from a rhetorical perspective, which is, in his opinion, more accurate than other methodologies and the best solution for a clear interpretation of 1 Thessalonians. Anyway, the novelty of this book is, more than a different approach to 1 Thessalonians, but the fact that it shows, in a highly detailed manner, how Paul the Apostle used rhetorical strategies and skills in this specific letter.

The Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians: In Light of Ancient Funeral Oration has 302 pages and is divided into eight chapters, preceded by *Tables*, *Preface* and *Introduction* and succeeded by *Bibliography*. Each chapter contains at the end the corresponding footnotes. Both in the preface and introduction, but also throughout the book, the author presents his main contention, that Paul the Apostle "employs elements of epideictic funerary oratory to persuade his audience in writing 1 Thessalonians - although the letter itself is not a funeral oration - and thus an examination of elements of epideictic funerary oratory illuminate the language and arguments of Paul in this letter".

The first two chapters present *The History of Interpretation and Methodology* and *The Philosophy and Theology of Death and Dying in Funeral Orations and 1 Thessalonians*. There are two broad approaches on the structure

and theme of the letter of 1 Thessalonians, says the author at the beginning of the first chapter: one consists in various analyses of the logical or thematic development, while the other includes analyses of the epistolary pattern. Cho reviews the theories of more than 50 scholars about 1 Thessalonians and, by examining key advocates of each approach, he shows that each has serious explanatory limits in what regards the Pauline text. Trying to explain how the language of 1 Thessalonians has been understood by researchers, he stops at the usual and overworked approach - the epistolary approach - to which he dedicates a broad analysis.

Even though Cho admits that there are overlapping elements between the epistolary approach and the rhetorical approach, he brings several arguments to support the methodological use of understanding the Pauline letter in rhetorical terms. One is that in the ancient world, the formal oral proclamation was the main way of dissemination, as only 5 percent or more of the total adult population (including women and slaves) was literate. That is why Paul's explicit request is made in 1 Thessalonians 5:27: "I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them". Another piece of evidence for the rhetorical nature of Paul's letters is the letter's length. If the average length of a letter of Cicero is 295 words, and of Seneca 955, for the Apostle Paul the average length of a letter is 2.500 words. Apart from this, Cho explains that being born in Tarsus (the birthplace of Hermogenes, the greatest rhetorician of the second century A.D.) Paul was familiar with Greco-Roman rhetoric, given its age and influence, and therefore epistolary conventions may not provide the most adequate hermeneutical key for this text.

In the subchapter entitled *The Methodology of Rhetorical Criticism*, the author presents rhetorical criticism as being based on the works of classical rhetoricians of Antiquity, such as Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*, Cicero's *De Inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. He is also referring to the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, the sole surviving rhetorical treaty before Aristotle.

The second chapter surveys the Epicurean and Stoic theology and philosophy of death, the philosopher's consolatory letters and funeral orations (the author noticed that the representative authors of consolatory letters, most of them influenced by stoicism, are Cicero, Seneca, Pliny the Younger, and Plutarch), the tombstone epitaphs in Greek and Latin and the philosophy and theology of death in 1 Thessalonians.

What is the main difference between the Stoic philosophy of death and the theology of death in 1 Thessalonians? Paul calls the pagan people as "others...who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13b), continuing the ideas of ancient philosophy as Theocritus, who said that "hopes are for the living, but the ones who die are without hope" or of Julian's, who explains in *Epistle to Himerius 69* that Himerius wife was prematurely "snatched away like a torch". Paul creates a powerful contrast between the pagan thought-world and Christian beliefs about death, the last ones being based on the Resurrection, the hope of

reunion of the living with the dead and the new creation within Christ's triumphant *parousia*.

In the next three chapters - *Funeral Oratory in Speeches, The Roman Oratory and the Jewish Oratory* and *Funeral Orations in Rhetorical Handbooks* - the author identifies many elements to categorize the rhetorical genre of 1 Thessalonians into epideictic rhetoric. Concrete examples of this can be amplification and embellishment with hypobole (1 Thessalonians 1:8; 5:16-22), the ongoing stress on anamnesis, an epideictic contrast between praiseworthy and blameworthy behaviour, prayer (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13), and the consolation and exhortation at the end of the epistle.

The aim of epideictic rhetoric is shown by concrete examples from the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian. Regarding the types of pure epideictic speech, the author brings them together with their specifics and so results: funeral oration, festal gathering/ party orations, paradoxical encomium, and encomium of person. Special attention is given to similarities, but also to small differences between contents of Greek funeral speech (5th - 4th B.C.), Roman funeral speech (2nd B.C. - 4th A.D.) and Jewish funeral orations (*4 Maccabees*). The Athenian funeral speech, dedicated initially to those citizens who had fallen in battle for their country, had the primary purposes of showing the continuity between the living Athenian community and the dead, to unify the Athenian community and to exhort the young to imitate the dead heroes, on the one side, and console the adults, on the other side. Cho notices that one of the main purposes of Athenian's funeral orations - to console and exhort the living - is presented and reflected in 1 Thessalonians 4:13: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope". Furthermore, the Athenian funeral orations end with wishful prayers. 1 Thessalonians follows the same structure: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen". (1 Thessalonians 5:28).

The original and important parts of the present research are chapters 6 and 7 - *Comparing 1 Thessalonians 1-3 and Funeral Oratory* and *Comparing between 1 Thessalonians 4-5 and Funeral Oratory*. After exploring, in previous chapters, ancient funeral orations and rhetorical handbooks, and discovering the structure, function, and purpose, and rhetorical *topoi* or commonplaces, the author applies the pattern of epideictic consolation speeches to the text of 1 Thessalonians. Step by step, almost every phrase and paragraph from the five chapters of 1 Thessalonians is analyzed, described, categorized from the perspective of ancient rhetoric, more specifically funeral oratory. In these chapters, the reader discovers that Paul's letter is modelled on ancient funeral speeches, that the text can be seen as a written discourse and that Paul the Apostle uses effective and rhetorical methods to encourage the Thessalonians, who were facing growing persecution, suffering, and even martyrdom of their members.

The scientific novelty is also given by the categorizing made by the author of the whole 1 Thessalonians into the typical ancient funeral orations divisions: the

exordium (1:2-3), the narration or encomium (1:4-3:10), the consolation and exhortation (4:1-5:15), and peroratio (5:16-22) with prayer (5:22-28).

To show how the author analyzes the text of the epistle and how he discovers Paul's rhetorical skills and arguments, I will make some references to what Cho called „the third exhortation/consolation” - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. I chose this passage because it is being used as a liturgical text in the Christian Orthodox funeral service. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul uses a distinctive emphatic formula by saying, “But we do not want you to be uninformed...about those who have died”, that indicates his intention to show and teach a new topic, which is not yet known by his audience - „the brothers”. Using expression like “as others do who have no hope” (4:13), or “the Gentiles who do not know God,” (4:5b) “outsiders (4:12a)”, Paul differentiates „the brothers” from pagans and unifies the Thessalonians believers into the newly chosen Christian community, with a new collective identity. This technique, as we have seen before, is the same as a funeral oration in purpose and function. We need to say that Paul's main topic in 1 Thessalonians is the theme of hope of Jesus' *parousia* and he suggests that at every partial conclusion such as 1:3,10; 2:12, 19; 3:13; 4:13-5:11; 5:23. Paul describes “Jesus' *parousia*” (second coming) as a processional *parousia*, like an image of conquering general entering the city or the image of triumphal procession “with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet” (4:16). Paul was probably familiar with the triumphal processions in his period and their cultural implications (like triumphal processions in Rome by Germanicus Caesar in A.D. 17, Caligula in A.D. 40, and Claudius in A.D. 43) and used some imperial funerary motifs in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 to describe Christ's second coming. To strengthen them by showing that they are not alone and that they have by their side the Emperor of all - Jesus Christ, Paul uses the power of images to do that. Just as the Roman imperial funeral procession interweaves the imperial processional parade with the triumphal image and the apotheosis of the emperor, Paul also employs the triumphal image of Jesus' *parousia* with a discussion regarding the death of the Thessalonian believers who had become martyrs. Also regarding the image of Christ's processional *parousia*, Cho noticed that Paul reverses the direction and order of the ancient funeral procession in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. If the funeral procession starts from inside the city and progresses to the cemetery outside the city, which shows the segregation of life and the end of life, Jesus' triumphal procession began outside the city and went into the city, which indicates a new era of Jesus' eternal reign with life for both the dead and the living and an eternal feast with the triumphal Lord. It is also noteworthy that Jesus will descend from heaven (4:16a), which is outside the city. In the cemetery outside the city, the dead in Christ will rise first (4:16b) with Jesus' triumphal *parousia* through the herald of archangel's trumpets. Then, says Paul, “we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together to meet (εις ἀπάντησιν) the Lord in the air” (4:17a). The term ἀπάντησιν evokes the image of a Greco-Roman formal reception as it is a technical term referring to the civic custom of

a Hellenistic formal reception. This word refers to the custom of sending a delegation of leading officials outside the city to welcome the royal personality or dignitary into the city or community for his official visit with great tribute and honour. Through these analogies, in association with the term as *παρουσία* (the coming of the Lord) and *ἀπάντησιν*, Paul pictures the Lord Jesus as the king escorted on the remainder of his journey to earth by his royal chosen people, that is, both those newly raised from the dead and those who have remained alive. Through this process, both the dead and the living together, who are prepared for the *parousia*, will meet Jesus and escort him into the city, “and so we will be with the Lord forever” (4: 17b).

In 4:16, Paul described Jesus’ triumphal *parousia* by three prepositional phrases: “For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven”. In Cho’s comment, Christ’s cry of command is directed to the dead, whom he calls to the resurrection through the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. These three prepositional phrases are all signals for the resurrection and an accompanying mark and intimation of the end. In any case, the third event to mark Jesus’ *parousia* as a triumphal processional *parousia* - “the sound of God’s trumpet” - must be interpreted in the meaning of the antiquity, not as a musical instrument, but to give signals and strengthen the war-cry of the soldiers. The trumpet has in 1 Thessalonians the double image: a mournful funeral procession and God’s triumphal *parousia* for his people’s resurrection. The author says that with the trumpet image, Paul employs the funeral motif of the trumpet from Greco-Roman culture, but simultaneously reverses it with Jesus’ triumphal processional *parousia*, particularly the triumphal entrance of the warrior king. This is consistent with the fact that Paul implants Jesus’ triumphal *parousia* for the dead into the hearts of the living with the overlapping image of the trumpet - the mournful funeral and the triumphal procession of Christ’s *parousia*. Quoting Mary Beard who claims that in the Roman imperial funeral procession, “some elements of triumphal practice have been found in funeral processions”, Cho says that Paul interweaves the triumphal image of Christ’s *parousia* into the funeral ritual and the death of his people.

As I already mentioned on a previous page in my review, the author mentions that ancient Julian describes the Himerius prematurely wife death by saying that she was “snatched away (*αναρπασθηναι*) like a torch”. Cho observes that Paul uses this symbolic funerary language (it was very common in ancient funeral orations) and the verb *ἀρπαζω* - *to snatch away* in 1 Thessalonians - “will be snatched in the clouds - *ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις*” (4:17) - but not to express the death and the power of death in the ancient/pagan context of funeral rituals. Paul uses the verb *ἀρπαζω* with some twist in meaning and perspective. He inverts this symbolic word of death into the triumphal and hopeful word of resurrection through the Lord’s *parousia*. If the word *ἀρπαζω* usually indicates death and separation from the living, Paul conversely uses it to denote association with the Lord and the living; he contrasts the snatching of the dead

under the earth with the releasing to the air. More than that, Cho show that the ancient expression of ἀρπαζω is mainly used in the past tense, which indicates the doomed destiny and despair concerning death. Paul, however, uses the expression of “will be caught up” with the future passive tense ἀρπαγησόμεθα in 4:17. Doing this, Paul emphasizes the hopeful future of the believers and the dead together, and replaces the hopeless condition of the pagans with the hope of salvation, “obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:9b).

By the above examples from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-1, I have tried to show how, in Chapters 6 and 7 of this book, the author analyses and comments, helped by the works of well-known authors as George Kennedy, each paragraph of Paul’s letter in the perspective of the ancient funeral rhetoric. In the last chapter, 8, Ezra JaeKyung Cho presents the *Conclusion* of his book. The author also mentions the limits of the research, such as the relatively small range of the study, lack of research of how Paul employs methodological synthesis or discord between rhetorical approach and epistolary approach in 1 Thessalonians, lack of research on how funeral oratory could be applied in other Pauline letters, and general letters. Anyway, Cho proposes broader and deeper research of ancient funeral oratory and more exploring on how the genre of funeral oratory originated, developed, and related among the Athenian, the Roman, and Jewish funeral oration.

The present book is a P.h.D. thesis, with clear premises, evidence and conclusions, which lead to the purpose of the research - to prove the existence of ancient funeral oration elements in 1 Thessalonians - but also, an alethic, referential perspective would have been welcomed. For example, as far as Jesus’ parousia, its primary occurrence is based on a promise made by Christ Himself (Matthew 24:30-31, Luke 21:6-36, John 14:3; Acts 1:9-11). Generally, regarding any rhetorical approach, it is recommended to recognize, among the forms of a speech or text, its truth and authority value. In the case of Cho’s book, who probably considers his target audience familiar with Christian teachings, the approach focuses on the auditorium and its consolation, and its social-cultural dimension, and less on the referential dimension of the topics.

All things considered, the book provides significant support for all those interested in rhetorical criticism, who will find in Cho’s thesis a comprehensive list of references about funeral oratory. Researchers in theology will find out a large bibliography list about biblical interpretation and will benefit from a broad overview of the fascinating ancient world of rhetorical strategies and techniques. Christian preachers can find in this book new persuasive arguments for their sermons at funeral services, the book itself interpreting an excellent homiletical model for funeral speeches. For all readers, the book can also be seen as the solving of a difficult “puzzle” by Dr. Cho, as said by Ben Witherington. Finally, to those who are reluctant to the author’s new interpretation, I let Apostle Paul answer them: “Test everything and hold on to what is good”. (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

**The power of influencers.
How can influencer marketing help a brand's performance?**

Aron Levin. *Influencer Marketing for Brands: What YouTube and Instagram Can Teach You About the Future of Digital Advertising*
(Apress, Stockholm, 2019)

Gabriela POLEAC

The book written by Aron Levin in 2019 contains valuable information regarding the current state of influencer marketing. I believe that this topic is extremely important in this day and age when New Media dictates new trends and new forms of advertising through uncommon tools that have definitive effects on brands. The author analyzes the power of influencers and the modality of brands using this relatively new type of marketing to accomplish their goals. Aron Levin, the co-founder of Relatable (the company which has in charge of clients like Google, Heineken, or Adobe) is famous for his work in advertising for notorious brands such as Candy Crush. These performances recommend the writer as a professional practitioner in the field of online marketing. Throughout his book, the reader is easily familiarized with the theoretical framework related to the field of influencers. Furthermore, those interested have the privilege to learn about this from a reliable source.

Levin's goal in writing his book was to show how influencer marketing works behind the scenes. He manages to spread his knowledge in synthesized wisdom in 8 chapters. This book provides a whole new perspective on marketing techniques through the use of influencers. From the origin of this form of advertising to advice regarding the remuneration and methodology related to the relationship between brands and influencers, the author manages to maintain the reader's curiosity by delivering current examples, good practice tips and tricks, and information about the mistakes from which any practitioner can learn.

Starting with an introduction in which he presents an image illustrating his expertise in the field of influencer marketing, the author speaks about the 10,000 campaigns in which collaborations with influencers were implied across 40 countries. Due to his outstanding knowledge and experience in this domain, Levin is ready to share the secrets most advertising agents would not tell easily. The preeminent focus of this book is on the strategies one can use in order to reach a marketing objective well-defined.

The first chapters, intitled "Origins", transports the reader to the year 1730, at the very first use of an influencer to promote a business through the story of how the queen of the United Kingdom made a sell-out for a type of

pottery she enjoyed, by being a source of inspiration for the entire country. The potter, an entrepreneur with a strategy ahead of his time, managed to bring exclusivity to the masses, and such, he put the basis on the idea that people like to live/be like royals and that is why they will follow the advice royalty gives. The Consumer Revolution started when he could persuade consumers to shop out of aspiration, and not a necessity, using the power of royals as influencers.

Traveling back to the present, in the second chapter the author defines the current state of the advertising industry focusing on the rise of digital ads, whilst analog ads are losing their power. No longer needing the approval of traditional media, and personal growth depending only on ingenuity, the world is described as one without gatekeepers. The only way for a person or a brand to be set apart is to push the boundaries of creativity and innovation. Nowadays, people are media companies and the eyeball is on other people. Thus, Levin believes that marketers, more than ever, should play by the rules of the consumers.

In the third chapter, the author proves how influence cannot exist without context or frame of reference. He outlines the 3 levers of influence: audience size (reach), affinity (expertise, credibility), and strength of the relationship (engagement). Referencing the work of Everett Rogers about the *Diffusion of Innovations*, Levin proves that early adopters have the identical characteristics as influencers: they act as change subjects and are able to influence the early majority. The author presents the implications of influence as an outcome, not a profession, and advises on how to find the right influencers or creators for a brand.

The ensuing chapter follows the guidelines for describing the art and science of creativity. The reader is introduced to 14 creative executions on Instagram and 9 creative executions on YouTube that can easily be incorporated in marketing campaigns. Levin emphasizes the idea that in order to have good results there must be a good strategy. In this manner, he presents a template on how to write an effective brief. The example has been used in his successful collaborations and I consider this insight to be utterly remarkable for practitioners, regardless of their experience. In the final part of this section, he analyzes the 7 principles of the word of mouth, as he has a vast knowledge concerning this field, having worked on previous projects demanding it, such as Spotify.

After enriching their knowledge regarding the principal view on influencer marketing, the reader can begin to learn more about marketing from the perspective of creators. Thus, in Chapter 5, Levin presents the results of his research on the mistakes that brands make when working with influencers. Introducing the ways in which the relationship between a brand and an influencer can be improved so that the star would collaborate swimmingly. The chapter values the raising importance of collaborative relationships. The key points are related to quality and personal brand alignment, but also to the type of remuneration an influencer deserves (free products are not enough). In the next chapter, dr. Goldratt's Theory of Constraint is discussed in order to help marketers to remove the barriers that may appear while working on an influencer

marketing campaign. The section is focused on the 80-20-80-20 strategy and several tips are addressed to help practitioners prevent overhead.

Chapter 7 is, from my point of view, the core of the book, presenting the four-step influencer marketing framework. Starting with reviewing marketing objectives, analyzing the target audience, and defining success, the author presents how to make the right decision in choosing the type of campaign needed for a brand. Afterward, he shows how to identify the right strategy for the goal. Alongside, he indicates how to choose the right creative idea and the personalities of the influencers that fit that idea. Last but not least, Levin provides valuable insights into budgeting and remuneration. What I found interesting in this particular section is how the author uses classic theories applied to contemporary issues. The integration of basic theories in influencer campaigns provides a recent approach on how online marketing works and on what marketers can do for reaching their professional objectives and increasing the value of their work.

In the final chapter, the reader learns to concentrate on the untracked audience, finds out more about Google attribution models, and is introduced to plans to fight fraud. Another key concept revolves around the longevity of YouTube. Unlike traditional advertising, the longevity of video clips reaches a new dimension that allows a leveraged time to improve the return on investment.

From my point of view, this book captures in a comprehensive technique and in an elegant style the modality in which any marketing campaign that involves the use of the influencers should be carried out. The strong points of this book are revealed in the fashion in which the author captures the advice that any practitioner at the beginning of his professional journey should receive. Each step of implementing such a campaign is authentically explained and easy to comprehend, computing a practical book that acts similarly to a powerful toolbox – necessary for any online marketer.

However, the lack of a conclusion, which would encourage readers to take action, builds up to be a disadvantage. Finally, I consider this book to be vital to the New Media industry, especially on account of the functional perspective taken on explaining the theoretical framework.

What does a writer do after hitting the „Publish” button?

John R. Gallagher, *Update Culture and the Afterlife of Digital Writing*
(Utah State University Press, Colorado, 2020)

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Writing and communication have always been human activities *par excellence*. We have assumed that speech and writing were inherently human traits a long time ago, and scholars from different domains studied these concepts with both curiosity and tenacity. The modern world has made this even more obvious.

In this digital era that we experience nowadays, writing becomes more than just putting one word after another in search of meaning and even more than creating a text. *Update Culture and the Afterlife of Digital Writing* by John R. Gallagher explores these new perspectives that internet and writing on the internet have created or, at least, emphasized. It also gives us a conceptual framework for understanding the steps that digital writers make *after* a text is published online. The author builds its arguments on both the general theory of rhetoric and discursive practices and the newer studies about template-standardized interactions of internet cultures that emerged in the mid-2000s (p. 18).

Before discussing the structure and methodology of this book, we need to consider three main concepts that underlie it: digital writing, interactive and participatory internet (IPI) templates, and update culture. We treated these terms not in a random order but one which creates a logical flow that ultimately defines update culture.

The first one, digital writing, is the easiest to comprehend. As we highlighted at the beginning of this review, writing is a frequent occurrence (p. 11). In a broad sense, digital writing can be understood as any text realized through (or for) a digital interface. The author adds some shades to this definition: for him, digital writing means “discursive communication that includes alphabetic text, images, emojis, GIFs, and other information that can [be] placed into a template” (p. 34).

Gallagher’s definition of digital writing guides us to the second concept we need to understand: interactive and participatory internet templates (IPI templates). He defines these templates as “interactive interfaces of ongoing prefabricated designs and cultural forms” (p. 34), thus outlining the main features of this concept. We know that the online world is built by code, but not every one of us knows how to do it. IPI templates are the solution to this problem, providing us some well-defined structures that we can fill in with our

text or interactive content. While doing it, they are also influencing our perception of digital communication, a fact we miss because “we often look *through* them rather than *at* them” (p. 37, emphasis in original).

The structure that IPI templates provide is an “ongoing prefabricated design”. However, these do not work as a preformatted canvas but rather as a procedure for users. Instead of being forced into a specific action (as the prefabricated design would require), users still have the freedom of interpreting the meaning of some fields. Another characteristic of IPI templates is they function as cultural forms by habituating us to act in a certain way: “Because IPI templates can be filled out repeatedly, unlike a printed page, template rhetoric induces continuous filling in and filling out of templates” (p. 43).

The last concept we need to understand before diving into the core message of this book is *update culture*. Gallagher argues that this is an inherent part of digital culture and describes it as “an ongoing need to reread, edit, and update texts in digital environments mediated by interactive and participatory internet (IPI) templates” (p. 32). As we have seen, these patterns encourage and amplify, by definition, the interaction between writers and readers. This extraordinary closeness that the online environment offers makes digital writers look at their texts through the comments they received and update them accordingly. Update culture does not necessarily mean that every digital text is updated, but that it is updatable:

“Digital writing is inordinately changeable – even if the subjects and objects don’t change, we know they can, as recent theories of planned obsolescence have shown us” (Fitzpatrick 2011). And we expect this change. (p. 157, emphasis in original).

With these three concepts as a theoretical given, we can now approach the structure of the book. *Update Culture and the Afterlife of Digital Writing* has eight chapters, everyone treating a fundamental dimension for the demonstration of the book’s principal argument: “*due to the speed, frequency, scale, and access of audience participation on the internet, writers attend to the afterlife of their texts through a variety of strategies that fuse oralities and literacies through what I call textual timing, textual attention, and textual management*” (p. 6). The book is based on a study John R. Gallagher conducted among forty digital writers (Redditors, Amazon reviewers, digital journalists, and bloggers) from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The thesis of this book is, therefore, based on the discoveries made in his study.

From an ideational point of view, the book can be divided into two distinctive parts. The “practical” section of the book, which contains chapters 1-6, directly highlights the results and conclusions of the study with digital writers. The “theoretical” part, which sums up the last two chapters of the book, focuses instead on the implications this study have on pedagogy and the general epistemological background.

The first chapter draws the methodological characteristics of the study, introducing us to the people who were part of the target audience. The author clarifies the principles of selection for the digital writers that he interviewed: “(1) individuals (2) who write and communicate within IPI-templated environments while (3) actively considering responses from their audiences” (p. 17). It also delimits the research scope, which was to find how writers revise and rethink their writing strategies as a response to the public’s feedback.

The second chapter aims to delimit the theoretical context on which the author based his research. He explains the concepts of IPI templates and template rhetoric and gives us a brief introduction to the literature built around them. As we emphasized earlier, the main implication of template rhetoric is that the structures we use are continually structuring our minds. By repetition, time-space compression, ambient affordances, and standardization, IPI templates create a shared knowledge base between writers and their audience. It contains specific words, habits, or expectations, and it influences their interaction in significant ways.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 focus on the three strategies by which digital writers “attend” the development, transmission, and updating of their texts after pressing the Publish button. Textual timing, textual attention, and textual management serve as the weapons these writers count on when interacting with the public. Every one of these provides some specific models or steps that writers follow when approaches it.

Textual timing, for example, fulfils two roles: it is a “systematic approach to delivering and circulating discourse” (p. 55) and, at the same time, a strategy to avoid being “always on.” As we enhanced earlier, IPI templates stimulate writers to stay connected: checking on comments, updating articles, or writing new ones. In this perpetual environment, every moment can be a kairotic (opportune) moment for posting: everything *can* go viral, but not everything *will* go viral. That is why writers are developing ways to fusion kairos (the time of opportunity) with chronos (real, chronological time). While deciding “when” to post, writers also take template timing and algorithmic timing into consideration. These three specific strategies for timing allow them to understand when the readers will see their post, where it will appear in the IPI template, and how do the algorithms interact with the content.

Textual attention is a strategy writers use to deal with the comments they receive. According to Gallagher, the interviewees followed a three-step recipe: they read the comments, sought genuine ones, and responded to these. The author argues that textual attention highlights the afterlife of digital writing, establishing what he calls „ postproduction production” (p. 97).

Last but not least, textual management reveals two ideas about digital writing. First, we know that writers cannot control their audiences. However, they still managed their readers: they “created parameters for behaviors and initiated certain roles in the group” (p. 101). They do this following four different categories of actions: macromanagement (framing the conversation

through implicit or explicit comment policies and establishing forums), indirect management (monitoring, curating, and controlling the conversation), direct management (confronting or reporting trolls), and responsive management (deleting, correcting, and updating the text).

In *the fifth chapter*, the author also touches on the subject of aspirational branding, which turns out to be the purpose for which digital writers implement all these strategies. By engaging in a continuous process of call and response with their readers (p. 132), alongside all the “backstage” activities they commit to, digital writers “cultivate and rework their own image and *ethos*” (p. 133, emphasis in original).

The goal of building an online persona that’s appealing to a specific groupthink of hivemind (the projection of public in writer’s minds) was not only a strong motivation for the interviewed writers but also, as *the sixth chapter* lays out, an internal standard for acting ethically. Consistent with the interviewees’ responses, the author emphasizes that ethical frameworks in the field of digital communication cannot be based on rules or results. Therefore, he proposes a model based on the virtues ethics that involves the creation of a code based on dispositional characteristics (virtues). This paradigm “frames the habits of writers [...] as guides for ethical engagement in the digital world” (p. 141). Moreover, it admits that ethical people are not *always* ethical, which gives this theory remarkable flexibility.

The last two chapters of this book are discussing the finalities of Gallagher’s study and the implications this can have in the digital communication field. Chapter 7 focuses on a series of pedagogical advice for those who teach digital writing, while the eighth one is drawing a broad perspective on how this study can improve our understanding of update culture and digital writing in general. The author emphasizes that digital writers nowadays do more than just writing: they edit, moderate the site, manage social media accounts, advertise their work, and engage in conversations with their public, all at once. By doing so, they employ strategies that “fuse written and oral modes” (p. 157), which makes the creation of new interconnected analytical categories necessary:

“Update culture is only increasing in intensity, and template design is increasingly easy to use. With the speeds and scales of the internet and social media, digital writing and writers will continue to close the perceived gap between writing and orality. From a broad perspective, this project means to heal a larger rift and put something together: talking and writing. By using textual timing, attention, and management, we can see that talking, writing, reading, and listening are becoming closer, rejoining one another”. (p. 159)

We believe that the subject of this book provides an *outstanding perspective shift* in the digital communication field of study, making it a useful

resource for teachers, scholars, or even communicators. It puts digital writers in the spotlight, making us realize the effort given to every piece of “text” they post. Also, one of the most important points this book accomplishes is, in our opinion, the fact that it makes us a little more “sensitive” to, or conscious about, all the digital templates we are using and interacting with and their rhetorical influence.

However, like any research that explores a relatively unstudied perspective, several issues should be clarified or fathomed in the future. For example, it would be interesting to determine if the qualitative data from this study remain valid when applied to a larger audience. Although the strategies in this book seem intuitive and practical, it is safe to say that the target public is far from being representative of the segment implied. There are many other platforms (IPI templates) that deserve our attention – Medium or TikTok, to name a few.

Update Culture and the Afterlife of Digital Writing is a reader-friendly book, so theoretical correlations between concepts are sometimes hasty. However, we believe that the author contextualized the information accordingly, making it accessible for students, teachers, researchers, or digital writers who want to understand their activity from an epistemological perspective.

The link between digital interaction and rhetorical instances is a valuable insight into our research field, and it has great development potential. If until recently, such research focused on content published online, this study draws attention to digital content writers and the strategies they use to write and distribute texts.