

The Parable of the Widow and Judge (Luke 18:2-5):
Talking Back to African American Stereotypes

By

Febbie C. Dickerson

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Religion

August 11, 2017

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Amy-Jill Levine, Ph.D.

Barbara E. Reid, Ph.D.

Herbert R. Marbury, Ph.D.

Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, Ph.D.

Copyright © 2017 by Febbie C. Dickerson
All Rights Reserved

Table of Contents

	.Page
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Chapter	
Introduction.....	1
Problems with the Text.....	1
My Problem with the Text in Church.....	15
My Approach.....	18
Stereotypes and How They Function.....	25
Chapter Summary.....	33
I. The Widow Through Time.....	45
Patristic Interpretation.....	48
Medieval Interpretation.....	57
Reformation Period.....	62
The Widow, Judge, and Historical Criticism.....	65
Preaching the Parable.....	82
Womanist and Feminist Readings.....	90
II. Luke, Women and Widows.....	97
Infancy Narratives.....	104
Luke, Women, and Healing.....	114
Luke, Women, and Power/Status.....	121
Luke, Women, and Silent Voices.....	126
Luke and Widows.....	128
Widows in the Bible.....	133
III. Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire Talking With Luke.....	135
Mammy.....	139
The Widow as Mammy.....	163
Jezebel.....	168
The Widow as Jezebel.....	186
Sapphire.....	192
The Widow as Sapphire.....	207
The Widow in Her Various Roles.....	210

IV. The Judge: Cool, Cruel, Fool.....	212
Masculine Constructs.....	218
Luke and Masculinity	225
Modern Masculine Performance.....	228
The Judge’s Masculinity	231
African American Masculinity	233
The Cool Black Male.....	238
Luke’s Cool Judge	246
The Master-Pastor.....	249
Luke’s Master-Pastor.....	253
The Foolish Judge.....	256
Luke’s Here Comes the Judge.....	263
Conclusion	267
Bibliography	273

To the Dickerson Family

Mom, Dad, Grandma, Carla, Marisa,

Zareeya and DestinyMonét.

This dissertation is just as much yours as mine.

You have walked this journey with me.

Acknowledgements

While writing a dissertation is indeed an individual effort, it is also a communal effort. The agony of pushing out the right words to convey the message I desired to communicate never occurred to me. I am thankful for those in my midst who encouraged and pushed me along the way.

I am grateful to Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, who encouraged me to pursue biblical studies. She told me I could do this when others said it was too late. Dr. Levine has invited me to her Bible studies and lectures in the Nashville area; we go to dinner to talk New Testament, and about the academy, and about life, and just about everything else. Her academic rigor has both stretched and prepared me to do the work of biblical studies. I thank my committee members, Drs. Barbara E. Reid, Herbert R. Marbury, and Stacey Floyd-Thomas, for engaging with and contributing their expertise to my work. New Testament professors Drs. Daniel Patte and Fernando Segovia have been crucial to my growth as a student of the New Testament, while Drs. Victor Anderson and Jay Geller have, at different times, provided sage advice.

My church communities, in both Atlanta and Nashville, have been a source of support and encouragement. Bishop Gerard A. Ancrum and the Bread of Life Church family in Atlanta provided financial support. Similarly Reverend Martin L. Espinosa and Dr. Renita J. Weems and the Ray of Hope Community Church in Nashville provided a sense of community and comfort. Pastor Espinosa and Dr. Weems on many occasions invited me into their home, provided food, and even books for classes. They have been available to help me succeed in my academic endeavors since I arrived in Nashville in August 2006.

Finally, I owe my parents Henry and Rosetta Dickerson more than I can ever repay. They have supported me in whatever I have set out to do.

Introduction

Luke 18:2-5, the Parable of the Widow and Judge, is a “problem text”¹ in multiple ways. The encounter between a tenacious widow with a legal complaint and a judge who “neither fears God nor has respect for people” (v.2), but who finds in her favor lest she strike him, raises questions about women’s social roles, stereotype and history, ethics, law, tradition and redaction. The reception history of this parable further complicates any secure understanding. Luke the evangelist has provided the first interpretation: the widow’s tenacity becomes an allegorical image for constant, faithful prayer, and the judge becomes an allegorical counter-image for God. Luke’s reading removes many of the parable’s challenges, even as it leads to its own problematic theology, one of pestering God. With both the parable detached from its Lukan context and the parable understood as part of Luke’s larger narrative, interpreters must draw their own conclusions, each tentative, and each rich with both liberative and constraining possibilities.

The Problems with the Text

The parable begins, “He [Jesus] said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people...’” (18:2). Already the parable asks for the reader’s engagement. First is Jesus’ mention of a city. Although Luke mentions cities (singular: πόλις) thirty-nine times, Jesus himself appears to have avoided the larger metropolitan units such as Sepphoris and Tiberias; he concentrates his early mission in the smaller towns of lower Galilee. When Jesus situates a story “in a certain city” (ἐν τινι πόλει), the listener needs to determine how to assess the context. Is the city, for example, the place where rich Pharisees, and equally rich and sinful women, live (cf. 7:36-50)?

¹ Yvonne Sherwood, *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Hosea’s Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective*

Next, what should one think of a judge who has no fear of God, given that the biblical tradition repeats, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10), “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” while “fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov 1:7), and “To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Sir 1:14)? The question is not simply one of history; it has implications today in places where a judge is expected to be a “good Christian” or at the very least a “theist.”²

That a judge has no respect for people (καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρεπόμενος) raises another set of problems. In a judicial context, this characterization may be exactly what one wants: an impartial arbiter who is concerned about justice rather than about reputation. On the other hand, perhaps a judge should respect all, including those who come to the court in the search of justice. A judge who has no respect for the person who appears in court—the mother who shoplifted to provide food for her children; the youth caught in gang violence; the mentally ill old man picked up by the police for loitering; Esaw Snipes, the widow of Eric Garner, who initially rejected a 5 million dollar offer to settle the wrongful death of her husband—will not be able to temper justice with mercy, and that is intolerable. Indeed, this judge, who is connected neither to a theology nor to a human community, challenges our notions of who judges are and what they do. He may even be, in his perfect isolation, a figure ripe for satire. To recognize the judge’s presumed independence and then realize that he is not independent at all sets in motion a critique of both the judge himself and the entire judicial system.

² See “ACLU Is Challenging State’s Refusal to Allow Religious Oaths Not Sworn on the Bible,” *ACLU*, January 16, 2007, <https://www.aclu.org/news/north-carolina-appeals-court-allows-aclu-lawsuit-over-court-swearing-practice-go-forward>, accessed September 29, 2016. Not only are judges expected to be good Christians, but witnesses are too. In 2005, the ACLU, on behalf of Syidah Mateen, sued the state of North Carolina for Mateen’s right to be sworn in as a witness using as her religious text the Quran. The ACLU asked that the court to clarify the state statute governing religious oaths. The goal of the ACLU was to broaden the term “Holy Scriptures” to include religious texts such as the Quran, the Tanakh, and the Bhagavad-Gita. The ACLU was successful.

Matters become increasingly complicated with the next verse. Jesus begins, “In that city...” and so invites the listener, once again, to import images of the city into the interpretation of the parable. What people do in the “big city” is not necessarily what they do in the small villages. Luke’s phrasing, *χήρα δὲ ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ*, “and a widow was in that city” echoes Luke 7.38, *καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ ἣτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει αμαρτωλός*, “and behold, a woman was in the city, a sinner.” Luke (inadvertently?) may have signaled that our widow is less benevolent than the stereotypes would suggest. It is up to the listener to determine how to assess characters located there, with options ranging from rich and successful to the begging poor to individuals who left home for adventure.

In this unnamed city, there was a widow [*χήρα*] who kept coming (*ἤρχετο*, the imperfect), to the judge...the imperfect verb suggests continual coming. Whatever the widow’s concern, she is tenacious about it; the case matters to her. And yet problems arise: does her persistence speak to a thirst for justice, or to an obsessive/compulsive reflex? Has it consumed her life? Should it have?

The reference to the widow brings up numerous associations, from her connection to “the poor, the orphan, and the stranger” (cf. Deut 10:18) and so her place among society’s vulnerable, to her association with trickster widows who achieve what they want by manipulating men in power, from Tamar (Gen 38) to Ruth to Abigail (1 Sam 25) to Judith. Complicating the characterization of the widow is Luke’s penchant for presenting widows as pious, silent, and needy (e.g., the widow who puts her coins in the temple treasury [21:2-3]; the widow of Zarephath [4:25-26]; the widows overlooked in the daily distribution [Acts 6:1]).³

The widow is the first to speak in the parable, but her words open to distinct understandings. She says, *ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου*. The Greek is ambiguous.

³ See Luke 2:26-28, 7:11-17, 21:1-4.

The widow may be demanding, “Grant me justice against my opponent” and so represent the side of the good and the true. Conversely, she may be insisting on the ethically problematic “Avenge me against my opponent.” The Greek ἐκδίκησόν can be translated either way.⁴ The majority of New Testament uses suggest avenging, or revenging, and they include hints of violence. Paul advises the Roman congregation, never avenge yourself, for “vengeance (ἐκδίκησις) is mine, I will repay says the Lord” (Rom 12:19 NRSV cf. Deut 32:35); “it is the servant of God to execute wrath (ἔκδικος) on the wrongdoer” (Rom. 13:4 NRSV).⁵ The violent desires increase in Revelation, as the martyrs ask, “Sovereign Lord, how long will it be before you judge and avenge (ἐκδικεῖς) our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?” (Rev 6:10). The seer assures them, “he has avenged (ἔξεδίκησεν) on her [the great whore] the blood of his servants” (Rev 19:2). Moreover, the term is also understood as retributive. Paul says, “We are ready to punish (ἐκδικῆσαι) every disobedience” (2 Cor 10:6), and the Petrine writer says, “For the Lord’s sake accept the authority of every human institution...as sent by him to punish (ἐκδικησιν) those who do wrong” (2 Pet 2:14). Given that ἐκδίκησις is most often understood as vengeance, it is plausible that the widow is seeking vengeance rather than justice. Rather than regard widows as weak, we may want to see widows as capable of acting in unpleasant, if perhaps necessary, ways.⁶

⁴ See Walter Bauer et al., eds. (BDAG), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 300. Ἐκδικέω can either mean granting justice or to punish or take vengeance. See also Amy-Jill Levine, “This Widow Keeps Bothering Me (Luke 18:5),” in *Finding A Woman’s Place: Essays in Honor of Carolyn Osiek*, ed. David L. Balch and Jason T. Lamoreaux, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 150 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 131. See also Amy-Jill Levine, “The Widow and the Judge,” in *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of A Controversial Rabbi* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 221–45.

⁵ See also Paul’s comments: “No one should wrong or exploit a [sister or] brother, because the Lord is the avenger (ἔκδικος) in all these things” (1 Thess 4:6); “for it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you...in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance (ἐκδίκησιν) on those who do not know God” (2 Thess 1:6-8).

⁶ Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus*, 243.

The problems here are more than linguistic: they are also matters of cultural roles. We do not know if we are to side with the widow, remain neutral, or withhold our own judgment pending more information. Should we regard the widow as conforming to the stereotype of the righteous woman under divine protection (Deut 10:18; 14:28-29; 24:17-22; 26:12; 27:19; Isa 1:17; Zech 7:10; Sir 35:18-22), and thus support her? Or should we see her as a trickster like her fellow widows Tamar, Ruth, Abigail and Judith, and thus recognize that she might be morally ambiguous if not primarily self-interested. Many interpreters, including most homilists, following the biblical stereotypes of widows, Luke's contextualization of the widow in the parable, as well as the modern cultural view of widows (or older women in general) as righteous and needy, read ἐκδίκησόν μου as "grant me justice" rather than "grant me vengeance." Readers assume the widow is the moral exemplar; they regard her as the one who has been wronged and who is seeking a positive outcome for her situation. Readers do not read the widow as vengeful because we readers like the widow, and we deem the "vengeful as out of control, emotionally unhinged, perpetually angry, unable to turn the cheek, and incapable of moving on with their lives."⁷

The NRSV translates 18:3b, "Grant me justice against my opponent" and so tames the parable instead of prompting the question of how one distinguishes justice from vengeance. Not all law cases are just. Because the parable offers no details on the widow's opponent – the details of the case, the relationship of the litigants – readers have no secure way of knowing what specifically the widow wants beyond that ambiguous call for "justice/vengeance." We may speculate on the details, be they restitution of property, the payment of a debt, even the desire that the adversary be imprisoned, tortured, or killed. Readers typically ignore the absent other

⁷ Thane Rosenbaum, "Eye for an Eye: The Case for Revenge," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 26, 2013, <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Case-for-Revenge/138155/>, accessed April 26, 2017.

litigant, and they ignore as well, in interpreting this parable, Jesus' usually negative statements about law courts, such as "when you go with your accuser before a magistrate, on the way make an effort to settle the case, or you may be dragged before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you in prison" (Luke 12:58 cf. Matt 5:25).

The widow's tenacity in coming is matched by, and likely prompted by, the judge's refusal to hear her case. The judge οὐκ ἤθελεν ἐπὶ χρόνον, literally, "not did he want upon time" or, colloquially, "for a while he refused," whether to hear her case or to grant her a judgment. We are not told why the judge refuses to listen to the widow; we do not know if he views her case as serious but time-consuming, or frivolous and therefore not worthy of time. He may feel that time spent with this widow is a waste of time.

After the widow's continual coming, the judge finally yields. Jesus gives us access to the judge's thoughts: "After these things he said to himself..." (μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, 18:4b). Interior monologue is rare in parables; indeed, the technique is rarely deployed in the synoptic tradition. Speaking of the characters in the Lukan parables who think out loud, Philip [Melissa] Sellev observes:

What great difficulties the leading characters of precisely these stories have long posed for those seeking exemplary Christian heroes — including the gospel writer! None of the personalities whose thoughts are described is particularly commendable; indeed they tend to embody anything but noble characteristics. The self-satisfied, amoral, or even immoral individuals who star in these portrayals, who are looking out for their own interests above all, sometimes encounter unexpected divine intervention or retribution (the Farmer, perhaps also the Owner of the Vineyard), but more often they seem able to use their craftiness

or amoral reasoning to escape punishment (the Prodigal, the Steward, and the Judge).⁸

Interior monologue is not, in the Gospels, just an indicator of the attitudes and emotions of people in crisis situations.⁹ It usually indicates connivance, at best. In Luke 7:39, Simon the Pharisee, Jesus' host at a dinner, says to himself (εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ), "If this man [Jesus] were a prophet..." he would have known the character of the woman anointing him. Jesus then reveals to Simon that he knows not only the woman's identity, but Simon's own – improper—thoughts. The rich fool "thinks to himself" (διελογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῷ) about the problem (sic!) of having an overabundance of crops (Luke 12:17). In more interior monologue, he states that he will "say to his soul" (ἐρῶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου) that he has enough goods to eat, drink, relax, and be merry for many years (Luke 12:19). The night the man showed satisfaction with his wealth is the night that he lost his life (Luke 12:20), because Jesus has different ideas concerning the proper use and distribution of possessions (see Luke 6:20-26, 35; 12:33; 14:12-13; 18:22).

In Luke 12:45, the parable of the unfaithful slave: Jesus describes, "a slave who might say in his heart..." (εἶπεν ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ), 'My master is delayed in coming,' and who then "begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk...." The slave is not modeling fidelity. The Prodigal Son is apparently speaking to himself when he asks, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger?" (Luke 15:17). The interior monologue suggests not that the son has repented, but that he will do whatever is necessary to sustain himself. Finally, the conniving steward said to himself (εἶπεν δὲ ἐν ἑαυτῷ), "What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg" (Luke 16:3).

⁸ Philip [Melissa] Sellev, "Interior Monologue as a Narrative Device in the Parables of Luke," *JBL* 111.2 (1992): 239-53 (242).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 239.

The result of this question is his dishonest handling of the accounts. The judge in our parable, like his fellows who think to themselves, is apparently concerned with expedience, not justice.

The content of the judge's interior monologue begins with his repetition of Jesus' description: the judge reiterates that he has no fear of God and no respect for persons (v. 4). Yet he will attend to the widow, first because she troubles (κόπος) him. His motive for action is her troubling him. She initiates the process. His motive is, at best, annoyance. She bothers him; she gives him trouble.

His verdict, ἐκδικήσω αὐτήν, can be translated: "I will grant her justice" or "I will avenge her." Because we do not know the details of the widow's case, we cannot determine whether the judge made the right decision in granting her justice or the wrong decision in facilitating vengeance. Even here readers are morally implicated: is vengeance always a bad thing?

The judge's rationale further complicates the narrative: he states that he will grant her plea "so that she may not ὑπωπιάζει me by continually coming" (v. 5). Again, we have a translation problem. The judge may be hoping that the widow will not "wear me out" (the standard translation [e.g., the NRSV]). The Greek suggests his fears are more physical: that she will not "give me a black eye": ὑπωπιάζω is a boxing term.¹⁰ Paul, describing the need for self-discipline, states, but I ὑπωπιάζω my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified (1 Cor 9.27); the NRSV renders ὑπωπιάζω as "punish."¹¹ The judge, using the same verb, is not speaking of simply becoming weary.

The judge's motive might be expedient self-interest, or necessary self-protection. Did he make the right decision for the wrong reason, or the wrong decision for the right reason? Does

¹⁰ See BDAG, 1043. The literal meaning of ὑπωπιάζω is to strike in the face or to give a black eye.

¹¹ See also the LXX use of ὑπωπιάζω in Prov 20:30; the NRSV reads "blows."

his accession to the widow's demand move him toward righteous behavior, or does it make him complicit in her potentially unethical goal? Just as the widow has entrapped the judge, so the parable entraps the reader.

The problems the parable poses continue: is the threat of physical violence ever warranted? Do we find the threat appropriate, even humorous, if a widow gives it, while a threat from a young man, particularly a young African American man, would be condemned? Do we like the idea of a widow besting a judge, and so overturning standard gender roles? Has the judge, in yielding to the widow for fear of a blow under the eye, also yielded his masculinity? Who would think that a male judge would be afraid of a widow? Or, has the woman—in public, in court—overstepped her culturally prescribed roles to the point of being shrill, a harridan rather than a saint?

The major reason such questions are not typically posed to the parable is that Luke, the evangelist, has already begun the process of foreclosing the more provocative readings. Within the Third Gospel, the parable is embedded in a narrative frame, and the frame removes the parable's challenge.¹² F. Scott Spencer asks, "What kind of redactional contortions (and distortions) does Luke put our widow through to make his theological points?"¹³ Since the rise of redaction criticism and following that, composition criticism, which recognized that what appears to be the voice of Jesus may in fact be the voice of an interpreter, or the evangelist, scholars desire to distinguish the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus from the voice of the narrator. Such concerns are directly applicable to our parable.

¹² See Barbara E. Reid, "A Godly Widow Persistently Pursuing Justice: Luke 18:1-8," *Biblical Research* 45 (2000): 25–33.

¹³ F. Scott Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows: Capable Women of Purpose and Persistence in Luke's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 266.

Some biblical scholars regard the entire pericope, Luke 8:1-8, as coming from Jesus,¹⁴ and others are convinced that the entirety is a Lukan creation since it fails to conform to the so-called criteria of authenticity.¹⁵ I am among those readers who see a disjunction between the parable and what appears to be Luke's interpretation of it.¹⁶ The disjunction leads me to regard the parable proper as coming from Jesus, and Luke – struggling to make it conform to Luke's own interests – begins the process of interpretation. I regard 18:1 and 18:6-8 as Lukan redaction designed to tame the parable of its ethical questions and coopt it both for Luke's interest in prayer and for Luke's attempt to define women's role in the church and society.

Conservative interpreters often follow the evangelist's lead and tie the parable to Luke's discussion of the kingdom of God and the coming of the Son of Man in chapter 17.¹⁷ The Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God will come, and Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed" (17:20). He then tells his disciples, "The days are coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it" (17:22). Jesus then provides details concerning all that will take place at the Son of Man's coming (17:23-37).

¹⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). See also John Mark Hicks, "The Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8)," *Restoration Quarterly* 33.4 (1991): 209–23.

¹⁵ See John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume V: Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*, vol. 5, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 48. Meier maintains, "Relatively few of the Synoptic parables can be attributed to the historical Jesus with a good degree of probability; few of the parables can meet the criterion of authenticity."

¹⁶ I am not alone in my suspicion that Luke assigns meaning to the parable proper. See Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 100; Stephen Curkpatrick, "Parable Metonymy and Luke's Kerygmatic Framing," *JSNT* 25.3 (2003): 289–307; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd Revised (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972), 156; Levine, "Widow and the Judge," 235–36; Reid, "Godly Widow, 27; Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 176.

¹⁷ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 457. Snodgrass, linking the parable to Luke 17:20-37, suggests that Luke's concern "is not prayer in general, but praying and not becoming weary" or giving up while waiting. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 637, argues that the parable is a response to the description of the coming Son of Man anticipated in Luke 17:20-37.

The evangelist then locates our parable following these eschatological comments by contextualizing it as offering the appropriate response to the delay of the Parousia. In the interim, disciples are “to pray always and not become discouraged (ἐγκακέω), literally, ‘enter’ (ἐν) ‘evil’ (κακός).”¹⁸ This introduction to the parable, the instruction to pray always and not loose heart, represents Luke’s concern that followers will encounter hostility to their message, seek deliverance from that hostility, and become disenchanted when the deliverance does not come. It also shows that Luke has begun the process of allegorizing the parable: it is now a message about constant prayer, and not about seeking either justice or vengeance.

The opening phrase of v. 1, “he said a parable to them” (Ἐλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς) and its variations are standard Lukan formulae for introducing parabolic material not found in Mark or Matthew.¹⁹ Further speaking to the argument for Lukan redaction here is the fact that throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is praying (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28-29; 10:21; 11:1-6; 22:32, 39-44; 23:34, 46) or encouraging prayer (6:28). While Jesus himself may well have prayed, the emphasis on prayer is Lukan. The parable, stripped out of its narrative context, is not about eschatology or prayer, but about tenacity and threat and the overlap between justice and vengeance.

Luke’s hand appears again at the conclusion of the parable, in vss. 6-8. V. 6 shifts from the parable proper to the frame: “And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says....’” The judge in the parable had said, in effect, “I’ll give her what she wants because she’s threatened me.” This is not an impressive start for a moral lesson. Nor does the parable proper identify the judge as “unjust”: foolish, perhaps, but not unjust. The frame controls the parable

¹⁸ The term ἐγκακέω appears in the NT also at 2 Cor 4:1, 16; Gal 6:9; Eph 3:13; and 2 Thess 3:13 with the connotation of “become weary” or “lose heart.”

¹⁹ Edwin D. Freed, “The Parable of the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1-8),” *NTS* 33.1 (1987): 39. Freed argues that due to the vocabulary, style of writing, method, and special interests, the parable is entirely a Lukan creation. Repetitions of Ἐλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς include Luke 5:36 and 14:7. Variations on this syntax, Εἶπεν δὲ καὶ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς, include Luke 6:39; 12:16 and 15:3.

rather than allows the judge to appear in all his complexity. It is up to the reader to determine if the judge is unjust, and if so, at what point: before he rendered the verdict, or after.

V. 7 continues Luke's interpretation: "And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them?" The argument appears to be a *qal v' homer*, or 'from the light to the weightier': if the unjust judge grants justice, surely the Just Judge will. The problem is that the analogy does not work. The rhetorical question suggests that the answer to "Will he delay long in helping them?" should be "no," but readers, whether in Luke's original audience or in the church today, know well that justice has yet to be given. Readers, both then and now, might also choose to resist not only the idea that the unjust judge serves as a cypher for God, but also that God expects believers, embodied by the widow, to bang on the doors of heaven with repeated calls for justice or, perhaps, vengeance.²⁰ Rather, David Buttrick indicates, "We do not need to pray 'all the time' because God is instantly attentive and eager for justice. If God is loving and attentive and concerned for justice, we may want to live in constant communication with God" instead of incessantly crying out to God.²¹

Luke concludes the pericope with the assertion – whether Jesus' words or more likely the redactor's summary – "I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (18:8). Justice was not granted quickly, as the persecution of the followers of Jesus in the first several centuries indicates; it has not been granted quickly today, as Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* and the events that prompted the formation of Black Lives Matter so viscerally demonstrate.²²

²⁰ David Buttrick, *Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 225.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 225.

²² See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010). Alexander argues that justice is neither quick nor even in sight for those impacted by the various forms

For the Third Gospel, the widow is to pray in light of the delay of the Parousia, so that people do not lose heart. That Luke does not see the Parousia on the near horizon²³ suggests that the widow (and her sisters) will be praying a long time. As long as they are praying, they are not challenging, or changing, the status quo. This contextualization is consistent with Luke's other depictions of women: rather than leaders of the church, their function is to provide support.²⁴ Rather than active figures, they are silent or silenced. The Third Gospel reinforces rather than challenges gender stereotypes: the widow, given Luke's narrative frame, is a warrior for God who fights in the realm of the spirit rather than on the streets of the city. She is, read within Luke's narrative frame, comparable to a cloistered nun who prays on behalf of the world, or an "old mother" of the church who prays on behalf of Jesus' "children." This is how the widow is understood in many Black Church traditions, and this is how she is usually presented in Sunday sermons. Such spiritual warriors should not be mocked or diminished, but neither should they be the total of what women can do – and should do.

of discrimination carried out under the cover of the criminal justice system. "Rather than rely on race, we use the criminal justice system to label people of color 'criminals' and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination—employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, denial of educational opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service—are suddenly legal." See also "Black Lives Matter," *Blacklivesmatter.com*, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>. This movement began due to the unjust nature of the Trayvon Martin court decision as "Martin was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder while George Zimmerman, accused of killing Martin, was not held accountable for his crime."

²³ See Michael Wolter, "Eschatology in the Gospel According to Luke," in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. Jan G. Van Der Watt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 91–108. Wolter argues that while Luke does not know when the Parousia will take place, he does not rule out that the coming of the Son of Man can take place quickly. Thus, Luke asks his readers to stay prepared for the coming of the Son of Man with proper conduct. God's disciples are to pray always (Luke 18:1), beware that they are not led astray (21:8), and to be alert at all times (21:34-36). Rather than solely thinking of eschatology as the appointed time of the end, "Luke transforms the question about the time of the eschatological consummation of the world into a question of proper conduct of life for the Christians: they are liable to be always prepared like servants who await the return of their absent master at every moment," 105. This view of eschatology works with the Lukan contextualization of the parable as God's chosen ones who cry out day and night demonstrate proper conduct. Their conduct is an expression of faith whereby Luke can rightly ask "when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

²⁴ See Ben Witherington, III, "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples--Luke 8:1-3." in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, FCNTECW 3, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 133–39. Witherington advocates that rather than the abandonment of traditional roles, being a woman disciple of Jesus meant that the women's roles were given new significance because women could serve both the master (Jesus) and the family.

Luke's treatment of the judge similarly fails to raise any critique of the concept of justice, of the judicial system, or of the benefits of power. The judge, in Luke's view, is a negative exemplar and "unjust judge," but this is not what the parable itself calls him. Readers of the parable need to determine if this judge is just or not, and in that very determination they necessarily question their own definition of justice.

Next, the parable denaturalizes the judge's unfettered authority, since he does relent under the widow's pressure; however, Luke's redaction leaves the judge's authority in place by analogizing his role to that of God. By comparing the judge, albeit negatively, to the divine, Luke forestalls reading the judge as a figure who demonstrates the limits of judicial authority and who complicates constructions of masculinity. Luke's restricting the parable to a message about prayer dismisses the parable's challenge to the legal system and to those who employ it, even as it domesticates the message of Jesus by transforming his social critique and his interest in human relationships into a teaching on personal piety.

Luke has taken a story about a tenacious widow and a strange judge and created an allegory of prayer and divine response. The allegory reinforces stereotypes: the role of the widow is to pray rather than to litigate or agitate; she is to be personally patient rather than publically tenacious; she represents the faithful in an ecclesial setting rather than the justice-seekers, or the revenge-seekers, in the court. The allegory also secures the role of the judge as the one with authority who, whether just or not, is equal to God. Adolf Jülicher, who asserted that since "Jesus's purpose was not to obscure his teachings, the parables cannot be viewed as allegories,"²⁵ was right in this case.

²⁵ Klyne Snodgrass, "From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus," in *The Challenge of Jesus Parables*, edited by Richard Longenecker. McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 7. See also Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963).

My Problems with the Text in the Church

I stand outside of conventional norms for womanhood: I am a female African American biblical scholar, ordained clergy, drummer, unmarried and without biological children. When people see me, particularly if they do not know me, it is easy for them to ignore me because I do not have the social accoutrements of marriage and children. I am easy going; I take things as they come, and I focus on one day at a time. While I do not represent the traditional idea of womanhood, married and with children, I do represent the complexity and diversity of womanhood because there is a lot more to my story than meets the eye. Moreover, there is a deeper story to the lives of most women and men. We, however, do not take the time to hear those stories.

This issue of the deeper story is what attracts me to Luke's Parable of the Widow and Judge (Luke 18:2-5); I suspect there is more to the story than what Luke tells us, and what commentators have said. And there are more readings to the story, both historical and hermeneutical, than Luke offers. What the evangelist forecloses, I seek hermeneutically to re-open.

My interest in this sparse story progressed as I wondered what lessons in addition to "pray always" could be mined from the parable. Paul already provides for readers the encouragement to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17), but pray without ceasing is hardly Paul's complete message. He also exhorts the Thessalonians "admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them..." (1 Thess 5:14) and to "test everything" (1 Thess 5:21). That testing should include instructions from evangelists.

Thinking about the parable and its potential for other meanings led me to consider my own faith community in which a number of women pray a lot. They see themselves in the place

of the widow, and they are persistent in prayer. The reality, however, is that some of those prayers go unanswered while the widow in the story receives what she wants. For real persons and situations God is sometimes silent. And if God is sometimes silent, then the parable as only an encouragement to pray can have limited import for a faith community. I think that with both the widow and the judge, much more is going on than a lesson in prayer, and that “much more” has implications regarding both personal expression and social justice for all people in the church today.

To make sense of the parable, commentators typically stereotype both the widow and judge. The widow is often an old, vulnerable and needy woman, while the judge epitomizes (corrupt) power. Reading communities such as Bible study groups employ these stereotypes to make sense of the story: they make comments such as: The widow is like the widows at the church; she has to be old and good. Women weren't independent back then, therefore she has to be needy. The judge, a man with power, is taking advantage of the widow; powerful people are always victimizing the less fortunate. Since the widow is vulnerable and needy, her cause must be just. Since the judge represents the corrupt system, he is the subjugator who refuses to help resolve an unjust situation. However, not all needy people are just; not all people in positions of power are corrupt. Vulnerability and victimization do not necessarily correlate with the moral high-ground; “the System” does not necessarily correlate with the antichrist. That a woman is persistent does not mean that she is persistent for the right reasons; that a man does not acquiesce to a person of apparently lower social status does not necessarily suggest that he is uncaring about justice.

African American preaching makes its contribution to both the stereotypical images of the widow and judge and by extension to women as well as men. African American homilists,

following Luke's narrative frame, assert that the widow's persistence is the *result* of continuous prayer: because she prays, she has the strength to return to the court day after day.²⁶ They view Jesus as having told the parable to challenge us to pray always²⁷; when we pray, we need to stay with it until we get an answer²⁸; Jesus assures those who believe that God will hear and answer prayer²⁹; we should continue asking God for our needs.³⁰ We should be persistent in prayer, we should get on God's nerves, praying day and night until we get what we want.³¹ The widow, then, is the prayerful, faithful, petitioner; she is to be emulated by Christians, and especially by women. The stereotype for the good African American woman is that of one praying; she becomes the bearer of faithfulness for others and so, by extension, of morality. If one prays, one is viewed as necessarily moral. The good woman also lives in a particular manner: she neither raises her voice, like the widow who demands that the judge decide the case in her favor, nor does she agitate for better circumstances when issues arise. She allows God to take care of negative people, issues, and events. The good woman is also readily available to all in her sphere of influence; she puts others before herself. Thus, a good woman is a praying woman; the praying woman is depicted through the widow.

When readers limit the widow to an old, needy woman and the judge to an uncaring person in authority, they recognize no possibility of ambiguity; the roles are set; readings are constrained. As long as traditional readings keep women as victims, even tenacious ones, and as

²⁶ Steven L. Glover, "The Unjust Judge, Change His Mind" at Perfecting Word Deliverance Ministries, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=betLfZ0O1x0>, accessed February 6, 2013.

²⁷ Kent Price, "The Widow and the Unjust Judge" at Hillview Seventh Day Adventist Church, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYm2FU2AAxM>, accessed February 6, 2013.

²⁸ J.O. Lawson, "The Unjust Judge" at Holy Light Church of God in Christ, <http://www.texaswesternjurisdiction.org/Media.html>, accessed February 6, 2013.

²⁹ L.V. Gibbs, "Hear What the Unjust Judge Saith" at Grace and Truth Prayer Temple, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1EMbbtKsk8>, accessed February 6, 2013.

³⁰ M. L. Graves, "The Persistent Widow" at Revelation of God and Christ Ministries, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb79gUI7St0>, accessed February 13, 2013.

³¹ Van J. Alexander, "Persistency Paid Off" at Christ Kingdom Church, 2012, <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=2984835184321>, accessed February 13, 2013.

long as they leave intact the negative view of the judge, opportunities for interrogating stereotypes of social roles (widow, judge), gender (femininity, masculinity), and structures of power go unremarked. Women are perpetually weak, men are oppressors, and men in power are not to be questioned. The challenge of the parable is eliminated. Reading communities miss the chance to receive the unconventional insights from this unconventional story.

My Approach

While I have no interest in erasing the “pray always” interpretation, I seek to show how the parable has ethical meaning and even prompts to social justice. I question the traditional interpretations; indeed, I question Luke’s interpretation. Praying always, while necessary, runs the risk of becoming a platitude, if that is not already the case. To pray and not to act is insufficient. Without exploring the characters of both the widow and judge, we are left with the reinforcing of stereotypes. I ask the following questions: What does the parable make one do? How does the parable make one act towards others? How might the parable influence one’s thoughts about widows and judges, men and women, the judiciary system, the role of violence, and so on. Rather than promote stereotypes—all widows are poor and sympathetic, all upper-class people are the enemy of the poor, all Christians are good and men are oppressors—we should interrogate them. To do so, I use the toolbox of biblical interpretation, from historical-critical studies of women’s roles in first-century Jewish and gentile settings, to literary-critical studies that help gain access to the agenda of the evangelist, to reception history, to a womanist biblical hermeneutic, which centers biblical interpretations from the perspective of African American women, to interrogate how the stereotypes the parable evokes impact both African American women and men.

Luke's narrative frame is part of the Gospel, and for conservative readers, there is no separation between what Jesus said and what the Gospel writers report. Interpreting Jesus' parables, however, requires engagement with literary contexts (Luke's Gospel; Luke-Acts; the New Testament); historical contexts of the first and early second centuries (the approximate time of the Gospel's composition) and understandings of the historical Jesus. It also requires attention to tradition history or reception history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), for we do not come to the parables without the past two thousand years of interpretation. While the Bible insists that "readers consent to its mode of perceiving reality in order to grasp its claims"³² — i.e., the world of the Bible, with its patriarchy, androcentrism, acceptance of slavery, etc. — the combination of historical-critical work (the world behind the text; the world of the text) and reception history (the world in front of the text) shows that meaning transcends the contextual interests specific to the production of any text. Meaning is to be found also among readers in communities that hold the biblical text sacred.³³

I have found the academic approach to Scripture, including the exploration of redactional issues, to be not only interesting but also liberative. Setting Paul in the context of the Roman Empire allowed me to understand, if not necessarily agree with, some of his comments regarding gender and class. I became able to ask how much of the text was speaking for all times and all places, and how much of it was historically and culturally contingent. I find in showing my own students at American Baptist College the distinct reception histories of the household codes –

³² Renita J. Weems, "Womanist Reflections On Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume II 1980-1992*, ed. James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 220.

³³ Mark Allan Powell, *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001). Reader-response criticism takes into account readers' social location, understanding of meaning-making, and the choices they make when entering the story world of a biblical narrative. These factors evoke the polyvalence of any narrative. This polyvalence discovered through reader-response criticism does not mean, however, that there are no parameters for interpreting the biblical text; the use of historical criticism can provide the balance between critically investigating the text in its own historical context and appropriating the narrative for contemporary contexts.

wives be obedient to your husbands remains in place; slaves be obedient to your masters is rejected (see Ephesians 5) – that they come to realize, in part, the importance of looking at history, of seeing the texts in their original contexts, and then in seeing how the texts have been interpreted over time. They recognize immediately that texts require interpretation, and that not all interpretation is necessarily “good news.”

At the same time, I have found frustrating, at best, the lack of integration of historical-critical biblical studies with homiletics or praxis in the Black Church tradition.³⁴ Given the current social climate of racial insensitivity, homophobia, and religious xenophobia, our communities and those who hold the Bible sacred should expect more from Bible studies and sermons than “Jesus can fix it.” The Bible forms the basis of our tradition, but approaches to it remain generally detached from what the academy can offer. “Biblical studies is something white people do” is a prevailing notion. In the black pulpit, the focus is almost entirely on the meaning “in front of the text”³⁵ and not on the meaning in the text itself, or on the text’s social-historical setting. We claim the stories as “our stories,” but we do not give sufficient recognition to the fact that they are stories with their own history, and history of interpretation.

This concern for historical-critical work is directly related to how one understands the parables. For the Church Fathers, parables were allegories; for the Reformers, they were moralizing tales. But today’s scholarship has made the convincing case that parables both should

³⁴ The same problem of ignorance of, or ignoring, historical-critical and redaction-critical work exists in other communities as well; the disjunct between what is learned in the biblical studies classroom and what is proclaimed from the pulpit is a global problem.

³⁵ See Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 160. “One looks at the “world in front of the text” to determine the effect of the text. To examine the world behind the text suggests the reader examines the origin of the text. Looking at the world in the text is examining the content of the narratives.”

be understood, at least in part, as products of their own time,³⁶ and that they are designed to challenge the status quo.

Robert Funk, Dan Via, Amos Wilder, and Madeline Boucher, among others, following the advent of the New Hermeneutic, argued that language not only describes, but has the power to bring something into being.³⁷ Thus they saw the parables not only as speaking in a non-allegorical way to Jesus' audience and as taking meaning from their historical context, but also as creating new ways of looking at that context. John Dominic Crossan argues that Jesus's parables "push or pull us into pondering whatever is taken for granted in our world."³⁸ Similarly, Eta Linneman argues, "a successful parable is an event that decisively alters a situation by creating a new possibility that did not exist before."³⁹ Moreover, she asserts, "The new possibility compels the person addressed to a decision."⁴⁰

By the late 1970s, parable studies sometimes came to focus upon polyvalence, with different meanings derived from the application of different methods as well as from the perspective of different subject positions. Interpreting parables became the "engagement of context juxtaposed against the views and experiences of the interpreter."⁴¹ Thus, parables have been interpreted from the perspectives of feminism and the context of women's experience in

³⁶ C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 10. See also Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1954), 13.

³⁷ Dan Otto Via, Jr., *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); Amos Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); Madeleine Boucher, *Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study*, CBQ Monograph Series 6 (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1977); John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988). See also David J. Lose, "Whither Hence, New Homiletic?", paper presented in Dallas, Texas, at the Preaching and Theology Section of the Academy of Homiletics, December 2000. See Academy of Homiletics, *Papers of the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Homiletics* (San Antonio: Academy of Homiletics, 2000), 255-265.

³⁸ John Dominic Crossan, *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction About Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 63.

³⁹ Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition* (London: SPCK, 1966), 31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴¹ Mary Ann Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 55.

antiquity,⁴² historical reconstructions of the Greco-Roman world,⁴³ psychotherapy,⁴⁴ peasant studies and patron-client relationships,⁴⁵ Middle Eastern culture,⁴⁶ theology and liberation theology,⁴⁷ *haggadah*,⁴⁸ and within the context of the canonical gospels.⁴⁹ Luke's allegorization via contextualization is indeed one way of reading the parable.

My concern for recuperating what may be ordinary readings that challenge all people to interrogate our biases as well as to interrogate systems that keep us fully from loving our neighbors and loving the strangers who dwell among us is informed by history. It is also informed by reception history, whether for good or for ill, including the way the text has traditionally been received by the Black Church.

My study adds a womanist voice to this polyvalence.⁵⁰ Womanist thought, the interpretations that derive from the history and experience of African American women as well

⁴² Mary Ann Beavis, ed. *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom* (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Susan M. Praeder, *The Word in Women's Worlds* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988).

⁴³ Wendy Cotter, "The Parable of the Feisty Widow and the Threatened Judge (Luke 18:1-8)," *New Testament Studies* 51.3 (2005): 323-43; Dorothy Jean Weaver, "Luke 18:1-8," *Interpretation* 56.3 (2002): 317-19; Pheme Perkins, *Hearing the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Paulist, 1981), 4.

⁴⁴ Richard Q. Ford, *The Parables of Jesus: Recovering the Art of Listening* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

⁴⁵ William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

⁴⁶ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lucan Parables, Their Culture and Style* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

⁴⁷ Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012); Buttrick, *Speaking Parables*; Green, *Gospel of Luke*; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*.

⁴⁸ Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998).

⁴⁹ Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁵⁰ Alice Walker originally used the term womanist in her 1979 short story "Coming Apart," in which she writes about a black husband and wife arguing over the effect of the husband's consumption of pornography on their marriage. By 1983, Walker describes a womanist as the opposite of the frivolous and irresponsible girl. She is an emotionally flexible woman who appreciates women's culture and strength, is responsible, in charge, and serious. Walker also adds that while a womanist is a black feminist or feminist of color, she is committed to the survival and wholeness of both African American women and men. Major contributions, in ethics, theology, and biblical studies, to the womanist tradition include Katie Canon's *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) and *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Renita J. Weems's *Just A Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (San Diego: LuraMedia, 1988) and "Womanist Reflections On Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume II 1980-1992*, ed. James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 216-24; Jacquelyn Grant's *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Clarice J. Martin's "Womanist Interpretations of the New Testament: The Quest for Holistic and Inclusive Translation and Interpretation," in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume II 1980-1992*, ed.

as men, creates its own, polyvalent hermeneutic; not all womanist thinkers think alike, but we do share a particular reading approach, among others. This study then seeks to merge historical-critical work with womanist sensibilities to see what the parable might have said to its first listeners, as well as what it might say to listeners today, including widows and judges, people invested in the judicial system and people harmed by it.

As I use a womanist approach to interrogate the parable, I am aware that the very use of the term “womanist” puts into operation stereotypes concerning readings considered outside the mainstream of traditional biblical interpretation. Nyasha Junior argues this point when she says, “Even when a womanist scholar specifies the elements of her particular womanist approach, the term ‘womanist’ is so consistently identified with African-American women that it may overshadow attempts to specify one’s usage of this [womanist] approach.”⁵¹ I have heard colleagues describe “womanist” work as “uncritical,” “not real scholarship,” and “parochial.”

This dismissal of readings from particular subject locations (feminist, queer, post-colonial, etc.) may be endemic to that part of the guild that still holds the historical-critical

James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, vol. 2 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 225–44; *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) by Emilie Townes; *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993) by Delores S. Williams; Karen Baker-Fletcher’s *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit: Womanist Wordings on God and Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) and *Dancing with God: The Trinity From A Womanist Perspective* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2006); *If It Wasn’t For The Women: Black Women’s Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001) by Cheryl Townsend Gilkes; Layli Phillips’s *The Womanist Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, ed., *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2006) and *Mining the Motherload: Methods in Womanist Ethics* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006); Monica Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008) and *Ain’t I A Womanist Too? Third Wave Womanist Religious Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013) edited by Monica A. Coleman; Eboni Marshall Turman’s *Toward A Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Shanell T. Smith’s *The Woman Babylon and the Marks of Empire: Reading Revelation with a Postcolonial Womanist Hermeneutics of Ambivalence* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014); *I Found God In Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutic Reader* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2015) edited by Mitzi J. Smith; Nyasha Junior, *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015); *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016) edited by Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace; Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder’s *When Momma Speaks: The Bible and Motherhood From A Womanist Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016).

⁵¹ Junior, *Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation*, 124.

method as preeminent and rejects what they perceive to be readings that cannot speak to “everyone.” They do not realize that no readings speak to everyone.

Conversely, I am drawn to bell hooks’s observation that “the term womanist is not sufficiently linked to a tradition of radical political commitment to struggle and change.”⁵² The term “womanist” can be used to balkanize groups and set readers with similar goals against each other rather than encourage collaboration or recognize the concerns of intersectionality.

Womanist biblical hermeneutics is a reading strategy among many other hermeneutical strategies. Just as historical criticism asks different questions than post-colonial criticism, womanist criticism, too, has its own set of concerns. Mitzi J. Smith locates womanist biblical criticism as “audaciously start[ing] with and concern[ing] ourselves with the lives of black women and our communities.”⁵³ While I do seek to “empower African American women as readers, as agents, and as shapers of discourse by uncovering the program and agenda of both biblical texts and dominant cultural readings... to decenter for marginalized readers the privileged status of the dominant readings and the dominant community of readers,”⁵⁴ my interests and my goals are broader than this. I also seek to understand history, specifically the history of the New Testament story, as told by those who experienced it originally and those who continued to tell the story over time. I regard womanist biblical hermeneutics as a necessary tool for interrogating the text, and I find it to be particularly helpful when it is combined with other biblical reading strategies. It is a personal choice to focus on readings behind the text, in the text, and in front of the text; it is often the case that the three approaches overlap. Thus, my own

⁵² bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End, 1989, 181-82, cited in Junior, *Womanist Biblical Interpretation*, xvii.

⁵³ Mitzi J. Smith, “Introduction” in Mitzi J. Smith, ed. *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 1-13 (4).

⁵⁴ Renita J. Weems, “Re-Reading for Liberation: African American Women and the Bible,” in Sylvia Schroer and Sophia Bietenhard, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 19-32 (25-26); Smith, *I Found God in Me*, cites a version of this quote in her introduction (7 and see n. 23) as well as reprints the full essay (42-56).

social location – I am an African American woman – necessarily impacts what I see on the page. Yet my own social location – I am biblical scholar, an historian, a teacher, a student who loves reading Greek, studying the Roman world, delving into the nuances of the Gospel texts.... – intersects with that first location just as the reading approaches overlap. All of these identities are constructed. I employ a womanist lens in order to challenge not only certain readings I hear in the Church but also readings produced by the academy. Womanist and historian, womanist and biblical critic, are interrelated terms. I am just as much one as the other.

I think that this reading approach has much to offer the church, the academy, and individuals who seek to use the Bible as more than a prop for wagging a moral finger. A womanist perspective, based upon the experiences of African American women, is just as valuable as the so-called objective interpretation as it opens the framework of the Bible to be a living as well as an inclusive text.

Stereotypes and How They Function

The history of how this parable has been interpreted is a history of stereotypes. A stereotype is a fixed and oversimplified generalization usually focusing on unfavorable characteristics about a group or class of people.⁵⁵ Stereotypes function by identifying and making visible differences between groups and maintaining boundaries by concealing similarities between groups. The stereotypes applied to the characters in the Parable of the Widow and the Judge appear across the interpretive spectrum, from academic study to homiletic appropriate: Widows are needy, and women — in general — need men to fight their causes;

⁵⁵ Andrew M. Colman, *A Dictionary of Psychology*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199657681.001.0001/acref-9780199657681-e-7992?rkey=ZGX5yJ&result=1>. See also Lawrence Blum, “Stereotypes And Stereotyping: A Moral Analysis,” *Philosophical Papers* 33.3 (November 2004): 251–89. Blum suggests that a stereotype involves making and/or perpetuating a false or misleading generalization or image of a group.

powerful men abuse their authority. Women are emotional in comparison to men, who are rational, and the rational is the preferred attitude. Because men are understood to be (and often understand themselves to be) rational, they have the right to positions of leadership and decision-making.⁵⁶ The stereotype can become so normative that people conform to its power: men learn that to be emotional is to be weak and feminized; to be like a woman is to be unmanly, unnatural, of a lesser order. At the same time, women who seek leadership positions or authoritative roles go against the stereotype and, therefore, are perceived (or may perceive themselves) as unnatural. The stereotypes lock us in, personally as well as culturally and ideologically. The outcome of such stereotyping leads not to alliance but to identity politics, fear of critique rather than productive relationships, and to the loss of the individual voice in favor of the predetermined roles people are expected to play. Stereotypes both hide a sense of commonality among groups as well as mask individuality and diversity within groups.⁵⁷ While widows and judges may have some common traits, all widows are not vulnerable and needy, and all judges are neither uncaring nor impervious to justice.

Stereotypes not only communicate a message about those that are stereotyped, they also communicate messages about those who do the stereotyping. Stereotyping often becomes a tool of dominant groups. Social critic Walter Lippman argued in his classic study, *Public Opinion*, that stereotyping is a “defense of society’s hierarchical positions.”⁵⁸ The “stereotypes imposed by our culture... provide us with security in an unfamiliar world... But of greater significance to

⁵⁶ For example, hip-hop artist T.I. stated that he could not vote for a woman to be the leader of the free world because women make rash decisions emotionally. See Iyana Robertson, “T.I. On Hillary Clinton: ‘I Can’t Vote For The Leader Of The Free World To Be A Woman,’” *Vibe.com*, October 13, 2015, <http://www.vibe.com/2015/10/ti-hillary-clinton-woman-president/>.

⁵⁷ Lawrence Blum, “Stereotypes And Stereotyping: A Moral Analysis,” *Philosophical Papers* 33.3 (November 2004): 251–89 (274-76).

⁵⁸ Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (Harcourt Brace, 1922), 64.

decision-making is that if stereotypes determine what we see, our perceptions may be no more than partial truths. What we assume to be ‘facts’ may be only judgments.”⁵⁹

In the 19th and 20th centuries, scientific racism provided stereotypes a particular authority that impacted politics, economics, education, and a host of other policy decisions. Proponents, using science to bolster their stereotypical conclusions, claimed that some racial groups were naturally superior to others.⁶⁰ Birthed out of these so-called discoveries was the eugenics movement founded by Francis Galton, an English sociologist and anthropologist. The purpose of the movement was to improve humanity by limiting the negative qualities of certain groups of people through methods such as sterilization while encouraging the sexual reproduction of persons deemed to have positive qualities. “People deemed to be morally degenerate, possessed an overactive sex drive, feeble-minded or insane were to be sterilized;”⁶¹ “healthy” people, who usually correlated with people having status and wealth, were encouraged to reproduce. The gendered and racial implications of such studies are well known. They alert us to any interpretation we impose on characters, including widows and judges, and womanist scholars. Stereotyping is usually if not inevitably, dangerous.

When stereotypes conceal similarities between groups, boundaries are reinforced and the opportunity for collaborative work is aborted. The boundaries help to “map out acceptable and legitimate behavior,” particularly in the case of women.⁶² The stereotype of the ideal, pure, and

⁵⁹ Ronald Steel, “Foreward to Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Free Press, 1997), xi-xvi (xiii)

⁶⁰ W. Carson Byrd and Matthew W. Hughey, “Born That Way? ‘Scientific’ Racism Is Creeping Back Into Our Thinking. Here’s What To Watch Out For.,” *Washingtonpost.com*, September 28, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/28/born-that-way-scientific-racism-is-creeping-back-into-our-thinking-heres-what-to-watch-out-for/>, accessed June 9, 2016.

⁶¹ Andrea Denhoed, “The Forgotten Lessons of the American Eugenics Movement,” *Newyorker.com*, April 27, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-forgotten-lessons-of-the-american-eugenics-movement>, accessed June 9, 2016. See also Rich Remsberg, “Found In The Archives: America’s Unsettling Early Eugenics Movement,” *Npr.org*, June 1, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2011/06/01/136849387/found-in-the-archives-americas-unsettling-early-eugenics-movement>, accessed June 9, 2016.

⁶² Richard Dyer, “The Role of Stereotypes,” in *Media Studies: A Reader*, ed. Paul Marris and Sue Thornham, 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 249.

chaste woman presumes that a woman who is sexually experienced outside of marriage and who enters into the public sphere is both inappropriately claiming the masculine role and perhaps even morally degenerate. Such stereotypes import their own racialized judgments. As Stacy Floyd-Thomas summarizes, “While white women have been regarded as feminine and chaste, virginal and virtuous, black women have been regarded as ‘the mules of the word,’ ‘matriarchs,’ ‘superwomen,’ ‘mean and evil bitches,’ ‘castrators,’ ‘Sapphires,’ and ‘mammies.’”⁶³ The stereotype of the macho man presumes that a man who fears any woman is himself feminized, and therefore aberrant or even morally degenerate. Melissa Harris-Perry observes: “It may seem inexplicable that a respected black woman educator would stamp her foot, jab her finger in a black man’s face, and scream while trying to make a point on national television, thereby reconfirming the notion that black women are irrationally angry.”⁶⁴ For Harris-Perry, this accommodation to “degrading stereotypes” is influenced by the constraints of the broader society.⁶⁵ Such stereotypes then can be traced to cultural productions.

Harris-Perry flags three major stereotypes of African American women that not only prevail in the broader culture but are also named by focus groups of African American women. First, according to Harris-Perry, “The academic literature on stereotyping traces the popular representation of black women as uniquely and irrationally angry, obnoxious, and controlling to the 1930s *Amos ’n’ Andy* radio show.”⁶⁶ The stereotype is associated with the character of Sapphire.

The stereotype of the angry black woman is not the only one imposed on, and sometimes appropriated by, African American women. The stereotype of the sexually available and

⁶³ Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, *Mining the Motherload*, 40.

⁶⁴ Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 29.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 30. Harris-Perry, in a footnote (319 n. 2), mentions that the anecdote is autobiographical.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

therefore deviant woman — “whore,” “slut,” “ho” — began during chattel slavery, when African American women’s bodies were appropriated by men, from other slaves to slave owners. Their bodies were more than simply sexual outlets for men, their pregnancies produced new laborers for the plantation.⁶⁷

A major example of the negative critique of black woman’s sexuality is Saartjie Baartman (1789-1815), also known as the Hottentot Venus. Baartman, a member of the Khoi tribe of South Africa, was a part of traveling exhibits in London and Paris (1800-1815) where her body captured the European imagination. “Her most remarkable features were a huge, steatopygous bottom and an elongated genital ‘apron,’ characteristics that scientists of the day argued linked her more closely to baboons and monkeys than to human beings.”⁶⁸ The Baartman exhibition showcased a semi-nude, one-woman spectacle along with a baby rhinoceros.⁶⁹ While it is not clear if Baartman consented to her participation in the European exhibits, Zachary Macaulay, an abolitionist who attempted to prove in court that Baartman was being exhibited against her will, argued that her exhibitor “would invite spectators to feel her posterior parts and that she is exhibited to the public in the same manner that any animal of the brute creation would be exhibited.”⁷⁰

After Baartman’s death in 1815, Georges Cuvier, a French naturalist, dissected her body and attended specifically to her genitalia.⁷¹ In 1817 he published a report on her anatomy, which reinforced the European view that Africans in general, and particularly African women, were

⁶⁷ Carlyle Van Thompson, *Eating the Black Body: Miscegenation As Sexual Consumption in African American Literature and Culture* (New York: Lang, 2006), 60.

⁶⁸ Bernth Lindfors, *Early African Entertainments Abroad: From the Hottentot Venus to Africa’s First Olympians* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 11.

⁶⁹ “Sara ‘Saartjie’ Baartman,” *South African History Online: Towards A People’s History*, accessed June 9, 2016, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/sara-saartjie-baartman>.

⁷⁰ Rachel Holmes, *African Queen: The Real Life of the Hottentot Venus* (New York: Random House, 2007), 59.

⁷¹ Beverly Guy-Sheftall, “The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the Nineteenth-Century Euro-American Imagination,” in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, ed. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 18

“lasciviousness and wont to display animal passions.”⁷² Following Cuvier’s study, Sarah Baartman became the scientific evidence that defined all African women. “Her skeleton, decanted brain, and other remains were preserved and studied at the Musée de l’Homme, where a plaster cast of her body, naked and unadorned, stood on public display until 1982.”⁷³ At the request of Nelson Mandela, Baartman’s remains were repatriated to South Africa in 2002.

The critique and fascination with the sexuality of black women continued the stereotype that black women were eager for sex. When freed African Americans economically sustained themselves through domestic, field, and factory work, African American women and girls were vulnerable to sexual violation by white men.⁷⁴ Today, African American women are often viewed not merely as available, but also as exotic, over-ripe and loose, as bodies to be enjoyed rather than as individuals with integrated personality, intellect, memories, and goals. In her womanist study of “antitypes, stereotypes, and antetypes,” Love L. Sechrest finds that “Jezebel imagery like the one used in Revelation 2 lies behind a common stereotype of the hypersexed uncontrollable foreign woman that disparages black, Latina, and Asian Pacific women.”⁷⁵ Harris-Perry also remarks on the economic implications of the stereotype: “The myth of a plantation Jezebel can be deployed to limit today’s welfare-dependent mothers.”⁷⁶ This image of the sexualized African American woman matches Harris-Perry’s second stereotype, that of “Jezebel.”

Harris-Perry’s third image is that of “Mammy,” the sexless and self-sacrificing maternal figure. Working for white masters and then employers, taking care of other people’s children,

⁷² Ibid., 18.

⁷³ Lindfors, *Early African Entertainments Abroad*, 12.

⁷⁴ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, From Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 130.

⁷⁵ Love L. Sechrest, “Antitypes, Stereotypes, and Antetypes: Jezebel, the Sun Woman, and Contemporary Black Women,” in Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace (eds.), *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible*, 113-38 (115).

⁷⁶ Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 68.

and called “mammy,” she was never quite a member of the household she nurtured. The Mammy of the plantation, seen as happy and fulfilled in her work, served as an apologetic for slavery.⁷⁷

The Mammies of twentieth century television – Esther Rolle on “Maude” and the “Good Times”; Nell Carter in “Gimme a Break,” and others – continued the stereotype, yet they also managed to challenge it.

Sapphire, Jezebel, Mammy and their various permutations, from the Angry Black Woman to the Strong/Super Black Woman to the Welfare Queen, can provide a heuristic for interrogating stereotypes not only of today’s African American women, but also of the parable and its interpretations.

For African American men, their masculinity may be in question if they do not play or at least demonstrate an interest in sports. African American men are stereotyped sexually: they are sexually aggressive and “hung like a horse.”⁷⁸ African American men, so it goes, are sexual beasts; they are simple-minded, virile predators, and consequently, white women must be protected from them.⁷⁹ The 1923 Rosewood, Florida massacre occurred because a group of white men heard the allegation that a white woman had been raped in her home. The woman’s husband assembled men from his community to search for the rapist, and the ensuing violence destroyed the predominantly African American city.⁸⁰ In 1955, 14-year-old Emmett Till was violently beaten and lynched in Mississippi for ostensibly flirting with a 21-year-old married white woman. His encounter with the woman, and his perceived sexual aggression, was the

⁷⁷ Ibid, 72, citing K. Sue Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 38.

⁷⁸ Scott Poulson-Bryant, *Hung: A Meditation on the Measure of Black Men in America* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 6.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 7. See also Amy Alexander, “Think Big,” *Washingtonpost.com*, January 22, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/19/AR2006011902738.html>, accessed June 6, 2016.

⁸⁰ Lizzie PRB Jenkins, “History of Rosewood, Florida,” *Rosewoodflorida.com*, accessed June 7, 2016, <http://www.rosewoodflorida.com/>, accessed June 7, 2016.

worst crime a black man could commit.⁸¹ J. W. Milam, one of the confessed killers of Emmett Till, said, “When a nigger gets close to mentioning sex with a white woman, he’s tire o’ livin’. I’m likely to kill him.”⁸² This stereotype is still a pretext for racial violence. In June 2015 the Charleston shooter of nine African American people attending Bible study at Mother Emmanuel AME Church, reportedly said to his victims, “I have to do it. You rape our women and you’re taking over our country. And you have to go.”⁸³

When we view both the widow and judge through stereotypes — the widow through the image of vulnerability and need, and the judge as a representation of uncaring masculinity or abusive power— our readings are influenced not only by gender codes, but also by historical suppositions, themselves yet another form of stereotyping. The parable, then, forces us to look at both the widow and judge from a different perspective. Since we do not know the widow’s background, we cannot assume that she is needy; since we do not know the exact nature of her request, we cannot presume the judge is being uncaring or abusing his power. The more we attempt to locate the widow and judge in our stereotypes, the more the parable requires that we take another look at both the characters and the stereotypes. Thus, the parable, if we allow it, challenges the conventions that we readers hold so dear.

The challenge for readers, then, is to resist the stereotypes we import onto the parable, and to read the text anew. Rather than tarnish the challenge of the parable, I examine the

⁸¹ Christine Harold and Kevin Michael Deluca, “Behold the Corpse: Violent Images and the Case of Emmett Till,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* Vol. 8.2 (Summer 2005): 271. See also William Bradford Huie, “The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi,” *Pbs.org*, 1956, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/sfeature/sf_look_confession.html, accessed June 7, 2016.

⁸² Huie, “The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi.” See also Timothy B. Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017).

⁸³ Christine Hauser, “Charleston, S.C., Church Shooting: Live Updates,” *Nytimes.com*, June 18, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/live/updates-on-charleston-church-shooting/gunman-was-quoted-as-saying-i-have-to-do-it/>, accessed June 7, 2016.

stereotypical images of both the widow and judge through a womanist biblical hermeneutic to demonstrate that the parable calls readers to not only live piously but also ethically.

Because I am speaking in part to members of Black Church traditions, and because I am a minister in a Black Church tradition, I approach the text with both respect and inquiry. Faithful biblical interpretation requires not acquiescence but engagement. It is not the text that we worship (that would be bibliolatry, yet one more idolatrous practice that has crept into the church and presented itself as legitimate), but the transcendent God to which the text points. Without questioning what the text says, from the now common rejection of “slaves be obedient to your masters” to the complicated issues of tithing and military action, we abdicate our responsibility as human beings. Katie Geneva Cannon writes, “A womanist critique of homiletics challenges conventional biblical interpretations that characterize African American women as ‘sin-bringing Eve,’ ‘wilderness-whimpering Hagar,’ ‘henpecking Jezebel,’ ‘whoring Gomer,’ ‘Prostituting Mary Magdalene,’ and ‘conspiring Sapphira.’”⁸⁴ Similarly, we can do more than “poor widow” and the “judge is somehow in the position of the divine.” And I argue that the text in general, and the Parable of the Widow and Judge in particular, has much to say to my church, to other Christians, and to anyone who seeks to interrogate issues of gender, power and stereotypes. It is precisely through invoking and then interrogating stereotypes that I read this parable.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 begins with a select tradition history. Here I show how readers consistently disempower the woman, either by making her the image of individual, non-public piety, or by allegorizing her role away from one of social agency. I begin with patristic readings and examine

⁸⁴ Katie Geneva Cannon, “Womanist Interpretation and Preaching in the Black Church,” in Mitzi J. Smith (ed.), *I Found God in Me*, 56-67 (57).

the reception history through medieval and Reformation commentary. I then turn to the 19th and early to mid 20th centuries to show how interpretations of the parable moved away from allegory to historical-critical observations. The foundation for the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation was actually the Reformers' call for interpreting Scripture by using reason and attending to the literal sense of Scripture. They desired to get away from the multiple interpretations made possible by allegorical readings; for them the historical-critical method provided the one meaning of the text.

By the mid 20th century, biblical interpreters were firmly planted in the historical-critical method, but they were also beginning to question the relevance of the method. In the late 20th and 21st century, interpreters influenced by the New Hermeneutic undergirded a move back to multiple readings of the biblical text; several began to examine homiletic appropriations of the parable. I recognize the parable is not only an ancient artifact but also a living word. The homiletic appropriation, rather than claiming a living word *that prompts action in the present*, is usually consistent with the tradition history: it serves to limit the widow to prayer warrior rather than promote her as social activist.

I then turn to womanist and feminist interpretations: frequently, womanist readers view the widow as a model for those seeking liberation albeit through prayer while feminist readers seek to reclaim the widow as either an image of the divine or the representative of the voice of justice.

Regarding the judge, in the history of interpretation either he is ignored, and so ignored as well is the matter of understanding the legal system, or he is shown, in more recent readings, as representing the corrupt (Jewish) system that includes no concern for women in general or for widows specifically. In cases where the judge is understood, following Luke's prompts, to be a

negative image for God, no critique is offered. The sermons, by their silence, serve to locate judges, and by extension other men (such as pastors), in positions of authority; their authority itself is not questioned.

Chapter 2 turns to Luke, Women, and Widows. Feminist readings that query the Third Gospel's view of women⁸⁵ – from the earlier view that Luke *is* a woman,⁸⁶ given the numerous passages featuring female characters, to the assessment that Luke offers a “double message”⁸⁷ of both empowerment and disempowerment, to the lament that Luke is the “most dangerous” text in the Bible for women⁸⁸ – help in the process of locating how the evangelist understands the widow in the parable. Here I look to the Gospel's portrayal of women in general and then particularly of widows, in order to show how Luke draws from the rich biblical tradition of widows and at the same time circumscribes their roles.

Luke knows the accounts of widows in the Scriptures of Israel who not only have agency, but who through often clever if not deceitful machinations, achieve their goals: Tamar, Ruth, the Widow of Zarephath, Judith, etc. Luke, however, domesticates the widows in his narratives. Anna the prophet (προφῆτις) stays in the Temple day and night, but we do not know the content of her prophesies; the widow of Nain simply weeps, and it is incumbent upon Jesus to have compassion for her; a widow loses her home to scribes, but Luke's focus is not on the widow but on Jesus' ire against those who exploit her. Luke lacks other Synoptic stories of women with

⁸⁵ Amy-Jill Levine, “Introduction,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 3 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 1.

⁸⁶ See Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Women* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), 261. Swidler argues, “Given the strong presence of stories about women in this “proto-Gospel” with Luke and the strong prejudice against accepting the witness women... it is possible that this “proto-Gospel was written or told by a woman disciple of Jesus and used by Luke without referring to her as his source, lest his Gospel be discredited and disbelieved.” See also E. Jane Via, “Women in the Gospel of Luke,” in *Women in the World's Religions, Past and Present*, ed. Ursula King (New York: Paragon House, 1987), 38–55.

⁸⁷ Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).

⁸⁸ Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Ringe, “The Gospel of Luke,” in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsome, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 493–511 (493).

agency: missing is the Canaanite (Matt 15:21-28) or Syro-Phoenician (Mark 7:24-30) woman whose faith (Matthew) or clever word (Mark) prompts Jesus to heal her daughter. Luke reframes the story of the woman who anoints Jesus' head (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9) and whose story will be told "in memory of her"; instead, Luke offers a "sinner" who anoints Jesus' feet and who serves as an example not of one who anoints for kingship, messianic status, or burial, but as one who, forgiven, loved much (Luke 7:36-50). Luke retains the reference to Herodias (Luke 3:19-20), but omits the story of her agency and her daughter's involvement in John's death (cf. Matt 14:1-12; Mark 6:17-29). Whether Luke knew these stories and omitted or changed them, or whether Luke did not have access to them, cannot be determined with certainty, although I am quite suspicious that Luke had such access, and omitted or rewrote these accounts to fit his own agenda (cf. Luke 1:1-4).⁸⁹

For purposes of analysis, the chapter groups the women in Luke's Gospel according to categories related primarily to empowerment and status. I begin with the infancy materials, where Mary the mother of Jesus and Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist predict what looks like social revolution, but they do so in private settings. Their primary role is to bear sons. Luke even minimizes this role. According to Luke 11:27-28, a woman from the crowd blesses Mary's womb and breasts; Jesus responds, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.

Next I address women in the healing narratives: Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39); Mary Magdalene and her colleagues in Luke 8:1-3 who serve as patrons of Jesus' movement; the woman healed of a hemorrhage (Luke 8:43-48), and the bent-over woman in the synagogue (Luke 13:10-17). The mother-in-law and the patrons, like the sinful woman/the woman who

⁸⁹ Cf. Philip F. Esler and Ronald A. Piper, *Lazarus, Mary & Martha: A Social-Scientific and Theological Reading of John* (London: SCM, 2006).

loved much, serve Jesus out of gratitude for his healing them rather than from an original call; the bent-over woman is an object lesson for the synagogue ruler, not a figure with agency in her own right. The wife of Jairus watches the raising of her daughter, but neither she nor the daughter speaks (Luke 9:51-54); Luke shortens the story of the hemorrhaging woman, who does show agency, with the result that it is Jesus' pronouncement of her faith, rather than her active search for healthcare, becomes the primary message. The healed women do not become "wounded healers."⁹⁰

As her healing prompts Peter's mother-in-law to serve (Luke 4:39; *διηκόνει*) Jesus, and as the patrons "had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities" to "serve" (Luke 8:2-3; *διηκόνου*), so this chapter next turns to the depiction of women's ministry. Here I show how the connection of women's ministry and women's healings can serve to undercut women's authority. The account of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) demonstrates how Luke subordinates women and their work. Jesus tells Martha that "Mary has chosen the better part which will not be taken away from her" (10:42). Thus *διακονέω* when associated with women, according to Luke, means women's ministry becomes subordinate.

This chapter also looks briefly at the women in Acts. These include, along with women in the crowds and references to women in Israel's Scriptures: Hebrew and Hellenist widows (Acts 6:1-6); Tabitha and the widows with her (Acts 9:36-42); Mary the mother of John Mark, perhaps a widow, and Rhoda (Acts 12:12-17); the "devout women of high standing" who reject Paul (Acts 13:50); Lydia, perhaps a widow (Acts 16:13-15, 40); and the mantic slave (Acts 16:16-18). For the most part, the women are silent, but Luke silences them further when their words are not believed. Rhoda announces that Peter is at the door, but the church does not listen to her words;

⁹⁰ Cf. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1979).

the women and especially the widows pose problems to be addressed rather than offer counsel; they are patrons, but they are not leaders.

The chapter concludes by applying its results to Luke's parable. Just as Luke contextualizes the parable of the woman with the lost coin (Luke 15.8-10) away from a woman who discovers something lost, searches, and celebrates to an allegory of repentance, so Luke contextualizes the widow away from a woman with agency as well as moral ambiguity to a model for private prayer. Removing Luke's narrative frame then opens the parable for new interpretations.

Chapter 3 begins with a survey of the stereotypes of African American women: Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire. Rereading the parable through the lens of womanist criticism, I examine the genesis of these images and show how they persist through media and entertainment.

Womanist thought has found its primary home in ethics and theology, and not in either history or biblical studies.⁹¹ Biblical readings from the disciplinary perspectives of womanist ethics and theology, much like biblical readings from ethics and theology more broadly defined, are frequently ahistorical, or the historical context is presumed rather than delineated or interrogated. Original language work is often usually ignored (the NRSV or NIV or even KJV suffices), and attention is rarely paid to the question of the "historical Jesus," for example, so that the Gospel narratives are taken as historically accurate or at least for granted. The Womanist readings thus take the word of the evangelist as gospel rather than interrogate it as they would interrogate the teaching of American history or presentations of race.

This frequent de-historicized and re-historicized approach is explicable given the focus of womanist concerns on the lives and experiences of African American women. By reading "in

⁹¹ Junior, *Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation*, xxi, observes, "Much of the womanist work that engages biblical texts comes from fields outside of biblical studies."

front of the text,” womanist interpreters find in the text resonances of their own lives and inspirations for their own programs.

As the womanist tradition has further expanded into biblical studies, new volumes demonstrating womanist hermeneutics have been published. Starting with Renita J. Weems’s 1998 *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women’s Relationships in the Bible*,⁹² these volumes include: *I Found God: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader* edited by Mitzi J. Smith (2015).⁹³ *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation* by Nyasha Junior (2015), *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse* edited by Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace (2016)⁹⁴ and *When Momma Speaks: The Bible and Motherhood from a Womanist Perspective* by Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder (2016).⁹⁵ The collections by Smith and Byron and Lovelace advance the discipline by employing womanist hermeneutics in a variety of ways. The essays, mostly using the methods recognizable from the discipline of biblical studies, address gender roles and sexuality, cultural constructions, familial roles, and issues such as soteriology, Christology, and ecclesiology. As Emilie Townes, the final contributor to Byron and Lovelace’s collection, summarizes, “This volume represents the authors’ insights, questions, outrage, celebration, and more of what each sees through the disciplinary lens of biblical hermeneutics as they use the variety of approaches (literary criticism, social scientific, postcolonial, critical race theory, gender and sexuality studies) within biblical studies to interpret and understand the text and the impact of the text in human lives in creation.”⁹⁶ This summary

⁹² Renita J. Weems, *Just A Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women’s Relationships in the Bible* (San Diego: LuraMedia, 1988).

⁹³ Mitzi J. Smith, ed., *I Found God in Me*.

⁹⁴ Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace, eds., *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible*.

⁹⁵ Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, *When Momma Speaks*.

⁹⁶ Emilie J. Townes, “The Road We Are Traveling,” in *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible*, 359-367 (360).

models what I seek to contribute in this volume, and I seek as well to add historical criticism more prominently to this list.⁹⁷

Crowder, writing primarily to women in the church (the study questions at the end of each chapter in her volume make it useful in Bible study contexts), explicates both what it means to be a mother in the African American context and how African American women tend to interpret the Bible in light of our own experiences. Given this focus, her volume pays little attention to Greek or Hebrew, to redaction-critical concerns, or to the broader contextualization of the various stories under review. Junior explains how womanist biblical hermeneutics emerged from feminist biblical interpretation. Within these volumes, interpretation is based upon the social location and experiences of African American women authors; the contributors seek to open new vistas in understanding how readers take up the text. Katherine Doob Sankenfeld, a white feminist contributor to *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse*, says that “the interweaving of the contemporary and the biblical is remarkable throughout, and at some points the contemporary material has left me feeling rather like a beginning student in an introductory course, holding on by my fingernails, realizing how much more there is to know.”⁹⁸ The womanist essays, then, allow readers and commentators to include new and different perspectives to their own knowledge base. This, in turn, allows them to expand their own interpretations as well as include different interpretations within their respective communities.

While womanist hermeneutics is not typically aligned with traditional interpretative methods, the use of historical-critical tools has proven helpful for several such biblical readings.

⁹⁷ See Shively T. J. Smith, “One More Time With Assata On My Mind: A Womanist Rereading on the Escape to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-23) in Dialogue With An African American Woman Fugitive Narrative,” in *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible*, 139–63 whose contribution is a womanist historical-critical reading.

⁹⁸ Katherine Doob Sankenfeld, “Challenged and Changed,” in *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible*, 349–57 (351).

Shively T.J. Smith, another contributor to *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse*, examines “Egypt’s literary, historical, and theological significance at the time of the Gospel of Matthew’s composition in the later part of the first-century CE” to read the story of Assata Shakur, a political refugee from the USA who received asylum in Cuba.⁹⁹ Shakur, a member of the Black Panther Party, was intimately acquainted with law enforcement as she was once charged and acquitted of bank robbery, murder of a drug dealer, and the attempted murder of a police officer.¹⁰⁰ “In 1977 she was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for the murder of a New Jersey state trooper despite evidence to the contrary; in 1979 Shakur escaped prison, went underground, and reappeared in Cuba.”¹⁰¹ Smith reads the Gospel of Matthew’s flight to Egypt with Shakur’s flight to Cuba to highlight how “Shakur’s transition from the United States to Cuba acts as a window into the exigencies of flight for Jesus’s family from Judea to Egypt.”¹⁰² Smith finds that reading the escape to Egypt in light of Shakur’s story makes visible “the contrast between the dangerous Judea and safe Egypt” as well as “the culture shock that might accompany radical and risky location.”¹⁰³ Reading Matthew’s flight to Egypt in light of Shakur’s flight to Cuba provides new insight for understanding the Matthean narrative as well as aligns the experience of an African American woman with the biblical text.

My study, too, seeks to join historical-critical biblical studies and womanist thought, in order that each discipline can benefit from the other. For the Bible to remain relevant to those who hold it sacred, it has to mean more than what it meant when Jesus spoke the words or Luke included them in a Gospel.¹⁰⁴ Readers who are invested in multicultural perspectives, and

⁹⁹ Smith, “One More Time With Assata On My Mind,” 139–63.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, “One More Time With Assata On My Mind,” 141.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 151-52.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 153-54.

¹⁰⁴ Abraham Kuruvilla, *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 2. Kuruvilla asserts that it is the duty and role of the preacher to make “the text, which is historical and distant,

especially for readers who have had their histories coopted by others, at least can avoid hypocrisy by recognizing that Jesus and Luke are both products of their own cultures, and those cultures also give rise to valuable readings. The historical-critical grounding claimed here is not the older, falsely objectivist model: the past is necessarily constructed by the historian and thus its representation necessarily has subjective elements. Yet the past is also a real thing, lived by real people, and it is the task of the historian to know them as best as possible.¹⁰⁵

My womanist reading of the widow adduces three tropes, or stereotypes, of African American women – Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel. Stereotypes are difficult if not impossible to erase; the better process in several cases, then, is to reinterpret them and to deploy them for the benefit of those who have previously been hurt by them. This dissertation delineates and then reimages by putting them in conversation with the parable proper. For example, the stereotype of Mammy is one of self-sacrifice, but Mammy — when understood in the context of the parable — displays the security of her own body, forcefulness of pursuing her case, and fearlessness before whatever “master” seeks to block her; she could in fact scare the judge by giving him a black eye. The stereotype of Sapphire depicts a woman marked by conceit and bitchiness, but read through the parable, she becomes a widow who has both assuredness of the truth of her claim and righteous anger that will not be silenced. Jezebel’s stereotype is that of vixen, but seen through the parable, she becomes a woman who uses whatever means necessary to accomplish her goals, shamelessly and directly. Placing these stereotypes in conversation with the parable thus offer new insights into the parable even as they complicate the stereotypes. The effect is to

contemporary and near to the congregation. Thus, a fundamental issue for preachers of the Bible is to be both faithful to the textual intention and fitting for the listening audience.”

¹⁰⁵ See Gina Hens-Piazza, *The New Historicism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002). The new historicism acknowledges that “the constructions of the past are tied to the present. Thus, the history has something to say to readers of the present.”

reclaim images that have been used to criticize, and condemn, African American women even as the approach provides the widow distinct forms of characterization and agency.

These cultural tropes, especially that of Mammy, also give insight into the position of widows in my own community. Women experiencing widowhood often report that “married friends treat them as poor and lonely, hide their activities for fear of exacerbating the widow’s vulnerability, or treat widows as special.”¹⁰⁶ Even when widows attempt to move forward with their lives forming new friendships or intimate relationships, expectations of friends and, especially, immediate family can suggest that the widow is not being sufficiently devoted to the deceased spouse.¹⁰⁷ Rather than allowing widows to live life on their terms, the de facto perspective is that the widow should live as if the husband were still alive. This means continuing with stereotypes of women’s roles: she does not go out without him; she certainly does not date anyone else; she exists not as an independent woman, but still as “Mrs.” There are, however, other experiences of widows that posit a different response. A member of the women’s ministry in one church community recounted to me that since the death of her husband, her experience has been more positive than negative. Both church members and other friends have treated her with compassion.¹⁰⁸ Viewing the widow in the parable through multiple lenses thus opens new perspectives for widows today, just as the experience of widows today can provide insight into the text.

Chapter 4 applies a womanist reading to the figure of the judge. I start with Luke’s own view of judges and judging; this contextualizing shows Luke’s ambivalent view of the judicial process: it is necessary, but it is not a burden one necessarily wants. For example, in Luke 12:58,

¹⁰⁶ Janine, “Widow’s Voice: Seven Widowed Voices Sharing Love, Loss, and Hope,” *Is It Just Me?*, December 28, 2011, <http://widowsvoice-ssl.blogspot.com/2011/12/is-it-just-me.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Tammy Ruiz, “Catholic Stand,” *A Young Widow On How to Treat Young Widows*, August 6, 2013, <http://catholicstand.com/a-young-widow-on-how-to-treat-young-widows/>.

¹⁰⁸ Just A Sister Away Women’s Ministry, Ray of Hope Community Church, 2015.

Jesus states, “when you go with your accuser before a magistrate, on the way make an effort to settle the case, or you may be dragged before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you in prison.” Then again, this making friends is precisely what the widow in our parable did not do.

The primary cultural lenses through which I interpret this figure focus on the African American critique of the judicial system, as well as American racism, via Dewey “Pigmeat” Markham’s routine, “Here come da judge,”¹⁰⁹ and its reception. Put into conversation with these tropes, the judge of Luke 18 can be seen as a figure of humor. Despite his insistence of his lack of concern, or respect, for others, the judge emerges as respecting of the widow if not fearful of her. Despite his almost god-like authority, he becomes her captive, or victim. At the same time, he can be seen as a pathetic figure, and a womanist approach cannot be satisfied with the humiliation of anyone. Finally, the womanist critique recognizes that the judge, as characterized in the parable, is exactly the wrong image for the Divine. As Stacy Floyd-Thomas trenchantly observes, “The moral crisis of identity within both the church and society, occasioned by the unending violence, discrimination, poverty, hatred, and terror, is the fear that we may worship a strange god who is blind to gender, class, and color and neither shares nor sees our interests, concerns, and thoughts.”¹¹⁰ One cannot read these words and fail to recall the judge of the parable,” who neither feared God nor had respect for people” (Luke 18:2). And such a judge must be resisted.

The conclusion to this study demonstrates the need for readers to take note of stereotypes and how they deploy them.

¹⁰⁹ Pigmeat Markham, *Here Comes the Judge*, Record (Chicago: Chess, 1968). See also Kilph Nesteroff, “Last Man in Blackface: The World of Pigmeat Markham,” *WFMU’s Beware of the Blog*, November 14, 2010, <http://blog.wfmw.org/freeform/2010/11/the-forgotten-pigmeat-markham.html>.

¹¹⁰ Floyd-Thomas, *Mining the Motherload*, xiii.

Chapter 1

The Widow Through Time

Luke's narrative framing has, until the rise of redaction criticism and then its use by some feminist interpreters, guided the parable's interpretation. Although the parable proper does not mention prayer, Luke's introduction, "Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart," secured the interpretation. For centuries, the parable offered neither challenge nor empowerment other than that of spiritual warfare. The widow was as Luke explained, a metaphor for tenacious prayer. She was also, according to some early interpreters, a symbol of the Church or the soul, both of which went into battle against enemies, whether Satan or heretics or both. Thus the allegorical interpretation of the widow determined the identity of her opponent: since the widow represented the side of righteousness and she sought to be avenged, her opponent must represent a form of temporarily triumphant evil. Occasionally, the widow becomes a negative example of one who seeks vengeance rather than displays love of enemies. We must be very careful not to put our readings in the position of blaming the victim. If we problematize the woman's morality, as I will do, I am not suggesting that the morality of victims should be questioned (see below). Generally, however, commentators affirmed her plea as in the cause of justice.

Luke's concluding frame typically determined the function of the judge: that a dishonest judge granted the widow what she wanted assures faithful Christians that God would swiftly respond to their prayers. The judge is thus a negative image for God. On occasion, commentators take seriously the judge's lack of religiosity or morality and regard the widow as responsible for his conversion.

The gaps between Luke's frame and the parable proper bothered few interpreters prior to the rise of critical biblical scholarship. Readers knew that Luke's rhetorical questions at the end, "And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them?" would often be answered in the negative: prayers for healing, for safety, for peace, or for the myriad of other requests, public and personal, were not always answered with swift help. Luke's Jesus states, "I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them" (18:8a), but the faithful knew that divine justice was sometimes different than what they thought justice would be. To forestall even a modicum of doubt on the part of the believers and so to stop a challenge to the narrative frame, Luke's Jesus then asks, "And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (18:8b). To ask about the timing of justice would then be to display lack of faith; to display lack of faith would in turn threaten one's salvation. For a few commentators, Luke's acknowledgment of lack of faith prompted by eschatological delay led to an emphasis on good works. However, the widow herself does not usually become an example of such good works.

When allegorical interpretations began to be rejected, whether because later exegetes found them too fanciful or determined that they were lacking in moral relevance, the widow still remained the symbol of individual non-public piety and the judge still remained a figure of authority. These interpretations continued with the rise of redaction criticism: Luke's message of women as spiritual warriors as well as public supporters of the ecclesial status quo remained the major claim. This is the approach of most homilies preached today, even in congregations that explicitly promote social justice.

With the rise of feminist criticism, the parable finally broke free of its Lukan frame. Some feminist readers regarded the woman not as the model of the faithful Christian or as an

allegory of the Church but rather of the faithful God, who prays that indifferent humans will listen to the divine call for justice. Again, the widow herself—understood to be a human being in a judicial situation—is disempowered: this approach of reading the woman as a symbol for God just replaces one allegory with another, and again it takes women out of the court.

More popular historical-critical work also serves to limit the woman's agency by emphasizing her displacement in the court: historians frequently cite the stereotype of the poor widow rather than either query this *particular* widow's economic status or grant her agency; they note the biblical image of the socially vulnerable widow rather than the numerous biblical as well as classical characterizations of a significant number of widows as wealthy, active in the public realm, trickster figures who achieve their goals, and otherwise characters who contravene the stereotype of the disempowered.

Like the widow, the judge remained — when he entered into the interpretation at all — a figure ripe for allegory rather than one whose earthly authority should be questioned. When the role of the judge is ignored, problems with legal systems and, by extension, people in power, go unaddressed. When he is mentioned in more recent historical-critical work, he represents the “corrupt Jewish system”—elitist, misogynist, and interested only in externals—against which Jesus stands. Allegory again, this time of using elements in the parable to construct a negative image of Jews and Judaism, reemerges. Rarely do commentators, and even more rarely do homilists, note the problems of a reading that sees the parable's particular judge as a divine image, even if as a negative one.

This chapter provides a selective survey of the parable's reception history as well as select references to historical data from the time of Jesus and the time of Luke that challenge common readings.

Patristic Interpretation

Luke's narrative frame not only reduced interpretation of the parable of the Widow and the Judge, it contributed to the view that parables are best, or only to be, understood, as allegories.¹ Beginning already with Luke and continuing from the patristic period until the end of the nineteenth century, the practice of using external referents as symbols for elements within the parable was the common mode of interpretation. Church fathers elaborately "decoded the vivid details of parables in theological terms."² Their focus was not ethics, but theology: "Scriptures provided the basic catechism of the church,"³ and thus the parables, as Jesus' own teachings, had to be about theology and its related concerns: soteriology, ecclesiology, and Christology.

Epitomizing this approach is Augustine's interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan:

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho: Adam himself is meant; Jerusalem is the heavenly city of peace from whose blessedness Adam fell; Jericho means the moon, and signifies our mortality, because it is born, waxes, wanes and dies. Thieves are the devil and his angels. Who stripped him, namely, of his immortality; and beat him, by persuading him to sin; and left him half-dead, because in so far as man can understand and know God, he lives, but in so far as he is wasted and oppressed by sin, he is dead; he is therefore called half-dead. The priest and Levite who saw him and passed by, signify the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament, which could profit nothing for salvation. Samaritan means guardian, and therefore the Lord

¹ Matthew Black, "The Parables As Allegory," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 42 (1959-1960): 273-87.

² *Ibid.*, 273.

³ Raymond E. Brown, "The Parable and Allegory Reconsidered," *Novum Testamentum* 5.1 (1962): 37.

Himself is signified by this name. The binding of wounds is the restraint of sin. Oil is the comfort of good hope; wine the exhortation to work with fervent spirit. The beast is the flesh in which He deigned to come to us. The being set upon the beast is belief in the incarnation of Christ. The inn is the Church, where travellers are refreshed on their return from pilgrimage to their heavenly country. The morrow is after the resurrection of the Lord. The two pence are either the two precepts of love, or the promise of this life and of that, which is to come. The innkeeper is the Apostle. The supererogatory payment is either his counsel of celibacy, or the fact that he worked with his own hands lest he should be a burden to any of the weaker brethren when the Gospel was new, though it was lawful for him “to live by the Gospel. (*Quaest. Ev.* 2.19)⁴

Missing in this interpretation is any historical connection such as Samaritan-Jewish enmity or the role of the priest and Levite in Jewish society. The allegorical mode renders the parable eternal rather than historically grounded, meaningless without the keys provided by the authoritative teachers, and focused on Christology rather than on ethical challenge. The allegory also detaches the parable from its own generic connections, whether the ethical parables found in Israel’s Scriptures such as Jotham’s parable of the trees in Judges 9 or Nathan’s parable of the Ewe Lamb in 2 Samuel 12, or the morality or practical wisdom stories told by Aesop. The allegorical approach also removes the parable from its Jewish relations, the *meshalim*, as well as Jewish exegesis in general, in which literal meaning rarely is so fully elided.

Augustine (354-430), defending the allegorical interpretative method, argues, “Whatever appears in the divine that does not literally pertain to virtuous behavior, or to the truth of faith,

⁴ Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, II 19, slightly abridged as cited in C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner, 1961), 1-2.

one must take to be figurative” (*On Christian Doctrine* 3.10.14.). For the parable of the Widow and the Judge, Luke’s narrative frame provides the focus on virtuous behavior: the widow is the model for prayer. Luke has also provided Augustine the allegorical referent for the Judge. Augustine, as well as his fellow Fathers, generally followed Luke’s allegory. Occasionally they enhanced it, but in no case I could find do they read in terms of an actual widow’s agency other than to stress the role of prayer.

Augustine allegorizes the widow as the Church waiting in apparent desolation for the Lord. He says:

The whole Church there is one widow, whether in men or in women, in married men or married women, in young men or in old, or in virgins: the whole church is one single widow, desolate in this world, if she feels this, if she is aware of her widowhood; for then is help at hand for her. Do ye not recognize this widow in the gospel, my brethren, when the Lord declared “that men ought always to pray and not to faint?” “There was in a city a judge,” he said, “Which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him day by day, saying, Avenge me (ἐκδίκησόν με) of my adversary. The widow, by daily importunity, prevailed with him; for the judge said within himself, “Though I fear not God, neither regard man, yet because this woman troubleth me, I will avenge her.” If the wicked judge heard the widow, that he might not be molested (ὕπωπιόζη) ; heareth not God his Church, whom he exhorteth to pray?” (exposition of Psalm 132 vs. 16)⁵

⁵ Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, Translation and notes by A. Cleveland Coxe, *ANF* viii (London: T & T Clark/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint 1989), 620.

The widow in this exposition is the Church, not an independent woman. Augustine also ignores here the identity of the opponent.

Modern translations of Augustine's words have toned down the parable to make it palatable to twenty-first century ears that do not associate widows with vengeance. Maria Bounding translates the widow's call for vengeance as "Do justice for me against my opponent."⁶ Similarly she takes the judge's promise to "avenge" the widow as "I will see justice done for this widow."⁷ The harsher terms are appropriate, as they are consistent with Augustine's references to the parable elsewhere in the *Expositions*.

Prompted by Luke's reference to swift judgment, Augustine also comments, "For to us the time is slow; and in our person is this said, "When will Thou look on?" that is, when shall we see vengeance (ἐκδίκησόν) upon those who insult us? When shall the Judge, overcome by weariness, hear the widow? [Luke 18:3] But our Judge, not from weariness, but from love, delayeth our salvation; from reason, not from need; not that He could not even now succour us, but that the number of us all may be filled up even to the end. (Psalm 35, vs. 20).⁸

Augustine, like Luke, uses the parable as an occasion to defuse concerns over the delay of the Parousia.

Augustine is one of several readers, from antiquity to the present, who recognize that the widow in the parable is asking for vengeance rather than justice. Beginning with a reference to the martyrs in Rev 6:10 ("They cried out with a loud voice, 'Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge [ἐκδικεῖς] our blood on the inhabitants of the

⁶ Maria Bounding, translation and notes, Boniface Ramsey, ed., Augustine of Hippo, *The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century, Exposition of the Psalms* (Enarrationes in Psalmos) 121-150 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 170.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Saint Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, 84.

earth?”) and the assurance that “there may be known before our eyes vengeance among the nations,” he insists,

And this indeed, as we have said, is a prophecy, not a wish.... And the Lord in the Gospel hath set before us the widow for an example, who longing to be avenged, did intercede with the unjust judge, who at length heard her, not as being guided by justice, but overcome with weariness; but this the Lord hath set before us, to show that much more the just God will speedily make the judgment of his elect, who cry unto him day and night, thence is also that cry of the martyrs under the altar of God [Rev 6.9], that they may be avenged in the judgment of God. Where then is the, “love your enemies, do good unto them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you”? [Matt 5.44]. Where is also the, “Not rendering evil for evil, nor cursing for cursing:” [1 Pet 3.9] and, “unto no man rendering evil for evil”? [Rom 12.17].⁹ (*Exposition of Psalm 79*, vs. 14).

Augustine concludes this section by referencing love of enemies and not rendering evil for evil (Matt 5:45; Luke 6:27).

Unlike most modern commentators who insist that the widow is asking for “justice,” Augustine regards her as wanting vengeance, or to be avenged; she becomes a voice echoing the martyrs in Revelation. She also becomes, ironically, a negative exemplar, since she may, for Augustine, be asking for the wrong thing: Augustine makes clear that vengeance belongs only to God, but the faithful are to love their enemies.

The Church Fathers do, on occasion, address the transformation of the judge before moving immediately to the negative analogy between the judge and God. Ephrem of Syria, who spends more time on the character of the judge than on the widow, suggests that “in his iniquity,

⁹ Ibid., 384.

the judge was not willing to vindicate the widow, and in his wickedness he was not willing to put her mind at rest.”¹⁰ By turning to her “mind,” Ephrem changes the widow from a figure seeking resolution in the legal system to a figure who is mentally or spiritually troubled. The actual details of her case – which, without the allegorical overlay, were likely to be monetary or more broadly issues of personal injury given that such suits are the ones most likely to find their way into the judicial system– are irrelevant to the spiritual message derived from the allegorical approach.

By her prayer, according to Ephrem, the widow transforms the judge from the sinner to the pious.¹¹ Luke’s narrative frame prevents Ephrem from questioning the justice of the widow’s case and discourages him from turning to Jesus’ advice that one make friends quickly with one’s opponent before opening a court case (Matt 5:25). Ephrem also misses the parable’s suggestion that it was not the widow’s prayer that transformed the judge, but the threat of her striking him. The widow’s persistence did not transform the judge’s “wickedness”: his own fear caused him to grant her petition. Ephrem makes the judge’s shift the result of prayer, and thus of divine intervention; he thereby restricts the woman’s power by making any reaction the direct result of divine initiative rather than human persistence.

Cyril of Alexandria (376-444) uses the parable to explain how prayer is one of the pathways to an uncorrupt life. Because Jesus taught, through this parable, the importance of prayer, people are to be diligent in praying. Using Luke’s widow as an example for all

¹⁰ Ephrem, *Saint Ephrem’s Commentary On Tatian’s Diatessaron*, trans. Carmel McCarthy (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1993), 250.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 275-276.

supplicants, Cyril says, “God will incline His ear to those who offer him their prayers not carelessly nor negligently, but with earnestness and constancy.”¹²

Cyril opens his discussion of the widow by remarking that she is “oppressed.”¹³ Then, launching fully into allegory that associates the widow’s opponent with Satan, he begins, “Others also there are who wrong the servants of God, and whom we may without sin attack in prayer.”¹⁴ The others represent Satan, so therefore “we say in our prayers to Him Who is able to save, and to drive away from us that wicked being, ‘Avenge me of my adversary.’ And this the Only-begotten Word of God has indeed done by having become Man: for He has ejected from his tyranny over us the ruler of this world....”¹⁵

In a footnote, Smith notes an alternative allegory ascribed to Cyril “which even Theophylact, from whom it is taken... characterizes as curious (περίεργον).”¹⁶ In this version, the widow stands for the soul, “which having divorced her first husband the devil, is therefore persecuted by him as her adversary. On which account she prays to God, the Judge of injustice, because He condemns the unjust....”¹⁷ The widow is the soul, the opponent is Satan, the judge is God, and the vindication occurs with the incarnation.

These various allegorical readings then find their way into Late Antiquity and the Medieval period. According to Stephen L. Wailes, Isidore of Seville (560-634) “omits the idea of the conversion of enemies as vengeance on them” but does include, along with the devil as the opponent, heretics.¹⁸ He cites Rabanus Maurus, “The Devil and Heretics,” quoting Isidore, “The widow can signify the Church praying with perseverance for vengeance on her enemies, the

¹² Cyril of Alexandria, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, trans. R. Payne Smith (New York: Studion Publishers, 1983), 478.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 479.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Stephen L. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus’ Parables* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 263.

devil or heretics.”¹⁹ Wailes notes, however, that later sources do not develop the focus on “real vengeance” following Augustine.²⁰ According to Nicholas of Lyra, the vengeance of which the parable speaks is actually about justice; as Wailes summarizes, “he comments that temporal punishment is one inducement to conversion, and so it is appropriate for Christians to implore vengeance on their persecutors—not in wrath but out of zeal for justice (“because temporal punishments are a kind of medicine which is effective for the emendation of life and the declaration of divine justice, so it is very appropriate that the saints pray thus to God to be avenged on their persecutors, not from the motive of anger but from zeal for justice”).²¹ The distinction, or lack thereof, between justice and vengeance troubled the early commentators; it tends not to trouble most modern ones, who – creating greater sympathy for the widow – insist her case is just.

Wailes also observes that the medieval sources also drop the analogy of the widow to the church in favor of regarding her as representing the soul.²² Once this allegory is in place, the widow as woman is erased as is her agency in the court.

Isidore of Seville, in keeping with the patristic use of allegory, likens the widow to God. Following Augustine’s commentary that the widow might represent the Church and that the just are avenged when the evil perish by way of conversion or through their loss of power, he argues that the widow is the “likeness of the Lord” (*Allegoria quaedam Sacrae Scripture, col. 127A*).²³ This is the approach picked up by some feminist commentators who see the widow as God. It does grant the view that female characters can represent the divine, but at the same time it disempowers the widow: this particular divine figure can only call out in hope. Alternatively, if

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 262. See also J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 83, cols 97-130 (Ann Arbor: ProQuest).

the widow in the parable represents God, then it is not her prayers that yield results, but her threats.

For the early commentators on this parable, prayer is essential, but entering the public sphere to challenge the judicial system is not. The widow ranges from representing one who models consistent prayer, to the image of the desolate church awaiting the return of her spouse, to the human soul seeking vengeance for oppressors. The judge is usually the (negative) image of the divine, but a few of the commentators do note that he is converted by the widow's prayer. Taking seriously the Greek term for vengeance (ἐκδικέω), the early commentators such as Augustine inquired as to the distinction between the prayer for vengeance and Jesus' concern about loving enemies. For some commentators, the widow herself is the negative exemplar: one should not pray for vengeance. In the more extreme allegories, the vengeance is appropriate, since the opponent is Satan, or heretics, or both.

In no cases that I could find do the commentators explore the idea of a real widow in a real court; in no cases that I could find do the Fathers have anything positive to say about the opponent: he ranges from being ignored to being Satan. And in no cases that I could find do they move to issues of women's agency beyond prayer, or to the seeking of justice beyond the matters of either defeating Satan or avenging the persecution of the Church, whether by pagan Rome or by perceived heretics. Although allegory had a role in teaching faith, I echo Raymond Brown's sentiment that "we need not seek a return to allegorical interpretations."²⁴

²⁴ Brown, "The Parable and Allegory Reconsidered," 37.

Medieval Interpretation

Bible commentators, particularly in the early Middle Ages, “built upon” the interpretations of previous generations.²⁵ Their successors then increasingly moved away from allegory and viewed the Bible as a “textbook” to be thoroughly interrogated.²⁶

For the Venerable Bede (672-735), the Widow and the Judge should be interpreted in light of the following parable, that of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14): Jesus shows that “it is not our protestations of faith that will be considered by God but our works. And among these works humility holds the chief place.”²⁷ He then adduces the parables of the Mustard Seed (Luke 13:18-21) and the Worthy Slaves of Luke 17:10 to indicate that “the proud, who, though they are far from doing all things that are commanded them, nevertheless, not alone do they dare to pride themselves upon their justice, but they also despise others; and so when they pray they are not heard, since their faith is without works.”²⁸ The judgment is on the judge, who anticipates the role of the Pharisee in the next parable; the widow would be analogous then to the sinful tax collector, but Bede, appropriately, does not make this connection.

Following Isidore of Seville, the Frankish archbishop of Mainz, Rabanus Maurus (780-856), anticipated feminist criticism not only by writing a commentary on the book of Judith but also by finding the widow of the parable to be a symbol for the Divine: “And yet we heard the voice of the widow, who is the likeness of God” (*De Universo*, col 81D).²⁹

²⁵ Joseph W. Goering, “An Introduction to Medieval Christian Biblical Interpretation,” in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 198.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 199. The advent of Scholasticism provided biblical commentators with a variety of apparatuses such as “a Latin text of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament divided into chapters, a commentary, Gloss, and the Histories drawn from multiple sources.”

²⁷ Venerable Bede, *Exploration of the Gospel*, in M.E. Toal, *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers III: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996), 370

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus’ Parables*, 262. See also *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 111.

Haimo Auxerre (d. 865; *Homiliae de tempore*, Homily 131, cols 696-698) follows Augustine and Bede by allegorizing the widow as the desolate church.³⁰ Zacharias Chrysopolitanus (d. 1155) adds that the widow's seeking of vengeance does not contradict Matthew's exhortation to pray for enemies, but that "it is the vengeance of a just man, that the wicked shall perish" (*In Unum ex Quator sive De concordia evangelistarum libri quatuor*, cols 11-620, col 383B-D).³¹

Hugh of St. Cher (1200-1263), the French Dominican and Bishop of Ostia, introduces exegesis by catch-word and in so doing emphasizes the problem of corrupt judges who oppress the socially marginal; he cites in connection with the parable Isa 1:23 ("Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow's cause does not come before them" [NRSV]), Jer 5:28 ("They have grown fat and sleek. They know no limits in deeds of wickedness; they do not judge with justice the cause of the orphan, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy" [NRSV]), and Sir. 35:14-15 ("Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it; and do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge, and with him there is no partiality" [NRSV]).³² His focus is on corrupt power and thus by extension the widow's plight. The texts he cites reinforce the image of the widow as helpless and consequently prevent reading the widow of the parable as a person with agency. The increasingly common portrayal of the widow as desolate – whether as the desolate church, or the desolate soul – eventually becomes, for the modern interpreter, the widow as epitomizing the desolate socially vulnerable.

³⁰ Ibid., 262. See also *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 118.

³¹ Ibid. See also *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 186.

³² Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Paraphrase on Luke 11-24*, trans. Jane E. Phillips, vol. 48, *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 117.

Bonaventure (1221-1274) the Franciscan begins his study of the parable by insisting that “this parable is not to [be] understood as a metaphor of *similitude*, since the judge of a city is in no way to be likened to God, who is to be petitioned. Rather, it is to be understood by *dissimilitude* and by means of the contrary, so that the Lord is teaching them via the argument from the lesser to the greater to understand the efficacy of prayer.”³³ Following Bede, he then makes the practical, critical observation that praying always “does not apply to every moment of time, but for designated hours....”³⁴ He goes on for several more lines about the times and manners in which one prays. For the parable itself, he mentions “Three components in its development: *the hard-heartedness of the judge, the insistence of the poor, and the efficacy of prayer.*”³⁵ The widow herself is subsumed into the category of the “poor”; Bonaventure may assume that women are poor, that the poor are weak and therefore appropriately compared with women, or that the gendered figure is insufficient. While he recognizes the judge as a character type, he erases the “widow” in favor of the broader category.

In his exposition of the parable proper, he speaks of the widow, “namely, a widow deprived of the support of her husband.”³⁶ Robert Karris, the editor of this commentary, notes that Bonaventure follows Augustine’s *Letter* 130, ch. 16, n. 29-30: “Now what makes this work [earnestness in prayer] especially suited to widows but their bereaved and desolate condition?”³⁷ Because for Bonaventure the widow represents the poor, her claim must necessarily be just and her opponent must necessarily be evil: she “needs the protection of the judge against the oppression of wicked people.” To support his reading, he cites Sir 35:16-19 on the “prayers of the fatherless and the widow.”

³³ Saint Bonaventure, *Commentary on Luke 3*, chapters 17-24, translated and annotated by Robert J. Karris (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004), 1702.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1707.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1708.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1708 n. 27 cf. NPNF1 Vol 1, 468-69.

When Bonaventure does look at the widow as a character rather than a symbol, the characterization is less than positive. He compares the widow's tenacity "to what Judges 14:17 says about Samson's wife: 'She wept before him the seven days of the feast. And finally, on the seventh day, since she had become a bother to him, he expounded the riddle.'" Bonaventure similarly compares the widow's complaint to the importuning friend in Luke's parable (Luke 11:7-8). The comparison reinforces the interpretation that her cause is just – the importuning friend needs to feed his guest, so the widow must need to do something on behalf of others. It also ignores the widow's perceived threat of doing the judge physical harm.

Karris translates Bonaventure as speaking of the widow's desire for "justice," but he concludes that the case is one of punishment, not monetary recompense or apology. He cites Num 31:1-2, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Avenge first the children of Israel on the Midianites....'" Of course, the judge "should not do this out of hatred for the person, but out of love for justice like Matthias, about whom 1 Maccabees 2.24 says, 'His wrath was kindled according to the judgment of the law, and he sprang upon this man and killed him.'" To extend Bonaventure's reading: the widow is requited by the death of her opponent.

The judge finds his counterpart among the unfaithful against whom the prophets complained (cf. Isa 1:23; Jer 5:28). Bonaventure next speaks of him in terms of the proud (cf. Job 15:26; Ps. 13:3). The judge's motive in granting the widow her request stems not "on account of zeal for the law, but to avoid the bothersome petition." The judge specifically fears being strangled; as Bonaventure explains, "So the Glossa says that the verb 'to wear me out' stems from the verb 'to suck' and refers to having been seized by vampire bats, and thus ultimately refers to the verb 'to strangle.' For vampire bats kill little children and suck their blood." That is, the judge feels that his blood is being sucked out of him by the widow

(Bonaventure refers to Lam 4:3, “Even the jackals offer the breast and nurse their young, but my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness” [NRSV]).³⁸ The image is not a pleasant one.

The remainder of his exposition echoes that of the earlier commentators: It is God who will “avenge his elect” (citing Rom 12:19; Deut 32:35 as well as Sir 35:23-25 and 28:1), and the martyrs of Rev 6:9-10 who call for this same avenging. Bonaventure then, following Hugh of St. Cher, includes the murdered Abel in the list of those who seek to be avenged (Gen 4:10).³⁹ He concludes with the note that there are “two types of vengeance. The first is designed *to make one return to God*. The second is designed *to stop a person from foolish action*. The saints can ask for the first type with no conditions. The second, only if it pleases God. But the saints should abhor *vengeance for a personal injury* and must pray against the *vengeance of eternal damnation*.”⁴⁰

By associating the woman with the poor and the judge with corrupt figures of Israel’s past, Bonaventure assures that her case is just. By stressing through textual allusion the violent role of avenging as well as by insisting that one should not seek “vengeance” in the sense of harming another, he both raises the question of the widow’s motives as well as, given his associations of the widow with Samson’s Philistine wife, works to prevent any reader from identifying with her. Such identification is also generally precluded by the vampire bat references. Bonaventure’s intertextual reading as well as his general resistance to allegory will find their way into the commentaries of the Reformers.

³⁸ Karris (1712 n. 40) references early commentators’ discussion of “*sugillare* (‘to wear out’), *suggere* (‘to suck’) and *strangulare* (‘to strangle).” The origin of the metaphor appears to come from Albert.

³⁹ Ibid., 1714-15.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1715.

Reformation Period

The great Desiderius Erasmus (1456-1536), in his Paraphrase on Luke 11-24, adds details to the parable that make the widow more sympathetic and the judge more venal, and thus he moves the parable away from allegory to a case for justice even as he continues the earlier readings that see the widow as desolate and oppressed. He also reinforces the stereotypes of the widow as impoverished and “hard-pressed” by her opponent: she says, “I am being worsted in a good case... because of my opponent’s riches and influence. I am a widow and destitute. Defend my rights against the ferocity of my opponent.”⁴¹ The parable says nothing about the opponent: we know neither whether he is ferocious or docile. Regarding the judge, Erasmus begins by paraphrasing the parable and then glossing it: “His impiety made him have no fear of God, while his power made him have no respect for humans.”⁴² The charge of “impiety” makes clear that the judge is not an impartial figure; the concern for “power” shows a move toward the critique of individuals who hold power: power, for Erasmus’s reading, can be a corrupting agent.

Erasmus continues: the judge should have aided the widow, since “great power is given to certain individuals precisely so that they can assist the orphaned and fatherless, the widows and humble folk, against the wealthy and powerful.”⁴³ Thus power can be a problem, but wielded correctly, it can parry the power of “the wealthy and the powerful.” The move toward a social justice reading begins.

This discussion concludes with Erasmus’s glossing the final lines of the Lukan frame: “Will God, who is most just and merciful towards his chosen, shut his ears when he is appealed to day and night.... Will he refuse to free them from the violence of their oppressors and instead

⁴¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Paraphrase on Luke 11-24*, trans. Jane E. Phillips, vol. 48, *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 117.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 117

⁴³ *Ibid.*

calmly and coolly allow them to be assaulted with impunity? No, I tell you he will not. He will either turn the hearts of the wicked so that their will is changed and they cease to attack, or he will remove their capacity to do harm....”⁴⁴ Erasmus recognizes not only that people will be evil, but also that they have the *capacity*, through wealth and power, to create oppressive conditions. While he does not depict the widow as herself challenging the powerful, he opens the parable toward a function as social critique rather than only theological instruction and assurance.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) returns to the patristic approach by reading the parable allegorically: the widow is a representation of the Church. Luther says, “But in the mean time the Church is sighing and groaning in the midst of danger and wishing for vengeance on her enemies: as Christ shows in his parable of the unjust judge, Luke xviii.”⁴⁵ Luther, in a manner similar to patristic interpreters, asserts that the widow wants vengeance on her opponent, but due to God’s patience the widow must “sigh and groan” or pray while waiting for recompense.⁴⁶

Luther’s reading of the parable is in service to what he views as the destruction caused by those he deems “enemies to the Gospel.”⁴⁷ Quoting Pss 55:23, Luther maintains, “the wicked shall not live out half his days” because “although the Son himself is one whose wrath is kindled in a moment, the godly also ply him with their entreaties and supplications. And therefore, as Christ says concerning the widow and the unjust judge, ‘God also shall avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him; and shall avenge them speedily’”⁴⁸ Although Luther follows Luke’s contextualization that the parable is about prayer, he reads the parable as not about finding faith on earth (18:8), but as the Church crying out to God day and night to be relieved of the distress caused by the Gospel’s enemies.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 117-118.

⁴⁵ Martin Luther, *Select Works of Martin Luther: An Offering to the Church of God in “The Last Days,”* 2 Tim. iii. I., trans. Henry Cole, vol. IV (London: T. Bensley, 1826), 484.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 484.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 552.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

John Calvin (1509-1564) starts by latching onto the Lukan frame concerning perseverance in prayer. He finds such perseverance to be “a rare and difficult attainment because it [persistence in prayer] is a manifestation of unbelief” since “when our first prayers are not always successful, we immediately throw away not only hope, but also all ardor of prayer.”⁴⁹ Wary that Christians would think that prayer is the means by which spiritual warriors “gain a victory over God,” he insists, “The actual facts do not all at once make it evident that he graciously listens to our prayers.”⁵⁰ Otherwise put: God hears all prayers, but sometimes the answer is not what the supplicant desires. Calvin concludes by exhorting his followers to faithful prayer, regardless of “however wretched and despicable may be the condition of those who pray to him.”⁵¹

Calvin’s commentary concerning the widow is limited. He says, “In the parable Christ describes to us a widow, who obtained what she wanted from an unjust and cruel judge, because she did not cease to make earnest demands.”⁵² “Cruel” is an addition to the parable: it presumes that the widow’s case is just and that the judge maliciously ignores her. It obviates any possibility that the widow is harassing the judge for vengeance. The widow, for Calvin, becomes the exemplar of the uninterrupted exercise of prayer. Just as God “opened his eyes to the distresses of the widow, we have no reason to doubt that believers will derive, at least, equal advantage from their prayers, provided they do not cease to plead earnestly with God.”⁵³ Calvin is concerned with neither vengeance nor justice, but that believers pray.

⁴⁹ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries: Harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke*, trans. William Pringle, vol. II, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 198. See also <https://deovivendiperchristum.wordpress.com/2016/02/18/john-calvin-1509-1564-on-the-parable-of-the-persistent-widow-luke-181-8/>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 198

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 199.

Through this history of interpretation, symbolic, allegorical, or figurative readings generally fade to proof-texting, where terms in one place (such as “vengeance”) are used to interpret terms in another. The parable morphs from being a lesson on the desolate Church’s prayer for Satan’s defeat to a concern that the poor be protected to an overall focus on the importance of prayer. The woman does not receive attention as an individual person, although the judge does. Whatever agency she has is typically corralled into that of a model of patient and persistent prayer. Her search for vengeance becomes, either through alternative translations or through appeals to divine concern, a search ultimately for justice. But the mere suggestion that she wants vengeance, coupled with analogies connecting her to Samson’s nagging Philistine wife, removes her from the category of moral exemplar. This removal will itself be removed in the later studies.

The Widow, Judge, and Historical Criticism

By the 19th century, allegorical interpretations were mostly a method of the past, and biblical interpreters increasingly located themselves in the historical-critical movement. The rise of historical criticism, however, was a result of the Reformation and its “appeal to reason” when interpreting the Scripture.⁵⁴ The appeal to reason bolstered the claims of the Reformers that the literal sense of Scripture, interpreting the Bible from what is written in the text, was a better mode of interpretation than focusing on the spiritual sense, which was a by-product of allegorical interpretation. The Reformers, such as Luther, argued, “the ‘spiritual’ meaning of the Bible gave license to multiple meanings.”⁵⁵ Instead they argued, “Scripture should not therefore have a

⁵⁴ Travis L. Frampton, *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible* (New York and London: T&T Clark, 2006), 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

twofold meaning. Instead, it should retain the one meaning to which the words refer.”⁵⁶ “To discern the literal meaning of the Scriptures, “interpreters needed to employ a grammatical and historical method,” which examined the Hebrew and Greek language and sought the “context and purpose of biblical writers.”⁵⁷ This concern for interpreting the Bible based on a literal sense caused a revolution in biblical hermeneutics. No longer did interpretation solely reside in the hands of the Church and priest. The Reformation empowered individuals to interpret the Bible for themselves; by the 19th century, biblical interpretation was being performed not only by the Church and priest, but also by a variety of individuals in multiple disciplines.

Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904), a 19th century suffragist, calls upon the parable in support of the persistence of the activists working to secure women’s right to vote. Comparing the judge to the Irish Legislature, she says, “The parable of the unjust judge will probably not be found inapplicable to a masculine Legislature, when poor widows (and also rich ones, and other single women), by their continual coming, become wearisome.”⁵⁸ Cobbe excellently captures what could become a twenty-first century womanist or feminist reading: women who are often not in positions of power get what they want by continually seeking their desire, and by uniting across class lines.

Cobbe’s reading also raises questions of sexism for the parable. In a style of diatribe similar to Paul, Cobbe puts forth and then answers the questions of an imaginary conversation partner. When asked why women desire the right to vote, Cobbe answers, “Women can lose nothing, and have much to gain by entering a field on nobler interests than has hitherto been

⁵⁶ Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell, eds., *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 56.

⁵⁷ William Baird, *History of New Testament Research: Volume 1: From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), xviii.

⁵⁸ Francis Power Cobbe, “Why Women Desire the Franchise,” in *Before the Vote Was Won: Arguments For and Against Women’s Suffrage 1874*, ed. Jane Lewis (New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 179–83 (180).

open to them.”⁵⁹ Similarly, the widow has nothing to lose but everything to gain by pressing the judge to rectify her situation.

John Millais (1829-1896), a 19th century artist and author, was a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of artists who sought expression through “realistic detail and brilliant colors.”⁶⁰ Although Luke provides sparse details concerning both the widow and judge, Millais’s realistic detail fills in the gaps of the parable by adding to the portrait male onlookers and a scribe who appears to be taking notes of the proceedings, but whose view towards the widow seems to show a level of compassion for her.

Millais’s depiction of the judge appears to be that of a religious rather than a civil figure: He is dressed in priestly vestments. Millais also adds a guard who can be seen pulling the widow away from the judge. Thus, the religious and the civil are combined in his interpretation of the parable. Rather than sketching an old widow, Millais depicts the widow as a young woman. Her posture of kneeling in front of the judge suggests that she is seeking justice rather than revenge. Although the parable does not provide information about the economic status of the widow, Millais depicts her as a peasant. She is wearing plain clothes with a scarf covering her hair; she is also without jewelry, lace, or other trinkets that suggest a woman of means. Millais, in many ways, follows the literal sense of the parable: a widow goes before the judge and he refuses her request. There is nothing to hint that she represents the prayers of the faithful, or the judge is a negative image for divine justice.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 181.

⁶⁰ Walker Art Gallery, *Millais: An Exhibition Organized by the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool & the Royal Academy of Arts, London* (Liverpool/London: Walker Art Gallery/Royal Academy of Arts, 1967), 6. See also Christine Riding, *John Everett Millais: British Artists* (Tate Publishing, 2006), 16. Riding suggests, “The use of the term ‘Pre-Raphaelite’ was to indicate that the [Brotherhood’s] inspiration came from paintings before the High Renaissance (approximately pre-1500).”

William James Webbe (1830-1904), influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of John Millais, also illustrates the parable of the widow and judge.⁶¹ His depiction is a civil context, as indicated by two guards standing behind the judge and wielding swords as well as the by a guard standing in front of the judge's chambers. Rather than a note-taking scribe as in Millais's depiction, Webbe shows the judge passing a note, perhaps his decree to one of the guards behind him as he listens to the widow beg. She is also grabbing the judge's tunic.

Webbe, like all interpreters, fill in the gaps when information is missing from the story. His widow appears a bit older than Millais's young widow, but she is also kneeling before the judge. She, too, is dressed in peasant clothes. The guards seem to be protectors of the judge. As with Millais's painting, there is nothing to indicate that Webbe follows Luke's contextualization of the parable. Webbe simply shows a poor widow in a juridical scene who, apparently, does not win her case. The result is a message of pathos, not justice.

Harold Copping (1863-1932), a student of London's Royal Academy like John Millais, depicts a kneeling widow, dressed in peasant clothing and grabbing the sleeve of the judge as he looks away.⁶² Copping includes a man pulling the woman away from the judge as a crowd stands by. Unlike the Millais and Webb depictions where soldiers are standing guard or pulling the widow away from the judge, Copping offers a community rather than juridical setting. Again, however, the stress is on pathos. Viewers may judge the situation as unfair to the widow, but they are not prompted to challenge the court system.

While the 19th century artists were concerned about detail and realism, their paintings also communicated their social thoughts. Women were poor and needed the help of men to

⁶¹ See "William James Webbe," *The Victorian Web: Literature, History & Culture in the Age of Victoria*, <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/webbe/>, accessed March 10, 2017.

⁶² Harold Copping, *The Parable of the Jude and the Widow*, Painting, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://www.biblepicturegallery.com/pictures/gparables/The%20parable%20of%20the%20Judge%20and%20the%20Widow%20-%20painting%20pa.htm>.

survive. In the three paintings of the widow and judge narrative, each shows a begging woman rather than a threatening one. While Millais and Copping add onlookers, at no point does anyone speak for or stand on behalf of the widow. Thus the artists retain the idea of the widow as a pathetic figure. By adding guards, both Millais and Webbe suggest judicial systems are not independent of the government. When the judicial system and the Empire are intertwined, it can be impossible for individuals, particularly poor people, to receive fair hearings.

The realistic depictions by Millais, Webbe, and Copping anticipate late 19th and early 20th century interpreters who argued for simplicity in parable interpretation. Biblical interpretation is moving further away from the allegorical interpretations that held sway for earlier generations of interpreters.

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) argues, “The original meaning of a parable is irrecoverable.”⁶³ Disagreeing with the notion that there is one special lesson in Jesus’s teachings, Bultmann proposes, concerning the parable of the widow and judge, that “the general meaning is clear enough, but not the special point, because the occasion which prompted the similitude is not known.”⁶⁴ He concludes that the parable had “originally been an exhortation to prayer,” but he queries, is it an exhortation “to some specific petition? To prayer for the coming of God’s reign?”⁶⁵ Readers can never know.

Bultmann, a proponent of the demythologization, argues that because the New Testament depicts earth as “a theater for the working of supernatural powers,” it is impossible to “repristinate a past world picture, especially a mythical world picture.”⁶⁶ For Bultmann, then, a widow praying to a power in heaven to help with her situation on earth is “unintelligible and

⁶³ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh, Rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 199.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 1, 3.

impossible” for [his] contemporary readers.⁶⁷ The parable, to be intelligible to Bultmann’s readers, must be demythologized or exclude the workings of supernatural powers in order to “talk about the authentic reality of human beings.”⁶⁸ Through this hermeneutical approach Bultmann both moves away from allegorical readings and in the direction of historical criticism. He also opens the door for commentators to argue that the parable proper (vv. 2-5) is not concerned with divine response to prayer or to a heavenly intervention into an unjust world, but that Luke uses the narrative to suit his theological purposes.

Joachim Jeremias (1900-1979) also rejected allegory as the best way to interpret the biblical narratives. In his examination of the parable, he suggests that the “widow need not be regarded as an old woman because the result of the early marriageable age was that widows were frequently quite young.”⁶⁹ Similarly, John R. Donahue warns, “In imagining the world of this parable, we should avoid thinking of the widow as aged and infirm. In a culture with short life spans where women married in their early teens, the ‘widow’ as the narrative presumes, would most likely be young and vigorous.”⁷⁰ The New Testament itself tells us that there are older widows (cf. 1 Tim 5:9, “Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old”). Widows could be of any age, so any attempt to determine the widow’s age, or her economic status, requires narrative imagination, not historical-critical claims.

Jeremias does not however show consistency in recognizing the different circumstances of individual characters. Rather, he surmises both that a money issue is the reason for the case

⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 161.

⁶⁹ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd Revised (New Jersey: Prentis Hall, 1972), 153. See also Eric Francis Fox Bishop, *Jesus of Palestine: The Local Background to the Gospel Documents* (London: Lutterworth, 1955), 229. See also Ross S. Kraemer, “Jewish Family Life in the First Century CE,” in *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 537-540 (538). Kramer suggests that “free women married for the first time between the ages of about twelve and twenty, to men who were typically ten to even fifteen years older.”

⁷⁰ John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 182.

and that the widow is too poor to bribe the judge. Hence, he presumes her to be poor and her opponent to be a rich and influential man.

Rather than viewing the judge as afraid of the widow's actions, Jeremias argues that the judge's fear of the widow should be read figuratively rather than literally. His translation of ὑπωπιάζει με is "to finish off" (German: *fertig macht*),⁷¹ which is similar to the common translation "to wear out," and he reads the line as, "So that she may not finish me off (ὑπωπιάζει με) completely (εἰς τέλος) by her obstinacy"⁷² For Jeremias, the judge is tired of the widow's nagging and "wants to be left in peace."⁷³

Jeremias's interpretation is a perpetuation of stereotypes. The widow, a woman, is a nag; the judge, a man, does not want to be bothered with a nagging woman. The judge acquiesces because of the widow's perpetual nagging.

Historical criticism became the dominant approach to the Bible in the mid-twentieth century because of the assumption that the literal sense would produce the one true or accurate interpretation. There are, however, multiple angles to take when using historical criticism. Some commentators use as a lens of inquiry the Roman judicial system; others seek to reconstruct the early Jesus movement, and still others the thought of Jesus himself. Several adduce cultural constructions that they presume to underlie the actions and reactions of both storytellers and the figures in their stories. While the purpose of the historical-critical method is to produce an interpretation based upon a rigorous analysis of historical details rather than an individual's own thoughts, biases necessarily creep in. The historical lens one adopts cannot fail to impact the conclusions one draws.

⁷¹ Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 8th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 153.

⁷² Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 154.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 154.

For example, Kenneth Bailey appeals to the cultural construct of an honor-shame system. Therefore, he concludes that the “problem [of the judge] is not a failure to respect people in the sense of giving respect to persons of learning or high position, but a failure to sense the evil of his actions in the presence of someone who should make him feel ashamed.”⁷⁴ The presence of the widow should make the judge ashamed of his harming the widow in his failure to vindicate her. The first gap in this conclusion is that readers do not know if the widow should be vindicated. Second, the judge has no shame, because he does not care what people think; why he should suddenly worry about his reputation remains unclear. Unclear as well is why his reputation would be salvaged if he responds to threats rather than to petitions.

Bailey’s interpretation, from a modern Middle Eastern context that he then retrojects to the first century, proposes that the court system is a man’s world and therefore that women are not expected to participate; however, if they do, he argues that such women are respected, honored, and can express their feelings or opinions without being mistreated.⁷⁵ The problem here is that nothing in the parable suggests that the woman is honored. That she operates without fear of mistreatment is possible, but not necessary. We can read her either as aware of her rights and therefore her safety, or – as the nineteenth century artists suggest – perhaps facing armed guards who would drag her away.

Bernard Brandon Scott takes the honor-and-shame template in a different direction. He argues that the widow’s action, her continual wearing down of the judge, is a “viable metaphor for the kingdom of God” (cf. Matt. 11:12).⁷⁶ “The widow, like the kingdom, keeps coming battering down [the judge] regardless of honor or justice. It may even come under the guise of

⁷⁴ Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 132.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁷⁶ Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 187.

shamelessness (lack of honor).⁷⁷ The lack of honor that Scott suggests the widow has in her fight against the judge codes her as inappropriate. He further claims that “she does not begin with a respectful address”⁷⁸ to the judge.

For Scott, the widow represents lack of honor; apparently, it is not the judge who lacks concern for what others think, it is the widow. To seek justice or simple answers may require inappropriate behavior. Scott manages, however, to disempower the widow by returning to the widow as metaphor for the kingdom. Moreover, it is not clear whether lack of appropriate behavior in a court is the best way of achieving one’s goals. Finally, Scott presumes that the parable is a full narrative, which it is not. The parable does not record all that the woman could have said, just as it does not record the words the judge used in his consistent referrals. It is not beyond reason to presume that the judge has also not spoken with appropriate address in his responses to the widow. Basing a reading on what is not said is a good literary approach, but it moves beyond claims of historically grounded honor-and-shame contexts.

Determining that a parable is a proclamation of the kingdom of God confronting hearers with a new vision of reality,⁷⁹ John Donahue argues, “The story demonstrates a reversal of human expectation. In this kingdom in the world of the parable, victims claim their rights and seek justice—often in an unsettling manner.”⁸⁰ Donahue’s depiction of both the widow and judge contributes to what he views as unsettling and transformative. To make his case, he has to regard the widow as justified in her petition and the judge as doing the right thing in finally granting it. He also presumes that the widow is a “victim” who has “rights” and seeks “justice”; whether such seeking requires threats of violence goes unaddressed. Finally, it is not clear that

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 183.

⁷⁹ Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 184

⁸⁰ Ibid.

the parable gives a “reversal of human expectation”: in stories, especially biblical stories, widows usually get what they want. It would be surprising for Jesus to tell a story of a widow who has a just petition, and who fails.

The shocking portions of the parable, according to Donahue, are the widow’s public and persistent cry for justice and that she may have physically struck the judge. “Women,” says Donahue, “would rarely, if at all, claim their rights by appearing constantly, and presumably alone, in public, raising a public outcry.”⁸¹ The presumption that the widow is alone is just that, a presumption. The other shocking aspect of the parable is the notion that the widow would, if needed, physically attack the judge. Donahue could go farther: what is to be made of this shock? Is the widow a moral exemplar? Does she show the fragility of the court system? Commentators correctly note the surprising behavior of the widow, but they rarely transfer this notion to ancient or modern court contexts. The praxis take-away remains at best inchoate.

Dorothy Jean Weaver follows Donahue’s concern for justice by arguing that “the parable setting is a world of powerful people who practice injustice and powerless peasants who suffer the injustice.”⁸² She locates the parable as a “call to action and a word of hope for the Jesus community.”⁸³ However, although justice/injustice is the framework of the parable, Weaver suggests these concerns are not what move the plot. Her focus is rather on the widow’s persistence. The conflict is the widow’s insistence that the judge grant her justice. The resolution is the judge’s acquiescence. The persistence of the widow propels the plot from conflict to resolution.

For Weaver, the widow’s persistence stands for what Luke names as prayer. “Urgent, persistent, and bold prayer becomes the essential medium through which the world’s injustice is

⁸¹ Ibid., 182.

⁸² Dorothy Jean Weaver, “Luke 18:1-8,” *Interpretation* 56.3 (2002): 317.

⁸³ Ibid.

transformed into God's justice.”⁸⁴ The widow becomes the model for prayer for Jesus' disciples. Weaver then links justice and prayer by asserting that “justice is the name for God's action; prayer is the name for the collaboration of humans in that act.”⁸⁵ Moreover, prayer is also among “those sturdy, audacious, or even outrageous acts that go by the name of faith and also drive one to action.”⁸⁶

This reading proposes a paradigm by which the community can work together to create a more just world. It also is a reminder that God is with the community as they sometimes engage hostile forces. The question of the violence goes unaddressed even though one might presume Weaver has violence in mind when she names the 1st century legal world of Jesus’ context as “ugly, oppressive, and full of corruption and major power imbalances.”⁸⁷ She, however, never questions the widow’s own sense of justice. That the widow may want vengeance cannot be acknowledged when the widow is a “vulnerable person at the bottom of the heap.”⁸⁸

Charles Hedrick, reading the parable in light of what can be known of legal systems, argues that the story is designed to focus on the judge rather than the widow. He suggests that by following Luke’s contextualization of the judge as “unjust” (18:6, a line that I do not think is part of the parable proper), readers miss the positive qualities of the judge. He finds the judge to be a “thoroughly honest man bound neither by the limitations of religion nor by ties to anyone in the community.”⁸⁹ The description of the judge as neither fearing God nor having respect for people, according to Hedrick, indicates neither a corrupt nor an immoral judge. Rather, he was

⁸⁴ Ibid., 319.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 317.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 318.

⁸⁹ Charles W. Hedrick, *Parables As Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 197.

neither “religious in the sense of traditional Jewish piety” nor intimidated by people.⁹⁰ Hedrick also argues that the widow does not fit the stereotype of vulnerability that, in turn, gives widows a protected status; in his view, she is not a sympathetic character: she shows no respect for the court or judge; “her demand for vengeance violates Torah.”⁹¹ For Hedrick, the widow is the negative exemplar and the judge is honorable; this reading turns Luke’s interpretation inside-out; it also contravenes more pronounced biblical tropes.

Hedrick’s reading also limits assessment of the judge. To suggest that the judge is a thoroughly honest man contradicts the Torah’s concern that one not only judge justly, but that one rebuke a neighbor who is behaving unjustly. Leviticus 19:15,17 states, “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.... you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself.” If the judge found the widow’s case to be unjust, he should rebuke her. If he found it to be unjust, further, by granting her what she wants, he colludes in injustice. Thus, although Hedrick initially praises the judge for neither being religious nor intimidated by people, he concludes that in Luke’s “humorous, sarcastic, and complex story with its unexpected reversals, the judge is a hopelessly ridiculous figure.”⁹²

Wendy Cotter also examines both the widow and judge from the perspective of the Empire’s judicial system.⁹³ Her goal is to destabilize the common thoughts concerning both widows and judges in the Greco-Roman world. While Donahue asserts that women would not show themselves in court without a male counterpart, Cotter shows that women did appear in

⁹⁰ Ibid., 195.

⁹¹ Ibid., 202.

⁹² Ibid., 203.

⁹³ Wendy Cotter, “The Parable of the Feisty Widow and the Threatened Judge (Luke 18:1-8),” *NTS* 51.3 (July 2005): 328-343

court on their own behalf.⁹⁴ These include Carfania (80 B.C.E.),⁹⁵ wife of Roman senator Sulla, who provided her own defense in court;⁹⁶ Hortensia (42 B.C.E.)⁹⁷ who defends women against a taxation law; Fannia,⁹⁸ whose husband attempts to extort her of her property; Maesia of Sentinum,⁹⁹ who defends herself in court; and Babatha,¹⁰⁰ a 2nd century Jewish widow who goes to court to fight against the court appointed guardians of her son Yeshua as well as to make a claim on property within her late husband's estate.

Cotter then claims that the judge is not the ideal official because he fails to demonstrate *pietas* toward the gods and citizens. *Pietas* acknowledges the superiority of the gods and the responsibility of those with resources towards dependents. Leaders are to show *pietas* both toward the gods and toward the state by acting for the good of all people. Cotter's historical points are valid, but they do not in the end help fully with a resolution to the parable. By acquiescing to the widow, it is not clear that the judge is displaying *pietas*. His motives are not honoring the gods or honoring the state, but avoiding physical harm. Perhaps the parable subverts the idea that the courts display *pietas*; perhaps it questions any necessarily connection between *pietas* and justice.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 334.

⁹⁵ Valerius Maximus, "Women Who Pleaded Before Magistrates For Themselves Or For Others, Book 8.3.3," in *Valerius Maximus: Memorable Doings and Sayings*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 211. See also Richard A. Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 50.

⁹⁶ Cotter, "The Parable of the Feisty Widow and the Threatened Judge (Luke 18:1-8),", 334-335. See also Maximus, "Women Who Pleaded Before Magistrates For Themselves Or For Others, Book 8.3.3, 211.

⁹⁷ Maximus, "Women Who Pleaded Before Magistrates For Themselves Or For Others, Book 8.3.3," 213. See also Appianus of Alexandria, *Appian's Roman History*, vol. 4, 4 vols., The Loeb Classical Library (London: Macmillan, 1912).

⁹⁸ Valerius Maximus, "Of Remarkable Private Trials, Book 8.2.3," in *Valerius Maximus: Memorable Doings and Sayings*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 210. See also Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 176.

⁹⁹ Maximus, "Women Who Pleaded Before Magistrates For Themselves Or For Others, Book 8.3.1," 211.

¹⁰⁰ Hannah M. Cotton and Jonas C. Greenfield, "Babatha's Property and the Law of Succession in the Babatha Archive," *ZPE* 104 (1994): 211–24. See also Ranon Katzoff, "P. Yadin 21 and Rabbinic Law on Widow's Rights," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 97.4 (Fall 2007): 545–75. See also Philip F. Esler, *Babatha's Orchard: The Yadin Papyri and an Ancient Jewish Family Tale Retold* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017), especially 150-229.

Annette Merz grounds her interpretation on the biblical tradition of widows as vulnerable and needy to show how Luke's widow transgresses social boundaries. Merz argues that the constant scriptural appeals to care for "widows and other underprivileged groups" as well as the "threat of divine retribution" suggest that there was failure on the part of those responsible for upholding the scriptural mandates.¹⁰¹ She goes on to claim that the early hearers of the parable would identify with the widow's situation because they knew widows were not getting the mandated care.

Merz next suggests that Luke's widow is not a powerless and hopeless person, but one who has found ways to make herself visible by transgressing "restrictive codes of conduct for women."¹⁰² As Cotter's study illustrates, it is not necessarily the case that the widow is transgressing anything. There is no law preventing widows from appearing in court; if Hedrick and Bailey are correct, not only could the widow appear in court, she could presume that she was safe there.

Merz supports her claim that the widow was not the vulnerable widow so often seen in the biblical tradition by citing the examples of Tamar (Genesis 38), Ruth, the widow of Tekoa (2 Samuel 14), Judith, and the mother of the seven sons (4 Macc 16:5, 12) to show how each narrative depicts a widow "becoming active as well as enforcing God's will" in order ultimately to get what she wants.¹⁰³ Tamar takes matters into her own hands to force Judah into providing her children; Ruth chooses her own path: it is her choice to accompany Naomi, to work in the fields, to tell Boaz what to do. That she walked from Moab to Bethlehem and then worked on her feet all day in the fields suggests she is physically strong. The widow of Tekoa only pretends to

¹⁰¹ Annette Merz, "How A Woman Who Fought Back and Demanded Her Rights Became An Importunate Widow: The Transformations of a Parable of Jesus," in *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity: Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus*, ed. Tom Holmen (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 60.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰³ Merz, "How A Woman Who Fought Back," 69.

be a mourner to save the life of her son and so, in manipulating David, to have the king recall his son Absalom back to Jerusalem. Judith is the wealthiest woman in her community, and she takes the lead in defending her town of Bethulia against Holofernes and his army. Finally, the Maccabean mother epitomizes the philosophical spirit: she is not pathetic but determined in possessing the “soul of Abraham” in being willing to sacrifice her children and indeed herself.

Reading the parable through models of honor and shame becomes limited in terms of what the interpreter considers “shameful”: the widow’s importuning and lack of respect; the judge’s lack of fear; the initial behavior of the judge or his acquiescing; the widow’s concern for vengeance rather than justice, etc. Appeals to history show women do appear in law courts, so claims that the woman is somehow transgressive by her appearance do not hold. On the other hand, her threat of violence may be the actual transgressive move, and that move the critics who want to read for social justice will underplay. Appeals to biblical tropes falter given the diversity of widow characters.

The majority of the major commentators, as the survey below indicates, keep the parable neatly tucked into Luke’s contextualization. For example, Luke Timothy Johnson identifies the parable’s main character as the unjust judge given Luke’s conclusion that “God’s patience is greater and that God’s response to prayer is faster for his elect.”¹⁰⁴ Yet he also suggests that “readers will too easily see themselves as the widow, subject to oppression and daily retribution, and by losing hope and courage become those who ‘have faith for a time but in a season of testing fall away.’”¹⁰⁵ Thus, the widow’s persistence demonstrates that she is able to withstand

¹⁰⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina 3 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 273.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

continuous rejection. She now demonstrates, as P.T. O'Brien suggests, the Lukan model of the "disciple who stands" in the midst of trial (21:36).¹⁰⁶

Joel Green, also drawing on the parable's narrative context including the eschatological discourse in Luke 17, argues that "Luke's interpretative introduction (Luke 18:1), Jesus' words concerning faith on earth (v. 8), and Luke's characterization of the widow as persistent should aid readers in discerning that the proper disposition for Jesus' followers prior to the eschaton is that of continuous prayer."¹⁰⁷ Green also argues that the widow is the paradigm for both women and men. Like Buttrick, Green does not find Luke promoting that "one ought to pray for the same thing over and over as though repetition could wear God down in order to achieve one's desire."¹⁰⁸ Rather prayer, as Green describes it, is "having confidence in and openness to the benefaction of God."¹⁰⁹

Brad Young argues that the characterization of the judge makes the reader "understand the divine nature by using exaggerated characterizations of action that are unlike God."¹¹⁰ Young adduces the story of Honi the Circle Drawer who prayed to God for rain, drew a circle around himself on the ground, and declared that he would not leave the circle until God granted the prayer request to show that prayer with expectant faith is linked to *chutzpah* and can be expressed as persistence or brazen tenacity.¹¹¹

Klyne Snodgrass maintains that "Luke's concern is not prayer in general, but praying and not becoming weary or giving up with respect to the eschaton, the time when deliverance

¹⁰⁶ P. T. O'Brien, "Prayer in Luke-Acts," *TynBul* 24 (1973): 111–27 (119-120). O'Brien argues that since God knows that people have need of earthly things (Luke 12:30), Luke's purpose for prayer is to encourage people to stand in the midst of trials. He compares Luke to Matthew 6:33 in which there is no admonition to stand before the Son of Man.

¹⁰⁷ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICTN (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 640.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 638-639.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 639.

¹¹⁰ Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 42

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

comes.”¹¹² Thus, “people praying are in a much more advantageous relation to a righteous God who loves and hears his elect.”¹¹³ Snodgrass also argues that the parable “is not about persistence, seeking justice, or badgering God until we get our desires.”¹¹⁴ Rather, the parable functions to reveal the merciful character of God and to encourage Jesus’ followers to remain vigilant for the Parousia. Snodgrass does recognize that without Luke’s contextualization, the parable proper, vv. 2-5, is not eschatological.

Declaring that “the Lukan-style prayer is in the trenches,” F. Scott Spencer recognizes that the widow, “far from being toned-down and kid-gloved, [she] emerges as a vibrant model of a prayer warrior, fighting with God—both in the sense of actively arguing with and allying with God and God’s just cause—with all her might.”¹¹⁵ Spencer locates the parable in the lament tradition, whose focus is on divine justice.¹¹⁶ The move to lament is a helpful one, since to lament, in the biblical tradition, is substantially focused on systemic issues, such as exile or poverty.

This brief survey of historically informed exegetical works yields little in the way of moving from the parable to the actual work of justice, and it shows that few interpreters are willing to challenge stereotypes. Widows remain, for the most part, poor and victimized; the opponent goes unnoticed; little is done with the question of whether the woman wants justice or vengeance; Luke’s contextualization remains the dominant lens.

¹¹² Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 457

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 461.

¹¹⁵ F. Scott Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows: Capable Women of Purpose and Persistence in Luke’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 307.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 297.

Preaching the Parable

By the middle of the 20th century, questions about the relevance of historical criticism flourished. “The emphasis of biblical interpretation centered upon the relevance of the Bible for the modern listener.”¹¹⁷ “A literalistic representation of the text cannot guarantee that it will speak to the modern hearer.”¹¹⁸ Interpreters no longer thought it necessary to confine the interpretation of parables to a particular meaning, time frame, or reconstructed history. Interpreting parables became an engagement of context juxtaposed against the views and experiences of the interpreter.¹¹⁹ Thus, the New Hermeneutic was born with its question of “how might the Bible speak to hearers anew?”¹²⁰ Each generation or community of interpreters discovers meaning in the parables, which speaks to their contexts. Parables are interpreted, for example, via theology, culture, politics, feminist studies, liberation theology, and psychotherapy. Thus, for contemporary commentators, the widow is more than a symbol of prayer; she represents the oppressed, the socially vulnerable, or all people who require God to act on their behalf; she can also represent God. To some extent, by moving away from historical-critical readings, the newer approaches resemble the patristic allegories. Likewise, the judge becomes more than an authority figure; he represents the subjugator or an oppressive power. The watchword in much of these readings was “counter-cultural”: the parables were read as subverting the status quo (a reading appropriate for the genre of parables), and the counter-cultural person was the hero. The culture – America, Western Europe – became the enemy.

Writing in the late 1960s, Clarence Jordan, a popularizer and author of the Cotton Patch version of the Scriptures, had as his goal “stripping away the fancy language, the artificial piety,

¹¹⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, “The New Hermeneutic,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 308.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹¹⁹ Mary Ann Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 55.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 309.

and the barriers of time and distance to put Jesus and his people in the midst of our modern world, living where we live, talking as we talk, working, hurting, praying, bleeding, dying, and conquering alongside the rest of us.”¹²¹ Jordan, telling the parable in a colloquial manner, describes the judge as not believing in God and not giving a hoot about people. His widow says “please, hear my case against so-and-so.”¹²² While his desire was to bring the parable into what was then modern times, Jordan could have done more to show readers how an interpretation of the widow and judge might have been heard during the late 1960s, a time of social transformation that included the Civil Rights movement, the United States-Russian space race, and the Vietnam conflict.

Taking a psychological approach to the parable, Richard Ford outlines several barriers that prevent the widow and judge from understanding each another: the differences in their social worlds,¹²³ differences in communication styles such that the judge misperceives the widow’s tenacity as badgering,¹²⁴ the lack of “outside authority to correct their differences” so that the two figures must rectify the situation on their own,¹²⁵ and the imaginary worlds they have created about each other. This helpful start derails when Ford imposes his own constructed views onto the parable.

For example, he claims “the widow is probably illiterate and clearly lacks political influence.”¹²⁶ The story gives no indication of either her education level or her political clout. The opposite could very well be the case; that she visits the judge with impunity may suggest how smart and politically astute she is. Ford also alleges that the judge’s resistance to the

¹²¹ Clarence Jordan, *The Cotton Patch Version of Luke and Acts: Jesus’ Doings and Happenings* (New York: Association Press, 1969), 7.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²³ Richard Q. Ford, *The Parables of Jesus: Recovering the Art of Listening* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 67.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

widow's demand renders "her progressively more incompetent."¹²⁷ Perhaps the proper scenario is that the judge is incompetent for not doing the job assigned to a magistrate. Whereas Ford suggests that the judge's need to be in control, which he calls self-deception, inhibits his ability to judge appropriately, the parable itself does not mention this need for control. Perhaps his need was more to be left alone.

Ford next seeks to demonstrate how parables speak to modern situations.¹²⁸ In reading the parable in light of debate over climate change, he reads the judge as a fossil fuel executive who has chosen self-sufficiency over community care. Ford maintains that the judge's inability to care for the widow not only is a betrayal of his community, but also is a betrayal of God's covenant with His people. Ford's assessment of the widow is more hermeneutically appealing. He acknowledges that it is not clear what the widow seeks. Yet he then locks her into the place of justice: perhaps she is seeking a "rebalance of the way things should be between the powerful and powerless."¹²⁹ The move to contemporary justice issues is splendid; the allegorical associations are both intriguing and restricting.

The reception of the Parable of the Widow and Judge in Black Church traditions shows how the new hermeneutic becomes instantiated. Published sermons (and my own personal experience) show the focus is on the theme of prayer. Homilists, following Luke's lead, often focus on the widow and either negatively depict or ignore the judge. The widow is the prayerful, faithful, petitioner, and she is also the exemplar for women in the churches. This exemplary role often plays out on the intercessory prayer teams: women are the ones who often lead this ministry. Women pray for the congregation, for church leadership, and for the community in

¹²⁷ Ibid., 68. Ford argues that the "incompetence" is a result of the distortion between the two because of their different social locations. Because the judge has not been a patient listener, the widow is reduced to fewer words and therefore looks to be incompetent.

¹²⁸ Richard Q. Ford, *The Parables of Jesus & The Problems of the World: How Ancient Narratives Comprehend Modern Malaise* (Eugene: Cascade, 2016), especially 121-138.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 134.

which the church sits; they are not, however, encouraged to lead the congregation, appear in the pulpit, or run for office.

Sermons on the parable frequently declare that the widow's success is the result of her continuous prayer¹³⁰ and that Jesus designed the parable to challenge us to pray always.¹³¹ We are to continue asking God for our needs¹³² as well as believe that God will hear and answer prayer.¹³³ These emphases, consistent with Luke's framing, neatly fit into the history of the Black Church's participation in seeking civil rights for African Americans. The Church regarded prayer as providing the strength to fight for racial as well as social equality. If the widow, seen as vulnerable in her time, could continuously pray and so continuously have hope, so could Church members.

Some pastors in the Black Church do develop the theme of prayer: we need to stay with it until we get an answer¹³⁴ even to the point that we should get on God's nerves and pray day and night until we get what we want.¹³⁵ That extended reading is simply bad theology. If God will not forsake the faithful ones (Ps 37:28) and longs to be gracious (Isa 30:18), then there is no need to nag. Rather than helping persons to be confident in their communication with God, these interpretations create a sense of angst. When the answer to prayer is delayed or does not come, supplicants can erroneously think that they were deficient in their actions or prayer. As David Buttrick argues, "we do not need to pray 'all the time' because God is instantly attentive and

¹³⁰ Steven L. Glover, "The Unjust Judge, Change His Mind" at Perfecting Word Deliverance Ministries, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=betLfZ0O1x0>, accessed September 17, 2016.

¹³¹ Kent Price, "The Widow and the Unjust Judge" at Hillview Seventh Day Adventist Church, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYm2FU2AAxM>, accessed September 19, 2016.

¹³² M. L. Graves, "The Persistent Widow" at Revelation of God and Christ Ministries, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb79gUI7St0>, accessed September 19, 2013.

¹³³ L.V. Gibbs, "Hear What the Unjust Judge Saith" at Grace and Truth Prayer Temple, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1EMbbtKsk8>, accessed September 19, 2013.

¹³⁴ J.O. Lawson, "The Unjust Judge" at Holy Light Church of God in Christ, <http://www.texaswesternjurisdiction.org/Media.html>, accessed September 19, 2016.

¹³⁵ Van J. Alexander, "Persistency Paid Off" at Christ Kingdom Church, 2012, <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=2984835184321>, accessed September 17, 2013.

eager for justice.”¹³⁶ The concern for moving from divine eagerness to taking action ourselves, however, sometimes fails to find voice in the sermon.

Homiletical readings of Luke’s parable, like scholarly assessments, depend upon which character the preacher chooses to examine. When the focal character is the widow, most often the preacher presents the widow as an example of a model supplicant; her persistence in prayer allows her to obtain her desires. The judge as the focal character most often is the subjugator, the one refusing to help resolve an unjust situation. There are, however, other aspects of the parable to highlight for congregational hearers, although few actually lead to the work of justice.

John Piper, prominent pastor and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary, views the parable from the Lukan standpoint of persistent prayer. He asserts that the parable is in response to the eschatological dialogue between Jesus and the disciples and that it should be read as a conclusion to the section on the coming of the kingdom (Luke 17:20-37). He argues that the widow is being oppressed unjustly and that she represents readers and hearers—“she is weak, poor, and has no husband to speak on her behalf.”¹³⁷ “Her only source of help is the judge, whereas our only source is God.”¹³⁸ There is no room here, in a theological explication, for community solidarity. The individual is the focus of both prayer and salvation. In the case of the judge, Piper follows Luke in stating that God is not like the unjust judge but is much more kindly disposed to us. Therefore, he concludes, persons should not grow weary in prayer. He says nothing about their engaging the present judicial system. Given the eschatological setting, such political involvement is not necessary.

¹³⁶ Buttrick, *Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide*, 225.

¹³⁷ John Piper, “Always Pray and Do Not Lose Heart,” *Desiring God*, January 9, 1983, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/always-pray-and-do-not-lose-heart>, accessed September 17, 2016.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

David Buttrick, like Piper, also reads the parable through eschatology, but he takes the concern for eschatology in a more liberal way. He suggests that the delay of Jesus' return (the Parousia) was a source of discouragement for the Lukan community; therefore, Luke situated the parable as a teaching on prayer. While Buttrick reads both the widow and judge as stock characters,¹³⁹ as we have seen, the conventions are less tidy when the biblical canon is fully considered and external references are made. Buttrick concludes that people do not need to pray all the time by "banging incessantly on heaven's door; God is instantly attentive and eager for justice."¹⁴⁰ Buttrick concludes his interpretation, helpfully, by suggesting that people should be attentive to those who are oppressed by being eager for justice also. He therefore needs to move out of the parable proper to find a "good news" import. The widow is not in solidarity with anyone, as far as we know.

William H. Morley of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Reidsville, North Carolina veers away from traditional interpretations. He argues, "The parable is not about being persistent in prayer, but the certainty of being heard."¹⁴¹ He asks his congregation to consider with which character they identify in the parable. Morley asks if "they've done all they can to be the just judge, that is, seeking God's love and guidance in making the 'right' choices around their thoughts and actions in how they treat their neighbors and by respecting the dignity of every human being?"¹⁴² He insists that the just judge's work is that of reconciliation. "Reconciliation" is, however, precisely what is not accomplished in the parable. He instead presents "a modern

¹³⁹ Buttrick, *Speaking Parables*, 223.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁴¹ William H. Morley, "The Parable of the Unjust Judge," *Stthomasreidsville.org*, October 21, 2001, <http://www.stthomasreidsville.org/sermons/10212001.htm>, accessed September 19, 2016.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

day parable of the Gospel story in which an elderly woman continues to pray for her atheist neighbor.”¹⁴³

Craig L. Blomberg argues that the parable should be read through the eyes of each character so that hearers may gain one lesson from each. He suggests that the parable has three characters: the widow, judge, and God. Blomberg describes the widow as a “classic victim, a paradigm of helplessness” and the judge as wicked, neither concerned with what the Lord thinks nor how the public views him.¹⁴⁴ He also acknowledges God as the one who responds to the elect who cry day and night.

To ask hearers to read through the lens of each character while describing the widow as a classic victim is to keep in place stereotypes about women and widows. Not all women lived on the fringes of society; nor were they all victims. Although there may be some “classic victims” in the community, everyone is not a classic victim; the term “classic” reinforces the stereotype rather than allows the parable to challenge it. Framing the judge as wicked also limits how the parable might be interpreted even as it threatens to rehash a stereotype: powerful persons do not care about others.

Blomberg goes on to argue that while the parable concerns persevering prayer, prayer should be given towards social justice. His three lessons from the parable include: pray perseveringly with optimism that God desires to grant prayer requests, consider the helpless and the injustice they experience as a larger focus of prayer, and recall that God remains eager to grant prayer requests but has good reasons for his delay.¹⁴⁵ The conclusions do not undermine

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Craig L. Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 171.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 177.

stereotypes, do not exhort people to find justice on their own, and provide little comfort to those for whom the divine delay might mean jail time or starvation or eviction.

David Lose, president of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, acknowledges the complexity and polyvalent nature of the parable. He provides three avenues for preachers as they prepare a sermon on the parable, but he warns that preachers must exercise homiletical, pastoral and contextual judgment in determining a reading for their congregations. Rather than comparing God to the unjust judge, Lose focuses on the *qal v' homer* argument found in Luke's explanation: "if you then who are evil, give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (11:13). Lose suggests that even though God may *seem* like an unjust judge, God's actions are just and God will deliver justice in due time.¹⁴⁶

Regarding the widow, Lose follows the common reading that the widow is seeking justice, but he also recognizes that the judge's fear concerns more than her wearing him out. He explains how translations dilute the meaning of ὑπωπιόζω, which is to give a black eye, and he concludes that "insolent, obnoxious, even intolerable behavior sometimes results in justice."¹⁴⁷ In describing what it might take to receive justice, Lose tacitly communicates that it is alright to be obnoxious or insolent if such behavior is for the cause of justice. Women, however, caught up in the criminal justice system know very well that an attitude to insolence or obnoxious behavior will not likely get them the verdict they want.

Mark Driscoll, former pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, distinguishes between good and bad persistence to get to his point of "holy persistence." He argues that

¹⁴⁶ David Lose, "Commentary of Luke 18:1-8," *Workingpreacher.org*, 2010, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=810, accessed September 17, 2016.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

“persistence isn’t always a good thing; it depends on who or what you are persisting in or for.”¹⁴⁸

Holy persistence is a virtue; it is also a character trait, ability, or endowment that God gives.

Holy persistence is the foundation of good persistence. For Driscoll good persistence is working to have a good marriage, being good parents, or running a successful business. An example of bad persistence is remaining in a marriage where a spouse is abusive.

Rather than identifying with the widow, Driscoll asks his congregation to think of the ways they are like the judge. His argument for this line of questioning is, “We’re a culture of victims....”¹⁴⁹ We love to be victims because it puts us in a position where we have power and people owe us.”¹⁵⁰ He has a point. The problem is that victimization does not grant an individual the moral high ground. To rely on victimization rather than on justice, or to argue that social status rather than the merits of the case should determine the verdict, substitutes politics for ethics. Given what we know of systemic inequities, those who are not victims are also not blameless given that they sometimes perpetuate inequitable systems. Nevertheless, granting a judicial system of “vengeance” will do nothing to create solidarity, equity, or justice; it will just leave stereotypical categories in place.

Womanist and Feminist Readings

Womanist readings of the parable take up the justice issue, but rarely do they move women from the Church into the courthouse. Stephanie Crowder suggests that the “widow represents those who continue to pray to God to resolve an unjust situation.”¹⁵¹ She, as many

¹⁴⁸ Mark Driscoll, “The Parable of the Persistent Widow,” *MarkDriscoll.org*, March 11, 2011, <http://markdriscoll.org/sermons/the-parable-of-the-persistent-widow/>, accessed September 19, 2016.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder. “*The Gospel of Luke*” in *True to Our Native Land*, edited by Brian Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice J. Martin, and Emerson B. Powery (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 178.

commentators, leaves intact the frame rather than recognizes its problem; God does not always act; women should not be restricted to prayer. Crowder also presumes the widow is just.

Doreen McCalla reads the widow in the parable from the perspective of a woman being taken advantage of in the Church by a religious leader.¹⁵² This lens celebrates the widow for her tenacity and it appropriately brings the parable into a present-day setting. Pastoral abuse of congregants happens more than we would like to think. The parable opens us to conversations about this type of clergy negligence. McCalla's reading could be expanded by assessing the community voices that ignore such happenings. The parable is silent as to why the widow needs court action. The widow's community is silent and thus betrays the injunction to make sure widows receive justice (Deut. 27:19). On the other hand, McCalla's reading keeps the parable inside the Church; any systemic problem that allows women to be abused must wait for another sermon.

Renita Weems, like Crowder, regards the widow's complaint as just (I could find no sermons, in the Black Church tradition or otherwise, that regarded the women as even morally ambiguous). She compares the widow to subjugated people and contends that, like the widow, subjugated people always push back and find ways to subvert the system. Weems argues, "The widow's persistence was her way of getting the judge to acknowledge her existence and give her what she needs."¹⁵³ The reading helpfully moves the lesson to women away from "pray always"; it too can do more to interrogate *how* the widow achieves her goal, and it can take the next step and determine whether we regard the woman as just. The widow's threat of violence has particular implications for the African American woman. The widow can be seen as violent. Is her violence an appropriate reading of the parable or a response to the widow's situation?

¹⁵² Doreen McCalla, *Unsung Heroines in the Church: Singing the Praises of Black Women Now!* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 181-208.

¹⁵³ Renita Weems, *Somethingwithin.com* accessed January 23, 2013.

All these readings reinforce the view that women or, particularly, widows, are in a marginalized position. They do not take into account that African American widows, like widows in the Bible or the Roman world, have different forms of access to power. The opening move of seeing the widow as needy or vulnerable can reinforce the very stereotypes the sermons seek to combat. Such readings also resist forms of biblical interpretation that engage Luke with a hermeneutic of suspicion and so refuse to detach the parable from its narrative context.

Feminist commentators, “bringing new perspectives” to and sometimes asking “unorthodox questions” of the biblical text,¹⁵⁴ attempt to explore how to interpret critically in the “interest of women.”¹⁵⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza views the feminist interpretative task as “a tool for becoming conscious of structures of domination that are inscribed in our own [women’s] experience as well as in that of text.”¹⁵⁶ Feminist interpretation is not a one-size-fits-all model; feminist commentators examine the text to make women visible, to unmask dominant structures, and to offer means of liberation.

Approaching the text in a manner similar to that of Hedrick and Cotter, Luise Schottroff argues that resistance in court, like that of the widow, may not have been remarkable in antiquity. She argues that both women and men resisted injustices in court and that the widow is a part of that tradition.¹⁵⁷ Schottroff goes on to propose that “the outcry of women is often found in descriptions of their resistance” and that “persistence is often associated with transgression against socially assigned roles.”¹⁵⁸ She offers as an example of women’s resistance the wise

¹⁵⁴ Beavis, Mary Ann, ed. *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom*. London and New York: Sheffield Academic, 2002, 17.

¹⁵⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 20.

¹⁵⁶ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 3.

¹⁵⁷ Luise Schottroff, *Lydia’s Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 103.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

woman of Tekoa who, disguising herself as a widow, asks David to protect her remaining son (1 Sam. 14:7) from the avenger of blood (14:11). The woman persistently asks David to protect her son. Schottroff opines, “The story assumes quite simply that widows have to take legal action and that the king does not think it unusual that a widow keeps after him so stubbornly.”¹⁵⁹ Luke, too, may have believed that the widow is transgressing a socially assigned role and so reinterprets what she signifies. The story of the widow and judge itself says nothing about prayer: the widow is not praying to the judge; she is making demands. Whether demanding justice is “socially transgressive” will depend on the person doing the demanding and the setting in which the demand occurs.

While commentators easily view the judge as not caring about the widow, not too many regard the judge as sexist. Schottroff argues that rather than fearing the widow will give him a black eye, the judge was being sarcastic. She says, “The judge’s ‘sarcasm’ is the sexist sarcasm about a woman who does not behave as a woman is supposed to; he surmises that she is now capable of anything, even violence...the sarcasm of the judge in Luke 18:1-8 is an expression of sexism and a cynical reversal of that reality in which the people seeking justice are beaten up by the servants of order.”¹⁶⁰ While progressive in her interpretation, Schottroff goes beyond what the story provides. The most that can be said is the judge fears the widow will resort to a physical altercation.

Barbara Reid argues that the widow, rather than the judge, is the God-like figure. She asserts that when one “doggedly resists injustice, faces it, names it, and denounces it, until right is achieved, then one is acting as God does.”¹⁶¹ The “widow as God” raises the status of the widow, and as feminist interpretation does, makes her visible in a new light. The widow is no

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 104.

¹⁶¹ Barbara E. Reid, “A Godly Widow Persistently Pursuing Justice: Luke 18:1-8,” *Biblical Research* 45 (2000): 31.

longer poor and needy, but in a position of power which she deliberately withholds. She, as God, has the ability to compel the judge to change his decision; she moves through tenacity, however, and not through violence. In a similar move, Barbara Scheele connects the widow both to “God, who like the widow, suffers with us in our poverty and doubt”¹⁶² and to Wisdom, who raises her voice and walks in the way of righteousness along the path of justice (Prov 8:1, 20).¹⁶³

Such approaches echo the pre-critical allegorical interpretations, but they provide a feminist spin. These feminist appropriations, while encouraging, are not without problems. They presume the widow’s cause is just; they ignore or downplay the violence; they do not fully interrogate the judge’s motive; they do not consider the widow’s opponent.

Mary Matthews’s feminist reading is a homiletical commentary that draws upon the construct of honor and shame to consider how first-century hearers would have assessed the parable; it also moves to allegory. First, “the widow would have been expected by Jesus’ first-century audiences to be a victim—passive, subordinate to whatever surviving male relatives she had, silent, meek, discreet, rarely stirring out of her home.”¹⁶⁴ One wonders how those widows addressed in the Pastoral Epistles would have responded. Then, for Matthews, the widow represents every Christian, since “Every Christian is to be persistent, to keep badgering unjust authority until it finally gives in, while the judge represents structural injustice.”¹⁶⁵ Her assessment of the judge is that “for Jesus’ audience, this judge was the opposite of what a judge should be: he was not righteous and God-fearing, and he did not care about his own reputation or

¹⁶² Barbara Scheele, “Will She Find Faith on Earth?,” in *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom*, ed. Mary Ann Beavis (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 69.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, Scheele, “Will She Find Faith on Earth?,” 69.

¹⁶⁴ Mary Matthews, “Go Thou and Do Likewise: A Homiletical Commentary,” in *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom*, ed. Mary Ann Beavis (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 49.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

what others thought about him—he was without honour.”¹⁶⁶ Whether he achieves honor must remain an open question.

Carter Shelley argues that the widow is one of the many people whom Jesus identifies as powerless.¹⁶⁷ One of the ways that powerless persons act, according to Shelley, is to nag. “Nagging is what one does when one is powerless, but not voiceless.”¹⁶⁸ The parable, in Shelley’s estimation, encourages the believing community to pray and act. The widow represents prayer and her continuous coming to the judge is the act.¹⁶⁹ “The community is to pray for wisdom, guidance, and persistence and to act through nagging, persisting, and speaking on behalf of those allowed no voice.”¹⁷⁰

The weakness of this interpretation is that while it attempts to put a positive spin on the term “nagging,” the term is too much of a negative stereotype of women. The nagging wife is a trope that impacts real marriages; since the wife nags, the husband ignores her. Rather than interrogating this stereotype, trying to redeem the term “nagging” further attaches women to the stereotype. Nor is nagging a biblical virtue, especially when predicated on women, as the stories of Samson’s first wife as well as of Delilah indicate. As Judg 14:17 states in describing Samson’s Timnite wife, “She wept before him the seven days that their feast lasted; and because she nagged him, on the seventh day he told her. Then she explained the riddle to her people.” The results of this episode are good for no one. Similarly, after Delilah “had nagged [Samson] with her words day after day, and pestered him, he was tired to death” (Judg 16:16). Women’s nagging can be successful, but it can also indicate a danger to men. Women’s nagging could also be redefined as persistence; the difference is in the eye of the reader.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁶⁷ Carter Shelley, “A Widow Without Wiles,” in *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom*, ed. Mary Ann Beavis (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 60-61.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 61.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

Amy-Jill Levine, focusing on stereotypes, acknowledges the complexity of widows by recounting the problematic motives and actions of women found within the biblical widow tradition (Tamar, Abigail, Wise Woman of Tekoa, etc.). She argues that Luke tucks away the widow of the parable within conventional images of poor, dependent, or powerless widows and so undercuts the idea that the widow's actions can be viewed as problematic, and as indicative of strength and cleverness.¹⁷¹ Levine suggests that the widow's time to be persistent coupled with the articulation of her own voice provides clues that she may not be the destitute person that so many other readers find. She points out that readers give widows, in general, the benefit of the doubt and side for Luke's widow, which in the end allows the widow to be read through a stereotype. The widow becomes the model supplicant as well as the justice seeking exemplar.¹⁷² Levine then attempts to reclaim the problems of the parable in terms of judicial power, threat of physical violence, and the unclear distinction between vengeance and justice.

Susan Praeder interprets the parable as instructing a group about persistent prayer. Where she diverges from many commentators is in her critique of assessments that over-rely on Old Testament images. Praeder finds an "overrepresentation of Old Testament portrayals of judges and widows and underrepresentation of 1st century C.E. sources for images of judges and widows."¹⁷³ She acknowledges, "My descriptions of the judge as a corrupt local official and the widow as an unusually persistent and self-sufficient representative of an oppressed group rely on the OT. The first-century C.E. texts required for conducting a complete or representative comparative study are not available to us; either there were no such texts, or they have been lost

¹⁷¹ Amy-Jill Levine, "This Widow Keeps Bothering Me (Luke 18:5)," 124. See also Levine, "The Widow and the Judge," in *Short Stories by Jesus*, 221–45.

¹⁷² Levine, "This Widow Keeps Bothering Me (Luke 18:5)," 133.

¹⁷³ Susan M. Praeder, *The Word in Women's Worlds* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 70.

for centuries.”¹⁷⁴ Praeder concludes that the judge is corrupt but that the “widow departs from the stereotypical image of widows as poor, defenseless women.”¹⁷⁵ She argues, “There is no reason to doubt her view of the case,” while acknowledging that “Jesus doesn’t state whether the widow is right or wrong.”¹⁷⁶ Thus she helpfully opens the possibility of addressing the widow’s ethical stance.

Conclusion

The reception history demonstrates how readings of this parable are often constrained in the midst of the multiple critical readings. The widow is restricted to stereotypes of oppression or low socio-economic status while the judge is also restricted to the person who abuses power. Luke, in the midst of stereotypical images, adduces the narrative to show his understanding of God, and by extension, to show what he thinks of women and their place within the early community. Stereotypes of women as well as people in authority also guide how readers understand the parable. Ignoring or even unaware of the stereotypes in the parable, readers follow suit by mapping on to their reality what they conclude about the widow: she is vulnerable and in need of God’s help against an uncaring judge.

A closer look at women within the Gospel provides another hermeneutical lens for reading the parable. While Luke’s Gospel includes multiple stories about women, these narratives depict women in certain roles within the early community. Uncovering and freeing the women from Luke’s limitations also provides a way for readers to uncover new insight about the widow in the parable. I now turn to examining Luke, women, and widows.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 56, 58.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 56, 60.

Chapter 2

Luke, Women, and Widows

The Gospel of Luke is often called the “Gospel for women” because of the many woman-centered narratives. Elizabeth is pleased that the Lord looked favorably on her with the conception of a child (1:25), while Mary accepts Gabriel’s message from God and says, “Here am I, the servant (i.e., slave) of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word” (1:38). A woman anoints the feet of Jesus (7:36-50); other women support the Jesus movement financially (8:1-3); a woman is a homeowner who welcomes Jesus and his followers (10:38-42), and women are the first to see the empty tomb (24:3). Jane Koppas suggests, “One cannot deal with the ministry of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel without giving careful attention to the dynamic role and value of women in making the Christian message come alive.”¹

Other assessments of Luke’s view of women are less positive: while there are many women-centered stories, Luke’s presentation can be seen to limit women’s agency and voice. According to Barbara Reid, “closer study reveals that women disciples who appear in Luke-Acts do not share the same mission as their male counterparts.”² Men who are disciples “participate in Jesus’ mission by doing what he did: preaching, teaching, healing, exorcising, forgiving, feeding, serving, and enduring conflicts and persecution”³ whereas “Women in Luke-Acts do not imitate Jesus’ mission of preaching, teaching, healing, exorcising, forgiving, feeding, or praying.”⁴ Jane Schaberg takes a more extreme view: concerning women, “The Gospel of Luke is an extremely dangerous text, perhaps the most dangerous in the Bible.”⁵

¹ Jane Koppas, “Jesus and Women: Luke’s Gospel,” *ThTo* 43.2 (1986): 192-202 (192).

² Barbara E. Reid, “Luke: The Gospel for Women?,” *CurTM* 21.6 (November 1994): 405-414 (406).

³ *Ibid.*, 407.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁵ Jane D. Schaberg and Sharon H. Ringe, “The Gospel of Luke,” 493.

While Luke depicts women as followers of Jesus who also receive his teaching and are the beneficiaries of his healing, they are “excluded from the power center of the movement and from significant responsibilities.”⁶ Rather, women are models of prayer who are “quiet, grateful women supportive of male leadership and forgoing the prophetic ministry.”⁷ Schaberg is concerned that these depictions entice readers to accept Luke’s presentation of women’s limited roles as divinely ordained.⁸ Mary Rose D’Angelo argues that Luke intentionally “increased the number of stories about women” to show that women also play a role within the early community.⁹ But quantity of reference is not the same thing as quality of leadership. Although today’s readers may rejoice in Luke’s numerous stories about women, in light of the Greco-Roman world, the stories serve the “purpose of edification as well as control.”¹⁰ Luke must show the contribution of women in the early movement and in the churches the Third Gospel addresses, but in both settings, women must appear fully compliant with the strictures of the Roman world. The problem, as D’Angelo views it, is that Luke needs to protect his community from Roman critique. While women are to be catechized, “an expanded role for women must not cause the community to be seen as practitioners of un-Roman activities.”¹¹ In Luke’s context, women “are not heard, not necessarily seen, and by no means talked about.”¹² D’Angelo concludes that while Luke appears to provide agency for women, he imitates Roman society by limiting women’s participation in the public sphere and so in ecclesial leadership.¹³

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View,” *JBL* 109.3 (1990): 441-461 (442)

¹⁰ Ibid., 443.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 451.

¹³ Ibid., 453.

“Luke is most careful to assure the reader that the women (and men) who welcome the Christian mission are respectable.”¹⁴

Although Luke offers more stories about women than do the other Gospels, Luke also lacks the two major pericopae present in the other Gospels concerning women’s agency. Gone is the Canaanite or Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30) who convinces Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter; absent are Herodias and her daughter and Herodias’s prompt to Herod Antipas to execute John the Baptist (Matt 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; contrast Luke 9:7-9). Absent as well, although less likely known to Luke, are both the Samaritan woman of John 4, who becomes the first successful evangelist, and the aggressive Martha who publicly challenges Jesus regarding his failure to aid her brother Lazarus (John 11:21). These accounts would compromise Luke’s pattern of restricting women to reactive rather than proactive roles. More, these women do what women should not: they violate Luke’s “world divided by gender in which men and women keep to their own sphere of life.”¹⁵ Both the Canaanite or Syro-Phoenician woman and Herodias invade masculine space to secure their desires. The Canaanite woman invades Jesus’ private time on the border of Tyre and Sidon (Matt 15:21), and the Syro-Phoenician woman barges into a house where Jesus was hiding (Mark 7:24). Herodias gets the best of Herod through manipulation: he must keep his word to serve John the Baptist’s head on a platter (Matt 14:9; Mark 6:26). The Samaritan woman proclaims the Gospel: “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” (John 4.29); for John’s Gospel, Martha takes Peter’s place as making the correct Christological claim: “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world” (John

¹⁴ Ibid., 451.

¹⁵ Karlsen Seim, *Double Message*, 24.

11:27). Luke has none of this: the Samaritans, minus any explicit mention of women are simply models of fidelity; Martha is restricted to her home and silenced for speaking out (Lk 10:38-42).

In Luke's orderly account, the agency and voice of women characters are reduced; women serve Jesus and the Church and contribute to its financial stability; women receive Jesus' teaching and healing and respond in gratitude, but they are not themselves commissioned as are the Twelve. Luke may well retell stories of women's agency in order to restrict their public roles, as we see with the distinct accounts of the woman who anoints Jesus (Luke 7:36-50 compared to Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). And women in the parables – the woman who hides yeast in dough, the woman who searches for her and finds her lost coin; the widow who enters the public court – find themselves constrained by Luke's narrative framing.

Marinella Perroni rightly says, "Investigating women in Luke's works has to do with the study of Luke, not the study of women."¹⁶ That is, Luke's presentations do not tell us primarily about women's roles in antiquity; they tell us about what Luke thinks of gender.

Luke's presentation of widows also belies the thought that Luke is a friend to women. Widows in the Third Gospel are always either in service to others or in need for themselves. If they are not praying for someone or something, they are losing children or their homes. They spend their lives in prayer and fasting (Anna, 2:37), support prophets (the widow of Zarepath, 4:26), serve as test cases regarding resurrection (20:28) and scribal venality (20:47), and contribute to religious institutions (21:2-3), but they do not lead. Rather, they are either behind-the-scenes caretakers or they are the objects of the care of others.

In this chapter, I examine Luke's presentation of women and widows to show that although Luke provides many stories about women, Luke deliberately limits their roles. Luke's

¹⁶ Marinella Peronni, "Disciples, Not Apostles: Luke's Double Message," in *Gospels: Narrative and History*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, vol. 2.1, *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopedia of Exegesis and Cultural History* (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 176.

“orderly account” (1:1) reinforces for the early community and so for readers today gender-specific roles. Women are to support but not to lead; they are to take direction rather than to direct; their role is dedicated to prayer and piety and not to pedagogy or protest.

I begin with the infancy narratives and focus upon the presentation of Elizabeth and Mary. Both Elizabeth and Mary express themselves; they have a voice. Yet three factors mitigate against regarding their voices as models for other women. First, the pair are restricted to the time before the Church. Second, they speak in response to miracles directly involving their bodies: their rejoicing is related to their conceiving special sons. To limit women to processes of biology turns women into wombs and thereby denies their contributions as patrons, moral exemplars, and even challenges to convention. Third, the infancy accounts may well be additions to the original Gospel, designed not to promote women, but to counter incipient Marcionism that denied the value of both the “Old Testament” and the flesh.

Following the naming of her son, Elizabeth disappears from the narrative. Mary becomes the first of those who do not understand her son (2:48-50), and by Acts 1:14, she is safely tucked away as yet another praying woman: “All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.”

I then assess Luke’s depiction of women who are healed by Jesus. Some respond to their healing by serving the Twelve (8:2-3), and thus rather than proclaim political manifestos, as does Mary the mother of Jesus, they remain in traditional, gender-determined roles. As Ben Witherington indicates, “Being a disciple of Jesus neither lead the women to abandon traditional roles nor caused Jesus to see it as inconsistent with the high calling of discipleship.”¹⁷ Other recipients of Jesus’ healing— the hemorrhaging woman (8:47), the bent-over woman (13:12)—serve to demonstrate Jesus’ abilities, not their own.

¹⁷ Witherington, “On the Road with Mary Magdalene,” 138.

In conjunction with the evaluation of the healed women in Luke 8:2-3, I look at Luke's use of *διακονία* (to serve) and show how service for women takes on different connotations than for men, since service in Luke's Gospel appears to be gender determined and then, eventually, subordinated to preaching and teaching. The Twelve do not think serving people, indeed, serving *widows*, should interrupt their service of the word (Acts 6:2), and even the seven appointed to serve at table (Acts 6:3-6) are never shown doing so.

I also examine Luke's presentation of women through the lens of Luke's concern of wealth and possessions. Consistent with 1 Tim 6:10, which says, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil," Luke does not count wealth as evil. "Luke's primary concern is not wealth itself, but the way wealth is obtained and employed."¹⁸ Women dedicate their resources for the benefit of ancient prophets, Jesus, and Jesus' (male) representatives (Luke 4:25; 8:1-3; 10:38-42; 21:2-3; Acts 16:15; etc.). Although women "of high standing" (Acts 17:12) join the movement, they play no explicit role. Jesus then corrects women's words (10:38-42; 11:27). Although the women correctly report their experiences at the tomb (24:1-11; 24:22-24), their witness is marginalized: they do not have a direct resurrection appearance (contrast Matt 28:9-10; John 20:1-18). Their witness is also marginalized by the account of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus rebukes the disciples *not* for their lack of belief in the women's testimony, but for their being "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared" (24:25); he then gives them, but not the women, a Bible study lesson (24:27). Upon returning to Jerusalem, the proclamation is that Jesus appeared, not to the women, but to Simon (24:34). At the end of the Gospel, at the final resurrection appearance, the women are not (explicitly) present.

¹⁸ Alan P. Sherouse, "The One Percent and the Gospel of Luke," *RevExp* 110.2 (Spr 2013): 285-293 (285).

My final assessment in this chapter is a brief discussion of Luke's presentation of widows in light of other biblical accounts of widows. Luke relies on the trope of the "helpless" widow who, along with the poor, the orphan, and the stranger, is the object of divine care and therefore to be the object of the community's care as well. However, not all biblical widows are poor or helpless; from Tamar to Bathsheba to the widow of Zarephath to Judith to the Maccabean mother, widows in the biblical tradition are variously active agents, public teachers, and political operatives. They are not mono-dimensional, despite Luke's attempt to limit their roles. It is within this broader tradition of biblical widows that I will then locate the widow of Jesus' parable, and thereby release her from the constraints of the Third Gospel.

The Infancy Narratives

Luke's presentation of women begins with Elizabeth, wife of Zechariah and mother to John the Baptist. In an allusion to Israel's Scriptures, Luke adduces the barren-woman type scene including the "initial barrenness of the wife, the divine promise of conception, and the birth of a son."¹⁹ The scene frequently begins with the plea of the husband to God, or by the prayer of the mother; divine promise can be announced to the father or mother through direct address or by emissary such as an angel or priest. God tells Abraham, "Your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac" (Gen 17:19); Isaac "prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived" (Gen 25:21); Hannah prays, "O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but give your servant a male child..." (1 Sam 1:10). Hannah's prayer is answered: "In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She

¹⁹ Esther Fuchs, "The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 151–66 (152). See also Robert Alter, "How Convention Helps Us Read: The Case of the Bible's Annunciation Type-Scene," *Prooftexts* 3.2 (May 1983): 115–30.

named him Samuel, for she said, “I have asked him of the Lord” (1:20). Although the type scene implies that YHWH is “the sole proprietor and master of human life,”²⁰ and although nothing in the biblical text suggests that the infertile women of Israel (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, the wife of Manoah, Hannah, the great woman of Shunem) are being punished for sin,²¹ it also suggests that the barren woman is deficient.

Only in Luke is this deficiency identified as shameful. Elizabeth is the aging infertile woman (1:7); an angel announces to Zechariah the birth of a son who “will be great in the sight of the Lord” (1:13-15) and tells Zechariah to name his son John (1:13). After becoming pregnant, Elizabeth says, “This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people” (Luke 1:25).

Barrenness is the disgrace that cancels what ancient standards regarded as a woman’s main function.²² However, once she becomes pregnant, Elizabeth secludes herself for five months. Commentators remain baffled by this otherwise unknown practice. Rick Strelan suggests rather than understanding Elizabeth as hiding her pregnancy, readers should view Elizabeth as “covering her face with a veil for five months to honor the mercy of God shown to her.”²³ Francois Bovon suggests, “Childlessness was, in that time, the fault of the woman.”²⁴ Therefore, “Perhaps she stayed home because of her disgrace (her barrenness) and now lingers there until people can see that she is pregnant.”²⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer argues, “The seclusion is not to be explained psychologically as the result of some modesty...rather, the five-month

²⁰ Ibid., 152.

²¹ See Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden, *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 135.

²² Schaberg and Ringe, “Gospel of Luke,” 502.

²³ Rick Strelan, “Elizabeth, Are You Hiding?,” *Neotestamentica* 37.1 (2003): 85–93. Strelan argues that while *περιέκρυβεν* is a hapex legomenon in the New Testament, outside of the New Testament, though still rare, *περικρύβω* is best understood as to cover rather than to hide.

²⁴ Francois Bovon, *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible: Luke 1*, ed. Christine M. Thomas, trans. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 40.

²⁵ Ibid.

seclusion is a preparation for the sign to be given to Mary” in response to her question to Gabriel “how can this be, since I am a virgin?” (1:35). Robert Tannehill states that Elizabeth is in seclusion so that her “pregnancy does not become public knowledge.”²⁶ Raymond Brown argues that her “seclusion is a literary device to prepare for the sign to be revealed to Mary in 1:36” when Gabriel says, “And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son.”²⁷ Similarly, I. Howard Marshall says, “Since Luke wished to ensure that the revelation of the pregnancy was first made to Mary six months later, the delay is probably a literary device.”²⁸

Darrell Bock says, “To put the matter simply, Elizabeth withdrew and Luke does not tell us why” and Joel Green agrees, “Elizabeth’s five month seclusion remains a mystery.”²⁹ Regardless of the rationale, the seclusion does have the narrative effect of removing Elizabeth from any public event. The first action taken by a woman in the Gospel is to speak about disgrace and to seclude herself. If Luke presents the seclusion as a literary device to enable Mary to receive the news from the angel, then the good news for women is decreased: Elizabeth’s silent seclusion is for Mary’s benefit. One possible feminist take-away from that scenario is that Luke arranges for the needs of one woman to silence another.

The Gospel foregrounds the male, public role. “A male, Zechariah, receives the promise of a son. The man will name the child. The father will experience joy and gladness and many will rejoice with him. The male child will be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb. He will

²⁶ Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 47.

²⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 282.

²⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *The New International Greek Commentary: A Commentary On Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 63.

²⁹ Darrell Bock, *Luke: Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 98. See also Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 81.

turn many sons of Israel to God, and in the spirit of the male prophet Elijah turn the hearts of fathers to the children.”³⁰

Female commentators take a slightly different stance toward Elizabeth and her seclusion than that of their male colleagues. Loretta Dornisch highlights Luke’s presentation of Elizabeth as “not subordinated” to Zechariah.³¹ Elizabeth, like Zechariah, is righteous, but she receives God intervening on her behalf while Zechariah, encountering an angel, was “terrified and overwhelmed with fear” (1:12). Elizabeth is also perceptive; she recognizes Mary as the “mother of my Lord” (1:43) while Zechariah is “full of disclaimers and resistances.”³² He demonstrates unbelief by asking Gabriel “how will I know that this is so?” Elizabeth is thus more than an avenue to get to John the Baptist and Jesus; she “articulates that God is equally concerned to show graciousness to her” as God is concerned about honoring Zechariah with offspring.³³

Although Barbara Reid follows the argument that Elizabeth’s seclusion indicates that the “news of her conception will be a sign given by Gabriel,” she also suggests Elizabeth’s seclusion is a “time of contemplation.”³⁴ Elizabeth “sees God’s hand in the new life she bears and in the lifting of her public disgrace.”³⁵ Her deliverance from disgrace is reminiscent of the “God who delivers oppressed people from their plight and who rejoices in their liberation.”³⁶ Elizabeth declares the conception is what “the Lord has done for her” (1:25) rather than what the Lord has

³⁰ Joseph Vlcek Kozar, “Reading the Opening Chapter of Luke From A Feminist Perspective,” in *Escaping Eden: New Feminist Perspectives on the Bible*, ed. Harold C. Washington, Susan Lochrie Graham, and Pamela Thimmes (Washington Square: New York University Press, 1999), 57.

³¹ Loretta Dornisch, *A Woman Reads the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 16.

³² *Ibid.*, 15.

³³ Barbara E. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part: Women in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 63.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

done for Zechariah.³⁷ Reid suggests, “One might expect that in her [Elizabeth’s] culture the conception of John would be seen as what God is doing for Zechariah, or for God’s people.”³⁸ Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and pronounces a blessing upon Mary (1:42) while Zechariah, the one who should be pronouncing blessings, cannot speak. Reid’s readings are plausible, and indeed inspirational. They employ a hermeneutics of imagination to fill in what Luke does not state. Elizabeth may well be contemplative, but Luke does not record her contemplation. Elizabeth may well stand in the place of redeemed Israel, but she does so “in seclusion.” She may well carve out time to herself and thereby show her independence and spiritual depth. Yet all Luke mentions is “seclusion” and “disgrace.”

At John’s circumcision, Elizabeth does make a public appearance. Neighbors and relatives sought to name the baby after Zechariah (1:59), although the angel had told Zechariah that the child was to be named “John” (1:13). Elizabeth was not privy to the angel’s revelation, and Luke does not record the mute Zechariah providing her the details of his encounter. Yet Elizabeth says, “No, he is to be called John” (1:60). Reid argues, Elizabeth’s “speaking out at John’s naming with authority, daring, and boldness” is “taking up a stance that is more properly male, by the mores of her day.”³⁹ Reid is correct, although Luke immediately contains this boldness and authority by having the relatives and neighbors first reminding Elizabeth that she has no relatives named John (1:61) and then “motioning to his [baby’s] father to find out what name he wanted to give him” (1:62). Like the women who witnessed the angelophany and the empty tomb, Elizabeth – although speaking the truth – is not heeded. It could be said that for Luke, whatever women proclaim has to be affirmed by men in order to receive community

³⁷ Ibid., 63.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

acceptance. The naming is settled only when Zechariah affirms Elizabeth's demand that he is to be called John by writing on a tablet, "His name is John" (1:63).⁴⁰

Elizabeth does make the Gospel's first Christological confession and the only one by a woman when she identifies Mary as "the mother of my Lord" (1:43). Though the Holy Spirit prompts Elizabeth's confession, Luke does not explicitly recognize it as prophecy; rather, Luke limits women's prophetic roles.⁴¹ Prophecy is public, and Luke seeks to align with the "Roman imperial conviction that the political and public world of men is safeguarded by limiting the public voice of women."⁴² Even though the "Holy Spirit is poured out over all flesh expressing itself in the gift of prophecy, so that women speak prophetically just as well as men,"⁴³ Luke is not a fan of women speaking in public. Luke knows of female public "prophets" such as the slave girl who prophesied (Acts 16:17),⁴⁴ but although the slave speaks the truth, Luke silences her by depicting Paul as casting out her spirit of divination. In the Gospel, however, Luke celebrates a man doing the work of a disciple by saying, "Whoever is not against you is for you" (Lk. 9:50). Men in the public sphere, if they follow the concerns of Jesus even while not members of the movement, are affirmed; prophetic women in public, even if they speak the truth, are silenced. Elizabeth anticipates other women whose publicly spoken words must be corrected (11:27-28) or verified by males (24:10-12). Luke presents women as integral parts of the early community, but they must be subordinated to their male counterparts.

Luke's infancy narrative moves from Elizabeth's conception of John the Baptist to Mary's conception and the birth of Jesus. Luke also restricts Mary's role. Never identifying Mary as a disciple (the only explicitly named female disciple is Tabitha of Acts 9; along with

⁴⁰ James L. Boyce, "For You Today A Savior: The Lukan Infancy Narrative," *Word & World* 27.4 (Fall 2007): 374.

⁴¹ D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View," 453.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 450. See also David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, SBLMS 26 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 81-95.

⁴³ Seim, *Double Message*, 164.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

numerous references to “the disciples,” Luke explicitly names as disciples James and John [9:54]), Luke depicts Mary as a slave to God. She affirms Gabriel’s annunciation: “Here am I, the slave (δούλη) of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (1:38). Rather than using the term δίακονος, “servant” (the term does not appear in Luke-Acts, but see Matt 20:26; 22:13; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:45; John 2:5, 9; 12:26); Paul uses this term to describe Phoebe in Rom 16:1), Luke uses δούλη, “slave.” Mary repeats this self-identification in the Magnificat when she proclaims, “he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his slave” (δούλης, 1:48). Conversely, Luke calls the male disciples neither servants nor slaves; they are disciples, apostles, and catchers (ζωγρῶν) of men (5:10). Only Simeon speaks of himself as a slave (2:29). Although Luke uses the term δούλος frequently, especially in the parables, it does not mark the male followers directly. In the Bible, only free people call themselves slaves of God, with the term being applied especially to Israel (Lev 25:25) and Moses (e.g., Josh 1:3, 15; Neh 10:29 cf. Heb 3:5) and substantially adopted in the Pauline literature (e.g., Rom 7:25; Eph 6:6). The parables are replete with slave language, and the slaves there are often models for appropriate behavior (e.g., 23:37, 43; 14:22-23; 17:10; 19:13-17; 20:10-11), but it appears that Luke does not want the Church leaders associated with this term. Even in Acts, the term appears only in the quote from Joel in 2:18, in the proclamation of the silenced slave girl in 16:17, and once, in a positive reference to the apostles, in 4:29.

Some Christians conceive their relationship to God as that of a slave to a master,⁴⁵ and I find that many of my students at American Baptist College are ready to state that they are “slaves to God.” I understand this usage. To speak of being a slave to God puts one in the category of Moses and Jesus; it states that one only has God as Master and therefore there is no human

⁴⁵ See Alec Hill, “The Most Troubling Parable: Why Does Jesus Say We are Like Slaves?” *Christianity Today* 58.6 (2014): 76-79.

master to enslave. However, for others aware of the horrors of slavery, and in my context especially, who are aware of the enslavement of Africans and the effects of that slavery two centuries later, the metaphor is untenable. Elizabeth A. Johnson, who is not African American, writes, “the master-slave relationship” is “no longer suitable as metaphor for relationship to God, certainly not in feminist theological understanding...Slavery is an unjust, sinful situation. It makes people into objects owned by others, denigrating their dignity as human persons. In the case of slave women, their masters have the right to not only their labor, but to their bodies them into tools of production and reproduction at the master’s wish. In such circumstances the Spirit groans with the cries of the oppressed, prompting persons not to obey but to resist, using all their wiles.”⁴⁶ Therefore, many persons choose to use the translation “servant” rather than “slave.” I, however, choose to use the literal translation “slave,” both to make my students aware of the context in which the Bible emerged and to remind them that their own history matters. To erase the repugnant term “slave” is to erase the opportunity to encourage persons to think about how they deploy the biblical text.

Although Mary agrees to cooperate with the plan Gabriel outlined, she, as F. Scott Spenser argues, is “not entirely compliant and passive in response to Gabriel’s announcement.”⁴⁷ Mary ponders Gabriel’s words; she took the time to think about what was presented to her. Barbara Reid enhances Mary’s agency by noting, “while many [readers] envision the annunciation scene as wrapped in an aura of joy and delight, there is an undercurrent of terror, upheaval, and scandal in the story.”⁴⁸ The details scream potential scandal! Mary is a virgin (παρθένος) engaged to Joseph (1:27). Gabriel tells her she will conceive and bear a son by the

⁴⁶ See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 55. I thank Barbara Reid for calling Johnson’s text to my attention.

⁴⁷ Spenser, *Salty Wives*, 58.

⁴⁸ Barbara E. Reid, “Prophetic Voices of Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna in Luke 1-2,” in *New Perspectives on the Nativity*, ed. Jeremy Corley (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 39.

Holy Spirit, which is to “come upon” and “overshadow” her (1:35). Yet no scandal appears; Luke has no notice of Joseph’s concern regarding Mary’s pregnancy (contrast Matt 1:19). Luke’s Mary is less concerned with public response than with biological details. There will be no scandal regarding women in Luke’s text.

Nor are Mary’s parents in evidence, which creates a contrast to Elizabeth. Luke observes that Elizabeth is a righteous daughter of Aaron (1:5-6). In biblical narratives genealogies provide identity and pedigree.⁴⁹ Concerning the genealogies in 1 Chronicles, Antje Labahn notes, “These references construe women as fulfilling a variety of roles in society, and characterize and identify them in various ways.”⁵⁰ For Luke, the notice of Elizabeth’s Aaronic descent serves to affirm the Baptist’s priestly pedigree.

Despite lacking a genealogy (some early manuscripts accredit the Lukan genealogy to Mary, in order to eliminate contradictions with Matthew’s version), Mary emerges as theologically superior to Elizabeth; she is the “favored one” and the “Lord is with her” (1:28). Todd Klutz argues, “One of Luke’s primary aims in portraying Mary and her mode of conception as virginal was probably to accentuate Jesus’s superiority to John. John’s birth was not unlike several other well-known births in which the God of Israel had intervened; but conception by a virgin is an altogether different story.”⁵¹ Elizabeth acknowledges Mary’s superiority: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me” (1:42-43)? Her affirmation, done in the privacy of the home, is correct; it is also limited. Elizabeth will never see Jesus himself. Like the women

⁴⁹ Yigal Levin, “Understanding Biblical Genealogies,” *Currents in Research* 9 (2001): 16. Genealogies appear in Gen 4:17-22; 5:1-32; 11:10-24, 25:1-4, 1 Chron 1-9; Matt 1:1-17; and Luke 3:23-38.

⁵⁰ Antje Labahn, “Observations on Women in the Genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9,” *Biblica* 84.4 (2003): 457.

⁵¹ Todd Klutz, “The Value of Being Virginal: Mary and Anna in the Lukan Infancy Prologue,” in *The Birth of Jesus: Biblical and Theological Reflections*, ed. George J. Brooke (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 84-85.

at the tomb, her connection to her Lord is secondary. Jesus does not appear to her, and he does not appear to the women at the tomb.

In response to the angel's announcement of both pregnancies, Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth. She acknowledges Elizabeth's greeting with her "Magnificat" (1:46-55), a manifesto of God's acts of liberation. The hymn can be read as Mary's expression of both personal and national liberation; it can also be seen as the most Luke will accord women: their role is to praise God. Mary's self-acknowledged "slave" status (1:48) eventually recedes into a masculinized focus: on "his servant Israel" (Ἰσραήλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, 1:54) and the promise he [God] made to our fathers (πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν), to Abraham and to his seed forever" (τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, 1:55). Mary is a model of faithfulness, expressed with good biblical knowledge, in hymnic form, but to another woman, in the privacy of a home.

The depictions of both Elizabeth and Mary, although limited, nevertheless present women with agency and independence. Therefore, they can be seen as diverging from Luke's depiction of women in the Gospel's later chapters and in Acts. Raymond Brown argues that the "Gospels developed backwards" as "those in the early community wanted to know more about Jesus' earlier life: his family, his ancestors, his birthplace"⁵² and that the infancy narratives derived from "a Judaism skeptical about a Messiah who came from Galilee."⁵³ Extending this view, some scholars regard the infancy materials—with their "Old Testament" allusions and motifs, affirmation of the God of Abraham, stress on the physicality of pregnancy, birth, and circumcision, and appreciation for the Temple — serve as an anti-Marcionite prologue.⁵⁴

Marcion's own canon contained the Gospel of Luke, but it begins with a conflation of Luke 3:1a

⁵² Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 28.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 25-27.

and 4:31: “In the fifteenth year of the rule of Tiberius Caesar in the times of Pilate, Jesus Christ came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and he was teaching them in the synagogue.”⁵⁵

Marcion thus argues, in effect, “the God of Jesus had been totally unknown before the fifteenth year of Tiberius” to conclude that “there could be no connection between Jesus and the Hebrew Scriptures.”⁵⁶ If the infancy materials are additions to Luke’s Gospel, then readers may wish to delete Mary and Elizabeth from the assessment of Luke’s construction of gender roles.⁵⁷

Conversely, I find that the depiction is in fact relatively consistent with what follows: women speak, but in private; their role is to praise God and to witness with their bodies to God’s gracious acts, but they are not prophets, teachers, or leaders. Their words are true, but they nevertheless must be sanctioned by men.

Luke, Women, and Healing

Women and men in the Gospel of Luke both are beneficiaries of Jesus’s healings. Their responses are gendered. Peter’s mother-in-law (4:38-39) and the women who traveled with Jesus (8:1-3) respond to their healings by serving others, mainly men. The hemorrhaging woman (8:43-48) announces “in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed,” but we do not hear her voice. Jesus dismisses her with the epithet “daughter,” which is both ironic given the women’s (likely vaginal or uterine⁵⁸) hemorrhages and potentially infantilizing. Jairus’s daughter (8:40-56) and the bent-over woman (13:10-17) do not

⁵⁵ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Barbara E. Reid, “The Gospel of Luke: Friend or Foe of Women Proclaimers of the Word?,” *CBQ* 78.1 (2016): 1–23, suggests that the Infancy Narratives should be read with 23:49-24:12, where the women find the empty tomb and announce it to the other disciples. She argues that “strong verbal and thematic links,” connect these women as “faithful disciples.”

⁵⁸ See Amy-Jill Levine, “Discharging Responsibility: Matthean Jesus, Biblical Law, and Hemorrhaging Woman,” in *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 1 (T & T Clark, 2001), 70–87.

speak. Simon Peter's mother-in-law, healed by Jesus, immediately gets up and serves (διηκόνει) the people (αὐτοῖς, the reference to this plural pronoun is not clear) in Peter's home (4:38-39). Luke redacts Mark's version in order both to heighten Jesus' miraculous power and to decrease the connection between healer and beneficiary. Mark indicates Peter's mother-in-law has a fever (Mark 1:30) and that Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up, after which the fever left her (1:31). According to Luke, the mother-in-law has a high fever (πυρετῶ μεγάλῳ 4:38) and Jesus stands over her and rebukes the fever (4:39), but he does not touch her.

Luke's narrative demonstrates that women had a place in the Jesus movement, but their place is limited by gender. Joanna Dewey notes that Peter's mother-in-law "is healed in a private home, the proper sphere for women" (Mark 1:29-31).⁵⁹ Moreover, "this healing of a woman in private balances the preceding healing of a man in public" (Mark 1:21-28).⁶⁰ Jesus while in Capernaum had healed a man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue. Although Elizabeth Struthers Malbon argues, "God's power for wholeness knows no gender boundaries,"⁶¹ responses to this power do know these boundaries. Mark has Jesus entering the home with Simon, Andrew, James, and John (Mark 1:29). Both Matthew and Luke have Jesus entering Peter's home without noting who else, besides the sick mother-in-law, was present (Matt 8:14; Luke 4:38). Matthew says the mother-in-law served Jesus (διηκόνει αὐτῷ, Matt 1:14), while Mark and Luke says she served them (διηκόνει αὐτοῖς, Mark 1:31; Luke 4:39).

In all these cases, the woman's service is gender-coded. Marla Selvidge argues that for the Gospel of Mark, "δῖακονέω is never used of the Twelve and is only employed in a context

⁵⁹ Joanna Dewey, "The Gospel of Mark," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza with the assistance of Ann Brock and Shelly Matthews, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 477.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Gospel of Mark," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 481.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 481.

with women and Jesus (other than angels).⁶² A similar case can be made for Luke. The Third Gospel uses διακονέω eight times (8:3; 10:40; 12:37; 17:8; 22:26-27), and the term appears twice in Acts (6:2; 19:22). Luke applies διακονέω to Peter’s mother-in-law (4:39), the women from Galilee whom Jesus healed (διηκόνουν 8:3), and to Mary, whose service Martha seeks (διακονεῖν 10:40). To this point, the term is not predicated of men. Its next appearances are in parables and relate to slaves (διακονήσει, 12:37; διακόνει, 17:8). Only in Luke 22:26-27 does Jesus exhort the disciples to “be like one who serves.” At this point, however, the disciples have many other roles not accorded (explicitly) to women, such as evangelizing, curing the sick, and casting out demons (10:1-17). Acts 6:1-6 details how the Twelve did not think it was necessary that they should serve (διακονεῖν, 6:2) the community’s widows while in Acts 19:22, Paul sends Timothy and Erastus to serve (διακονούντων) in Macedonia.

E. Jane Via suggests that Luke’s use of διακονέω falls into two categories: διακονέω as roles for women or models of discipleship.⁶³ Luke’s message is that women and slaves, like Jesus, exist for the service to others. Other men besides Jesus serve in light of discipleship: they take the lead in bringing people into the movement.

Along with her serving in response to the healing, Peter’s mother-in-law sets up a second trope: Jesus verbally rebukes the fever in “language reminiscent of exorcisms.”⁶⁴ Luke then reinforces the connection of exorcism and women with the notice that Mary Magdalene is exorcised of seven demons and then she and other women serve (διηκόνουν; 8:2-3) Jesus and his disciples. Although Mary Magdalene appears in all four Gospels, only Luke depicts her as having suffered demonic possession. Carmen Bernabé Ubieta states that “even if these women

⁶² Marla Selvidge, “‘And Those Who Followed Feared’ (Mark 10:32),” *CBQ* 45.3 (1983): 396-400 (398).

⁶³ E. Jane Via, “Women, the Discipleship of Service, and the Early Christian Ritual Meal in the Gospel of Luke,” *Saint Luke’s Journal of Theology* 29.1 (December 1985): 37-60 (38).

⁶⁴ W. Barnes Tatum, “Did Jesus Heal Simon’s Mother-in-Law of a Fever?,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27.4 (Winter 1994): 148–58 (154).

did not preach the good news with words, they made their new existence, their healed bodies, evident to everybody just by their presence in Jesus' company."⁶⁵ The result – the proclamation of Jesus as Lord – may be the same, but the means of that proclamation are distinct. Like Mary and Elizabeth, the women proclaim Jesus more because of what was done to their bodies, and less because of their words.

The bent-over woman (Luke 13:10-13) who is healed in the synagogue on a Sabbath praises God after Jesus says to her, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment" and she is able to stand up straight (13:12-13). Like the hemorrhaging woman, her exact words go unrecorded.

Unlike the hemorrhaging woman (8:43-48) who seeks Jesus for healing (also Mark 7:24-30; Matt 15:21-28), Jesus initiates the healing of the bent-over woman. The synagogue leader accuses him of doing work on the Sabbath. Jesus, defending his right to heal on the Sabbath, compares the woman to an animal. He responds, "does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water?" (13:15). He then relates the woman's sickness to the work of Satan (16:16) and so locates the woman in the same context as Peter's mother-in-law and the Galilean women of 8:2-3. They all witness to Jesus; they are all beneficiaries of his care. They are also relegated to service roles, associated with Satan and compared to animals, and finally silenced.

The Galilean women (8:1-3), while not described in terms of διακονέω, provide for Jesus and the male (and possibly female) disciples out of their own resources. Luke does not explain precisely what they do, and their service could range from preparing food to catechizing newcomers. Given that Luke primarily associates service to others with women, it is most likely the women performed their service as domestic duties; thus Luke implicitly masks their

⁶⁵ Carmen Bernabé Ubieta, "Mary Magdalene and the Seven Demons in Social-Scientific Perspective," in *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Re-Viewed*, ed. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, trans. Lucia F. Llorente (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 217.

patronage roles. Like Simon Peter's mother-in-law, the three named women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, are "cured of evil spirits and infirmities" (8:2). Their support thus implicitly takes the form of a debt of gratitude; it is not prompted by Jesus' commissioning. Esther A. de Boer argues, "Luke is portraying the serving women in a discipleship role."⁶⁶ But again, the service is gender-determined. Whereas Mark and Matthew attest to women serving Jesus; Luke adds the Twelve (the ἀὐτῶν of 8:3) to those being served. Mark 15:40-41 says that Mary Magdalene along with Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome provided (the Greek indicates "ministry" or "service," δῆκονον) for Jesus in Galilee. Matt 27:55 repeats the point but uses the present active participle διακονοῦσαι. Esther A. De Boer argues that for Matthew, the women's service was a "ministry to" Jesus instead of "support for" Jesus as in Luke.⁶⁷ But in Luke, as Schaberg and Ringe assert, "The women are cast in a nonreciprocated role of service or support of the males of the movement."⁶⁸

Luke often limits διακονία to table service offered by women and slaves. Martha, a homeowner, welcomes Jesus into her home. Her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his teaching while Martha was "worried about much service" (περιεσπᾶτο περὶ πολλήν διακονίαν, 10:40). Martha asks Jesus, "Do you not care that my sister has left me alone to serve?" (διακονεῖν). Jesus responds, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42).

⁶⁶ Esther A. de Boer, "The Lukan Mary Magdalene and the Other Women Following Jesus," in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 3 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 140–61 (144).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶⁸ Schaberg and Ringe, "Gospel of Luke," 506.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza sees Luke as pitting Martha and Mary against each other.⁶⁹ By depicting them as rivals, Luke demonstrates that while women contribute to the early movement, they should not take leadership positions. Martha is the active woman who cares for her household whereas Mary is the contemplative woman; her primary concerns are “study, prayer, contemplation, and service to the Lord.”⁷⁰ Fiorenza suggests that “the Lukan account is not concerned with the two women as individuals: rather it is interested in them as representatives of two competing types of or roles of discipleship: *διακονία* -service and listening to the word.”⁷¹ “While the narrative emphasizes Martha’s service it is subordinated to Mary’s listening, neither type of service is serving the word of God like the Twelve (Acts 6:2).”⁷²

Some commentators, perhaps uncomfortable with Jesus’ rebuke or with Mary’s failure to serve, suggest that Jesus was giving a nod to women’s education.⁷³ The point is possible, but not necessary. Although there is a paucity of sources concerning the education of women in the Roman Empire, Emily Ann Hemelrijk indicates, “With the spread of education in the first two centuries of the empire, we hear of more well-educated women. Not only in the upper classes, but probably also among well-to-do urban sub-elite families.”⁷⁴ Mary’s desire and ability to sit and listen to Jesus should not be taken as evidence either that there is something innovative about

⁶⁹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 60.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 65.

⁷³ Loveday C. Alexander, “Sisters in Adversity: Retelling Martha’s Story,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 3 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 198. See also Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus’ Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Early Life*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 101.

⁷⁴ Emily Ann Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna* (London: Routledge, 1999), 24.

her posture. Mary is, rather, doing something expected. More, she is showing appropriate deference – silent, at his feet – to her male teacher.

Conversely, Warren Carter argues that Luke 10:38-42 not only “evidences the women’s leadership but also instructs the gospel’s readers and hearers about important aspects of the task of leadership and ministry.”⁷⁵ Following J.N. Collins, Carter argues that *διακονία* has a larger interpretative range than waiting on tables. Collins sees *διακονία* as indicating Jesus’s salvific work, service to other people such as footwashing, as well as holding an ecclesiastical office or functioning as a community leader.⁷⁶ Carter suggests that the term may be understood as “participation with others in leadership and ministry on behalf of the Christian community.”⁷⁷ He argues, “Luke’s audience has encountered the noun *διακονία* eight times in contexts that do not concern kitchen activity.”⁷⁸ His point requires nuance. As we have seen, *διακονία* is most often used in the Gospel to describe the work of women and slaves. Even Jesus’ self-description as “one who serves” (22:27b) relates to serving in light of the table: “For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table?” (22:27a). Although the male master serves, his action is aligned with “the most basic form of service that is implicit in *διακονέω*: that of a meal.”⁷⁹ In Acts 6:2, the Twelve assert, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to serve tables” (*διακονεῖν τραπέζαις*).

Likewise, in 17:8-10 Jesus uses *διακονία* to demonstrate to the disciples that their purpose is to follow orders. Jesus asks them, “Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field... would you not rather say to him,

⁷⁵ Warren Carter, “Getting Martha Out of the Kitchen: Luke 10:38-42 Again,” *CBQ* 58. 2 (1996): 264–80 (265).

⁷⁶ See John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Basing his study upon Mark 10:45, “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

⁷⁷ Carter, “Getting Martha Out of the Kitchen,” 270.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Via, “Women, the Discipleship of Service, and the Early Christian Ritual Meal in the Gospel of Luke,” 40.

‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve (διακόνει) me while I eat and drink...’” (17:7-8). Thus, as Jane Via argues, “it is to the servant’s role that Jesus compares the role of his disciples.”⁸⁰ For the disciples, service is a marker of their leadership roles; for the women and the slaves, service is marker of their restricted and subordinate status. The men give up what they have but in doing so obtain glory; the women and the slaves remain in place.

Luke, Women, and Power/Status

That Luke takes a critical stance toward the wealthy is a scholarly consensus. Erik M. Heen notes, “Luke-Acts is often characterized in terms of God’s ‘preferential option for the poor’ as epitomized in Jesus’ inaugural sermon on Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:18-19.”⁸¹ According to Joel Green, “Issues of wealth are inescapable for the people of God, according to Luke, because wealth is intricately spun together with issues of status, power, and social privilege.”⁸² Alan P. Sherouse finds Luke’s use of ἀνθρώπος τις ἦν πλούσιος [“there was some rich man”] to be a stock phrase indicating to the audience “connotations of superfluity, selfishness, and separation from the poor.”⁸³ Luke’s ideal community appears in Acts 5:34, “there was not a needy person among them,” and the ideal disciples give up all of their possessions so that they might have treasure in heaven (12:33; 14:33; 18:22). For Luke, wealth must be subordinated to the “supreme call of following Jesus.”⁸⁴

But Luke does not anticipate that all readers will engage in complete divestment. The Gospel “falls neither on the ideal of poverty nor on the evil of material possessions nor even on

⁸⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁸¹ Erik M. Heen, “Radical Patronage in Luke-Acts,” *CurTM* 33. 6 (2006): 442

⁸² Joel B. Green, “Wealthy...Who? Me?: Surprising Perspectives on Faith and Wealth from Luke-Acts,” *The Living Pulpit* 12.2 (June 2003): 18–19 (19).

⁸³ Sherouse, “The One Percent and the Gospel of Luke,” 286.

⁸⁴ Christopher M. Hays, “Hating Wealth and Wives?: An Examination of Discipleship Ethics in the Third Gospel,” *TynBul* 60.1 (2009): 47–68 (48).

total renunciation as a prerequisite for membership in the early community.”⁸⁵ Interested in the proper use of wealth, Luke shows women dedicating their resources to promote Jesus and, in Acts, the male-led church.

Joanna (8:3), one of Jesus’ patrons, is Luke’s initial image of women demonstrating the proper use of money; she spends her own resources, or perhaps those of her husband, on Jesus and his other followers. Joanna is married to Chuza, Herod’s steward, although she appears to have left him in order to travel with Jesus. Her connection to Chuza and so to the court of Antipas grants her, if not “contact with the highest circles of government,”⁸⁶ a certain status. She is likely among the elite women who could “expand their influence outside the house and engage in various social, financial, and political activities.”⁸⁷

In Acts, Luke depicts other women of high status in opposition to the new movement. Describing Paul’s experiences in Antioch, Luke says “the Jews incited the devout women of high standing (εὐσχήμοναζ, i.e., respected, cf. Mark 15:43 referring to Joseph of Arimathea) and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas” (13:50). In Acts 17:12, Luke acknowledges that women of status (εὐσχημόνων) became believers. None is introduced as an individual. The believing women are, however, accompanied by not a few believing men.

While Tabitha’s economic status is not clear, she has status in the Joppa community. Tabitha, also known by her Greek name Dorcas, is the one woman Luke explicitly calls a “disciple” (μαθήτρια); her status comes not from her teaching or healing or evangelizing, but from having devoted herself “to good works and charity” (9:36). Tabitha’s status is evident in the disciples’ sending for Peter in nearby Lydda to come to Joppa without delay (9:38) in order to

⁸⁵ Green, “Wealthy...Who? Me?,” 19.

⁸⁶ James M. Arlandson, “Lifestyles of the Rich and Christian: Women, Wealth, and Social Freedom,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 9 (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 167.

⁸⁷ Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite*, 11.

save her from her illness. When Peter arrives, he finds weeping widows surrounding her body (9:39).

Luke reports that Tabitha made clothes, although no mention is made of the reason: out of charitable kindness; to run a business; to be engaged in women's (distaff) work, etc. Mikael Parsons states that because Tabitha made clothes by her own hand, while she may have been a benefactor toward widows, she was not herself wealthy.⁸⁸ Conversely, Margaret Aymer suggests that Tabitha may have her own finances to make clothes with the widows,⁸⁹ and F. Scott Spencer notes that women in the textile business, such as Lydia of Acts 16, had a degree of wealth and independence.⁹⁰ The message from Luke concerning Tabitha is that what she has, sewing ability as well as financial resources, is properly used for the benefit of others within the community.

Luke does depict a few women as householders; to own property was to enjoy some social status.⁹¹ Along with Martha (Luke 10:38), both Mary, mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12-17) and Lydia (Acts 16:14) of Thyatira were homeowners; both use their status and resources in service to the movement. Neither, however, functions as a leader in her own right. Mary serves as a foil to Peter; Lydia is Paul's patron, and she subordinates herself to his needs.

Mary is wealthy: she owns a large home with a gate (12:14); the house is large enough to accommodate a prayer group (12:12). Mary is also a slave-owner, although the NRSV translates παιδίσκη (12:13) as maid. James Arlandson argues that "Mary's house is an independent factor that reveals her wealth"⁹² and surmises that the "urban and rural poor—the vast majority of the population in the entire empire—could never have afforded a house large enough to hold a

⁸⁸ Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 138.

⁸⁹ Margaret Aymer, "Acts of the Apostles," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 541.

⁹⁰ F. Scott Spencer, *Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 175.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 162

⁹² *Ibid.*, 163

congregation implied in the ‘many’ who gathered there.”⁹³ C. Clifton Black (generously) names Mary as “Peter’s patron,” which further suggests that she is a woman of wealth.⁹⁴ David Bidnell describes patrons as “providing support for clients via the provision of food, money, security, or legal support. In turn, the patron receives an enhanced reputation for generous benefaction.”⁹⁵ Mary’s home is thus used in support of the movement, and in return she is honored for making this provision. However, Mary’s patronage status is first mocked and then rejected. When Rhoda announces that Peter was at the gate, the ones inside – an anonymous “they” (οἱ) that likely includes Mary -- tell her, “you are out of your mind” and insist that what she saw was Peter’s angel (Acts 12:14-15). They not only disbelieve Rhoda, they also demonstrate a lack of belief that their prayers (likely) for Peter’s release would be answered. When “they” finally open the gate, Peter rejects their company. Instead, as Black wryly notes, “The narrator of Acts whisks Peter off the premises almost as quickly as he arrives” (12:17).⁹⁶ Martha may be a patron, but she lacks faith in her own prayers, she does not listen to her (female) slave [nothing new here], and Peter ultimately rejects her hospitality.

Lydia, from Thyatira, sells purple cloth (Acts 16:14). Luise Schottroff argues that textile production was “women’s work and that it was a despised profession in the Roman world.”⁹⁷ Ivoni Richter Reimer concurs, “Processing textiles was women’s work.”⁹⁸ She also indicates, that since “inscriptions attest to the presence of ‘dyers’ in Thyatira” rather than purple dyers as is

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ C. Clifton Black, “The Presentation of John Mark in the Acts of the Apostles,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 20.3 (Fall 1993): 238.

⁹⁵ David Bidnell, “Patrons and Clients” (Oxford Institute Biblical Studies Working Group, August 2013), <https://oimts.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/2013-1-bidnell.pdf>, accessed May 1, 2017.

⁹⁶ C. Clifton Black, “The Presentation of John Mark in the Acts of the Apostles,” 238.

⁹⁷ Luise Schottroff, *Let the Oppressed Go Free: Feminist Perspectives on the New Testament*, trans. Annemarie S. Kidder (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 132.

⁹⁸ Ivoni Richter Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 107.

ascribed to Lydia, “this means that a variety of colors were made there.”⁹⁹ Lydia’s profession, then, is not remarkable because she “comes from a region known for the production of dyed wool and woolen clothing.”¹⁰⁰ Moreover, “the texts of Acts 16:14 does not—as do 13:50; 17:4, 12—say that Lydia was ‘well-to-do’ or ‘of high standing.’”¹⁰¹ Elisabeth Shüssler Fiorenza proposes that Lydia was a free-born woman who sold luxury items.¹⁰²

Lydia, like Tabitha, is not clearly a woman of high income, but she like Tabitha has high status because she serves the Church. As a businesswoman, Lydia would have made financial decisions.¹⁰³ But Luke does not depict her as determining her use of funds. Luke’s message, perhaps to women of independent means who engaged in the waged economy by creating and “selling textiles, baking, midwifery, teaching, hairdressing and inn-keeping,”¹⁰⁴ etc., is that they are to be in service to others, but they do not themselves run the Church.

Lydia meets Paul when he joins the women gathered for prayer outside of the city gates (16:13). Dennis R. MacDonald notes that the women were outside of the synagogue and thus they were not constrained by the male-dominated city worshipping their god¹⁰⁵; his thought is viable, but he misses the role Diaspora women had as “leaders of the synagogue.”¹⁰⁶ Ironically, by being baptized and then inviting Paul to stay at her home (16:15), Lydia cedes her independence to Paul. Lydia now supports Paul’s mission as Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and

⁹⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 98.

¹⁰² Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 178.

¹⁰³ Miriam Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 64

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Dennis R. MacDonald, “Lydia and Her Sisters as Lukan Fictions,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 9 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 105–11.

¹⁰⁶ Bernadette J. Brooten, “Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue,” *Brown Judaism Studies* 36 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); Brooten, “Female Leadership in the Ancient Synagogue,” in Lee I. Levine and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series, 2000), 215–23 (218).

Susanna supported Jesus's mission. While the leaders change, women's work and their performance of it does not.

Luke, Women, and Silent Voices

Luke makes it clear that women hold secondary status in Jesus' mission. The Twelve are primary; they are the leaders; their job is to serve the word of God to people. Women form a separate category: "The Twelve were with him, as well as some women..." (8:1-2). These women are not disciples. To be a disciple, one must "hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even life itself" (14:26). Nor can a woman replace Judas; the replacement has to be "one of the men (ἀνδρῶν) who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (Acts 1:21). The one explicitly named disciple, Tabitha, serves silently, and serves ultimately to show Peter has his Lord's ability to raise the dead.

In the Gospel, women's voices are either muted or corrected by a male character. A woman from the crowd hailed Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!" (11:27). The woman does more than pronounce a blessing on Jesus's mother; she celebrates women's bodies in public. The woman brings what is reserved for the domestic sphere, wombs and breasts, into the public sphere. On the other hand, her praise reduces Mary's role to the biological: women are more than simply wombs and breasts. Rather than respond by remarking on Mary's nurturing or teaching, Jesus strips out even this physical recognition: "Blessed on the contrary (μενοῦν) are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (11:28).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Fitzmyer argues, "The compound Greek particle *menoun* (used only four times in the NT and, against classical usage, at the head of a sentence) can have three different senses: (a) adversative, 'nay, rather,' 'on the contrary': so commonly in classical Greek (Sophocles, *Ajax* 1363; Aristophanes, *Eccl.* 1102) and in the NT (Rom 9:20; 10:18); this would mean that Jesus was rejecting the woman's blessing of his mother (it seems to be the sense

Critics might regard Jesus as correcting the view that women are only breasts and wombs, or challenging the idea that women gain their worth by bearing children. Whereas the infancy accounts praise the mothers Mary and Elizabeth and emphasize the pregnancies of both, the Gospel and Acts show no other interest in fertility, conception, or childbirth. Yet Jesus silences the woman; he dismisses her opinion and along with it, he dismisses her notice of women's distinct attributes.

Luke also suppresses women's voices with the need for male validation. Mary, who has been obedient to God (2:38) as well as demonstrated praises to God (2:47-48), is left with the blessing as well as the warning of the male prophet Simeon, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too" (2:34-35). She may have given birth to Jesus, but Simeon knows more of her future than she does. The sword Simeon prophesies about is the sword of division (12:51) in which households will be divided. Fathers and sons will be against each other and so too mothers and daughters (12:53). Jesus demonstrates this division when he says, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" after being told that his mothers and brother wanted to see him (8:19-20). Luke nullifies Mary's favor with God to show the importance of Jesus' work. Similarly, Luke nullifies Martha's work when he suppresses her critique of the silent Mary.

advocated by T. W. Manson, I. H. Marshall, M. P. Scott, et al.). (b) affirmative, 'indeed,' expressive of agreement with what was said. See Phil 3:8. (c) corrective, 'yes, but rather,' meaning that what was said is true as far as it goes (Plato, *Rep.* 489D). M. E. Thrall (*Greek Particles in the New Testament*, 34–35) points out that for Luke the first two uses are to be eliminated since, when he wants to express contradiction, he uses *ouchi, legoæ hymin* (12:51; 13:3, 5); and for affirmation he [Luke 10–24, p. 929] employs *nai* (7:26; 10:21; 11:51; 12:5). Hence, the last corrective sense is to be preferred." See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According To Luke X-XXIV*, AB 28A, (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 928-929 and Margaret E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 35. I, however, suggest *μενοῦν* can be read in the adversative because Luke may have chosen to use variety in his expression of contrast. I thank Barbara Reid for this reference.

On his way to his death, Jesus tells the mourning women to weep for themselves and their children rather than weep for him (23:28). The disciples reject the women's announcement that Jesus had risen (24:11). Peter, hearing the women's declaration and "becoming confused," went to the tomb to see for himself.¹⁰⁸ While Luke uses ἔλεγον (the imperfect) to demonstrate that the women continued to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen, their words were "like an idle tale" because they lacked authority within the group of disciples.¹⁰⁹ Peter's voice, however is authoritative because after the two men went back to Jerusalem from Emmaus, they heard the disciples saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" (24:34). Luke's message is that women's declarations must be verified.

In Acts 16:16-18, Paul silences the slave girl with a spirit of divination. D'Angelo states, "The only 'prophetic' utterance by a woman in Acts is the mantic servant girl's proclamation of Paul's and Silas's mission."¹¹⁰ Her silence is more important than the truth that she tells. Luke, in alignment with Roman social practices, makes sure that "respectable women are not heard."¹¹¹

Luke and Widows

Luke refers to widows more frequently than do the other Gospels (2:37; 4:25-26; 7:11-17; 18:2-5; 20:27-40; 20:47; 21:1-4; Acts 6:1-6; 9:39-40) and often in passages that presuppose their economic helplessness (20:47; Acts 6:1-6).¹¹² Widows are objects of compassion rather

¹⁰⁸ Esther A. de Boer, "The Lukan Mary Magdalene and the Other Women Following Jesus," 156.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ D'Angelo, "Women In Luke-Acts," 453.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 451.

¹¹² Schaberg and Ringe, "The Gospel of Luke," 497. See also Barbara E. Reid, "The Power of the Widows and How to Suppress It (Acts 6:1-7)," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 9 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 71-89. Reid, following Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* [New York: Crossroad, 1983], 164-66), notes that there is nothing in the narrative that suggests the widows are poor. Rather, Reid suggests that the Hellenist widows are being "overlooked in the assignment of ministries, that is, not being given their proper turn to serve (83)." She notes, while "widows as objects of charity are only one strand of the tradition visible in Luke and Acts; there is also a strand in which they are the ones doing the ministry (73)."

than subjects (7:11-15), silent, objectified, and embedded in Levirate marriage (20:27-40), victims to rapacious scribes (20:47), neglected in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1).¹¹³ Luke's ideal widow is Anna who prays, who is pious, who is paired with a man, but in subordinate status (here in terms of quantity of verses), and whose voice is not heard. She sets the tone for how readers should understand the other Lukan widows; "they are tame, traditional, and respectable."¹¹⁴

Luke presents Anna, a prophet (προφῆτις) and the only person named so in the Gospel,¹¹⁵ as a worthy widow who has given her life to the continuous worship of God. After the death of her husband, Anna did not remarry but is a *univera* or once-married woman.¹¹⁶ In the Roman world, a *univera* was "a woman of high social standing who lived all her life under the *auctoritas* (authority) of her father or husband."¹¹⁷ We do not, however, know Anna's social status, but Theophilus, the ideal reader would have recognized her connection to this trope. Luke's emphasis upon Anna's age as well as how long she was a widow demonstrates her commitment to her one husband.¹¹⁸ In turn, her fidelity to her husband matches her fidelity to God and prayer; she "never left the Temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day" (2:37). Thus, Anna was an "exemplary" 1st century widow.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ F. Scott Spencer, "Neglected Widows in Acts 6:1-7," *CBQ* 56.4 (1994): 715-33.

¹¹⁴ Reid, "The Power of the Widows and How to Suppress It (Acts 6:1-7)," 73.

¹¹⁵ Andres Garcia Serrano, "Anna's Characterization in Luke 2:36-38: A Case of Conceptual Allusion?," *CBQ* 76.3 (July 2014): 464-80.

¹¹⁶ Marjorie Lightman and William Ziesel, "Univira: An Example of Continuity and Change in Roman Society," *Church History* 46.1 (March 1977): 19-32.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20. Although Luke does not provide information concerning Anna's social standing, her exemplary status demonstrates the feminine propriety of a *univera*.

¹¹⁸ The commitment to a deceased husband could also be a community expectation. "In the public perception, the material conditions in which the widow lived were designed to foster certain virtues. The true widow was devout, wise, and chaste. These virtues, however, were ascribed to the widow through the traditional image of widows. See Jan N. Bremmer and Lourens van den Bosch, eds., "The Public Image of the Widow in Ancient Israel," in *Between Poverty and the Pyre: Moments in the History of Widowhood* (London: Routledge, 1995), 19-30 (24).

¹¹⁹ Bonnie Bowman Thurston, "Who Was Anna?: Luke 2:36-30," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 28.1 (Spr 2001): 47-55 (50).

Anna is called a prophet, but as Robert Price observes, “the last thing we hear is any prophecy attributed to her.”¹²⁰ Luke conversely provides readers with direct quotes from the devout Simeon (2:29-32). Anna is the paradigm for Luke’s widows: subordinate to her male counterpart Simeon, dedicated to God rather than to her own family, asexual/celibate (we hear no reference to children), and prayerful. She prays as God, but we never hear her voice. She speaks about the child, but unlike Simeon we do not hear her words. She conforms to Luke’s sense that widows, or women in general, should pray rather than speak.

The model continues in Luke’s mention of the widow of Zarephath (4:25-26 cf. 1 Kgs 17:8-24). In his synagogue sermon (Luke 4:16-30), Jesus remarks that although there were many widows in Israel during a severe famine, Elijah was sent to the widow at Zarephath in Sidon. This widow receives Elijah’s help. Luke withholds reference to the widow’s agency. The widow has only a handful of meal and a little oil, but she shares what she has with Elijah. Moreover, when her son dies, she, like the widow in court, confronts the judge: she confronts Elijah and demands, “What made you interfere, you man of God?” (1 Kgs 17:18). In Jesus’ synagogue sermon, the widow serves only as the object of Elijah’s beneficence.

Luke’s account of the widow of Zarephath anticipates the Third Gospel’s reference to the widow of Nain. This widow’s son has also died, and Jesus, like Elijah, will resuscitate him (Luke 7:15). The widow of Nain is the weeping widow rather than a speaking widow. She foreshadows both the woman in the city (7:36-50) and the daughters of Jerusalem (23:27-31). For Luke, women weep and Jesus consoles them.

Luke’s depiction of a third widow plays upon the stereotype of the vulnerable widow. Readers know nothing about this widow except that she lost her home to devouring scribes

¹²⁰ Robert Price, *The Widow Traditions in Luke-Acts: A Feminist Critical Scrutiny*, SBLDS 155 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 48.

(Luke 20:47 cf. Mark 12:40).¹²¹ With the exception of Anna, Luke is sparse on the details concerning widow's lives. The widow is silent, and neither Luke nor Mark shows any concern about the recourse taken to rectify her situation. She fits nicely into the stereotype of the widow who has no male help in her daily life. Rather, the male scribes take advantage of the widow.

Luke's widow tradition continues with the story about the widow giving money to the temple (21:1-4). Luke's Jesus observes that the widow, out of her poverty, has put in all she had to live on in the temple treasury (21:4). Like Anna who dedicates her life by choosing to worship God in the temple with fasting and prayer day and night, this widow, too, dedicates her life to God by giving all of her resources to the temple. Both Luke and Mark emphasize the intensity of the widow's giving; ἀυτῆς πάντα τὸν βίον ὃν εἶχεν ἔβαλεν (she put out all her life, Luke 21:4) and εἶχεν ἔβαλεν ὅλον τὸν βίον αὐτῆς ("she put out her whole life," Mark 12:44). To give all of one's money to a religious community suggests that the community is or will be the caretaker. Thus, Levine argues, "The very temple to which she gives her last two coins will be the institution that will provide for her."¹²² Although the widow exercises agency in deciding to put her copper coins in the temple's coffers, Luke's message is that widows and, by extension, women sacrifice. He aligns the widow with Jesus; she dedicates her life just as Jesus dedicates (to the cross) his life.¹²³ She is an object lesson to the disciples –they are to "see her" – and by extension they are to be like her. However, they are to do much more than she does. The widow speaks by her actions, which must be interpreted by the men. The men, Jesus and the Apostles, will speak with words, and they will be understood.

¹²¹ See also Mark 12:38-40.

¹²² Amy-Jill Levine, "'This Poor Widow...' (Mark 12:43): From Donation to Diatribe," in *A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey et al., Brown Judaic Studies 358 (Providence: Brown University, 2015), 183–93 (186). See also Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Poor Widow in Mark and Her Poor Rich Readers," *CBQ* 53.4 (1991): 589–604.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 189.

With all the giving up her life that she does, the widow in the temple does not speak, nor does Luke provide insight into her thoughts. Luke's point is to show her contributing to the early community; women give what they have to support the community (cf. Luke 8:1-3). Commentators and readers alike enjoy hearing how the widow gave all of her life to the temple even if they are not going to do the same. Andre Resner says, "we preachers love her. We praise her: 'She had so little, but gave so much.'"¹²⁴ Others state, "If she, out of her poverty, could be so generous, how much more should we give generously of our wealth" or "It must have hurt for her to dig so deep. Do you have faith to give 'til it hurts?!"¹²⁵ The widow becomes an exemplar whom believers should emulate. Had Jesus thought the widow was being exploited, he would have said something. For Luke, widows as well as women support religious movements although they neither vocally contribute nor sit at the table to provide leadership.

Luke's portrait of destitute widows continues with the issue of food distribution in the early Jerusalem community. The Hellenists widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution (Acts 6:1). The narrative is not centered upon the widows; it rather sets up the role of the seven appointed to "serve" (δῆλον), and then the stories of Stephen and Phillip. Luke notes that men are appointed to care for the widows, but Acts never depicts this actual care.

Luke's presentation of widows continues the stereotype of the vulnerable widow. The Third Gospel suppresses details about the lives of the widows and then demonstrates how the early community must emulate as well as provide for them. Widows fast and pray day and night. They are models of the proper disposition of faith for those within the early community. Other than these restricted images, for Luke, widows are not trouble-makers in the community.

¹²⁴ Andre Resner, "Widow's Mite or Widow's Plight," *RevExp* 107 (2010): 545-54 (545).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

Widows in the Bible

While Israel's Scriptures depict widows as needy (Ex 22:22-24; Deut 10:18; Ps 72:4) and demonstrate God's bias towards toward them (Deut 10:18; 24:17; 27:19; Jer. 22:3; Zech. 7:10; Ps. 68:5; 146:9; Prov. 15:25), they also recount stories of widows who are neither vulnerable nor helpless. "Biblical widows are the most unconventional of conventional figures: expected to be weak, they move mountains; expected to be poor, they prove savvy stewards, expected to be exploited, they take advantage where they find it."¹²⁶ Widows can be seducing, tricksters, and conniving. Tamar (Genesis 38), Ruth and Naomi all take action to secure their desires.

Tamar, the first widow, seduces her father-in-law Judah (Genesis 38) when he refuses to honor the levirate agreement and marry his surviving son Shelah to her. Both Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi follow in Tamar's path: Naomi concocts a plan to get economic and social security by telling Ruth to seduce Boaz, a kinsman-redeemer. In the Apocrypha, Judith, a widow, seduces and then murders the enemy general Holofernes. The widow of 4 Maccabees proves the philosophical hero who urges her sons to martyrdom and then dies a martyr herself. Sarah, the frequently widowed woman of the Book of Tobit, fits better into the mold of the victim who requires both divine and human rescue. Yet she too engages in action, including her care for her parents. There are other widows in the text who also show agency, but Luke either ignores them or, as with the widow of Zarepath, only tells part of the story. It may well be the case that Jesus' own teachings fall into the broader biblical category of stories of widows who have agency, who defy the status quo, who seek their own good, who act as tricksters. For Luke, these more active categories are foreclosed.

The New Testament in general promotes widows as vulnerable and needy. 1 Timothy 5 sets the stage for the ideal Christian household within the Roman Empire. The writer takes a

¹²⁶ Amy-Jill Levine, "This Widow Keeps Bothering Me (Luke 18:5)," 124.

special interest in the widows by determining which widows are eligible for financial support.¹²⁷

Widows eligible for financial support had to be well attested for their good works, raised children, demonstrated hospitality, helped the afflicted, and devoted themselves to doing good in every way (1 Tim 5:9-10). Young widows are encouraged to marry, have children and manage their households because their sensual desires will alienate them from Christ (1 Tim 5:3, 14).

Like Luke, the author of 1 Timothy is not a supporter of active widows who may view themselves as more than servants of the patriarchal household.¹²⁸

While Luke presents many stories about women in general and widows specifically, the details of those stories do not suggest that Luke is the friend to women, as commentators and reading communities believe. The Third Gospel maintains gender roles and in so doing, depicts women and widows with secondary status. Both women and widows play a role in Luke's Gospel: women demonstrate discipleship by serving others; widows are models of piety.

The results of this brief survey suggest the likelihood that Luke has domesticated the widow of the parable. Set loose from Luke's context, our widow becomes more interesting, more active, more morally ambivalent, and more dangerous. Put into new contexts, she reveals both the dangers of stereotyping and the possibility of recuperating those stereotypes into something positive.

¹²⁷ Dillon T. Thornton, "'Saying What They Should Not Say': Reassessing the Gravity of the Problem of the Younger Widows (1 Tim. 5:11-15)," *JETS* 59.1 (March 2016): 119–29.

¹²⁸ See Joanna Dewey, "1 Timothy," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsome, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 595–601 (600). Dewey argues that from the perspective of the widows in 1 Timothy, they would not see themselves as busybodies, so named by the 1 Timothy writer. Rather, "they probably understand themselves as going about teaching, proclaiming the faith, and giving pastoral care."

Chapter 3

Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire in Conversation with Luke

Parables are designed to challenge readers; their role is therefore often more to challenge stereotypes than to reinforce them. Rather than reading the Parable of the Widow and the Judge for the interpretative challenges concerning widows, and by extension women, as well as concerning judges, and by extension both masculinity and the legal system, interpreters read the parable through stereotypes. They frequently determine that the widow must be old, that she has no male relative to aid her in her case, that she is socially vulnerable and that the judge mistreats her. Such interpretations are at best stale; they offer few challenges to stereotypes and therefore limited possibilities of transformation for Church or society.

Putting the parable into dialogue with the constructions of African American women, both those imposed on us by American society and those we sometimes impose on ourselves, we find not only a challenge to these stereotypes. We also find that Luke's parable, read through these constructions, has something to tell us both about the Gospel message and the possibilities opened by awareness of our social constructions.

Interpreters within the Black Church tradition as well as numerous feminist interpreters have already begun the challenge to the stereotype of the widow as helpless. They read her not as a figure of helplessness; instead they celebrate her for her boldness and tenacity. Yet even with this rereading, women, and African American women in particular, find a second stereotype, for our tenacity and boldness are not necessarily culturally valued. Women, and African American women in particular, are often denigrated for displaying these same traits: being bold slides easily into being shrill, and being tenacious becomes just a polite term for being a nag. The parable can create a "damned if you do; damned if you don't" impression. Either the widow is

helpless and therefore at best an object rather than an active agent, or she displays culturally inappropriate, unfeminine behaviors and therefore cannot serve as a role model.

Placing three cultural constructions of African American women into dialogue with the parable provides one helpful means of challenging the various stereotypes of women that surface or become reinforced in the usual readings. At the same time, the parable provides its own challenge to, and even recuperation of, some of the negative stereotypes associated with the more modern constructions. Audre Lorde, who writes from the explicit position of a black, lesbian feminist, famously stated, “It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”¹ By taking African American stereotypes, initially used to degrade, to debase, and to control, and by reading them into and in light of the parable, African American women can both reclaim their differences and find strength in them. Applications of the standard tools of historical criticism and theological interpretation have shown how the parable’s meaning can be limited. More fully to see what the text not only meant but can mean — to keep the meaning both open and yet faithful to the challenge of that initial parable in its initial historical context — acts of cultural imagination are essential. This chapter presents one such act in relation to the widow. The following chapter will perform the same type of re-imagining by addressing the judge.

Three stereotypes of African American women particularly lend themselves to an intertextual conversation with the widow of the parable.² First is the highly maternal and self-

¹ Audre Lord, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984), 110-14 (112).

² See Carolyn West, “Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and their homegirls: Developing an “Oppositional Gaze” Toward the Images of Black women,” in J. Chrisler, C. Golden, & P. Rozee (Eds.), *Lectures on the Psychology of Women*, 4th ed., (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008), 286-299.

sacrificing Mammy, best known from Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and associated with Hattie McDaniel, who played this role in the movie. Overweight and sexless, Mammy will fight for her (white) family. However, she has no clearly independent purpose apart from her care for others. Her very name – “Mammy” is not a given name but a name that comes from others – denotes her dependence on relationships.

Second, as Mia Moody notes, “the sexually promiscuous black woman, also known as the ‘oversexed-black-Jezebel,’ is an extreme opposite of the ‘mammy.’”³ The seductive and lascivious Jezebel is named for the foreign queen of 1 Kings 16-21; 2 Kings 9. Ironically, this original Jezebel of the Deuteronomic historian is actually a faithful wife, although she murders both those who worship in a different manner than she does, and those who own what she, or her husband, wants. Her power becomes sexualized in metaphors used by the Deuteronomic Historian and John the author of the Book of Revelation, and it remains there. The Jezebel of today is marked by a luscious body and a conniving mind that lead men astray.

Like Mammy, Jezebel's body is marked as black. From the depiction of the ancient Phoenician queen as black (the Phoenicians were a Semitic population group, comparable to that of ancient Israelites; nothing in the Bible marks them by skin color), Jezebel has coded black,

See also Lisa Rosenthal and Marci Lobel, “Stereotypes of Black American Women Related to Sexuality and Motherhood,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 40.3 (2016): 414-27. They note that “[c]ertain stereotypes of black women are similar to, or the same as, stereotypes of black men or white women, but there are also unique stereotypes of black women that are not applied to black men or to white women. Three prevalent, pernicious, images or archetypes of black women that have been promulgated dating back to the period of American slavery are the ‘mammy,’ ‘sapphire,’ and ‘jezebel’” (416). They follow C.M. West, “Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and their Homegirls: Developing an ‘Oppositional Gaze’ toward Images of Black Women,” in J. Chrisler, C. Golden, and P. Rozee (eds.), *Lectures on the Psychology of Women*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008) and J. B. Woodard and T. Mastin, “Black Womanhood: Essence and its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Black Women,” *JBS* 36 (2005): 264-81. For one more iteration of this trinity, see Marilyn Yarbrough with Crystal Bennett, “Cassandra and the ‘Sistahs’: The Peculiar Treatment of African American Women in the Myth of Women as Liars,” *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 3 (1999-2000): 625-57.

³ Mia Moody, “From Jezebel to Ho: An Analysis of Creative and Imaginative Shared Representations of African American Women,” *Journal of Research on Women and Gender* 4 (2012): 74-94 (79).

from Dorothy Dandridge as “Carmen Jones” to “Zulu Lulu” swizzle sticks to “The obligatory ‘black whore’ ... added to urban-themed movies.”⁴ Jezebel, the smart, sexy, black woman, both is objectified by the culture and escapes that objectification through her sexual threat. Jezebel uses her assets to get what she wants; she recognizes how others view her, and she can turn their objectivizing to her own advantage. She also teaches black women both that we need not be ashamed of our bodies and that others will attempt to use our bodies for their own desires. She thus provides lessons on both pride and prudence, satisfaction and shame.

The third stereotype is the argumentative and castrating, never satisfied and always complaining Sapphire,⁵ best known from the *Amos and Andy* radio and then television shows. This trope is often revived, from Aunt Esther on the 1970s comedy *Sanford and Son* through new incarnations in the “Angry Black Woman.” Unattractive in personality, Sapphire nevertheless has the ability, to use the cliché, to “speak truth to power”: she has no patience for men who are lazy, for any who would take advantage of her, or for stupidity. The stereotype can function to tell African American women that if they demand more from their husbands, such as “justice” ranging from work around the house to production in the public sphere, that they are ugly and mean. And this stereotype too can be reversed and reclaimed.

Making these tropes particularly apposite to analysis of the parable is that none of these women requires a husband. Mammy’s allegiance is to others, whether the children of upper-class white people or to her own children; a husband or male partner is not a concern. Jezebel is concerned with self-gratification, has no worry about shame, and has no fear of manipulating men. Sapphire thinks for herself, and she does so often at the expense of men who would seek to

⁴ David Pilgrim, “Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia: Jezebel Stereotype,” <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/News/jimcrow/jezebel/>, accessed May 24, 2017.

⁵ David Pilgrim, “Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia: The Sapphire Caricature,” <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/News/jimcrow/sapphire/>, accessed May 24, 2017.

control her. Despite the negative reactions her comments create, she perseveres, for she will be heard.

Reading the widow as representative of each of these tropes—in effect, “casting” her into the role of the widow—both changes the interpretation of the parable and challenges the negative aspects of the stereotypes. Used against African American women, the stereotypes cannot be erased, but they can be challenged and, in some cases, reclaimed. Yet the attempt to reappropriate culturally negative images,⁶ must be, as with all such experiments in cultural reconstruction, done carefully. Patricia Hill Collins observes, “Unlike the controlling images developed for middle-class white women, the controlling images applied to black women are so uniformly negative that they almost necessitate resistance. For US black women, constructed knowledge of self emerges from the struggle to replace controlling images with self-defined knowledge deemed personally important, usually knowledge essential to black women’s survival.”⁷ The following is just such an exercise in reclamation, reconstruction, and survival.

Mammy

One of the most enduring stereotypes of African American women is that of the Mammy; in her various incarnations, she has had a profound influence on American culture in general and on African American women in particular.⁸ “From slavery through the Jim Crow era (1877-

⁶ For example, Jewish women have reclaimed the night-demon “Lilith” as a figure of women’s empowerment; the term “queer” has achieved its own normativity in cultural discourse; more problematic is the use of the term “nigger” in the black community. While many have claimed the term ‘nigger’ for intra-communal use, I do not see the need for using the term. See Michel Foucault’s discussion of “reverse discourse,” exemplified when “homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.” *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990 [ET 1978]), 101.

⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd edition; Revised Tenth Anniversary Edition (New York: Routledge, 2000), 100.

⁸ Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 1. On the persistence of the stereotype, see also Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima*,

1966), the Mammy image served the economic, political, and social interests of white ideology and history in the United States.”⁹ Two other stereotypes, Jezebel and the mule, were created alongside Mammy, and in the comparison among the three, the delimitation of roles becomes clearer. While Mammy was stereotyped as asexual, Jezebel was sexually promiscuous. While Mammy worked inside the house, the mule (note the lower-case; the mule was animal rather than human) worked the fields. Rupp Simms writes, “the mule cast black women as insensible brutes and subhuman beasts who were to be valued for their labor.”¹⁰

Designed to categorize and so restrict the role of African American women, Mammy – like her sisters Jezebel and the mule as well as the later trope of Sapphire – both delimited African American women’s social and cultural options even while she provided a recognized role in serving her masters.

The term itself, a variant of “mamma” and so “mother,” was primarily part of the Southern dialect. By 1820 the term was almost exclusively associated with black women serving as wet nurses and caretakers of white children.¹¹ Mammy was thus of value in part because of her body: just as her name, given to her by her white owners, removed any personal name she might have claimed and located her in the position of maternal care, so her milk nourished children other than her own. Mammy was not “mother”; that role, whose biological details were kept unspoken, belonged to the white wife of the master. That mammy would have given birth herself in order to produce the milk is irrelevant to her role: the children of her owner, rather than her own children, are the focus of her care.

Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 88.

⁹ Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 31.

¹⁰ Rupp Simms, “Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women,” *Gender & Society* 15.6 (December 2001): 879-897 (883).

¹¹ Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*, 4

Mammy's role was not limited to lactation, and in many instances she aged out of the ability to provide milk. Her primary role was household caretaker, and therefore she held a position of responsibility and authority. Yet here too, she is a prisoner of her body, of what was seen to be her "natural" instinct. "Her 'natural' maternity is constructed as primitive, instinctual, base. Simultaneously, her maternal devotion to whites is constructed as sublime, extraordinary, superhuman. Her behavior and maternal status are inextricably linked when her biological (black) children function only to reaffirm her attachment to her surrogate (white) children."¹²

Early in my work on the Parable in relation to Mammy, Mammy reminded me of the biblical pastor's description of the ideal widow: "She must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way" (1 Tim 5:10). It has now become much more evident how such descriptions limit women's options, shame them if they fail to conform to the ideal, take women away from their own interests and place them in the service of the authority, and set up an impossible ideal against which women can only fail.

Mammy is often depicted as a large, dark skinned woman. According to Emilie Townes, Mammy's depiction as a "desexualized, fat, old black woman" served to counter charges that masters were sexually abusing their slaves; the "de-eroticized and safe" Mammy thus made white men safe from rumors of miscegenation.¹³ Similarly, Simms argues that Mammy "was neither a sexual temptation to the slave master nor a threat to the mistress."¹⁴

Mammy of Southern plantation culture also functions as the sign of happiness-in-slavery. Mammy's image teaches that African American women find their fulfillment not with their own families, however configured, but in caring for the families of the white mother, and the white

¹² Ibid., 19.

¹³ Townes, *Womanist Ethics*, 31-32.

¹⁴ Simms, "Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women," 882.

owner. As Kimberly Wallace-Sanders states, “the mammy’s preference for white children will become inextricably linked to her ability to embrace and affirm her inferiority.”¹⁵

Descriptions of Mammy in the antebellum South present her fearless, proud, and possessed with a temper.¹⁶ Jessie W. Parkhurst indicates that Mammy “could handle delicate situations and if she took a certain cause to the master, it would be attended to according to her advice.”¹⁷ Her influence was based on her reputation as a good caregiver, and she gained that reputation not because she resisted the system of slavery, or even manipulated it, but because she accepted it.

She even insured that others accepted it. Moreover, if there was a difficulty with the household servants, Mammy adjudicated the dispute.¹⁸ That is, the white system found Mammy trustworthy, and Mammy supported the system. Like the widows in the Pastoral Epistles who are commended for providing instruction to the younger women, and so keeping them in line, Mammy’s role was to socialize others into accepting the status quo. She can be compared to the intended listeners of Titus 2:3-5, “Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited.” Mammy would not be the first, or the last, woman to reinforce the status quo by socializing younger women into the system.

¹⁵ Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*, 2.

¹⁶ Jessie W. Parkhurst, “The Role of the Black Mammy in the Plantation Household,” *The Journal of Negro History* 23.3 (July 1938): 349–69 (351).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 353-354.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 353.

And yet, she would not be the first, or the last, to subvert that same status quo when circumstances demanded her action. The Mammy figure can be used against injustice, against “the system,” all depending on who deploys the image.

Proslavery writings prior to the Civil War begin the deployment in favor of the status quo.¹⁹ In “Black Diamonds” (1859), Edward Pollard (1831-1872) responds to abolitionists’ demand for the end of slavery. Using the form of a letter to a northern acquaintance, identified as C., who was seeking information concerning the plight of the enslaved, Pollard sought to detail the “natural portraits”²⁰ of Negro character. Pollard describes “Aunt Debby,” an “aged colored female of the very highest respectability, and, with her white apron, and her head mysteriously enveloped in the brightest of bandannas, she looks like a new pin.”²¹ The image, with the apron and bandanna suggesting domestic servitude resembles that of Mammy. Rushdy argues, “The aim of those writings was to personify the ideal slave as well as the ideal woman.”²² The ideal slave and woman accepts her role as a servant as well as her role in the broader society. Calling Aunt Debby respectable means she demonstrates acceptance of her servant role. Pollard confirms Rushdy’s assertion when he tells C., “Some of your northern politicians would represent the slaves of the South as sullen, gloomy, isolated from life—in fact, pictures of a living death. Believe me, nothing could be further from the truth. Like Aunt Debby, they have their little prides and passions, their amusements, their pleasantries, which constitute the same sum of happiness as in the lives of their masters.”²³ The use of “Aunt” functions like the use of “Mammy”: both terms suggest that the woman who bears them is a

¹⁹ Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159

²⁰ Edward A. Pollard, “Black Diamonds,” in *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South*, ed. Eric L. McKittrick (Englewood Cliffs : Prentice-Hall, 1859), xi.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

²² Rushdy, *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form*, 159.

²³ Pollard, “Black Diamonds,” 166.

member of the family, of the senior generation, beloved and respected. The terms “Mammy” as well as “Aunt Debby” also suggest a degree of familiarity if not infantilism: Mammy not “mother”; Debby not (the proper) “Deborah.”

Pre-civil war popular literature also celebrated and even romanticized the Mammy. In *The Scout* (1854), William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870) describes a “negro house servant” Mira, who is to watch over an injured woman through the night. Mira is a “staid family servant such as are to be found in every ancient southern household, who form a necessary part of the establishment, and are, substantially, members, from long use and habit, of the family itself. The children grow up under their watchful eyes, and learn to love them as if they were mothers, or at least grandmothers, maiden aunts, or affectionate antique cousins.”²⁴ Again, the Mammy nurses physically helpless white charges. She is sexless (so the “maiden aunt”), selfless, and faithful. She is a member of the family. She is also enslaved.

Along with descriptions of Mammy’s trustworthiness and loyalty, another consistent theme in Old South legends is how much the white family loved Mammy. In *Dem Good Ole Times* (1906), a volume that romanticizes the relationships between slaves and slave owners, author Sallie Mae Dooley writes in “memory of the dear old southern mammies whose love and fidelity were the inspiration of the book.”²⁵ The story is narrated through an old slave, granddaddy Ben, who recounts stories of plantation life to a child who wants to know “bout dem good ole times befo de war.”²⁶ Granddaddy Ben talks of old Mammy Chloe who, in name only, was the mammy to everyone on the plantation, how she “loved to knit socks fur de men, un

²⁴ W. Gilmore Simms, *The Scout or The Black Riders of Congaree* (W.J. Widdleton, 1854), 332-333.

²⁵ Sallie May Dooley, *Dem Good Ole Times* (New York: Doubleday, 1906), <https://archive.org/details/demgoodoletimes00doolrich>, accessed November 15, 2016.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

gloves fur de wimmen” as well as how she “hope nuss the sick, big un little.”²⁷ He also reminisces about how Mammy Chloe’s bedroom on Christmas mornings was like a “sto’ caze twar nobordy too po’ to member her.”²⁸

Questions of whether Mammies actually existed show exactly how powerful, and how pernicious, this trope can be. Patricia Hill Collins argues that Mammy is a myth because the “life expectancy of enslaved women was 33 years;” slave women would not have lived long enough to fit the Mammy image.²⁹ Similarly, Catherine Clinton argues that the lack of historical evidence for Mammy suggests she does not exist.³⁰ Townes, following Herbert Gutman suggests, “most domestic workers of the time were young girls who did not fit the stereotypical image of an older black woman.”³¹ Moreover, Townes suggests “the conditions of slavery did not allow for an older black woman to be taking care of the master’s family.”³² Thus the stereotype may be a myth, and like all myths, it serves the purposes of the dominant culture even as it opens up to possibilities of subverting that same culture.

Townes argues that while “Mammy is a mythical construction, there were real African American domestic workers who performed the duties of the mythological Mammy.”³³ She also notes that “these women departed from the Mammy image both by continuing to care for their own families and by recognizing the economic and social constraints placed upon them.”³⁴ Thus, as both cultural construct and unstable myth, the Mammy provides a helpful intertext to the widow in the parable, herself a cultural construct and unstable image.

²⁷ Ibid., 110.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 51.

³⁰ Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 202.

³¹ Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 32. See also Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 443, 632.

³² Ibid., 32-33.

³³ Ibid., 35.

³⁴ Ibid.

Although antebellum proslavery writings created the Mammy image, the image prevails in writings after the civil war when the “slave system was disrupted.”³⁵ The Mammy image was a way in which black womanhood was made acceptable to whites dealing with the move of African American men and women into the workforce.

Drawing upon the slave image but cleaning it up for post-slavery readers, one highly visible version of Mammy is the Quaker Oats Company’s pancake mix icon, Aunt Jemima. The pancake mix, initially sold by the R.T. Davis Milling Company, debuted in 1890 with Nancy Green as Aunt Jemima. By 1893, Green as Aunt Jemima served pancakes at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Following her Chicago debut, Green, called the “Pancake Queen,” signed a lifetime contract to promote the mix.

The Aunt Jemima image received an update in 1989. Prior to the remake, Aunt Jemima was a smiling, dark-skinned, large woman wearing a bandanna and apron.³⁶ She appeared fully satisfied in her domesticity, and in her role of providing (white) America with comfort food. The updated Aunt Jemima is still smiling, but now she lacks the bandanna; instead she is wearing pearl earrings. While the new look makes Aunt Jemima more attractive and of a higher class, the message is still that of an African American woman serving the needs of others by cooking their food. On the other hand, the image can be viewed as subversive. One viewer may see a subservient cook; the more attuned viewer may notice the expensive jewelry and conclude that “Aunt Jemima” is doing very well economically, especially because shoppers purchase her

³⁵ Cheryl Thurber, “The Development of the Mammy Image and Mythology,” in *Southern Women: Histories and Identities*, eds. Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Theda Purdie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 87–109 (90).

³⁶ Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 74. Kern-Foxworth also asserts that many of the black dolls of the late 19th century were characterized in the familiar Aunt Jemima format: heavy-set, wearing an apron, thick red lips with a broad toothed smile. See also Doris Wilkerson, *Images of Blacks in American Culture: A Reference Guide to Information Sources*, ed. Jessie Carney Smith (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988). See also Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*.

products. Whether she is a product of the American economy or a subversion of it remains in the eye of the beholder.

As Mammy and Aunt Jemima and their various permutations became popular in the early 20th century, their influence spread to the film industry. In the 1934 film adaptation of Fannie Hurst's 1933 novel *Imitation of Life*, Louise Beavers plays the role of an Aunt Jemima-like Mammy named Delilah.³⁷ Her name already hints at the subversion the Mammy role can indicate. Delilah, like Jezebel, is the pagan, shameless, powerful, and sexual opponent of all that stable society seeks. When the faithful Mammy is revealed to be the traitorous Delilah, nothing is stable, or safe.

Delilah, having a family recipe for delicious pancakes (the novel speaks of a waffle recipe), shares the details with her (white) employer Bea Pullman. Pullman markets the recipe as "Aunt Delilah's pancakes" and goes on to become a mogul. Delilah, the acquiescent Mammy, does whatever is needed to satisfy Bea. Delilah, by sight alone, fits the Mammy stereotype: she is a large, dark-skinned woman, and she bakes. Fannie Hurst describes her as an "enormously buxom figure of a woman with a round black moon face."³⁸ The description hints at the complexities in Delilah's character however, for the moon both waxes and wanes.

To convince Delilah to sign away her rights to her own pancake recipe for 20 percent of the Aunt Delilah pancake business, Bea tells Delilah that if she signs, she will be able to have her own house and car. Delilah responds, "You gonna send me away Ms. Bea? I can't live wit ya? Oh, honey chile, please don't send me away. Don't do that to me."³⁹ When Bea asks if Delilah wants her own house, Delilah replies, "Nome, how am I going to take care of you and Miss

³⁷ John M. Stahl, *Imitation of Life*, DVD (Universal Studios, 1934).

³⁸ Fannie Hurst, *Imitation of Life*, ed. and with an introduction, Daniel Itzkovitz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 75.

³⁹ Stahl, *Imitation of Life*.

Jessie (Bea's daughter) if I ain't here?"⁴⁰ Delilah located her quality of life not in her own accomplishments but in what she could do for Bea Pullman. In Delilah, Beavers represents the perfect, faithful servant, unconcerned with her own success and completely content with servility.⁴¹

While Beavers's depiction of Mammy resonates in many ways with stereotypical images, it has its divergent moments. Although Mammy typically gives priority to white children over her own, Delilah does not. Delilah, seeking a job as a domestic worker, explains to Bea that she is good with children and willing to work for room and board. However, Delilah also has a young daughter, Peola, who is "mixed race"; she explains to Bea, "That's the draw back about a job, folks don't want Peola."⁴² Delilah continues, "I could get jobs except for Peola, but I just can't be separated from Peola no matter what happens."⁴³ Bea responds, "That's 200 pounds of mother fighting to keep her baby."⁴⁴ Delilah is willing to care for Bea's daughter just as long as she is able to care for her own daughter. Whereas the film adaptation does not acknowledge that Delilah had married and thus leaves the suggestion that Peola was born out of wedlock, the novel explains that Delilah's husband died in an Atlantic City Hospital due to complications with his lungs.⁴⁵ Delilah thus sets the model of the Mammy of the first part of the twentieth century: subservient to the white mistress, and subscribing to white culture to the extent that her daughter sought to assimilate. This combination of subservience and subscription follows from the Mammy of the South; it reappears in another novel of the same decade, Margaret Mitchell's

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Sybil Del Gaudio, "The Mammy in Hollywood Film: I'd Walk A Million Miles--For One of Her Smiles," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 20 (April 1983): 23–25, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC28folder/Mammy.html>, accessed November 28, 2016.

⁴² Stahl, *Imitation of Life*.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Hurst, *Imitation of Life*, 75.

Gone with the Wind.

In the film adaptation of *Gone With The Wind* (1939),⁴⁶ Hattie McDaniel, a large, dark-skinned woman, plays Mammy. The casting matches the 1936 novel's details. Author Margaret Mitchell describes Mammy as "a huge old woman with the small, shrewd eyes of an elephant. She was shining black, pure African."⁴⁷ This description, on a number of fronts, betrays white American construction of African (and African American) women. Comparing Mammy's eyes to that of an elephant, Mitchell continues the animalistic imagery: the black woman remains something not-quite-human.

As Mammy to Vivien Leigh's Scarlett O'Hara, McDaniel is less seen as raising a child than as attempting to control an adult who has not grown up to face her own responsibilities. Scarlett's self-interests show the harm Mammy's indulgence, despite her seeming strictness, can cause; the same case can be made for Delilah in *Imitation of Life*. Mammy, although fearless and fearsome, remains finally under the control of the agenda of her white owners, and their children.

When Scarlett learns that Ashley Wilkes, whom she loves, is going to marry his cousin Melonie Hamilton, Scarlett runs out of the house. Mammy shows her maternal caring by yelling at her, "Miss Scarlett! Whare you goin' without a shawl? The night air is fixin' to set in!"⁴⁸ Continuing her maternal scolding, Mammy asks Scarlett, "And how come you ain't ask them gentleman to stay for supper? You ain't got no more manners than a field hand!"⁴⁹ Similarly, Mitchell describes Mammy as being indignant that Suellen, Scarlett's sister, could "climb a tree or throw a rock" as well as boys.⁵⁰ Mammy's retort to Suellen's abilities was "ack lak a lil

⁴⁶ Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*, DVD (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939).

⁴⁷ Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 25.

⁴⁸ Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 59.

lady.”⁵¹ Mammy here displays the knowledge of southern womanhood that Scarlett and Suellen, free white women of privilege, seek to flaunt. Otherwise put: the enslaved woman educates the white ladies on how to conform to (white) cultural expectations.

The narrator explains Mammy’s attitude: “Whom mammy loved, she chastened. And as her love for Scarlett and her pride in her were enormous, the chastening process was practically continuous.”⁵² Readers have choices in how to assess this comment. There is no reason to doubt Mammy’s love for Scarlett and loyalty to the O’Hara family; however, Mammy’s chastening may be one of her few options of critiquing the people who owned her. Mammy is part of the plantation system: she can attempt to improve it by manipulating its representatives, but she will never critique the system itself.

Although in 1940 Hattie McDaniel (1893-1952) was the first African American to win an academy award for best supporting actress, her portrayal of Mammy and perceptions of the film’s racial insensitivity sparked protest: the NAACP and some black media groups condemned Hollywood’s unwillingness to cast blacks in roles other than servants.⁵³ Roy Wilkins, co-worker to NAACP executive secretary Walter White, said the main concern of the NAACP “was to get blacks into movies in some capacity other than clowns or servants.”⁵⁴ Prior to the shooting of the film, the NAACP sought to enlist technical advisors aware of racial stereotypes as well as to seek the removal of the term “nigger.”⁵⁵

Reviews of the movie in black newspapers were ambiguous. Some critics chastised black actors for perpetuating racial stereotypes while others saw the appearance of blacks in film as a

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 25.

⁵³ Andrea Lewis, “Celebrating Hattie McDaniel, First African American to Win Oscar,” *The Progressive*, February 24, 2004, http://www.progressive.org/media_883mplewis, accessed November 28, 2016.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Leonard T. Leff, “David Selznick’s ‘Gone with the Wind’: ‘The Negro Problem,’” *The Georgia Review* 38.1 (Spring 1984): 146–64, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41398649>.

sign of progress.⁵⁶ In a 1938 column, Earl J. Morris, the movie editor for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, “denounced Hollywood for ‘telling the world that the Negro is only a clown... is lazy, a dolt.’”⁵⁷ At the time, black actors had few casting opportunities, and few had any desire to abandon the remunerative and glamorous work of Hollywood.⁵⁸ We can see here the background of the 2015 concern “Oscars so White”; the stereotypes of the film industry still provide, at best, occasions for learning.

McDaniel had her own concerns about the stereotypes perpetuated in the film. She, too, “objected to the term ‘nigger’”⁵⁹ and asked, to no avail, that it be removed from the *Gone with the Wind* script, especially in the scene where Mammy uses the term in reference to other slaves. The novel describes the scene: Scarlett’s mother Ellen O’Hara decides to visit the home of a poor white family, the Slatterys, to baptize a dying newborn. Speaking of Ellen, Mammy says, “She doan never git no res’ on her piller for hoppin up at night time nursin’ niggers and po’ w’ite trash dat could ten’ to deyseff.”⁶⁰ For Mammy, “poor white trash” and “niggers” are equivalents: both are subordinate to the educated, wealthy, white slave owners. Perhaps it could be said that Mammy recognizes that class is just as much a social division as race: for both the poor and the “nigger,” Ellen’s chosen role was to serve as nurse. At the same time, Ellen becomes the ideal care-taker, an ideal that Mammy could never achieve. Ellen had a choice; Mammy, the enslaved, faced numerous constraints that the wife of her master did not. Yet Ellen too faced social constraints: she was, as a good Christian woman, expected to show benevolence. All women

⁵⁶ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁷ Frank Reeves, “When ‘Gone With the Wind’ Film Was Released, It Was Lauded and Lambasted,” September 23, 2014, <http://www.post-gazette.com/ae/books/2014/09/24/When-the-movie-Gone-With-the-Wind-was-released-it-was-lauded-and-lambasted/stories/201409240007?pgpageversion=pgevoke>.

⁵⁸ Leonard T. Leff, “David Selznick’s ‘Gone with the Wind’: ‘The Negro Problem,’” 148.

⁵⁹ Carlton Jackson, *Hattie: The Life of Hattie McDaniel* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1990), 42.

⁶⁰ Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, 41.

were trapped in cultural roles, rich and poor, black and white, alike. Ellen and Mammy do not recognize these constraints.

McDaniel herself was often caught between black and white audiences: black audiences wanted her to represent African Americans in terms of independence and power, while white audiences desired to see her as Mammy, in terms of nurturing and self-subservience.⁶¹ In public spats with the NAACP about her portrayal of Mammy, McDaniel asks, “What do you want me to do? Play a glamour girl and sit on Clark Gable’s knee? When you ask me not to play the parts, what have you got to offer in return?”⁶² Here we see one African American woman standing up to the (male-dominated) African American establishment. Melissa Harris-Perry, former correspondent of MSNBC, says, “McDaniel’s story is a complex mixture of ambition, compromise, resistance, rejection, and success.”⁶³ While McDaniel’s embodiment of Mammy won her public praise, her dilemma was livelihood over and against social critique in service to an entire community.

In 1959, following the contentious debate between McDaniel and the NAACP concerning representations of African and African Americans in film, and reflecting the emerging civil rights movement, Douglas Sirk produced a second version of *Imitation of Life*. In this second adaptation of Hurst’s novel, the Mammy figure Annie, played by Juanita Moore, literally changes shape. No longer is she a large, dark-skinned woman. Rather, she is slender and brown-skinned. Mammy now wears pearls and form-fitting dresses. Yet she remains a supporting actress, in all senses of the term. In a line indicative of this role, David Edwards, the playwright

⁶¹ Rebecca Wanzo, “Beyond a ‘Just’ Syntax: Black Actresses, Hollywood, and Complex Personhood,” *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 16.1 (August 19, 2006): 135–52.

⁶² Hedda Hopper, “Hattie Hates Nobody,” *The Chicago Tribune*, December 1947, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1947/12/14/page/196/article/hattie-hates-nobody>, accessed November 28, 2016.

⁶³ Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 76.

for Annie's employer, Lora Meredith, tells Annie, "you are much too pretty to be a watch dog."⁶⁴ Pretty, yes, but Annie cannot be the love interest, or her Mammy role would be compromised. Watch dog, yes – the animal coding, in light of racial stereotypes, speaks more than it says. Mammy remains primarily the care-taker, and not a sexually available, or sexually coded, woman.

After the success of both *Gone with the Wind* and *Imitation of Life* as books and film, the stereotype of the Mammy moved to television. Both Hattie McDaniel and Louise Beavers continued their mammy portrayals as Beulah Brown in *The Beulah Show* (1950-1952), while Esther Rolle, who played the domestic servant Florida Evans in the Norman Lear "feminist" comedy *Maude* (1972-1978), carried Mammy into the 70s.⁶⁵ The next decade saw Nell Carter portraying Nell Harper, a Mammy figure on the series *Gimme A Break* (1981-1987).

The characteristics of the television Mammy converge as well as diverge from the stereotype. The television Mammies generally remain large. Conversely, they either have an implied love interest, a husband, or ex-husband. Beulah shows interest in Bill Jackson, the handyman; Florida is married; Nell has an ex-husband, but is always hopeful of finding a love interest as she goes on dates and celebrates her sexuality.

Both Beulah and Nell care for their employers' children. The only child in *Maude's* household is her daughter Carol's son Phillip. However, Florida does not serve as his caretaker.

⁶⁴ Douglas Sirk, *Imitation of Life*, DVD (Universal Pictures, 1959).

⁶⁵ While Florida Evans is a domestic worker that diverges from the more common mammy image (see Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 35), she codes as a Mammy figure because of her "obedient, faithful, and nurturing" demeanor. In "Priming Mammies, Jezebels, and Other Controlling Images: An Examination of the Influence of Mediated Stereotypes on Perceptions of an African American Woman," authors Sonja M. Brown Givens and Jennifer L. Monahan define Mammy as an "African American woman housekeeper or nanny who appeared to be obedient, faithful, and nurturing." See Sonja M. Brown Givens and Jennifer L. Monahan, "Priming Mammies, Jezebels, and Other Controlling Images: An Examination of the Influence of Mediated Stereotypes on Perceptions of an African American Woman," *Media Psychology* 7.1 (2005): 87–106 (91). In many of the early episodes of *Good Times*, Florida was always in the kitchen, nurturing her children and appeasing her husband James, the patriarchal head of household. See Kendra Talley, "Portrayals of African American Women in Media," accessed July 29, 2017, <http://kendratalley.weebly.com/the-mammy.html>.

She has a family of her own and her concern is to work in order to help provide for them.

Florida, however, stands up to the overbearing Maude. Nell, with no children of her own, sets the rules for the family in her care and even keeps her boss, the father of the household, in line.

These Mammies are often marked by sharp one-liners; moving into the Sapphire role of speaking truth-to-power, yet by body type and general loving demeanor removed from Sapphire's bitterness, they remain likeable and respectable. They also remain economically subservient and dependent.

These television Mammies do reflect on their social roles; they do so primarily with pride rather than with critique. For example, in an episode of *Maude*, Florida's husband Henry expresses shame that his wife is a maid. Florida reminds him, "Your mother was a maid; that's how your brothers got through school and you got to be a fireman. My grandmother was a maid; that's how my daddy got a little schooling. There are a lot of women, Henry, on both sides of my family who worked all of their lives in white kitchens so that their kids could get some of the things they should have. You wanna be proud of something you be proud of them 'cause they was all black women and I tell ya there ain't never been a better woman than that."⁶⁶ The statement reflects pride; it does not, however, delve into why other social roles or economic assets were not available to those mothers. In an episode of *Nell* entitled "the Unmarried Couple," Nell speaks to the subject of a (white) pregnant, unmarried woman. When her (white, male) employer complains about this apparent lack of social mores, Nell tells him, "She's just a nice kid, a nice kid who is going to have a baby."⁶⁷ Nell expresses an alternative vision of what

⁶⁶ *Maude* (Television), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQuvK2pBxrA>, accessed March 30, 2017. The National Black Feminist Organization as well as the San Francisco based Black Women Organized for Action was instrumental in the development of the Florida Evans character. These groups worked with producer Norman Lear and his Tandem Productions unit in depicting minorities on television. See Kimberly Springer, "Good Times for Florida and Black Feminism," *Cercles* 8 (2003): 122–35.

⁶⁷ *Gimme a Break* (Television), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nL-ujbgRdoo&list=PLznaep8vEBgHNEt030JXRkG-YxM0SqDRx&index=42>, accessed March 30, 2017.

for the time would be seen by many as social progress: there is no reason to stigmatize a woman pregnant out of wedlock. That an African American woman voices this point has a double-edged aspect to it. Positively, Nell represents the progressive approach; negatively, she can reinforce the impression that African Americans have a defective ethical system. We might wonder how the scene might have played differently were the pregnant, unwed mother African American.

The 2011 movie *The Help* moves the Mammy stereotype into the twenty-first century. The title of Katrina Dyonne Thompson's article, "'Taking Care of White Babies, That's What I Do': The Help and Americans' Obsession with the Mammy,"⁶⁸ neatly frames the discussion. In *The Help*, the Mammy image is shared between the non-threatening and acquiescent domestic worker Aibileen Clark and the aggressive maid Minny Jackson.⁶⁹ Aibileen highlights Mammy's care of white children rather than her own. Sharing her story with Skeeter, the white writer who seeks to record the thoughts and feelings of the maids, Aibileen remarks that she had raised 17 children: "Looking after white babies, that's what I do."⁷⁰ She takes pride in her care even as she realizes she is doing something that the biological mothers do not have the time, or the inclination, to do: "I know how to get them babies to sleep, stop cryin', and go in the toilet bowl 'fore their mamas even get outta bed in the morning."⁷¹ Aibileen does more than provide physical care to the children; she also provides emotional nurture. She chants a daily affirmation to Mae Mobley, her employer's toddler: "You is kind. You is smart. You is important."⁷² The black dialect marks her as uneducated according to white standards, yet the content of her litany shows her nature. She places kindness before either intelligence or status. Although Aibileen

⁶⁸ Katrina Dyonne Thompson, "'Taking Care of White Babies, That's What I Do': The Help and Americans' Obsession with the Mammy," in *From Uncle Tom's Cabin to The Help: Critical Perspectives on White-Authorized Narratives of Black Life*, ed. Claire Oberon Garcia, Vershawn Ashanti Young, and Charise Pimentel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 61.

⁶⁹ Tate Taylor, *The Help*, DVD (DreamWorks Pictures and Reliance Entertainment, 2011).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

does all the cooking, cleaning, and grocery shopping for her white family, her most important task is taking care of Mae Mobley; she treats Mae Mobley as if she were her own child. That Aibileen had a son who was killed makes Mae Mobley even more her surrogate child.

Minnie Jackson, Aibileen's best friend, represents the aggressive Mammy. Kathryn Stockett, author of the novel on which the movie is based, describes Minnie as "short and big."⁷³ Although Minny has a husband and five children, her focus is her white women employers rather than her household. Minny is defiant whereas Aibileen is acquiescent. Rather than use the outhouse as her employer Hilly Holbrook demands, Minny uses the bathroom inside the house. She also brings to work her own toilet tissue because Hilly marks the toilet paper so that she will know if Minny is using the inside bathroom. Minny and Aibileen represent the split in the stereotypical Mammy: Aibileen is non-threatening while Minny is aggressive; Aibileen is slender while Minny is full-figured.

Another iteration of the Mammy trope is displayed in the television series *Girlfriends* (2000-2008). The sitcom centers around four friends, Joan Clayton (Traci Ellis Ross), Maya Wilkes (Golden Brooks), Lynn Searcey (Persia White), and Toni Marie Childs (Jill Marie Jones), who address relational issues such as family, dating, and friendships. Joan, the Mammy of the group who reinforces the image of the nurturing African American woman,⁷⁴ is the connecting point for all the women. She attended elementary and high school with Toni, went to college with both Toni and Lynn, and is Maya's employer. Slender, fair skinned, and stylishly dressed, Joan is a partner in a law firm. The setting of the series is often at Joan's home where everyone meets for entertainment, advice, and even conflict. Like the other Mammies, Joan takes care of

⁷³ Kathryn Stockett, *The Help* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2009), 13.

⁷⁴ Tamara Barnett, "Mammy's Image and Purpose" Applying the Mammy Myth to Contemporary Representations of African American Women," *All Academic*, accessed October 27, 2016, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p172283_index.html.

others: she financially helps Lynn who has a series of menial jobs although she is highly educated; she is Maya's employer and responsible for introducing her to a better lifestyle than her working-class background had provided; she is Toni's confidante and the one who is able to tolerate Toni's snobbery. Joan also sacrifices for her girlfriends. Yet Joan has no biological children, and she pines for a relationship that will lead to marriage. Unlike the other Mammies, she is defined by what she lacks: a husband. Finally the media presents a financially independent, stylish, respectable Mammy – yet now the Mammy figure loses the one positive aspect her other iterations had: they were not dependent on a man to complete them.

A final Mammy figure, although the label is not without controversy, is Oprah Winfrey. Winfrey began her rise in the media world in 1983 with the *AM Chicago* television talk show. By 1986, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* was nationally syndicated. Winfrey's program was filled with "experts and needy patients/participants who clung to each other and to Winfrey for the resolution of their problems."⁷⁵ Winfrey's presence as a large African American woman dispensing wisdom and nurture and even salvation to a predominantly white audience⁷⁶ points toward Mammy; her lack of husband (despite her connection to Stedman Graham) complements this connection.

Critics of the show charged that Winfrey "denied her own blackness, hugged more whites than African Americans, and befriended white persons more readily."⁷⁷ Beretta E. Smith-Shomade notes that in a 1989 episode about gun violence: "Winfrey sat between a colored (Latina) woman and a white couple mediating and negotiating the ideological position of gun control and the personal feelings of loss. In her brown body Winfrey effectively stood in for

⁷⁵ Beretta E. Smith-Shomade, *Shaded Lives: African American Women and Television* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 154.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

nonrepresented black women who have lost their children through gunfire. But within a white articulation/framework of the problem, she decolorized it.”⁷⁸

Alternatively, how Winfrey is regarded will depend upon the activity in question. While the television show features a predominantly white audience as well as predominantly white “experts” (“Dr. Phil” being the most famous), Winfrey also focuses care on African American and African causes. Her “children” are not only the offspring of privileged white families. For example, her “Angel Network distributed more than \$80 million in 2010 to help build schools in several countries and to rebuild homes damaged by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.”⁷⁹ Winfrey has donated money to historically black institutions such as Spelman and Morehouse Colleges; she also sponsors the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa.

The stereotype of the nurturing, physically substantial, African American woman has not only become more complex and positive, as *The Help* and *Oprah Winfrey* demonstrate; it has also been reconfigured for reinforcing racist views. A “darker” iteration of Mammy is today’s stereotype of the Bad Black Mother. The difference between the two stereotypes lies in how each is situated. Mammy is (usually) without a husband or at least not defined in terms of a husband and possibly her own children; she is situated predominantly within white homes;⁸⁰ the children for whom she cares are not necessarily or only her own. This sacrifice of her own children is accorded merit by the stereotype: the more “important” children are those of the white owner or employer. The related trope, the Bad Black Mother, is also husbandless, but she is situated in the black home.⁸¹ She too places other concerns above those of her children, but she is

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ryan Haggerty, “Giving to Chicago and Beyond: Oprah’s Philanthropy Makes a Difference in Chicago, Around the World,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 20, 2011, sec. Metro, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-05-20/entertainment/ct-ae-0522-oprah-causes-metro-20110520_1_philanthropy-harpo-janice-peck, accessed January 20, 2017.

⁸⁰ Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 116.

⁸¹ Ibid.

criminalized for not fitting the image of the nurturing, stay-at-home mom. Moreover, lacking the resources that (predominantly white, middle or upper-class) women have, such as cars, easy access to well-stocked grocery stores and medical care, daycare options and afterschool programs, she appears to be an inadequate caretaker and provider for her children.

Patricia Collins speaks of the Bad Black Mother as a “failed mammy.”⁸² These women, who often find themselves having to choose between providing for their children by leaving home to work, and caring for their children by remaining with them at home,⁸³ traverse racial and ethnic identities, but the face of this phenomenon is African American. The year 2014 witnessed a number of media stories of African American mothers “abandoning” children in parks and malls or falsifying school records; these mothers were actually attending job interviews and seeking better educational opportunities for their children.⁸⁴ What looks like “abandonment” to one viewer is, to another, an act of desperation. African American women often pay the “demonizing price for doing whatever is necessary to solidify their family unit.”⁸⁵ Mammy is praised for being an anchor to white families while the Bad Black Mother is criticized for being an anchor to her own family.

Mammy receives a second update in the Strong Black Woman/Super Woman stereotype.

The Strong Black Woman/Superwoman is derivative of both the Mammy and mule stereotypes

⁸² Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 75.

⁸³ Sarah Jaffe, “GOP’s ‘Bad Black Mother’ Myth: Meet the Modern-Day ‘Welfare Queens,’” *Salon.com*, August 14, 2014, http://www.salon.com/2014/08/06/gops_bad_black_mother_myth_meet_the_modern_day_welfare_queens/.

⁸⁴ See Noah Remnick, “Debra Harrell and the Mythology of Bad Black Mothers,” *Latimes.com*, August 24, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/opinion-la/la-ol-debra-harrell-mythology-black-mothers-20140718-story.html>. Debra Harrell was arrested because her daughter was playing alone in a park. See Staff, “Mom Accused of Leaving Kids at Food Court during Job Interview,” *Cbsnews.com*, July 20, 2015, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/texas-mom-accused-of-leaving-kids-at-food-court-during-job-interview/>. Laura Browder was arrested July 15, 2015 after her 6 year old daughter and 2 year old son were found unattended in the food court of Houston’s Memorial City Mall. See Julianne Hing, “Jezebels, Welfare Queens--And Now, Criminally Bad Black Moms,” *Colorlines.com*, August 8, 2011, <http://www.colorlines.com/articles/jezebels-welfare-queens-and-now-criminally-bad-black-moms>. Both Kelley Williams-Bolar and Tanya McDowell were charged with falsifying records so that their children could attend better schools.

⁸⁵ Crowder, *When Momma Speaks*, 10.

from chattel slavery. She, like the mule, is a woman of inordinate strength; she has the ability to tolerate an unusual amount of misery along with heavy, distasteful work. She also believes it is her responsibility to meet the needs of others; what must be done, gets done, and no one gets in her way. The Strong Black Woman/Superwoman does not have the same fears, weaknesses, and insecurities as other women; she believes herself to be and is, in fact, stronger emotionally than most men.⁸⁶ On the other hand, she imagines herself a failure if she must ask others for help.⁸⁷ The two points, apparently contradictory, frame the stereotype. In order to remain a superwoman, the Strong Black Woman cannot express fear or weakness; however, in order to remain human, she must. The model thus becomes an impossible ideal.

This stereotype combining care for others and physical as well as emotional strength is a badge of honor for many African American women: it denotes their having not only endured gender and social oppressions,⁸⁸ but their having overcome them. The stereotype also fosters a positive self-image of an individual able to take care of herself as well as of African American families and communities.⁸⁹ While the Superwoman/Strong Black woman trope developed during the height of the women's rights era when organizations like the National Organization for Women called for women's equality in the broader society, the stereotype still resonates now. African American women work, are the heads of households, and are raising children alone. They have to be super and strong in order to survive daily.

Yet this stereotype comes with a price. Studies in health and psychology have found that while the Strong Black Woman/Superwoman stereotype contributes to a positive self-image, the

⁸⁶ Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Warner Books, 1979), 154.

⁸⁷ Anita Jones Thomas, Karen McCurtis Witherspoon, and Suzette L. Speight, "Toward the Development of Stereotypic Roles for Black Women Scale," *JBP* 30.3 (2004): 446–442.

⁸⁸ Natalie N. Watson and Carla D. Hunter, "'I Had To Be Strong': Tensions in the Strong Black Woman Schema," *JBP*, July 30, 2015, 1–29.

⁸⁹ Cheryl L. Woods-Giscombe, "Superwoman Schema: African American Women's Views on Stress, Strength, and Health," *QHR* 20 (May 2010): 668–683.

stereotype also contributes to liabilities such as increased emotional distress, obesity and cardiovascular disease.⁹⁰ Caretaker to others, the Strong Black Woman risks sacrificing herself; the Strong Black Woman/Superwoman becomes the unhealthy African American woman.

The Strong Black Woman/Superwoman also takes on other negative connotations, from charges of being counterproductive for black families to accusations of emasculating African American men. Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Daniel Patrick Moynihan issued “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action.” The Moynihan Report, as the paper became known, is credited with both detailing how racial inequality impacted African American families as well as being the purveyor of negative stereotypes of African Americans, particularly African American women. Arguing that the “heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family,”⁹¹ Moynihan located the deterioration as caused by both the high unemployment rate of African American men (today the report would need to add the disproportionate incarceration rate) and by African American women being divorced, separated, or living apart from their husbands. He also surmised that the phenomenon of women as single parents and head of households contributed significantly to African American economic and social problems. Critics of the report argued that Moynihan failed to “deal directly with the influence of job discrimination and racism,” which were contributing factors hindering African Americans from rising above poverty.⁹² L. Alex Swan indicates that while the report is based upon 1960 census data, Moynihan is “blind to what the data reveals.”⁹³ Swan, elucidating other factors in the 1960 census such as income, found, for example, that low-income African

⁹⁰ Ibid., 683

⁹¹ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” *United States Department of Labor*, March 1965, <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/webid-meynihan.htm>

⁹² L. Alex Swan, “A Methodological Critique of The Moynihan Report,” *The Black Scholar* 5.9 (June 1974): 18–24 (21), https://www.jstor.org/stable/41065735?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents, accessed March 31, 2017.

⁹³ Ibid.

American and rural families were nearly identical in the number of female headed households. Swan concludes, “Income has a greater effect on family instability than race.”⁹⁴

The Moynihan report bolstered the stereotypes of the dominating and emasculating African American woman; the Super Woman became blamed for the unemployment and lack of educational opportunities for African American men.⁹⁵ Although African American women were doing what was necessary to sustain family and communities due to absent and unemployed men, social prejudices of the 1960s undergirded the thoughts that these women should take a back seat to the men of their communities. If the woman were the major breadwinner, or the primary parent, or the community leader, then the man was disempowered, and this idea was culturally intolerable.

This selective survey of the Mammy stereotype highlights the domestic abilities and self-sacrifice of black women even as it notes Mammy’s complicity with or resignation to the status quo. It reveals that when the stereotype becomes complicated and begins to break down, as new opportunities present themselves to African American women, demonization by outsiders and self-criticism on the inside come in the wake of liberation. Caring for others, Mammy does not sufficiently take care of herself; caring specifically for the families of (white) others, Mammy may not provide for her own children what they need. The stereotypes of the Bad Black Mother and SuperWoman, derived from Mammy, come with their own set of problems, and potentials.

Luke’s parable provides an opportunity for readers to reimagine Mammy, in her various deployments, and so too to reimagine the widow. The ancient parable and the American image intersect and so inform each other.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁵ Moynihan, “The Negro Family.”

The Widow as Mammy

In a certain urban area there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that same city, Mammy – he knew her; everyone knew her — kept coming to him and saying, “Give me justice against my opponent.” Now Mammy had a way about herself - once she set her mind to a thing, there was no stopping her. And she had set her mind on making sure that her children were taken care of. Mammy was going to get what she wanted. For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because Mammy keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she will not give me a black eye.”

The widow in Luke’s parable is traditionally seen as helpless and needy. Both biblical widows and the Mammies throughout history challenge this view. While some widows may be helpless, others help themselves to whatever they need. Indeed, the named widows of the Bible are subjects rather than objects; they are active agents in obtaining what they want, despite androcentric or patriarchal systems that might have thwarted their efforts. The first biblical widow, Tamar (Genesis 38) acts when her father-in-law Judah refuses to follow levirate practice and marry his youngest son to her. Whether her goal was to secure a child and so her place in Judah’s family (the traditional reading) or to kill Judah (the text does not describe her motives, although it does indicate that the two other men with whom she had sexual relations died),⁹⁶ she makes her way into biblical history and David’s genealogy. Ruth and Naomi, two widows, make a life for themselves in Bethlehem; the former shows her resourcefulness through work in the field and on the threshing floor; the latter provides guidance in terms of manipulating Boaz into

⁹⁶ Mordechai A. Friedman “Tamar, A Symbol of Life: The ‘Killer Wife’ Superstition in the Bible and Jewish Tradition,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 15 (1990): 23–61.

action. Abigail, widow of Nabal (and perhaps complicit in his death), secures her fate by marrying David (1 Samuel 25). Bathsheba, David's widow, secures her place in Solomon's court, and had Solomon's rival Adonijah obtained the throne, Bathsheba would have been protected by him as well (see 1 Kings 2). The widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17) supports Elijah, and she demands that the prophet revive her child. The widowed mother of seven sons (2 Maccabees 7; 4 Maccabees 15-18) becomes the epitome of fidelity during the Maccabean crisis. Judith saves her country when the male leaders lose courage. There is little reason, given these individual biblical characters, to think that an individual widow in the parable would be helpless.

It is primarily in the context of the Third Gospel that women are relegated to a secondary status: Anna is subordinate to Simeon; she relies on the apostles and the community for support because she lives in the Temple; the widow of Nain is cast as a pathetic figure whose pathos can only be corrected by Jesus' performance of a miracle; the widows in Acts, from the Hellenists overlooked in the daily distribution to the widows who display for Peter the garments Tabitha/Dorcas made, rely on the apostles for their support or, in the case of Tabitha/Dorcas, a resuscitation. Luke too attempts to constrain the widow of the parable by making her the model of those who pray always and do not lose heart.

For much of the Black Church today, the widow stays in her prayerful place and knows that, as sung by Sam Cooke, "a change is gonna come."⁹⁷ Black Church traditions, in theory and on Sunday mornings, follow the Lukan frame and celebrate the prayerful widow. She is the prayerful, faithful, petitioner to be emulated by Christians, and especially by women. The widow also represents the oppressed and is therefore fodder for neat and tidy sermons. Thus,

⁹⁷ Sam Cooke, *A Change Is Gonna Come*, (Hollywood: RCA Victor, 1964).

“persistence paid off” becomes the takeaway message of the morning preaching.⁹⁸ On the academic side of the discussion, too, the “widow represents those who continue to pray for God to resolve an unjust situation and because of her persistence God will act to bring resolution to the unfair circumstance.”⁹⁹ The message continues to be wait for God to take care of the situation.

Mammy may pray always and she does not lose heart – but nor is prayer the only action she takes. Reading the widow as Mammy adds complexity to the parable. Mammies, like widows, are more than stock characters who act in prescribed ways. They take care of their employers’ households, but also do what is necessary for their survival. Hattie McDaniel fought a racist Hollywood system as well as people in her own community who wanted to limit her roles. Delilah in *Imitation of Life*, while self-deprecating in her comments to Bea Pullman, also keeps a roof over her head. While Luke tells a story of the prayerful widow, allowing the widow to speak on her own terms tells us something different.

The Lukan contextualization of the widow limits her to prayer only. The parable’s details contradict this impression. The widow does not remain at home; rather, she consistently goes to the courthouse and demands justice. She steps out of her home when circumstances demand. The city, or in my rereading the “urban area,” is her territory; she knows the neighborhood, and she knows the seats of power. Had the parable been set in the ante-bellum South, the scene would be the Plantation and the judge would be the master. And Mammy still would have gotten what she wanted. That she visits the judge suggests other courthouse personnel allow her entry; given the stereotype of the large woman, we might even imagine her

⁹⁸ Van J. Alexander, “Persistence Paid Off” at Christ Kingdom Church, 2012, <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=2984835184321>, accessed December 10, 2016.

⁹⁹ Stephanie B. Crowder, “The Gospel of Luke,” in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, ed. Brian Blount et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 158–85 (178).

to have pushed the gatekeepers out of the way. Perhaps she traded on her reputation: known to the community, and known as unmoveable once she set her mind to something, when she comes to court, the judge had to realize he was defeated.

The widow's agency is also evident in her freedom to make her request; the widow Mammy says what is on her mind. Her statement, "grant me justice against my opponent" follows one translation of the Greek imperative ἐκδίκησόν; it is a demand rather than a request. As Hattie McDaniel's Mammy is not afraid of reprisals from the O'Hara family, and as Nell, Florida, and their sisters say what they think – to their social "betters" and employers; to the men in their lives; to the children for whom they care -- the widow Mammy is also unafraid of any negative response. She recognizes her socially inferior place vis-à-vis the judge, and she does not care. Like the judge, it appears she does not care what others think of her.

However, unlike the judge, Mammy does care for others. The parable does not tell us the details of the widow's case; the Mammy trope allows us to fill in the details. The case is one of justice for Mammy's (white) children. She is fighting for Ms. Scarlett (*Gone with the Wind*), J.J., Thelma, and Michael (*Good Times*), or Katie, Julie, and Sam (*Gimme A Break*). Her cause is righteous in that it is self-less.

If we read the widow as Hattie McDaniel, Nell Carter, or Oprah Winfrey, another wrinkle enters the scene: we would have to accept the judge's fear that the widow might physically do him harm. Mammy is no frail, aged woman hampered by osteoporosis or a limited diet; she is a towering figure of strength as well as righteous anger.

Next, reading the widow as Mammy commends reading her desire as seeking "justice" rather than "vengeance." Mammy's concern is not in harming others, but in protecting her charges. This interpretation does not guarantee that her request is "just" by all standards,

however. Mammy does not, in her traditional role, disrupt the status quo. Her claim may seek the reinstatement of whatever system had aided those in her care, even if that system worked to her own detriment or the detriment of her own children.

Given the Moynihan report as well as more recent work on incarceration rates for African American men,¹⁰⁰ yet another permutation can be added to the widow as Mammy. This Mammy is a woman who knows the court system, and she has seen her family involved in it. She may be asking for justice for her sons, or the young men in her neighborhood, perhaps imprisoned on charges made by her opponent, whether a rival gang member or a member of the police force. She herself may have been caught in that system; she may have been charged with being a Bad Black Mother who “deserted” her children when she was, in fact, out getting medicine for them at the drug store. Her opponent may be social services, or a manager who terminated her because she chose to leave work early to care for an elderly aunt. Or again, she may be the Superwoman who will never cease to fight for her cause, even if it eventually destroys her health.

That the judge was suspicious that the widow might possibly give him a black eye also gives weight to reading the widow as Mammy. Mammy has both the physical size and the community respect to cause him damage. And while he – like the master on the plantation or the judge sitting in a court – may not care what the enslaved, or the local urban poor think of him, he will acquiesce, mostly because such acquiescing benefits him.

Reading the widow as Mammy opens a pancake mix of interpretations, each one plausible, and each one preach-able. The intertextual approach yields new insights into the parable, in terms of what is missing, from the details of the widow’s case to the absence of any family to the construction of the opponent. It gives new insight into the judge’s decision. It gives

¹⁰⁰ See especially Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

African American women greater impetus to fight for what they need, greater awareness of the demonization that might accompany them to court, greater concern for self-awareness, and greater focus on *whose* justice is at stake.

Jezebel

Jezebel remains an enduring symbol of female depravity; she epitomizes the sexualized and so wicked woman.¹⁰¹ Descriptors of Jezebel include “cheap harlot, bimbo, slutty, ruthless, calculating, temptress, and a woman who takes or ruins the life of another.”¹⁰² When mapped onto European and American racism, the enduring image of the black Jezebel began. Thus the “archetypal power of Jezebel’s name stretches across the millennia.”¹⁰³

The stereotype of Jezebel has its origins in the Bible, but not simply with the queen who gives her name to it. Women, and especially foreign women, are successful seductresses. Both Tamar, who may well be a Canaanite (she is married to Judah’s sons, but her genealogy and so her ethnicity is not given) and Ruth the Moabite use their sexuality to obtain their desires; Tamar seduces her father in law Judah because of his refusal to honor the agreement to give her his youngest son in marriage, while Ruth seduces (chastely) Boaz with, if she is following her mother-in-law Naomi’s project, the hopes of obtaining economic security. Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite and perhaps a Kenite herself, seduces the general Sisera, and then plunges a tent-peg, a domestic implement, into his temple (Judges 4-5). Delilah, the Philistine, seduces Samson to reveal the secret of his strength (Judges 16). Judith plays on this trope by being an

¹⁰¹ Michael Satchell, “Jezebel Was A Killer and Prostitute, but She Had Her Good Side,” News, *U.S. News and World Report*, (January 25, 2008), <http://www.usnews.com/news/religion/articles/2008/01/25/jezebel-was-a-killer-and-prostitute-but-she-had-her-good-side>, accessed October 31, 2016.

¹⁰² Tina Pippin, “Jezebel Re-Vamped,” *Semeia* 69–70 (1995): 221–33 (221).

¹⁰³ Janet Howe Gaines, *Music in the Old Bones: Jezebel Through the Ages* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 98.

insider, a Jewish woman, who like Jael seduces an enemy general and then attacks his head, this time by chopping it off with her own sword.

One could even claim that Eve – also a non-Jew and so a type of “foreigner” —begins the stereotype. She does not actually “tempt” the man; he is, as far as a simple reading of Genesis 3 suggests, standing by her side when she gives him the fruit. Nevertheless, the image of Eve as temptress has continued through the centuries.

The biblical Jezebel, daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, is married to Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kgs 16:31). Noted for killing the prophets of God (1 Kgs 18:4), mocking the prophet Elijah (1 Kgs 19:2), and scandalously taking the property of Naboth (1 Kgs 21:5-25), Jezebel is the opposite of what women should be. Not only is she a Baal-worshiping, conniving murderer, she is independent and indeed controls her husband: this is not an acceptable paradigm for women.¹⁰⁴ Jezebel was eaten by dogs in Jezreel (2 Kgs 9:36-37) as prophesied by Elijah. Such is the fate of those who would follow in her footsteps.

While Jezebel is often read as a seducing, sexually promiscuous woman, her biography in 1 Kings belies such descriptions. The Deuteronomic historian (DH) situates her as a scapegoat for explaining Israel’s infidelity and consequent famine. The two Books of Kings consistently record how Israel’s rulers “did evil in the sight of the Lord” (1 Kgs 11:26; 14:22; 15:25, 33; 16:7, 25, 30; 22:52; 2 Kgs 3:2; 8:18; 8:27; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9). Jezebel’s husband Ahab did “evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him” (1 Kgs 16:30). Further highlighting Ahab’s dysfunction, the DH says, “And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him” (16:31). Jezebel meanwhile supports 450 prophets of Baal who “eat at her table” (18:19). Gail Streete suggests it is the foreign woman

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15.

“Jezebel who caused Ahab to commit ‘whoredom’” by worshipping another deity.¹⁰⁵ From the biblical perspective, she’s a criminal; from the perspective of the Sidonians, she’s doing exactly what a queen should do, including maintaining the priests of her god and so that god’s divine protection.

Powerful, foreign women like Jezebel are especially threatening and therefore all the more likely to be portrayed as sexual traitors, as “whores.”¹⁰⁶ Yet as Deborah Appler indicates, “there is little evidence in the Hebrew text connecting Jezebel to sexual immorality. Rather, the text portrays her as faithful to her husband and to her native deities.”¹⁰⁷ Jezebel is attentive to Ahab’s desires. When Naboth refused to hand over his vineyard, his ancestral inheritance (1 Kgs 21:3), to Ahab, Jezebel concocted a scheme to accuse Naboth of cursing God (21:8-15). As a result of this legal chicanery, Naboth was stoned to death (21:13) and Ahab took possession of his vineyard.

Jezebel “achieved with Ahab a husband-wife relationship which is almost unique in the Old Testament.”¹⁰⁸ While the wives, including concubines, of kings can be numerous, Robert Frost notes, “the Hebrew Bible does not mention any other wife for Ahab.”¹⁰⁹ Frost continues, “both of [Ahab’s] sons who succeeded him on the throne were children of Jezebel.”¹¹⁰ Even by contemporary standards, Jezebel and Ahab might be viewed as model marriage partners; there are no extra-marital children, and they support and nurture each other.

Readings that associate Jezebel with sexual immorality can be linked to 2 Kgs 9:22 when Israel’s king, Jehu, responding to Joram’s question, “Is it peace?” responds, “What peace can

¹⁰⁵ Gail Corrington Streete, *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 64.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

¹⁰⁷ Deborah Appler, “A Queen Fit For A Feast: Digesting the Jezebel Story (1 Kings 15:29-2 Kings 9:37)” (Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2004), 39.

¹⁰⁸ Stanley Brice Frost, “Judgment on Jezebel, Or A Wronged Woman,” *ThTo* 20.4 (1964): 503–17 (507).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 507.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

there be, so long as the many whoredoms and sorceries of your mother Jezebel continue?” Frost, discussing Jehu’s description, says, “The world has uncritically accepted this assessment of her.”¹¹¹ The following three examples, from antiquity to today, prove his point. First, patristic writers such as Jerome argued that Naboth’s vineyard, which Jezebel helped Ahab to acquire, would be a playground for sexual impropriety.¹¹² Second, the website for “CharismaNews.com” lists numerous postings about Jezebel and uses her name to talk about the decline of morality in the US system. One author claims, *inter alia*, that “Jezebel’s greatest deception is convincing Spirit-filled churchgoers that it is a power-hungry, self-promoting sprit of control.”¹¹³ Jezebel is “a spirit of seduction that leads people into immorality and idolatry.”¹¹⁴

Another proposes the following etiology, a mash-up of speculation, incorrect etymologies, and contemporary stereotypes of non-Yahwistic practice:

One woman brought down the kingdom of Israel. One woman sent the ministers and prophets of God running in fear for their lives. Her name was Jezebel. Jezebel was a seductive prophetess of the false god, Baal. We first hear about this infamous queen in 1 Kings 16:30-31. Jezebel was the daughter of a king-priest of Sidon named Ethbaal. Ethbaal means man of Baal or with him is Baal. He was a high priest of Astarte. This is very important. Astarte was the Canaanite fertility goddess, also called Ishtar. In the Babylonian pantheon, this deity was the daughter of the moon god, Sin, and later the consort of Anu, the deity of heaven. She is usually regarded as the goddess of love and sensual pleasure or fertility. The Assyrians also fostered her identification as the goddess of war. This high priest of Baal, Ethbaal, personally

¹¹¹ Ibid., 505.

¹¹² Gaines, *Music in the Old Bones: Jezebel Through the Ages*, 98.

¹¹³ Jennifer Leclair, “Have You Been Fooled by the Jezebel Deception?,” *Www.charismamag.com*, June 28, 2013, <http://www.charismamag.com/spirit/spiritual-growth/18157-have-you-been-fooled-by-the-jezebel-deception>, accessed March 23, 2017.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.,

mentored his daughter in the heathen worship of this pagan god of sexuality and spiritual war. This king, who was entirely devoted to Baal, indoctrinated his daughter with the notion that she was an ally of Baal, and her goddess of fertility is not only the giver of life but also the giver of death. He gave her the assignment of bringing death and destruction to all those who oppose Baal. Accordingly, he named her Jeze-Baal, (jěz'ə, bəl), or Jezebel.¹¹⁵

As far as any actual narrative of Jezebel's lasciviousness goes, the most the DH records is the following: when Jehu goes to Jezreel to complete the decimation of Ahab's family, Jezebel "painted her eyes, and adorned her head" (9:30). Her mode is not of seduction but of resistance. Jezebel lived as a queen, and she determines to die as one. Third, the connection between Jezebel and sexual immorality, hinted at by the DH, becomes developed in the Book of Revelation, a volume that codes women as sexual objects and that depicts Rome as a Great Whore whose body is dismembered. That John would sexualize his opponents should therefore not surprise. John writes to the Church at Thyatira, "But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings" (Rev. 2:20-22). "Fornication" may mean, for John, any form of sexual activity, given that John promotes male virginity: "No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these

¹¹⁵ Landon Schott, "Has America Compromised with the Jezebel Spirit," Charisma News, January 25, 2017, <http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/62599-has-america-compromised-with-the-jezebel-spirit>, accessed 11 April 2017.

follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev 14:3-4). The “bed” (κλίνη) on which Jezebel is to be tossed could be a “sick bed,” but connotations of bed in the sense of place of sexual activity cannot be ruled out. The “adultery” is likely some sort of compromise with the state (perhaps eating meat offered to idols or participating in state functions where the state gods are evoked), but the sexual coding of the term damns Jezebel as a sexual being, and negative exemplar. Jezebel – sexy, foreign, powerful, seductive, ruthless – was ripe for stereotypical picking.

The sexualization of Jezebel continues with a 141-line misogynist Latin poem found only in one 11th century manuscript (Paris BN lat. 8121A).¹¹⁶ The text, translated and annotated by Jan Ziolkowski, in which a character named “Jezebel” speaks, is replete with sexual innuendo and sometimes direct commentary. “Jezebel” speaks about her sexual desires as having increased in her old age. The text suggests for the etymology of “Jezebel” the meaning “a discharge of menstrual blood” and a “heap of shit.”

The connection of the pagan, lascivious Jezebel with African women, part of the cross-cultural process of “othering” through sexual stereotyping, began well before American ante-bellum culture. In the introduction to her edited collection, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, Kate Lowe notes numerous stereotypes of African natives, including “[l]ack of appreciation of the rules of civility and civilization produced the insidious stereotype of ‘the laughing black’, carefree because too stupid to understand the misery of his or her situation,”¹¹⁷ being “lazy and irresponsible” and having a “propensity toward drunkenness and criminality.”¹¹⁸ The stereotype of having “uncontrollable” sexuality¹¹⁹ marks the black bodies of both men and women; the move may have been inevitable: “Europeans mistook semi-nudity, appropriate for

¹¹⁶ See details in Janet L. Nelson, “Review of Ziolkowski (Jan M.), *Jezebel*, in *Recesses*, *Revue beige de philology et d’histoire* 73 (1995): 444-47.

¹¹⁷ Kate Lowe, “The Stereotyping of black Africans,” in Thomas Foster Earle and K.J.P. Lowe (eds.), *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-26

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

the tropics, for lewdness.”¹²⁰ Lowe summarizes, “In general, however, Europeans considered black African sexual promiscuity was both a consequence of life without boundaries and an example of superior physical prowess.”¹²¹

American biblical interpretation adopted the foreign woman as a “Jezebel” by providing it a racial coding. The portrayal of African American women as “lascivious, seductive, alluring, worldly, beguiling, tempting, and lewd began in slavery,” extended through the Jim Crow Period, and continues to today.¹²² While Mammy is imaged as the asexual woman who sacrifices her own family for the sake of her white owners/employers, “Jezebel is her opposite”¹²³; this alluring and lascivious woman invites white male sexual attention.¹²⁴

Josiah Priest, a pro-slavery minister, likened black women to the biblical Jezebel, the “worst woman ever to appear in the annals of time.”¹²⁵ He describes Jezebel as one who imitates a beast by getting down on all fours and disrobing herself in the presence of her priests and worshippers. The imagery suggests that Jezebel is an animal; echoes of the mule sound here, as do the views of black women as subhuman. Priest’s Jezebel – his image of African American woman – is of an animal who has no shame, and whose culture lacks shame as well. Priest argues that Jezebel was “guilty of the foulest actions, too bad to be believed.”¹²⁶ He concludes that black women were the sexually perverse daughters of Jezebel who derived pleasure from cavorting nude before men.

¹²⁰ Deborah G. White, *Ar’n’t I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, Revised (New York: Norton, 1999), 29.

¹²¹ Kate Lowe, “The Stereotyping of black Africans,” 32.

¹²² David Pilgrim, “Jezebel Stereotype” (Ferris Institutional Repository, 2012), <https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/jezebel/>, accessed May 24, 2017.

¹²³ Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women*, 10.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹²⁵ Josiah Priest, *Bible Defence of Slavery: And Origin, Fortunes, and History of the Negro Race*, 5th ed. (Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2010), 187

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 187

Priest even connects black women to Jezebel via an invented racialized genealogy. He determined that “Jezebel’s father “Ethball was the king of Zidonia [i.e., the Sidonians]. The Zidonians were of the same race with the Tyrians, so often spoke of in the Scriptures as being the inhabitants of Tyre and Zidon. Sidonius was one of the sons of Canaan, who was the son of Ham, and according to Josephus, built the city Sidonius, or Zidon, which was thus named after and in honor of its founder. This city was adjacent to the kingdom of Israel, of which Ethball, father of Jezebel, and wife of Ahab, was king, and proves Jezebel to have been a negress; because her father was a king of a negro people, descended from Ham by the lineage of Canaan, and Canaan’s son Sidonius.”¹²⁷ The Bible, and Priest’s interpretation of it, becomes the foundation for the view that black women were sexually deviant.

Echoing Priest’s view is the 1859 legal case, *George v. State*. In this case, the guilty verdict of an enslaved Mississippi man sentenced to death for the rape of an enslaved 10-year-old was overturned because the judge determined “the crime of rape does not exist in this state between African slaves...their intercourse is promiscuous.”¹²⁸ The black male is the victim of the system, and the black girl is the victim of both the system and its fellow victims.

Like Mammy, Jezebel the stereotype as it applies specifically to the African American woman developed during chattel slavery. While Mammy served to protect white masters from the charge of sexually abusing (i.e., raping) their black slaves, Jezebel served to show that any sexual attraction the man felt was a reaction to provocation. Deborah White argues, “One of the most prevalent images of black women in antebellum America was of a person governed almost

¹²⁷ Ibid., 188.

¹²⁸ Peter W. Bardaglio, “Rape and the Law in the Old South: ‘Calculated to Excite Indignation in Every Heart,’” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 60.4 (November 1994): 749–72 (759).

entirely by her libido.”¹²⁹ Like the mule, Jezebel possessed a sub-human, animalistic nature; unlike the mule, however, she was both attractive and smart.

While Mammy’s desexualized image was fundamental to the defense of slavery as an “institution that promoted racial affection,”¹³⁰ the Jezebel stereotype justified the sexual abuse of enslaved women by white owners.¹³¹ Simms argues that the slave owners’ portrayal of enslaved women as Jezebels meant any women with African blood “enjoyed being ravaged by her master and his sons, so that abusing her was satisfying her natural desires.”¹³² Along with justifying the white male’s sexual use of the black woman’s body, the stereotype encoded its converse: it preserved the image of the white woman as pristine, pure, and (comparably) sexless. According to bell hooks, this was not the original American construction of women’s sexuality. Rather, “Colonial white men placed the responsibility for sexual lust onto women and consequently regarded them with the same suspicion and distrust they associated with sexuality in general.... The shift away from the image of the white woman as sinful and sexual to that of the white woman as a virtuous lady occurred at the same time as the mass sexual exploitation of enslaved black women.”¹³³

The white wife was to produce children, but her role was less as sexual adventuress than as faithful partner. She was the administrator of domestic labor that contributed to the financial success of the plantation.¹³⁴ The more the black woman’s body became the marker of sexual availability, the more the purity of the white wife could be maintained. This distinction in

¹²⁹ White, *Ar’n’t I A Woman*, 28-29.

¹³⁰ Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women*, 10.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³² Simms, “Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women,” 883.

¹³³ bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End, 1981), 32.

¹³⁴ “Home, Sweet Home: Gender in the Antebellum Household: Domestic Sphere,” *Civil War Era NC*, accessed April 5, 2017, <http://cwnc.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/exhibits/show/protect/1/domestic>. See also “Home, Sweet Home: Gender in the Antebellum Household: Men’s Role as Head of Household,” *Civil War Era NC*, accessed April 5, 2017, <http://cwnc.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/exhibits/show/protect/1/men>.

function further related to child production: the wife was to produce sons who would inherit the household as well as daughters who themselves would become “pure” mothers of the next generation; white men used enslaved women not only as sexual objects but also as breeders, since “American slavery was dependent on the increase of the slave population.”¹³⁵

Following emancipation, the stereotype prevailed. The alluring (black) Jezebel first appeared in film in the movie *Hallelujah* (1929) directed by King Vidor with an all-black cast. Played by the 16-year-old Nina Mae McKinney,¹³⁶ the Jezebel figure, named “Chick,” established the “tradition of the light skinned black leading actress.”¹³⁷ Indeed, her work in *Hallelujah* made her “Hollywood's first black star.”¹³⁸ The plot of the film begins when Zekiel Johnson, a share-cropper, sells his cotton crop for \$100. Money in hand, Zekiel meets a honky-tonk dancer named Chick who seduces him with her beauty and dancing. Zekiel approaches Chick, but she rebuffs him by saying, “get out of the way small change; you don’t look like no big money to me.”¹³⁹ After Zekiel displays his \$100, Chick agrees to accompany him. She then charms him into gambling away his money and then betrays and deserts him. Zekiel becomes a preacher, but years later, he finds himself again seduced by Chick. Chick tries to run away, but Zekiel catches her and says, “don’t you know that you can’t leave me like that?”¹⁴⁰ Chick dies, and Zekiel goes to prison for killing his lover. After serving his sentence, Zekiel returns home to what should be a life of calm.

Although Chick performs no sexual act in the film, she codes as the Jezebel by her demeanor and dress. Her dresses, which fall above the knee, are sleeveless or with short sleeves;

¹³⁵ White, *Ar’n’t I A Woman*, 31.

¹³⁶ King Vidor, *Hallelujah*, DVD (Memphis: MGM, 1929).

¹³⁷ Lawrence Young, “Examining the ‘Image’ of Black Americans Through the Eyes of Hollywood,” *Daily Collegian*, February 9, 1984, http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archives/article_9c48a375-e608-5fa8-a4cb-176dd12ae1c1.html, accessed March 25, 2017.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ King Vidor, *Hallelujah*.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

bare arms coded women of the time as inappropriately dressed. She also wears a lot of jewelry. Even in 2009, Michelle Obama's bare arms, in her first official photo as first lady, caused an uproar.¹⁴¹

While Jezebel in the media is often coded as African American, Bette Davis plays the titular character in the 1938 film *Jezebel*, directed by William Wyler and set in 1850s New Orleans. While African American women are called Jezebels because of perceived hypersexuality, Davis's character Julie is a Jezebel because she defies the gender roles of the day. For example, when Julie is late for a party, Aunt Bell tells Ms. Kendrick, "Julie is late for her own party at her own house. I don't know what I'm going to do with that girl."¹⁴² As Aunt Bell continues to wait for Julie, she exclaims to Julie's guardian how outrageous Julie's behavior is.¹⁴³ Julie then mingles with the guests without changing into the proper party attire. When she grabs a drink, Aunt Bell tells her, "toddlies are for the gentlemen."¹⁴⁴ Julie continues drinking the whiskey.

Julie's major defiance of convention is her refusal to wear a white dress to an upcoming ball. The dressmakers tell her, "You know you can't wear red to the Olympus ball."¹⁴⁵ Julie responds, "This is 1852 dumpling, 1852 not the dark ages. Girls don't have to simper around in white just because they are not married."¹⁴⁶ The dressmaker responds, "In New Orleans they do." One of Julie's attendants said, "Julie you'd insult every woman on the floor."¹⁴⁷ Her guardian describes her as "high-headed and willful" while her future brother-in-law says that his

¹⁴¹ Imaeyen Ibanga, "Obama's Choice to Bare Arms Causes Uproar," *Abcnews.go.com*, March 2, 2009, <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=6986019&page=1>, accessed March 25, 2017.

¹⁴² William Wyler, *Jezebel*, DVD (Warner Bros., 1938).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

brother Preston will need to “keep her on a short leash.”¹⁴⁸ Julie defies the expected conventions of womanhood. Her rebellion causes her to lose Preston, the chance to be married as well as the opportunity to be seen as respectable.

By 1943, the Jezebel image regained its coloring in *Cabin in the Sky*, directed by Vincente Minelli, with Lena Horne playing the role of a Jezebel named Georgia Brown.¹⁴⁹ The plot develops when Little Joe, who is married to Petunia, dies from a fight over a gambling debt. When Lucifer, Jr. and his minions appear to take Little Joe to hell, an angel appears to stop them because of Petunia’s consistent prayers.¹⁵⁰ God makes a deal with Little Joe: he has six months to live, and within that time he must amend his ways. If he lives a righteous life, he will be considered for entry into heaven; if not, he will descend to hell. Lucifer, Jr. plans to cause Little Joe to stumble by sending his “best sinner” temptress Georgia Brown to seduce him.¹⁵¹

Like Chick in *Hallelujah*, Georgia Brown is the seductress seeking the money of her male prey. She is so gorgeous that Little Joe says, “You ain’t easy to erase from the mind once a man gets to know ya good like.”¹⁵² Georgia Brown, like Chick, is well dressed and wears fabulous jewelry. While Chick displayed her bare arms as a part of being sensual, Georgia Brown wears a midriff top that exposes her navel.

Little Joe worries about the consequences of being with Georgia Brown. She responds by singing, “Life is full of consequences, but who’s scared of consequences? Let’s sip the honey while it is sweet, we could be messin’ ‘round, but you is digressin’ ‘round while I’m tossin’ nature at your feet. Why don’t we mosey ‘round, you could be cosey ‘round the gal that could

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Vincente Minelli, *Cabin in the Sky*, DVD (Warner Bros., 1943).

¹⁵⁰ It cannot be determined if the author or director had the parable of the Widow and the Judge in mind.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

sprinkle you with spice.”¹⁵³ The “foreign woman” of Prov 7:17-18, whose husband is away and who states, “I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning,” underlies Sweet Georgia’s lines, if unintentionally. Little Joe resists, “How ‘bout the consequences that ol devil consequence, I’ve been burned more than twice and I ain’t paying the price. Georgia, this has got to stop.”¹⁵⁴

Both *Hallelujah* and *Cabin in the Sky* have religious themes. Both male protagonists, Zekiel and Little Joe, turn to religion to help them resist their Jezebels. Both Chick and Georgia Brown then turn to religion in an attempt to become respectable. Chick continues in the role of the faithless Jezebel; Georgia Brown does not. Yet Georgia Brown is remembered for her seductiveness, not her respectability, as anyone who has ever sung “Sweet Georgia Brown,” the 1925 song with lyrics by Kenneth Casey knows: “Fellas that she can't get must be fellas she ain't met! Georgia claimed her, Georgia named her, Sweet Georgia brown!”¹⁵⁵

Dorothy Dandridge, playing the title character in the movie *Carmen Jones* (1954), directed by Otto Preminger, neatly depicts the mid-twentieth century version of the stereotype. In the movie, Carmen is called a “hip swinging flussie” and a “hot bundle.” She sings to her lover, Joe (Harry Belafonte), “You go for me and I’m taboo, but if you’re hard to get I go for you if I do you are through that’s the end of you, take your cue don’t say I didn’t tell you true I told you truly, if I have you that’s the end of you.”¹⁵⁶ Honest about her own sexuality, the black Jezebel warns her lover, but he can do nothing to resist her temptation.

After luring Joe away from his fiancée, the (virginal) Cindy Lou, Carmen tells him that she is not interested in marriage: “I don’t answer to nobody. I don’t account to no man. Carmen

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Kenneth Casey, *Sweet Georgia Brown* (1925).

¹⁵⁶ Otto Preminger, *Carmen Jones*, DVD (Twentieth Century Fox, 1954).

is one gal nobody puts on a leash.”¹⁵⁷ She enjoyed the sexual tension, and play, with Joe, but she is not willing to commit to the relationship. Her sexuality would not be limited to one man. Carmen then dumps Joe for the popular boxer Huskey Miller. Joe, refusing to accept that Carmen is dating another man, tells her, “If I can’t have you no man can. I’m going to kill you so that you can do this to no man again”¹⁵⁸ He then strangles her.

The conclusions to be drawn from this quick survey are two-fold. First, the character of Jezebel need not be sexually coded. Bette Davis’s “Jezebel” promotes not lasciviousness, but the desire of freedom from social constraints. However, the “black Jezebel” in particular reinforces that sexual coding; Bette Davis is not fully comparable to Lena Horne or Dorothy Dandridge. Second, the attractive, young, usually light-skinned African American woman is a seducer both of African American and of white men. A woman who seeks her own freedom is already a problem; a black woman who does so is more than a problem: she is a danger.

The figure of Jezebel, like the figure of Mammy, has spawned its own variants. As the Bad Black Mother and the Superwoman developed from the Mammy image, Jezebel finds a new incarnation in the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s.¹⁵⁹ The heroines of these films are both sexually attractive and sexually aggressive. Jeanne Bell (*TNT Jackson*, 1974), Tamara Dobson (*Cleopatra Jones*, 1973), Teresa Graves (*Get Christie Love!*, 1974), and Pam Grier (*Coffey*, 1973, *Foxy Brown*, 1974) were the most noted Blaxploitation actresses. Grier became known as the queen of Blaxploitation films.¹⁶⁰ Her characters of *Coffey* and *Foxy Brown*, while concerned for family and community, also dominated men in sexually aggressive ways. In a 2013

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ See Nathan Rabin, Pam Grier, June 25, 2003, <http://www.avclub.com/article/pam-grier-13820>, accessed March 25, 2017. “Pam Grier is the foremost icon of the Blaxploitation era. In the 1970s she represented a new female cinematic archetype: sexy and strong.”

¹⁶⁰ Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 333.

interview with Ebony Magazine, Grier states, “My films reflected woman’s dominance, independence, and the quest for equality intellectually and physically.”¹⁶¹

Both Coffy and Foxy Brown enact vigilante justice on behalf of family members and in service to their communities. Coffy’s mission is to avenge the drug addiction of her younger sister LuBelle; Foxy seeks justice for the murder of her undercover cop boyfriend by a drug and prostitution crime organization.¹⁶² Both characters use their sexuality to obtain their desires, and both are sexually indiscriminate in their quest to manipulate men. In an early scene, Coffy seduces a drug dealer with an erotic display of her thigh. Later, her older boyfriend describes her as a “lustful bitch” while she assures him that he is still able to sexually satisfy her. Coffy states, “that long goodie a keep on workin as long as I am able to handle it.”¹⁶³ Likewise, Foxy Brown’s body is on display for the characters in the film as well as for the film viewers. When her brother calls her in the middle of the night to seek help from an impending encounter with loan sharks, Foxy’s breasts are exposed as she dresses to leave the house. Bared breasts play a role in the notions of black female sexual deviancy, as they are a sign of both physical beauty and sexual accessibility.¹⁶⁴ One could say that Grier was exploited by the directors; one could also determine that she, like Hattie McDaniel before her, reveled in her own choices, power, and body image. In an “Ebony Magazine” interview, when asked about being ashamed of her work during the Blaxploitation era, Grier responds, “Ashamed of one’s commitment of craft or organic truth of theater? Just play your truth. I was committed to my nudity 45 years ago. To be on

¹⁶¹ Kiratiana Freelon, “Pam Grier on Pam Grier!,” March 18, 2013, <http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/pam-grier-looks-back-during-lincoln-center-film-fest#axzz4cMe7j07K>, accessed March 25, 2017.

¹⁶² Jack Hill, *Coffy*, DVD (American International Pictures, 1973). Jack Hill, *Foxy Brown*, DVD (American International Pictures, 1974).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Stephane Dunn, *Baad Bitches and Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 111.

stage in front of an audience nude was organic and a performance truth.”¹⁶⁵ Unlike the Jezebel of Josiah Priest, the Blaxploitation Jezebel has a choice; she knows what (heterosexual) men want, and she determines what they receive.

In a later scene, when Foxy is held hostage by the same criminals that threatened her brother, the leader of the crime syndicate threatens to send her to the ranch where the prostitutes are sexually abused. The leader of the crime ring says that Foxy “will probably love it.” The gang leader presumes that sexually attractive black woman would enjoy any type of sexual activity, whether consensual or by force. Foxy is sexually attractive and so is sent to the farm. She is sexually abused, but she does not enjoy it. She is, therefore, in control of her responses; her sexuality does not control her, despite what others might think.

Just as the mammy stereotype moved from film to television, so too did the Jezebel model. A more recent iteration of the Jezebel stereotype can be seen in the television series *Girlfriends*. While Joan is the mammy of the group, her best friend Toni Childs, played by Jill Marie Jones, represents Jezebel. Toni is a manipulative seductress who puts her sexuality to use to obtain a wealthy man. Toni loves and boasts about her own beauty and sexuality, especially in relation to her girlfriends. The plot is thus an extension of the rivalry in “Carmen Jones” between Carmen and Cindy Lou: the good girl (and note the pejorative “girl” rather than “woman”) vs. the bad girl. Toni later courts Todd Garrett, a plastic surgeon, whom she eventually marries. Todd says during a date that he would try to ignore her beauty. Toni responds, “good luck with that!”

Janet Howe Gaines argues, “In every generation, when artists wish to return to the familiar theme of the wicked woman, the name Jezebel crops up again and again.”¹⁶⁶ Songs

¹⁶⁵ Freelon, “Pam Grier on Pam Grier!”

¹⁶⁶ Gaines, *Music in the Old Bones: Jezebel Through the Ages*, xvi.

about Jezebel appear in pop, jazz, alternative/indie, r&b, country, and metal. For example, in the pop song *Jezebel* (1951), Frankie Laine sings, “If ever the devil was born without a pair of horns, It was you, Jezebel, it was you. If ever a pair of eyes promised paradise, deceiving me, grieving me, leaving me blue, Jezebel, it was you. Could be better that I never know a lover such as you...Like a demon, love possessed me, you obsessed me constantly...”¹⁶⁷ Laine is a willing participant in the relationship, but it is Jezebel, veering on the non-human and demonic, who is at fault for his indiscretion. Such blame would have most likely been acceptable in 1951; there were prescribed ways for women to behave, and being sexually alluring or independent was not one.

While jazz is an avant-garde genre of music that celebrates newness, creativity, and improvisation, the old Jezebel image makes her way into the song *Jezebel* (1985) by Sade. Here Jezebel goes after what she wants. Sade sings, “Jezebel wasn’t born with a silver spoon in her mouth. She probably had less than every one of us. But when she knew how to walk, she knew how to bring the house down. Can’t blame her for her beauty. She wins with her hands down.”¹⁶⁸ This reading, coming after the height of the women’s movement in the 1970s, perhaps reflects an understanding of women’s self-expression while not fully agreeing with that expression: “Jezebel, Jezebel won’t try to deny where she came from. You can see it in her pride and the raven in her eyes. Try to show her a better way, she’ll say ‘You don’t know what you’ve been missing.’ By the time she blinks you know she won’t be listening.”¹⁶⁹

By 1992 and 1994, Jezebel moved to the alternative/indie and R&B genres. The 10,000 Maniacs’ *Jezebel* (1992) describes a woman who lacks true feelings about her marriage. She

¹⁶⁷ Frankie Laine, *Jezebel* (Columbia Records, 1951). See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw9j2EN4TU4>, accessed March 30, 2017.

¹⁶⁸ Sade, *Jezebel* (Epic Records, 1985). See also https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qTsxMS2PpA, accessed March 30, 2017.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

sings, “You lie there, an innocent baby. I feel like the thief who is raiding your home, entering and breaking and taking in every room. I know your feelings are tender and that inside you the embers still glow. But I’m a shadow, I’m only a bed of blackened coal. Call myself Jezebel for wanting to leave.”¹⁷⁰ This image is not of hypersexuality; it concerns rather a woman who takes her husband’s love without reciprocating, indeed who cannot reciprocate. In yet another interpretation of Jezebel, in Boyz II Men’s *Jezzebel* (1994), a man sings, “Jezzebel don’t know you well, but I’d like to. I can’t believe how my feelings took over. Let me let you know that I’m on, and I want you. Aiming to please baby, just let me show you.”¹⁷¹ In this depiction, Jezebel is not the initiator of sexual desire. However, the song also perpetuates the stereotype of the male’s inability to show self-control. By calling Jezebel “baby,” the song attempts to locate the male singer in the position of power.

Entering the 21st century, Jezebel remains a conversation starter. Both Chely Wright, a country artist, and the metal band Memphis May Fire published songs concerning the Jezebel image. Wright’s *Jezebel* (2001) describes a woman in competition with “Jezebel” for her lover’s affections. Wright sings, “Jezebel save your charms, he’ll be back here in my arms. Oh how quickly you forget, he is not yours yet. He is not yours yet.”¹⁷² Memphis May Fire’s *Jezebel* (2012) presents Jezebel as a nasty, hypersexual woman constantly seeking one-night stands. The band sings, “She’s on the prowl. She wants it all. And she’ll stop at nothing. Everyone knows she’s well aware of the fact that her self-respect was long lost on her search for something. First in line to give it up to the guy at the bar buying two drinks at a time...what she doesn’t know is that to us she’s just another one of them...Just leave, just leave! We’re all better off without your

¹⁷⁰ 10,000 Maniacs, *Jezebel* (Electra Records, 1992). See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rb6EAJlpv5U>, accessed March 30, 2017.

¹⁷¹ Boyz II Men, *Jezzebel* (Motown Records, 1994). See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuIQoZNd08s>, accessed March 30, 2017.

¹⁷² Chely Wright, *Jezebel* (MCA Nashville, 2001). See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nmA-ENKyRg>, accessed March 30, 2017.

disease, disease!”¹⁷³ Memphis May Fire presents Jezebel with all the disgust that her name and image can connote.

“When the story of the naughty woman is told, chances are good that she will eventually be called a Jezebel.”¹⁷⁴ The Jezebel stereotype therefore sheds light not only on the women who receive this label, but also on the men who fall victim to Jezebel. To perpetuate the stereotype of Jezebel is also to perpetuate a negative stereotype of men. Placing Jezebel into Luke’s parable brings into view new perspectives both on the widow and on the stereotype. Jezebel is sexually coded, but she may also be the victim of injustice. Alternatively, Jezebel – selfish, lascivious, and morally questionable if not bankrupt – may well be seeking vengeance rather than justice, and in the process may well be seeking to seduce the judge. The parable and the Jezebel stereotype finally brings the judge into focus. Unlike Mammy, who physically threatens the Judge, Jezebel’s threat is psychological, physical, and visceral. The “black eye” with which she threatens is one ultimately of seduction. The Judge cannot keep his eye off of her. Moreover, Jezebel allows the reader to ask about the relationship between male responsibility and self-control on the one hand, and the appearance and actions of women on the other.

The Widow as Jezebel

In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a sexy widow, with bare arms and a short skirt, who kept coming to him with sweet talk, saying, “Grant me justice against my opponent.” For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because Jezebel keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice—or perhaps vengeance—so that she may not tempt

¹⁷³ Memphis May Fire, *Jezebel* (Rise, 2010). See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26FDI2DoIws>, accessed March 30, 2017.

¹⁷⁴ Gaines, *Music in the Old Bones*, xvi.

me by continually coming to my office.” The widow was known throughout the city for being sexually seductive and promiscuous. Thus, when she walked through the courthouse every day, all the court officers and officials stopped what they were doing to take in her presence. They sought a glimpse of her thigh, or of her breasts, when she bent over to pick a piece of dust off her shoe. As she heads toward the open elevator doors to go to the judge’s office on the third floor, other patrons step aside to allow the widow Jezebel to enter the elevator first. After reaching the judge’s office, she demands that he give her what she wants. The judge, who had been ignoring her requests, finally acquiesces. He cannot resist her charms. Though he cares not for what others think about him, he finds himself unable to resist her power. To deny her would be to him impossible: she has taken his power from him; threatening to give him a black eye, she has castrated him. Giving her what she wants, the judge shows that she has won.

Whereas biblical readers generally do not regard widows as sexualized, the Bible insists that many are. The Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha, and New Testament all give evidence of sexually seductive widows and their sisters. They use their sexuality to get what they want. We should expect nothing else of the widow in our parable. Reading the widow as Jezebel is thus both biblically plausible and culturally informative. Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba, Judith...each widow gets exactly what she wants.

The Jezebel of the Blaxploitation films finds an immediate intertextual allusion to the widow in the courtroom. Jezebel, when denied, can do more than pray and more than persevere; she can attack, and her attacks can be lethal. Already the Jezebel intertextual reading presents a warning: give the widow what she wants, or the consequences may be deadly.

Reading the widow as Jezebel adds yet another nuance to the parable. Both Coffy and Foxy Brown are sexually alluring. Both movies included nude shots of Grier as she manipulates the men who stand in her way of getting justice. The Jezebel figure has no shame; the same can be said for the woman in the parable. She expresses no title of honor to the judge; she offers no argument for her case; she may well be disrespecting courtroom etiquette. Her threat to the judge is one that preys not on a sense of fear, as may be the case with the powerful Mammy, but on his own libido. Jezebel cannot be resisted. Yvonne D. Sims writes, “Grier’s heroines redefined sexuality, womanhood, and beauty by portraying empowering, liberated, assertive heroines. Grier deliberately uses the sexual stereotype to her advantage, reclaiming and transforming black female sexuality.”¹⁷⁵

Reading the widow as Jezebel also provides new insight for readers concerned about embodiment. Jezebel is secure in her embodiment, and she uses her body to fulfill her desires. She recognizes that (some) men lack self-control, and she can manipulate this weakness. Instead of viewing the parable’s widow as an elderly, frail, and by-no-means a sexually attractive woman, the Jezebel stereotype reframes the scene. Were the painters who depicted the widow as a peasant on her knees, dragged away from the judge by the guards, to have painted Jezebel instead, the scene would have been much different. The guards may well have been on their knees before this beautiful, powerful, sexy, shameless woman.

Reading the widow as Jezebel forces readers also to re-examine the judge. His fear of her attacking his body, or of giving him a black eye, recodes into a fear of sexual desire. He cannot resist his impulses. Her threat to the judge translates, through this stereotype, as a threat not just of a black eye, but of castration: she has unmanned him. He has, to adapt the lyrics cited above,

¹⁷⁵ Yvonne D. Sims, *Women of Blaxploitation: How the Black Action Film Heroine Changed American Popular Culture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 80.

become her baby. He is powerless before her allure, and he will do whatever he needs to do to satisfy her. One stereotype begets another as Jezebel prompts a stereotype concerning men: they cannot control their desires; they are controlled by beautiful women. Bringing the stereotypes full circle, Jezebel also offers the cultural teaching that beautiful women are dangerous.

The Jezebel trope is often applied, negatively, to women who are comfortable with their own sexual expression. Consequently, a self-confident woman proud of her body can spark feelings both of attraction and alienation. In the court, her self-expression can get in the way of her receiving justice. The judge may be beguiled by her charms even as he may find her appearance to indicate disrespect for the legal system, and for him personally. She, more than he, will be judged by the clothes she wears and how much flesh she bares. That this Jezebel is a widow then becomes all the more scandalous, for widows are culturally expected to be in mourning rather than in man-baiting.

Jezebel provides readers with yet another turn of the stereotype and so another reading of the parable. Her stroll through the courthouse demonstrates that the appearance of a single woman in the public square need not be a mark of loose sexuality: it can be the refusal to accept sexual objectification.¹⁷⁶ Although Luke does not address the widow's sexual behavior, that lack has not stopped commentators from seeing the widow as socially, if not sexually, inappropriate. The widow's continued presence in the courthouse suggests both shamelessness and aggressiveness. Jezebel takes those labels, and flaunts them. Shameless and aggression become Jezebel markers of self-reliance and assertiveness; she requires neither physical nor economic protection from men.

¹⁷⁶ Ayana Byrd, "Claiming Jezebel: Black Female Subjectivity and Sexual Expression in Hip-Hop," from *The Fire This Time: Youth Activists and the New Feminism*, edited by Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin (New York: Anchor, 2004), 248-256.

Readers, like the actresses Hattie McDaniel and Pam Grier, have choices. We can view the women on the screen, or in the court, as exploited: their bodies are used by producers to make money at the expense of their objectification; their incomes are usurped by their social superiors. Or, we can view them as exploiting the exploiters: they are doing what they want, on their own terms, and getting what they desired. They do what it takes to meet their objectives, and in the process they claim their own voice and their own bodies. They work the system, and they – like the parable’s judge – do not care how they are judged by it.

Coding the widow as Jezebel also prompts questions as to how she lost her husband. Like Tamar, Jael, Delilah, and Abigail, perhaps her actions prompted a man’s death. To be a widow may be an image of pity; it can also be, and it is when the widow is seen as Jezebel, an indication of personal strength (at best). The expression “Black Widow” in relation to the Jezebel image could not be more apt.

On the other hand, reading the widow as Jezebel also provides a challenge: how should we think about widows? Literary depictions of widows often paint a picture of the perfect feminine. Petronius’s “Satyricon” describes the perfect widow.¹⁷⁷ Having buried her husband, the widow mourned him by weeping day and night. She was so renowned for her chastity that women of neighboring communities sought to gaze on her.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Homer’s Penelope, who is presumed by her suitors to be a widow given the long absence of her husband Odysseus, is the model of chastity. While waiting for Odysseus to return from the Trojan War, she continues her

¹⁷⁷ Sarah B. Pomeroy. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), xv.

¹⁷⁸ Gaius Petronius Arbiter, *Petronius: Satyricon*, trans. Sarah Ruden (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), part 5, section 111, 89.

loyalty by deceiving the suitors.¹⁷⁹ These widows are perfect; they stay loyal to their husbands. It is an expectation of widows that erases notions of sexuality.

Yet, the Widow of Ephesus, who planned to starve herself to death in her husband's tomb, is seduced by the soldier who attempts to console her; Penelope becomes restless and longs to entertain her suitors.¹⁸⁰ Widows in Roman culture, similar to biblical depictions of widows, were not necessarily models of chastity. Widows can be sexy and sexual and reading the widow as Jezebel opens readers to those ideas.

When race along with sexuality is highlighted in the casting of the widow as Jezebel, contemporary legal issues come to the fore. The widow Jezebel cautions readers that justice should not be withheld because of a person's perceived or even actual sexual history. African American women are often viewed through the lens of sexuality, which becomes the prevailing mode of judgment. In America's cultural climate, where "black women are routinely accused of being sexually immoral, promiscuous Jezebels,"¹⁸¹ they are less likely to receive the respect of the court and so the judgments that they want.

Further, judgments about the sexuality of African American women often hinder them from seeking justice. For example, African American women are least likely, compared to white women, to report sexual assault. A 2005 Justice Department study, "Criminal Victimization in the United States," showed that only 17 % of black victims report the crime of rape as compared to 44% of white victims.¹⁸² While there are varied reasons that the women do not report sexual

¹⁷⁹ *Homer: The Odyssey*, trans. Martin Hammond, Book xix, 135-140, 198.

¹⁸⁰ Gaius Petronius Arbiter, *Petronius: Satyricon*, trans. Sarah Ruden, part 5, section 112, 90.

Homer: The Odyssey, trans. Martin Hammond, Book xix, 524-529, 205.

¹⁸¹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 125.

¹⁸² Allante Adams, "Why Are Black Women Less Likely to Report Rape?," *CityPaper*, December 21, 2016, <http://www.citypaper.com/news/mobtownbeat/bcpnews-why-are-black-women-less-likely-to-report-rape-20150609-story.html>, accessed December 21, 2016. See also "Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2005 Statistical Tables" (U.S. Department of Justice), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cvus05.pdf>, accessed December 21,

assault, one prominent reason, if not the most prominent, is that the African American women do not think their case will be taken seriously because of the historical perception that they are hypersexual and therefore responsible for the crime, not the victims.¹⁸³ Thus, the idea that black women are Jezebels prohibits them from reporting sexual assault. Not only are they convinced that the courts will not provide them justice, they are also fearful of the label “Jezebel” and other forms of what today is known as “slut-shaming.” Given this configuration, reading the widow as Jezebel adds a new pathos to the parable. The widow Jezebel demonstrates that a person’s sexuality or sexual expressions should not be an impediment to justice.

Sapphire

A third stereotype of African American women is the dominating and emasculating Sapphire,¹⁸⁴ the “wise-cracking, ball-crushing, emasculating woman...evil, bitchy, stubborn and hateful.”¹⁸⁵ Otherwise put, the stereotype portrays African American women as “rude, loud, argumentative, irrationally angry, stubborn and overbearing.”¹⁸⁶

2016. For the role of stereotyping in relation to African American women reporting abuse, see, inter alia, Linda L. Ammons, “Mules, Madonnas, Babies, Bathwater, Racial Imagery and Stereotypes: The African American Woman and the Battered Woman Syndrome,” *Wisconsin Law Review* 1995, no. 5 (1995): 1003–80, Zanita E. Fenton, “Domestic Violence in Black and White: Racialized Gender Stereotypes in Gender Violence,” *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 8.1 (1998): 1–66.

¹⁸³ Adams, “Why Are Black Women Less Like to Report Rape?” Adams indicates the reasons young black women do not report rape include being ashamed, feeling the assault was their fault, a fear of getting their assailant in trouble, and that black women are to remain strong no matter the circumstances. African American women then become the strong black woman in order to withstand being voiceless when they are the victims of sexual assault.

¹⁸⁴ Patricia Bell Scott, “Debunking Sapphire: Toward a Non-Racist and Non-Sexist Social Science.” *All the Women Are White, All the Men Are Black, But Some of Us Are Brave*, Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Barbara Smith, editors (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982), 85.

¹⁸⁵ Yarbrough with Bennett, “Cassandra and the ‘Sistahs,’” 638.

¹⁸⁶ David Pilgrim, “The Sapphire Caricature,” *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, 2008, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/sapphire/>, accessed December 4, 2016.

Sapphire is unlike both Mammy and Jezebel in that she usually “necessitates the presence of an African American male,”¹⁸⁷ although that man need not be a husband. Mammy requires children (or adults functioning as her children) in order to fulfill her role; Jezebel is most obvious in her alluring of others, although she performs her identity to her own satisfaction; Sapphire requires a target for her venom, and the target is a black man. K. Sue Jewell argues that Sapphire’s “existence is predicated on the corrupt African American male whose lack of integrity, and use of cunning and trickery provides her with an opportunity to emasculate him through her use of verbal put-downs. In doing so, Sapphire’s virtues and morals are contrasted with the lack of virtues and morals of the African American male.”¹⁸⁸ However, because (African American) women did not want to be identified as “Sapphires,” the stereotype prompted repression of their feelings regarding the failures of the men in their lives.¹⁸⁹ Often perceived by African American men as having an irrational desire to control and to shame them,¹⁹⁰ women who fit the Sapphire role became discredited in the African American community. In general, the name Sapphire serves a slur or label designed to silence dissent and critique from African American women.¹⁹¹

Yet African American women can also adopt the Sapphire role, since it more directly than Mammy or Jezebel allows them to critique what they perceive to be injustice, regardless of who is responsible for it. Sapphire re-inscribes the tenacity and boldness of African American women.

¹⁸⁷ K. Sue Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss American and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy*, Taylor & Francis e-Library (London: Routledge, 2002), 45.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Yarbrough with Bennett, “Cassandra and the ‘Sistahs,’” 639.

¹⁹⁰ Jean Carey Bond and Patricia Peery, “Is the Black Male Castrated?” *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, Toni Cade Bambara, editor (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970), 145. See also Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 87.

¹⁹¹ David Pilgrim, “The Sapphire Caricature,” *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, 2008, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/sapphire/>, accessed December 4, 2016.

The framework for the Sapphire stereotype derives from the minstrel shows, as far back as the 1830s, in which white men performed as loud-mouthed and masculine “Negro Wench.”¹⁹² They “used crude drag along with burned cork and grease paint to blacken their skin to mark black women as grotesque and therefore undeserving of the protections afforded to white ‘ladies’ in American society.”¹⁹³ Blair L. M. Kelly connects the Sapphire role to a combination of the two other tropes we have already discussed, and her comments are worth quoting in full:

black women were ridiculed on the minstrel stage. Mammies were fat, monstrous, asexual and loyal caretakers of white children and neglectful of their own. Jezebel characters, often called “mulatto” or “yellow gal,” were fair-skinned, disloyal, greedy and hypersexual but not portrayed as beautiful. These blustering women yelled at their spouses and acted loud and inappropriately in otherwise genteel, public spaces to demonstrate all the ways that they were different from white women. The distance from and disdain for black women was reinforced by the fact that although white women were stage performers in the 19th century, it was thought to be too bawdy and low for them to blacken their skin for the minstrel stage.¹⁹⁴

The image of “Sapphire” herself was incarnated as “Sapphire Stevens,” voiced by Ernestine Wade, in the 1940's radio show “Amos ‘n’ Andy.”¹⁹⁵ Wade’s portrayal of Sapphire’s assertiveness took on the “tone of the shrew and Sapphire became the folk term among African

¹⁹² Blair L.M. Kelley, “Here’s Some History Behind That ‘Angry Black Woman’ Riff the NY Times Tossed Around,” *The Root*, September 25, 2014, <http://www.theroot.com/here-s-some-history-behind-that-angry-black-woman-rif-1790877149>, accessed April 6, 2017.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ See Melvin Patrick Ely, *The Adventures of Amos “N” Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon* (New York: The Free Press, 1991). See also Elizabeth McLeod, *The Original Amos “N” Andy: Freeman Gosden, Charles Correll and the 1928-1943 Radio Serial* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005).

Americans for a domineering wife.”¹⁹⁶ Sapphire, however, lets us know when something is wrong, at least according to her understanding. She puts her “hands on her hips” and lets it be known what she is thinking.¹⁹⁷

Wade, a native of Jackson, Mississippi, was one Hollywood’s black pioneers.¹⁹⁸ She appeared in *Three Violent People* (1956), *The Girl He Left Behind* (1956), *Bernadine* (1957), *The Guns of Fort Petticoat* (1957), and *Critic’s Choice* (1963). Yet, like Hattie McDaniel, she spent a portion of her career defending not only her portraying a domestic worker in her first two films but also her taking the role of Sapphire, because many people viewed the character as demeaning to African American women.¹⁹⁹ Wade believed the entertainers who accepted these roles were “broadening the way for future African American actresses and actors.”²⁰⁰

Amos ‘n’ Andy has its own history. Radio, the new American form of entertainment, brought “performances borrowed from vaudeville, concert stages, and lecture halls” into the living rooms of its listeners.²⁰¹ In 1926, the *Sam ‘n’ Henry* radio show — in 1928 the radio show was renamed *Amos ‘n’ Andy* — depicted its main characters, like many other African Americans, as relocated from Alabama to Chicago in search of jobs and a better quality of life after World War I (1914-1918). The plot has an agent from a northern company recruit Sam and Henry. The creators of the show were two white men, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, who portrayed African American men. Gosden, originally from Richmond, Virginia, had some familiarity with African Americans and so black dialect. Correll, from Peoria, lived in a predominantly white

¹⁹⁶ Ely, *The Adventures of Amos “N” Andy*, 208.

¹⁹⁷ Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 62.

¹⁹⁸ “Actress From the Delta, Ernestine Wade,” *African American Registry*, http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/actress-delta-ernestine-wade, accessed November 4, 2016.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, accessed November 4, 2016.

²⁰⁰ J. Fred MacDonald, “Postwar Radio,” *Don’t Touch That Dial!: Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960*, <http://jfredmacdonald.com/postwar.htm>, accessed April 3, 2017.

²⁰¹ Ely, *The Adventures of Amos “N” Andy*, 3.

enclave, so Gosden taught him African American dialect.²⁰² Melvin Ely indicates, “Both partners drew on years of experience in blackface comedy as itinerant directors of amateur minstrel shows.”²⁰³

The *Sam ‘n’ Henry Show*, airing on WGN in Chicago, garnered Gosden and Correll so much popularity that they made stage appearances across the country. After WGN rejected Gosden and Correll’s idea to syndicate the show, the duo moved to a new station and renamed the “Sam ‘n’ Henry Show”: the first broadcast of “Amos ‘n’ Andy” was in 1928. While the show was based upon the Sam ‘n’ Henry show, its characters were revised to have a “softer edge than the often-crude Sam and Henry.”²⁰⁴ Rather than the “gin drinking and crapshooting” originals, “Amos was portrayed as a naïve but earnest young man while Andy was older, more worldly, and convinced that he had the answers to everything.”²⁰⁵ In episode 5, which aired March 24, 1928, Andy comforts Amos concerning their move to Chicago:

Andy: listen heah son, when we gits in Chicago, de minute we step off de train, dey is liable to come right up to us an’ grab us.

Amos: Grab us fo’ whut? Put us in jail or sumpin’?

Andy: No, no...grab us an’ ast us if we want a job.

Amos: You heard whut John told us though back dere at de depot, ain’t yo’?

Andy: Whut yo’ mean...about dem two boys goin’ to Chicago?

Amos: Yeh...he say dem boys went up dere an’ starved to death.

Andy: De trouble wid dem boys is...both of ‘em was like you. Dey didn’t have no sense...but wid a man like me along dat knows how to handle bizness men, we

²⁰² McLeod, *The Original Amos “N” Andy*, 37.

²⁰³ Ely, *The Adventures of Amos “N” Andy*, 3.

²⁰⁴ McLeod, *The Original Amos “N” Andy*, 38.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

ain't goin' have no trouble.²⁰⁶

Ely suggests that Gosden and Correll formulated storylines that “jumped back and forth across the color line in a manner both cavalier and surreal, in a way that caused the line to blur together.”²⁰⁷ The radio show, which moved to television in 1951, became the first “television series to have an all-black cast.”²⁰⁸

In both the radio and television shows, Sapphire's primary role was to assault her husband George “Kingfish” Stevens with insults when he did not conform to what Sapphire thought was proper behavior. Sapphire dominated Kingfish, and Kingfish viewed Sapphire as an overbearing battle-axe.²⁰⁹ Indeed, in one show Kingfish states, “I guess I better go home now and see if the battle-axe got any lunch for me.”²¹⁰ She may have been a battle-axe, but she fulfilled her domestic duties.

In the pilot episode of the television show, Kingfish discovers that Andy has a nickel that is worth \$250. Kingfish decides to take the nickel from Andy, but Sapphire, standing over Kingfish and vigorously pointing her finger at him, says, “well you just better not because I ain't gon stand for no more trouble around here and if you start gypping Andy or anybody else, I'm gon break every bone in your body.”²¹¹ Her assault demonstrates that she thinks her morals are better than the morals of her husband. Sapphire shows that she is aware of the right things to do; Kingfish is oblivious. Yet because Sapphire is so overbearing, the viewer's sympathy might actually rest with her husband, despite his problematic behavior.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 40.

²⁰⁷ Ely, *The Adventures of Amos “N” Andy*, 63

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 6.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 105.

²¹⁰ Amos ‘n’ Andy, “Rare Coin,” February 19, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1Bsk9GZga8>, accessed November 4, 2016.

²¹¹ Ibid.

In a subsequent episode, Kingfish is looking out of the window as new neighbors move into the building. Sapphire demands that he “come in out of that window”²¹² and tells him, “You have no right to be so nose-y! If you tend to your own business instead of other people’s business, you wouldn’t be in trouble all the time! It is such a disgrace staring out that window.”²¹³ When he does not follow her demand, she tells him, “Look George Stevens! You come in out of that window before I get angry!”²¹⁴ Yet while Kingfish is out of the room, Sapphire sneaks a look out of the window to watch the new neighbors. This portrayal undercuts the moral aspects of her complaints and so increases both the viewer’s distance from Sapphire and sympathy for her husband.

Although the radio show was successful, the television show was driven out of production after its second season because of objections by the NAACP that the show presented negative stereotypes of African Americans.²¹⁵ Similar to its concern about Hattie McDaniel’s portrayal of Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*, the NAACP criticized the “Amos ‘n’ Andy Show” as demeaning to African Americans. Ironically, the NAACP focused on the representation of black professionals such as doctors and lawyers specifically; they were particularly concerned with the recurring character of Calhoun, the corrupt lawyer. Gloster Current, the NAACP director of local branches, argued that the “Amos ‘n’ Andy Show” had “slandered an entire race of 15,000,000 Americans because every character in this one and only TV show with an all-Negro cast is either a clown or a crook.”²¹⁶ One of the NAACP’s most pressing concerns was making sure that white people did not think black life was limited to what they saw on the show.

²¹² Amos ‘n’ Andy, “New Neighbors,” June 2, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTepP_Jvpwo, accessed November 4, 2016.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ely, *The Adventures of Amos “N” Andy*, 7. Although the show was cancelled after its second season, the show remained on television until the mid-1960s because of syndication.

²¹⁶ Ely, *The Adventures of Amos “N” Andy*, 219.

Other critics condemned the show for not representing black progress. Melvin Ely, for example, notes, “working class Afro-Americans believed the show mocked their own strivings.”²¹⁷ Yet Gerald Nachman argues that for “the white audience the ‘Amos ‘n’ Andy Show’ did not perpetuate stereotypes. Rather, the show was a first peek on TV at a bustling black community. Blacks were depicted as judges, executives, doctors, and businessmen. In one episode, Kingfish casually refers to the *Wall Street Journal*. For whites who came of age in the 1940s and 1950s, this was all eye-opening stuff.”²¹⁸ Ernestine Wade’s assessment aligns with Nachman’s evaluation. In a 1979 interview, Wade stated, “Actually, I never was of the opinion that there was any intention or projection of racial overtones—not to my way of thinking. Just about everyone who saw the show, regardless of race, creed or color, identified with somebody on the show or knew someone in the family. I have been on escalators going up or coming down and people—‘Oh, I know who you are. I got an uncle just like your husband.’”²¹⁹ Alvin Childress, who played the role of Amos, also defended the show: “I didn’t feel it [the television show] harmed Negroes at all... Actually the series had many episodes that showed the Negro with many professions and business like attorneys, store owners and so on, which they had never had in TV or movies before.”²²⁰ Thus, although the show aired during times of racial challenges, it seems that the show also provided (some) viewers a positive look at black lives. Given the broadness of television comedy (we might compare the contemporary “Texaco Star Theatre” starring Milton Berle, often in drag [1948-55], which broke the color barrier in 1950 by featuring

²¹⁷ Ibid., 222.

²¹⁸ Gerald Nachman, *Raised on Radio* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 289.

²¹⁹ James R. Lowe, A Conversation with “Sapphire” and “Amos,” 1979, <http://www.yodaslair.com/dumboozle/tmoore/intervue.html>, accessed March 22, 2017.

²²⁰ Burt A. Folkart, “Alvin Childress, 78, of ‘Amos ‘N’ Andy’ Series on TV, Dies,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1986, http://articles.latimes.com/1986-04-22/local/me-1453_1_amos-n-andy, accessed April 7, 2017.

See also Bambi Haggins, “The Black Situation Comedy,” in *African Americans in Popular Culture: Theater Film, and Television*, ed. Todd Boyd, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Connecticut: Praeger, 2008), 219.

black performers such as the Step Brothers, Bill Robinson, and Lena Horne), the characters in “Amos ‘n Andy” could be seen as black versions of middle America.

While debates over the progressive aspects of the show for African Americans will continue, there is less doubt about the enduring, and negative, legacy, of Sapphire the character. Even her name can suggest a critique of women’s social roles. A sapphire is a precious gemstone developed from the mineral corundum. It is technically a derivative of the ruby, which is also developed from corundum. Sapphires and rubies are distinguished by their color, which is determined by the amount of impurities found in the corundum.²²¹ While red and blue are two of the major colors found in corundum, rubies are red while sapphires are blue in addition to the other colors that are produced by the impurities. Moreover, sapphires are more common than rubies. Thus, rubies are the ideal gem and command a higher price.²²² Job says the price of wisdom is beyond rubies (Job 28:18); the book of Proverbs proclaims that Wisdom is more precious than rubies (Prov. 3:15). The capable wife of Proverbs 31 is far more precious than rubies (31:10). No such idealization of Sapphires appears in the Bible.

To the contrary, the only biblical Sapphire is the Hellenized name “Sapphira,” the wife depicted in Acts 5.1-11, who together with her husband Annanias, cheats the Church out of the proceeds of their sale of property. Sapphira’s fate is to follow her husband and drop dead at the feet of the Apostles.

Gosden and Correll, the creators of “Amos ‘n’ Andy,” appear to have known the value of rubies too. While Kingfish is married to the shrew Sapphire, Amos is married to the lovely Ruby Taylor (played by Elinor Nathan). Ruby was a “bright, poised young woman” who was neither a

²²¹ Hobart King, “Ruby and Sapphire,” *Geology.com*, <http://geology.com/gemstones/ruby-and-sapphire/>, accessed November 4, 2016.

²²² Donald Clark, “How Rare is that Gem?,” *Gemsociety.org*, <https://www.gemsociety.org/article/how-rare-is-that-gem/>, accessed November 4, 2016.

shrew nor aggressive.²²³ She is not, however, particularly memorable. Gosden and Correll even distanced Ruby's character from the stereotypes "common in popular portrayals of African American women;"²²⁴ Ruby was "neither a Mammy nor Jezebel."²²⁵ Instead, "she was educated and from a well-to-do family;"²²⁶ "Amos's love for her is heartfelt."²²⁷ While waiting for Ruby at the train station, Amos says to Andy, "I'se so happy that I feel bad. I just can't believe she's comin'. Just seem like to me it's too good to be true, yo' know it?"²²⁸ Ruby is more precious than any gemstone; she, rather than Sapphire, is the ideal woman.

Portrayals of Sapphire continued with comedies such as *Sanford and Son* (1972-1977), *The Jeffersons* (1975-1985), and *Martin* (1992-1997). LaWanda Page plays the Sapphire role of Aunt Esther on *Sanford and Son*. While the original Sapphire argued with her husband, the majority of Aunt Esther's arguments are with her brother-in-law Fred (Redd Foxx). Their constant bickering includes name-calling where Fred, for example, will call her a "gorilla" and Aunt Esther will say, "watch it sucka!" Oftentimes after Fred has insulted her, Aunt Esther calls him a "fish-eyed fool" or "heathen." Aunt Esther also has a drunken husband who acquiesces to her demands.

Marla Gibbs (Florence Johnston) is the acid-tongued Sapphire on *The Jeffersons*. This television comedy, a spinoff from *All in the Family* (1971-1979), is about a successful African American couple, George and Louise Jefferson, who move "uptown" after the success of their dry-cleaning business. Once they are settled into their luxury Manhattan apartment, George Jefferson decides that they should have a maid. Florence Johnston gets the job and rather than clean, she has verbal battles with George. Although Florence is the Jeffersons' maid, which

²²³ McLeod, *The Original Amos "N" Andy*, 81.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid..

²²⁶ Ely, *The Adventures of Amos "N" Andy*, 101-102.

²²⁷ Ibid., 100.

²²⁸ McLeod, *The Original Amos "N" Andy*, 60.

codes as Mammy, she is Sapphire because of her back-talking, brashness, and strong-will with her boss. She is taller than he, and by consistently making demeaning comments about his being short, she emasculates him. Moreover, she does not take care of children. The Jeffersons' only child, Lionel, is an adult. Gibbs describes Florence as a "no non-sense woman who would tell you like she saw it whether she was asked or not."²²⁹

In the 1990 comedy *Martin*, Tichina Arnold (Pam James) plays the Sapphire role to Martin Payne (Martin Lawrence). Pam, the neighbor across the hall and the best friend to Martin's girlfriend, is always in verbal battles with Martin. Whereas Martin insults Pam by calling her "Pam E. Coyote" or "Bride of Stankenstein," Pam, like Aunt Esther, will not be outdone; she responds to Martin by also making comments concerning his height and so, like Florence, emasculating the leading black male figure in the show. In a word play on the television title *All in the Family*, Pam calls Martin "small in the family" as well as "Donald Stump," or "inch high private eye."

Sapphire makes her debut in film with Tyler Perry's *Madea* franchise. Perry has produced a number of stage plays, films, and television series, including *I Can Do Bad All By Myself* (1999), *What's Done in the Dark* (2006), *The Marriage Counselor* (2008), *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (2005), *Daddy's Little Girls* (2007), *Tyler Perry's House of Payne* (2006-2012), *Meet the Browns* (2009-2011), and *Tyler Perry's For Better or Worse* (2011-Present). He is currently partnered with Oprah Winfrey to create content for the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN), which is broadcasting *Tyler Perry's Haves and Have Nots* (2013-Present), *Love Thy Neighbor* (2013-Present), and *If Loving You Is Wrong* (2014-Present).²³⁰ Perry is most noted for

²²⁹ "Marla Gibbs," *Archive of American Television*, July 27, 2006,

<http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/marla-gibbs#>, accessed December 4, 2016.

²³⁰ See Tamara A. Lomax, "Mad Black Bitches and Ladylike Saints: Representations of African American Womanhood in Tyler Perry Films," in *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions*, ed.

his movies and plays centered on the gun-toting, sassy Madea. He plays the role of Madea, a threatening Mammy, who has control over her household. Tamura Lomax argues, “Perry’s body of work is wrought with several recurring threads of meanings and images that harmfully misrepresent African American womanhood.”²³¹ As with “Amos ‘n Andy,” whether African Americans in general or African American women are harmed by his production will depend on the gaze of the viewer.

In the *Why Did I Get Married* (2007, 2010) films, Sapphire appears through the character Angela played by Tasha Smith. Perry’s presentation of Sapphire/Angela is framed as the “mad black woman” or the “black woman as bitch.”²³² Angela is a loud-talking, cussing woman who says what is on her mind and refers to other women as “ho’s.”²³³ “Although African American men are Sapphire’s primary targets, she has venom for anyone who insults or disrespects her.”²³⁴ Thus, Angela’s venom is extended to women whereas Ernestine Wade’s Sapphire, Aunt Esther, and Pam limited their insults to men. *Why Did I Get Married* (2007) presents Angela as the owner of a hair salon as well as the employer of her husband Marcus. Already she evokes the Moynihan Report, with its concern that black women are creating a devaluation of black men. When, after graduating college, she was unable to get a job in her field of chemistry, she developed her own hair care products; Marcus is an ex-football player with two children from a previous marriage. He does not earn as much money as he did playing football, and therefore

LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, Tamura A. Lomax, and Carol B. Duncan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 125-146 (127). Lomax highlights that “since 2005 Perry has written, produced, directed, and acted in eleven successful feature films, nine stage plays, and one television show making him the highest paid man in entertainment due, in part, to the sheer volume, content, and production roles.”

²³¹ Lomax, “Mad Black Bitches and Ladylike Saints: Representations of African American Womanhood in Tyler Perry Films,” 127.

²³² *Ibid.*, 137.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 138.

²³⁴ David Pilgrim, “The Sapphire Caricature,” *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, 2008, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/sapphire/>, accessed May 25, 2017.

Angela is the breadwinner in the household. She is his superior, and she continually notes that fact. Marcus and Angela constantly argue, in part because Angela feels his previous wife is disrespectful of her. Angela belittles and embarrasses Marcus because he refuses to stand up to the ex-wife. Moreover, Angela does not care that she embarrasses Marcus. The irony here is that although Angela can be bitchy and bossy regarding Marcus, she has valid complaints regarding his ex-wife.

Angela is constantly emasculating of and argumentative with her husband Marcus, and on occasion she focuses her wrath on other men whom she also sees as failing to live up to her standards. For example, during a couples' retreat, Angela is combative with Marcus as well as with Mike (Richard T. Jones), one of the other guests. Mike is married to Angela's friend Sheila, but he brings his mistress Trina to the retreat. Greeting Angela, Mike tells Trina, "This is Angela, also known as the bitter one." Angela responds, "I'm also known as the ass-kicking one."²³⁵ In a second scene, Angela insults Mike's mistress again, "You belong on a corner...need a pimp?" Her aggressiveness is in defense of her friend Sheila and also because she finds Trina's presence at the married couples retreat to be improper. Angela's verbal assaults have no gender limits; women or men will feel her wrath. Although Angela "regularly delivers verbally abusive tongue-lashings" to Marcus as well as "makes those around her miserable," she believes her morals are better than both Mike's and Trina's.²³⁶ While Tyler Perry's Angela makes people miserable, she is generally correct on issues of ethics.

Just as Gosden and Correll frame Ruby as the ideal wife rather than Sapphire, Perry's depiction of Angela also communicates to viewers that she is not the ideal wife. When the

²³⁵Tyler Perry, *Why Did I Get Married?*, DVD (Lionsgate, 2007).

²³⁶Brittany Cooper, "Talking Back and Taking My Amens With Me: Tyler Perry and the Narrative Colonization of Black Women's Stories," in *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses To Tyler Perry's Productions*, ed. LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, Tamara A. Lomax, and Carol B. Duncan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 235–49 (236). See also Lomax, "Mad Black Bitches and Ladylike Saints: Representations of African American Womanhood in Tyler Perry Films," 135.

couples arrive at the retreat, the men and women separate to catch up with each other. The men make jokes about Angela; Terry, played by Tyler Perry, says “There’s women, then there’s Angela.”²³⁷ He also depicts how scary she is by saying, “We had to convince the airport that she wasn’t a terrorist.”²³⁸ Yet Angela, like the other Sapphires, frequently (again to use the cliché), speaks truth to power.

The Sapphire stereotype, while still visible in television and film, has also morphed into the Angry Black Woman stereotype.²³⁹ The Angry Black Woman, like Sapphire, is both tenacious and abrasive. Like Sapphire, she too says what is on her mind, often in service to justice. The major difference is that while Sapphire is played for comedic effect, the Angry Black Woman takes very seriously the injustices she sees, and she must be taken seriously by those who encounter her. To date there is limited research on the Angry Black Woman stereotype because it is taken for granted that being angry is the normal demeanor for black women.

Melissa Harris Perry suggests that this trope, enacted from Sapphire to Aunt Esther to Pam and then applied to politically powerful women from Maxine Waters to Michelle Obama, “has not been studied in as much detail as the Jezebel and Mammy images. But the extant literature does suggest that while Sapphire is one name for the myth, the angry black woman has many different shadings and representations: the bad black woman, the black ‘bitch,’ and the emasculating matriarch.”²⁴⁰ She then cites work by Marcyliena Morgan and Dionne Bennett, and here I quote from her citation, “The stereotype of the angry, mean black woman goes unnamed not because it is insignificant, but because it is considered an essential characteristic of black

²³⁷ Perry, *Why Did I Get Married?*

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ See Melissa Victoria Harris Perry, “Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America,” 86-88. For a popular discussion of this connection, see the Wikipedia entry for “Angry Black Woman” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angry_Black_Woman; accessed 12 April 2017).

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 87.

femininity *regardless* of the other stereotypical roles a black woman may be accused of occupying. These stereotypes are more than representations; they are representations that shape realities.”²⁴¹

Given America’s persistent racism and sexism, anger – righteous anger – may well be the appropriate response. One major problem arises, however, when black women express our anger: rather than recognized as railing against injustice, we are stereotyped as shrews or bitches, as pathologically anxious, or as emasculating and therefore destroying the black family.

In order to increase the negative image of Sapphire figures, the media has constructed a physical character type. While Sapphire, an indirect descendent of Mammy via the Negro Wench, “may be obese like Mammy,”²⁴² from television to film, the women that play the Sapphire role are often dark skinned with a medium build. The casting of darker skinned women is a result of colorism: lighter skin is coded as pretty and darker skin is coded as unattractive. Sapphire Stevens, Aunt Esther, Florence Johnston, Pamela James, and Angela are all comparably darker-skinned African Americans; that is, they are to be seen as less attractive physically as well as in terms of their personality. Hence, Fred Sanford and Martin Payne critique the lack of physical attractiveness of, respectively, Aunt Esther and Pam.

There are few named “Sapphires” today in popular culture, but these few suggest a reclamation and repurposing of the name. Most notable is the African American novelist Sapphire (born Ramona Lofton) whose 1996 novel *Push* was adapted into the 2009 award-winning film *Precious*. The story concerns an obese African American teenager (Gabourey Sidibe), abused by her mother (Mo’Nique, the “Mammy from hell”), who finds her way to

²⁴¹ Ibid., citing Marcyliena Morgan and Dionne Bennett, “Getting Off of Black Women’s Backs: Love Her or Leave Her Alone,” *Du Bois Review* 3 (2006): 485-502 (490).

²⁴² Sherri Burr, “Television and Social Effects: An Analysis of Media Images of African Americans in Historical Context,” *Gender, Race & Justice* 4 (2000): 159–81 (166).

liberation. According to Claude J. Summers, who wrote the entry on “Sapphire” for the *GLBTQ Archive* (2015), “She chose the name because Sapphire in African American culture signified a belligerent, overbearing black woman. That stereotype, she told an interviewer, ‘was somehow attractive to me, especially because my mother was just the opposite. And I could picture the name on books.’”²⁴³

Other modern Sapphires – having no apparent familiarity with the legacy of the name, are the teen-aged pop-singer from the United Kingdom, and Sapphire Elia, the actress also from Great Britain (the negative connotations of the term appear to be US-specific).

From the television figure to Ernestine Wade’s explications of her character to the reclamation by the author of *Push*, Sapphire the character can serve as both negative exemplar and speaker of truth. Both approaches, as well as variants of them, neatly map onto the widow of the parable.

The Widow as Sapphire

In a certain Northern city with a large African American population, there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that same city, the widow Sapphire kept coming to the judge, demanding that he grant her justice against her opponent. Sapphire daily complained; she showed no sign that she was going to shut up. Now everyone in the courthouse knew Sapphire because she always has a complaint. Moreover, she makes sure anyone standing near knows the nature of her complaint. They were annoyed by her, and yet they knew she was right. For a while the judge refused, but eventually he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this bitch keeps bothering me, I will grant her the

²⁴³ Claude J. Summers, “Sapphire (Ramona Lofton) (b. 1950),” *GLBTQ Archives* (Entry Copyright @ 20009) http://www.glbtqarchive.com/literature/sapphire_L.pdf; accessed April 12, 2017.

justice she wants so that she will not give me a black eye.” The judge finally granted her the justice she wanted – he knew she was right, and he could no longer face her tirades.

Sapphire is brash and she is scolding; she is not going to give up, or shut up, until she gets what she wants. Having no husband to scold, she focuses on the court and, specifically, the judge. Now cast in the Kingfish role, the judge can be seen as conniving, ignorant, and shiftless.²⁴⁴ The judge neither feared God nor had respect for anyone, and the widow Sapphire found his behavior was out of line. She was going to insist that he had respect for her, or at the very least, he was going to pay attention to her. He had done something wrong in refusing to have respect for others, and she was going to force him to make it right. When speaking her mind, Sapphire is usually “on point with her critiques.”²⁴⁵ Given her generally correct assessment of the men with whom she interacts, from Kingfish to Fred G. Sanford to Marcus—to those who use racial stereotyping to discredit African American women on the political scene—we readers should be on her side, even if we may find her approach distasteful, annoying, or overbearing. Her harsh approach may make us think that she is interested in vengeance, and perhaps there is a touch of the desire for vengeance in her motives, but her primary focus has always been on correct action and thus on justice.

As she comes into the courthouse, the widow Sapphire is ready to confront any man, or anyone, who gets in her way. Facing the judge, she puts her hands on her hips and launches into her insult-laced speech. Each time she appears, her protest becomes more intense. The judge finally yields to her demands, lest her loud voice and demonstrative gestures move toward a

²⁴⁴ See the following chapter for permutations of the character of the judge. The construction of the character of the widow necessarily impacts how the judge is to be assessed.

²⁴⁵ Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 61.

physical altercation. Sapphire, perhaps more than Mammy or Jezebel, is not beyond causing actual physical injury, but her tongue-lashing alone should prove sufficient.

The widow Sapphire should be read to highlight the power of women in general and African American women in particular. Just as the widow in Luke's parable became visible to the judge because of her persistence, Sapphire's unrestrained expression is a method that allows African American women also to become visible. Her self-expression is both a warning that something is wrong²⁴⁶ and a demand to be heard. She is the complete resistance of Luke's contextualization: she will not stay home and pray; she will not be patient. There is too much at risk, and she is too angry to remain silent.

The problem for Sapphire is that she is often not taken seriously because she always complains. As a comedic figure, she is easily dismissed. Although Angela was correct in her critique of Mike and in her desire to protect her friend Sheila, her critiques are overlooked by those with whom she interacts. To her husband Marcus and his friend Terry, Angela is "crazy" and "cuckoo."²⁴⁷ The same responses face the Angry Black Woman; she is dismissed not because she is a character in a comedy, but because she is also perceived to be "crazy" and "cuckoo." While we might laugh at the widow Sapphire, we should not laugh at the Angry Black Woman. Nor should we dismiss them either until we hear what they have to say.

Reading the widow as Sapphire prompts a comparatively greater focus on the (absent) details of her case. For Mammy, the focus is "justice" for those in her care. For Jezebel, the details are less irrelevant, as long as she can put the judge in her power. For Sapphire, the details move from justice to vengeance. She has had enough of being dismissed, or ignored, or silenced.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Perry, *Why Did I Get Married?* See also Lomax, "Mad Black Bitches and Ladylike Saints: Representations of African American Womanhood in Tyler Perry Films," 138.

Her anger plausibly moves her from the motive of justice to that of vengeance. She may be a stereotypical nag, but as she moves from Sapphire to the Angry Black Woman, she is a nag with justice on her side, and those who stand in her way – both the judge and the unnamed opponent – will feel her anger. Perhaps she herself, so angry for so long, can no longer tell the difference between justice and vengeance. Reading alongside her, we have to make that determination for ourselves.

The Widow in her Various Roles

Luke's parable, like any narrative, is open to multiple framings. Casting the parable's widow according to three dominant stereotypes of African American women leads to both a reassessment of the figure of the widow herself and to a critical analysis and possible reappropriation or, to use Foucault's term, a "reverse discourse" of the tropes. In each case, the reconfigurations raise questions of the roles of both gender and race in the courtroom, the means by which stereotypes serve to silence or repress African American women, and the ways forward to claiming the text for liberation.

The Evangelist attempts to silence the widow of the parable by explaining that she is the paradigm for praying always and not losing heart. Recasting the widow by providing her a body and a personality allows the parable to break free of the narrative frame and so to speak to other roles for women. Like biblical widows before and after her, the woman in the parable now variously claims her own agency. The application of the figures of Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire complicates her motives, her relationship to the judge, even her appearance. The application in turn both reveals the limitations of the stereotypes and the ways they can be turned helpfully by those who are victim to them.

The same process of cultural criticism can be helpfully applied to the figure of the judge,
and to him this study now turns.

Chapter 4

The Judge: Cool, Cruel, Fool

After Jesus tells his disciples to pray always and not loose heart, he recounts a parable about a judge who neither fears God nor has respect for people (Luke 18:2). The note that the judge does not fear God indicates to any biblically literate person that the judge is not wise, because the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10). If the judge is therefore not wise, his ability to adjudicate cases is called into question. Nor is the judge’s capacity for wisdom the only question the parable provokes: it also asks whether morality depends on theology. Could a secular or atheist judge, a judge who has no divine standard by which to make a determination, be trusted? Without the fear of God, what would prompt a person to love neighbor, follow the *mitzvot*, or otherwise live a decent life? Yet the judge is a man with judicial authority and patriarchal privilege; perhaps his class and his gender allowed his juridical and theological qualifications to go unchecked.

The judge also has no respect for people. Whereas this descriptor could indicate that he is above playing favorites and that he operates with complete objectivity, it could also indicate that he lacks any concern for the feelings, arguments, or legal situation of the people who appear in his courtroom. Lacking concern for other people could indicate the judge’s independence; it could also indicate that he has removed himself from the ethos to which Jesus, Judaism and Luke, and so Luke’s ideal readers, would subscribe, a society that mandates “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27, cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18). Making the judge all-the-more inappropriate is the fact that Jesus in Matt 22:37-40 and Mark 12:30-32 combines these verses as the “greatest commandment” whereas in Luke’s Gospel the verses are

placed on the lips of a “lawyer” (νομικός [10.25]), someone who should have familiarity with the law court.

Jesus repeats this same characterization regarding the judge’s lack of fear of the divine and lack of respect for humanity in adding to the parable the judge’s interior monologue (18.4): with the judge, what we see is what we get. There is no subtlety to his character. And yet, both the narrator’s description and the judge’s self-reflection are thwarted. The judge may not fear God, but he apparently fears the widow who intervenes into his space. He does not care what others think of him, but the widow forces him to care. He grants her request lest she punch him in the eye. Perhaps what we see is not all that we get. The judge who cared about neither God nor other people is forced to act. In so doing, the public perception may well be that he cares about the widow, and to care about a widow is to care about God, “who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing” (Deut 10:18).

The parable does what several other parables do regarding men in positions of power: it shows how their dependents and those who lack their power can put them in compromised positions. The dishonest steward of Luke 16:1-8a who cheats his master out of funds places the master in an impossible but ultimately good position, which is why the master “commended the steward” (Luke 16.8). The creditors are happy because they owe less; the steward’s actions cause the master to be seen by his creditors and so perhaps by the public as generous; the master not only lacks the means to recoup his funds, but also he would face shame were he to admit his servant (or slave?) bamboozled him. The same concern for public shaming appears in the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1-15). The first-hired who are paid the contracted wage cannot complain publicly about what the “lord of the vineyard” (ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος

[20.8]) has done, for all the complaint would do is highlight his generosity. They cannot state that they have been treated unfairly, because they agreed to the payment they received. Perhaps they will learn that they should have cared about those who might not have had the daily wage.¹ Finally, the same issue of people with privilege somehow ceding that privilege to greater benefit marks the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:10-14), which follows the parable of the Widow and the Judge. The Pharisee, and indeed the audience of the parable, cannot complain about the Tax Collector's reconciliation: to do so would be to complain against divine mercy. The tax collector may also have found his justification by tapping into the Pharisee's merit;² if this is the case, the Pharisee again is stuck: his merit served to reintegrate the tax collector into the community; it served a good purpose. The widow has, even on the surface of the parable, trapped the judge, forced him (potentially) to do the right thing, and so gained for him the public reputation of caring for widows.

On the other hand, and with parables there is usually another hand, closer readings suggest that the parable has called into question not only the appropriate role of the judge, but the standards of masculinity by which men are themselves judges. In acceding to the widow's request, the judge raises questions about not only his self-knowledge but also his masculinity. The judge's masculinity along with his privilege of gender and class is now in question. It is this combined privilege of gender and class that requires interrogation.

Interpretations of the parable often leave the judge to go unremarked or at best limited to how Luke contextualizes him. Just as Luke's narrative frame turns the widow into the prayerful petitioner, it turns the judge into a negative image of the divine, which is still an image of the divine. The judge and God are in the same structural place. The narrative frame evokes the *qal*

¹ See Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus*, 197-220.

² *Ibid.*, 169-96.

v'homer or “from light to heavy” form: if the lesser figure, the judge, acquiesces to the widow, then surely the Judge of Judges will grant the prayers of those who follow Jesus. As Luke puts it, “And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them?” (18:7). Read within this frame, the judge is easy to categorize and so tuck away neatly into Luke’s allegory: he is the bad judge who yields to prayer; if he yields, much more so will God listen to prayer. Such contextualizing ignores the challenge the parable poses to gender roles and, especially, to concepts of masculinity. It also ignores the petitioner whose prayers are not answered: the woman caught in the court system who seeks the release of her son on a false charge; the woman charged with attacking a police officer who had just shot her toddler. We can be even more precise: this immediate call for justice has not been answered to a number of people who continue to pray, including the families of Trayvon Martin, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Akai Gurley, Walter Scott, Laquan McDonald and so many more. Or perhaps these family members might be the unnamed “opponent” of the widow, the one against whom the verdict is given. But that is another subject for another time.

Luke’s contextualization of the judge together with the parable proper provides the occasion for examining both ancient concepts of masculinity and stereotypes of African American men. While Luke’s view of women’s roles and so the construction of “woman” has been much discussed, Luke’s view of men and construction of masculinity has received less sustained attention. Seminal (the connotations of that term spilling more than the simple meaning of “important”) studies begin with Mary D’Angelo’s 2002 “The ANHP Question in Luke-Acts: Imperial Masculinity and the Deployment of Women in the Early Second Century” and continue with Brittany Wilson’s 2015 *Unmanly Men: Reconfigurations of Masculinity in*

Luke-Acts. D'Angelo indicates the lack of attention to gender in much feminist work from the late 20th century: "Gender is constructed largely by the comparison and contrast of male and female. To allow one side of the contrast to evade scrutiny is to allow at least some aspects of its 'other' to remain uninterrogated."³ Similarly, Wilson argues that while "men dominate the landscape of *Luke-Acts*," the work of examining Lukan men "with respect to ancient masculine norms" has been generally overlooked.⁴

This ignoring of the codes of masculinity and so the norms over and against which women and femininity are defined, continues into modern churches. Interrogation of masculinity is a relatively recent concern. Congregants in many traditional churches take as natural that the man would be the pastor. A few such believers might well cite 1 Tim 2:13-14 to affirm this "natural" leadership: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." The man is to be a moral leader, a responsible father, a stoic pillar, and the source of knowledge. Because the woman is the "weaker vessel"

³ Mary Rose D'Angelo, "The ANHP Question in *Luke-Acts*: Imperial Masculinity and the Deployment of Women in the Early Second Century," in *The Feminist Companion to Luke*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 3 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 44–69 (44).

⁴ Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Reconfigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2. For additional work on masculinity in *Luke-Acts*, see *inter alia*, Sean Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013); Bonnie J. Flessen, *An Exemplary Man: Cornelius and Characterization in Acts 10*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011); Marianne B. Kartzow and Halvor Moxnes, "Complex Identities: Ethnicity, Gender and Religion in the Story of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)." *Religion and Theology* 17 (2010): 184-204; Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, "'All the World's a Stage': The Rhetoric of Gender in Acts," in R. Bieringer, G. van Belle, and J. Verheyden (eds.), *Luke and His Readers: Festschrift A. Denaux* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 373-98; Penner and Vander Stichele, "Gendering Violence: Patterns of Power and Constructs of Masculinity in the Acts of the Apostles," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 9 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 193-209; Penner and Vander Stichele, "Script(ur)ing Gender in Acts: The Past and Present Power of *Imperium*" in Eidem (eds.), *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourse* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 231-66. A number of other studies pursue Luke's portrait of masculinity via disability theory and martyrdom traditions. Wilson's volume provides a helpful listing.

(ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει [1 Pet 3:7]), and more naturally likely to be deceived and so likely to sin, male leadership must not only be affirmed, but promoted.

For social and communal transformation, masculinity broadly construed and male privilege in particular must be interrogated. Readers and commentators cannot continue evaluating Lukan women without giving the same attention to the Gospel's depiction of men. The Parable of the Widow and Judge provides the opportunity not only to examine the presentation of the widow, and by extension women, but also, through the depiction of the judge, to examine constructs of masculinity and male privilege.

My examination of the judge looks at select ancient constructions of masculinity as a heuristic tool examining stereotypes of African American men. The move is tricky, for the comparison is anything but exact. On the one hand, Luke's presentation of Jesus' masculinity can question or even refashion normative views: Jesus fails to marry and father children, he cries, he allows his body to be tortured, he dies an agonizing, humiliating death. Luke promotes martyrdom rather than battling for life; Luke promotes suffering on behalf of others; Luke's other heroes include a victim of stoning (Acts 7), a eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), and Paul, brought in chains to Rome. On the other hand, these same men fulfill other masculine roles: the martyr who dies valiantly, the chamberlain in charge of a nation's treasury, the persecuted prophet of God. Masculinity is a complicated subject.

Complications also prevent any neat or even idealized construction of the black man. As followers of Jesus exist as a subset within Roman culture and so both reflect and refract the dominant social constructs, so African American men, often excluded from the American ideal (i.e., white heterosexual) masculine norm, have developed their own standards even as they have had stereotypes imposed upon them. Whereas the ideal man, then and now, is Stoic in his self-

control, African American men have been stereotyped, like Jezebel, as sexually overcharged. Whereas the ideal man, then and now, is knowledgeable, the African American man has been stereotyped, like the mule, as intellectually lacking. The ideal man, then and now, is free.⁵ The African American male can never fully escape the effects of slavery and of racism and of stereotype.

To interrogate how the parable presents the masculine role and how its interpretations may help in the analysis of contemporary social constructs, I put the judge into dialogue with three stereotypes of African American men. First is the Cool Black Male who is too cool to show emotion, and so who risks becoming psychologically (if not actually) arrested. Second is the Master-Pastor Judge who rules his church as the master ruled the plantation: his will is not questioned; his sins are overlooked; his authority is supreme. Third is the Foolish Judge in the ‘Here Comes de Judge’ trope, who exaggerates and so reveals the prejudice of white stereotyping. These characters provide a dialogue with the parable in the same way that Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire do in light of the widow. We begin with the views of masculinity present in Luke’s and, by extension, Jesus’ contexts. With this brief survey in hand, we can better understand the nuances of the judge in Luke 18:2-5.

Masculine Constructs

Roman constructions of masculinity can be understood from the perspectives of *virtus* and *pietas*. “*Virtus*, derived from *vir* (Latin: “man”) characterizes overall ideal masculine

⁵ This is not to say that white men are free from their own participation in structural racism and other forms of exploitation, dominance, or even fragility. Nevertheless, the American cultural system constructs the white male as living in the “land of the free and the home of the brave.”

behavior.”⁶ A preeminent social and political value, *virtus* comprises the morality and courage a man demonstrates in public. Self-control or self-mastery, the control of emotions such as anger and lust, and moderation and so control over physical actions such as eating and drinking, were the principal outward signs of *virtus*. *Pietas*, an aspect of *virtus*, encourages men to show care towards the gods, fellow citizens, and dependents. Roman leaders showed *pietas* toward the state by acting for the good of all Roman citizens. Already we can see complications with the parable: the judge does not control emotions in that he expresses fear of the widow; he does not show *pietas* either toward the gods or to the God of Israel.

In antiquity, masculinity was not an innately given; having male “anatomical features”⁷ did not guarantee that one qualified as a “true man.”⁸ Rather than being something signaled by the male body, masculinity needed to be won and kept. “Masculinity was constituted more by the shape of one’s life than by the shape of one’s body”; to gain and maintain proper masculinity, a man was to be justice-oriented, self-controlled, and able to display wisdom, courage, and military prowess in the public sphere.⁹ The real man is thus “dominant, active, and self-controlled.”¹⁰ He demonstrated these traits through “facial expressions, gestures, and demeanor.”¹¹ He also demonstrated masculinity by controlling not only his own body but also by controlling women, lower-status men, and slaves: the self-controlled man displays the authority to control others who are deemed “subordinate, passive, and excessive.”¹²

⁶ Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

⁷ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 41.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.

¹⁰ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 40.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹² *Ibid.*, 40.

Slaves, of course, were not men or women, according to the cultural code of antiquity: thus there was no masculine marker to lose or gender hierarchy in which to rise, at least in the eyes of the dominant culture if not necessarily in the eyes of the slaves themselves. Slavery was a “permanent, violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons,”¹³ and without honor, there can be no masculinity to earn or maintain.

The challenge, for men, was to avoid sliding down the “slippery slope of feminization.”¹⁴ Signs of cowardice or indifference – that is, the lack of *virtus* and *pietas*, indicated a loss of the masculine role. To be bested in public, whether by debate or by battle, was to descend the gender hierarchy from the male pole to the female. Were a man to become known as lusty or promiscuous, his masculine role would also be compromised. The man is both the “social superior and the unspoken norm,”¹⁵ and negative constructions of women and other non-men reinforce and support this norm.¹⁶ Further securing this norm was its negative displacement onto women. A man who allows himself to become feminized is comparable to the woman who seeks the masculine role: attempts by women to ascend the masculine hierarchy were, like the movement by men to the feminine pole, seen as unnatural.¹⁷

Men were to do manly things; women were to do womanly things. Men led and women followed; men penetrated and women were penetrated. Thus, a primary factor in masculine

¹³ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 13, quoted and glossed by Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18.

¹⁴ Virginia Burrus, “Mapping as Metamorphosis: Initial Reflections on Gender and Ancient Religious Discourses,” in Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (eds.), *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 5.

¹⁵ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 40.

¹⁶ Stephen Moore and Janice Capel Anderson defines masculinity as mastery of others and/or of oneself. They argue that this conception of masculinity was less a dichotomy between male and female than a hierarchical continuum where slippage from fully masculine to least masculine could occur. See Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, “Taking It Like A Man: Masculinity In 4 Maccabees,” *JBL* 117.2 (1998): 249–73.

¹⁷ See, e.g., the classic study by Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), on the social construction of active and passive roles.

identity is “what one did with or allowed to be done to one’s body.”¹⁸ Another tenet of first-century masculinity is the “protection of one’s body from invasion,” whether by sword or by phallus.¹⁹ Sexual penetration was, like being stabbed, a wound, a sign of weakness, an unmanning. The penetrated male is feminized and so unnatural, just as a woman who seeks the male role sexually (however defined) is unnatural. True men defended the boundaries of their bodies from corporal assaults.²⁰ Such men, as “impenetrable penetrators”²¹ could penetrate and beat other non-men.²² This notion of power is depicted through the hierarchal image of man on top and woman/non-man on the bottom. Power through penetration is also exhibited in the political sphere. Rome extended its empire by penetrating or conquering other nations; the conquered nations were then feminized.²³

Given the association of masculinity with penetration and so conquering, the Roman emperor, the leader of the conquering military, is the ideal male. His masculinity is bound up not only in military strength but also in *pietas*. After conquering other people, he takes on a sacerdotal role of both sacrificing to the gods and embodying their power. The emperor was responsible for offering sacrifices to demonstrate *pietas*. “A major part of Roman imperial

¹⁸ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 21.

¹⁹ See Jennifer A. Glancy, “Protocols of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles.” In *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 262.

²⁰ Jonathan Walters, “Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought,” in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 29–43.

²¹ See also Angus McLaren, “The Impenetrable Penetrator: Manhood in Greece and Rome,” in *Impotence: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1–24; Kathy Gilhuly, “The Phallic Lesbian: Philosophy, Comedy, and Social Inversion in Lucian’s Dialogues of the Courtesan,” in *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World*, ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Laura K. McClure (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 274–94 (esp. 286–88).

²² Walters, “Invading the Roman Body,” 29. The term non-men goes beyond the anatomical mark of maleness. The status of non-men includes women as well as persons of low social and economic status and slaves. Gender constructions are based upon the dominant, hegemonic ideology of elite Roman society. Thus, ancient constructions of masculinity are undergirded by social status. To be a man of high status was an individual who could protect his body from sexual and physical assault. The mark of low status generally means that the person’s body was available for penetration or physical assault.

²³ For a Pauline perspective on this feminization of conquered nations, see, e.g., Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010) and Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul’s Mission*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).

theology involved the depiction of the emperor as a model of piety whose sacrifices benefited all of the empire.”²⁴ “The understanding was that the emperor’s exceedingly virtuous character, especially in the form of piety, gave him special access to the gods.”²⁵ If the emperor fulfills his duty to take care of the gods, citizens will live peaceful and good lives. The emperor had to be virtuous; to claim otherwise was to risk one’s life.

These various cultural codes apply to, and are called into question by, the parable’s Judge. Charles Hedrick argues that the parable’s judge “is a thoroughly honest man bound neither by the limitations of religion nor by ties to anyone in the community.”²⁶ This kind of disposition suggests that the judge’s decisions would be fair and impartial. The biblical depiction of judges, however, provides a less sanguine approach. Luke shows a distrust of judges and judging, so the negative reading of the judge in Luke 18:6 is consistent with other redactional interests. In Luke 11:19 (cf. Matt 12:27), Jesus asks his opponents (literally), “And if I, by Beelzebul, cast out the demons, your sons, by whom do they cast out? On account of this, they your judges will be.” The antecedent of “judges” is better read as “your sons” (i.e., the other exorcists), but it could refer not to the other exorcists but to the demons. Jesus himself refuses the role of judging or arbitration (Luke 12:14), and he shortly therefore indicates that going before a judge to settle a case is not advisable, for “you may be dragged before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you in prison” (12:58). Finally, Luke 6:37 reads, “do not judge and you will not be judged.” Luke’s message is to both stay away from judges and the act of judging (6:37).

Historically, judges also had the potential to be anything but fair and impartial. While the parable gives no specific indication that the judge is corrupt, judicial corruption was highly

²⁴ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 136.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 136 and see 135-39.

²⁶ Hedrick, *Parables As Poetic Fictions*, 197.

plausible because of the participation of advocates (Lat: *iuris consulti*) within the Roman court system. Roman courts were populated not only by judges, plaintiffs, and defendants, but also advocates trained in rhetoric as well as audience members could influence judgments. “As a part of the patronage system, advocates traditionally provided legal services to their client for no monetary fee.”²⁷ Chroust summarizes:

These reactions of the popular courts, undoubtedly, almost forced the advocate who wished for a favorable verdict to stoop to reprehensible tactics. Certain clever and not too scrupulous forensic orators actually made it a deliberate practice to play on the emotions of the populace in order to arouse public sentiment in favor of their client.²⁸

Along with the rhetorician-advocate, of whom Cicero would be the best contemporary example, Roman courts were also populated by the plaintiff’s friends and family, who functioned as character witnesses (the Latin *laudatores* indicates that their task was to praise the plaintiff). These were accompanied by *clagues*, or professional “applauders.”²⁹ The system was so abused that in 52 BCE, Roman law prevented any close relatives from attending the plaintiff.

Once social and socio-economic status became the foundation for advocates, law and justice took the back seat to enhancing the advocate’s influence.³⁰ “Advocates considered many factors when taking on cases. They weighed the status of the client and the opponent; the

²⁷ Leanne Bablitz, “Roman Society in the Courtroom,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World*, ed. Michael Peachin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 328. See also Leanne Bablitz, *Actors and Audience in the Roman Courtroom* (New York: Routledge, 2007). For further explication on Jurists and advocates and the court system see Jill Harries, *Cicero and the Jurists: From Citizens’ Law to the Lawful State* (London: Duckworth, 2006) as well as Jill Harries, “Courts and the Judicial System,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, ed. Catherine Hezser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁸ Anton-Hermann Chroust, *Legal Profession in Ancient Republican Rome*, 30 *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 97 (1954). Available at: <http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndlr/vol30/iss1/5>, 130-31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

³⁰ Bablitz, “Roman Society in the Courtroom,” 329.

character of the litigant was of great concern.”³¹ Roman judges, however, held enormous power and immunity from criminal persecution.³² Their authority extended to deciding on factual matters as well as legal issues.³³ Thus, they declared law, issued edicts, solved disputes between citizens and seized property; their judgments were binding.³⁴

The Roman public, however, viewed the privileges accorded judges with disdain.³⁵ They viewed judges as “hedonist and libertines who lacked a devotion to administering the legal system.”³⁶ Plebian scholar Titius (160 BCE) accused judges of being surrounded by “harlots and devoted to gambling.”³⁷ He also calls into question their concern for their legal responsibilities because of their “slothfulness in administering cases.”³⁸

Our judge could fit into this Roman system: there is no reason to presume from the outset that he will be fair. He can dispose of the bodies of others as he pleased; when he perceives that his body is imperiled –and it is his perception rather than an actual threat the narrator attributes to the widow—he acts to preserve his masculinity by keeping his body from being hit. At the same time, he compromises his masculinity by reacting in fear of a woman. To act or not to act, in either case the judge becomes un-manned. The woman, cast only by the judge’s impression as a battler, is nevertheless one who penetrates: she enters into the judge’s presence, and quite likely his court, with a demand, an imperative. She takes the assertive, penetrating role, and he

³¹ Ibid., 329.

³² College of Education, “The Role of the Judge: Neither Force Nor Will, But Merely Judgement: A Guide for Students and Teachers” (East Carolina University, 2014), <https://www.ecu.edu/cs-educ/TQP/upload/tqpRoleOfTheJudgeAug2014.pdf>, accessed April 28, 2017.

³³ O. E. (Olga Eveline) Tellegen-Couperus, “The Role of the Judge in the Formulary Procedure,” *The Journal of Legal History* 22.2 (2001): 1–13 (1).

³⁴ Ibid., 4. See also “The Role of the Judge: Neither Force Nor Will, But Merely Judgement: A Guide for Students and Teachers.”

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Percival Vaughn Davies, trans., “Titius’ Denouncement of Judges from Macrobius: The Saturnalia” (Columbia University Press, 1969), <https://www.ecu.edu/cs-educ/TQP/upload/tqpRoleOfTheJudgeAug2014.pdf>, accessed April 28, 2017.

³⁸ Ibid.

takes the feminine role in reacting to her. Her weapons are persistence and words; the judge's reaction shows that her words threaten like weapons, and, if the judge actually comes to care, the words are weapons that can damage him in the public sphere. If the woman looks like Mammy, with a good 200 lbs. of strength, the threat is intensified.

Luke and Masculinity

Luke's presentation of masculinity does not always follow Roman strictures. Conforming to the ideal masculine role, Luke's Jesus is foremost a teacher of wisdom, which is a foundational aspect of *virtus*. As a boy, Jesus sat among the teachers listening and asking questions (2:46); he increased in wisdom and stature as well as in divine and human favor (2:52). Jesus demonstrates *pietas* in his own prayers and in praying on behalf of others. Jesus prays after his baptism (2:21); he goes to quiet places to pray alone (5:15; 6:12-13); he prays before feeding people (9:16); Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray (11:1); he prays for children (18:15-17) and for Peter (22:31-31); he prays for himself on the mount of Olives (22:39-46); he prays for his adversaries while he hangs on the cross (23:34) and as he dies (23:46). Before he ascends, he blesses the bread (24:30) and the disciples (24:50-53). His virtuous character, "in the form of piety,"³⁹ gives Jesus "special access"⁴⁰ to God. In turn Jesus is able to bring "peace and goodwill to people" by demonstrating *pietas*.⁴¹

Conway suggests that Jesus does what the emperor does, with the same result, and thus Jesus' masculinity corresponds to that of elite Greco-Roman masculine constructions. Conway also argues that while Luke does not present Jesus in a "priestly role," the Lukan Jesus follows

³⁹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 136.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

the paradigm of imperial theology by being a model of piety.⁴² Similar to the emperor, Jesus is a son of God; his divine birth gives him divine status. His earthly parents are pious. They properly bring Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised (Luke 2:21). Mary follows purification laws (Luke 2:24). Jesus teaches in the Temple (Luke 19:47; 21:37-38; 22:53) and is always at prayer for himself and others. Just as the pious character of the emperor suggests that he should be emulated, so too is Jesus a model for his followers.⁴³

However, Jesus also allows the Spirit to lead him in the wilderness (Luke 4:1) and thus submits to it. On the Mount of Olives, Jesus asks God to remove this cup (22:42) and thus indicates a lack of bravery and fortitude; the angel from heaven gives him strength (22:43) and at least according to some manuscripts, his sweat from anguish produces sweat like drops of blood (22:44; the verse is a text-critical problem and may well be a scribal addition).⁴⁴ Jesus does not speak during his trials, which means he does not display the public mastery of rhetoric (compare Paul in Acts, who is more than happy to plead his case). While the protection of the body from physical assault is a mainstay of ancient masculine constructions, Jesus' body is assaulted brutally and often.⁴⁵ "He is led away from the Mount of Olives, led to the Sanhedrin court, led and sent to Pilate and Herod, handed over to the crowd, and led to the cross."⁴⁶ Wilson argues, "Luke depicts Jesus being passively passed around by people in positions of power."⁴⁷ The arresting party mocks him and beats him (22:63); Herod and his soldiers treat him with contempt (23:11); others scoff at him (23:35); one of the criminals crucified with him derides him (23:39).

⁴² Ibid., 137.

⁴³ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁴ See Moore and Anderson, "Taking It Like A Man," on the distinctions between attic and asianic rhetorical styles. The attic style included controlled and restrained movements and expressions; the asianic style demonstrated a great deal of emotion and body movements. Jesus' display of anguish and sweat of blood places him in the asianic style of expression.

⁴⁵ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 229.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 228.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Physical assaults along with verbal assaults degrade, dishonor, and un-man Jesus. On the cross, Jesus' body is displayed, in all its weakness and humiliation.

Jesus is not the only figure in Luke who contravenes masculine hegemony. Luke's general depiction of men is often in opposition to ancient masculine ideals. Zachariah questions Gabriel, and in response to his doubt, Gabriel strikes Zachariah mute (1:18-20); real men express confidence rather than doubt; real men talk. More, Zechariah cannot fulfill his sacerdotal and so masculine role of blessing the people. Nor is he in a position to control his own household. When the community wanted to name his son Zachariah (1:59), Elizabeth insisted that the baby would be named John. Zachariah, as the head of the household, could do nothing but confirm his wife's words. He writes on a tablet "his name is John" (1:63).

Men and boys are filled with demons (8:26; 9:38-40; 11:14); their bodies have been penetrated and that penetration causes lack of self-control. The disciples, unable to help the father by casting the demon out of his son, display public weakness (9:40) and so potentially compromise the legitimacy of their mission. The Twelve also have limited understanding (8:45; 9:49-50; 12:41; 24:11). Peter does not think Jesus knows when someone has touched him (8:45); John wants to stop another person from working in the name of Jesus (9:49).

Characters in parables also display a lack of masculine traits. The rich man who builds bigger barns for his possessions rather than sharing his abundance with others, lacks wisdom and cannot demonstrate *pietas* (12:16-21); the father who indulges one son and forgets to invite another to a banquet displays an inability to control his household, and both the sons bring shame to the family, one by dissolute living and the other by dishonoring the father (15:11-32); the merchant who sells all he has in order to buy a pearl is not protecting his home and family (Matt 13:45-46), and so on.

Whereas Jesus, his followers, and his parables can all be adduced as redefining masculine norms, two concerns related to our parable compromise any clear conclusion. First, Jesus and his male followers remain the ones running the mission and, later, the Church. Women, as we have seen, are to take the ancillary role. It is the widow in the parable who breaks out of this construction, despite Luke's attempt to domesticate her into a prayer warrior. Second, the Jewish tradition, even prior to its being under Hellenistic culture for several centuries, already offered alternative models of masculinity: the prophets are dishonored in their own time by those who reject their messages; by the time of Jesus, legends found in the pseudepigraphon *Lives of the Prophets* developed of prophets being tortured to death; Isaac is blind; Jacob walks with a limp; Judah is tricked by Tamar as is Boaz by Ruth; Barak is commanded by Deborah (Judges 4-5), Samson is un-manned by Delilah; David is unable to "get warm" (1 Kgs 1:1), and so on. As a minority within various empires, Jews both reflected and refracted masculine norms. The emphasis in the culture eventually settled not on military prowess or physical strength, but on study and prayer. Each culture, and each subculture, has its own standards of performance.⁴⁸ For Luke, an alternative vision of masculinity and consequently a compromise of the male posture would not be unexpected.

Modern Masculine Performances

Contemporary notions of masculinity include some aspects of the ancient forms. Men are still expected to be the head of their households, show courage, and demonstrate self-control. They have guns to protect their families; they demand justice from others and so protect the community/their turf. Real men still do not cry. In January 2016, *Psychology Today* posted an

⁴⁸ See e.g., Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, *Contraversions, Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society* 8 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

article on how, well past the post-WWII generation, men are still being taught that crying is shameful and a sign of weakness or inadequacy.⁴⁹ Despite research indicating that traditional masculine constructs induce a fear of failure and that the goal should be being a “good person” rather than a “good man,”⁵⁰ ancient views of hegemonic masculinity prevail.

They are reinforced in many Christian contexts; just as men are the heads of the churches, so too, should they be the heads of their homes. Religious-based institutions such as Focus on the Family as well as many conservative churches promote the idea that the social order is best when men take the lead and women submit to that leadership.⁵¹ They promote the hierarchal and male-ruled family whose dystopian logical conclusion is Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, which is currently streaming on Hulu.⁵²

In antiquity, men could perform their masculinity by being the provider and protector of their wives and children.⁵³ That women then often served as household heads, and that the dominant slave group was likely women,⁵⁴ do not disrupt the model. Today, however, “women make up half of the American workforce and are the primary or co-breadwinner in two-thirds of American families.”⁵⁵ Men in antiquity could perform masculinity in terms of displays of

⁴⁹ Sam Louie, “Real Men Cry. Crying is Caring,” *Minority Report*, Psychology Today (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/minority-report/201601/real-men-cry>), posted January 29, 2016.

⁵⁰ The Editors, “21st Century Masculinity: What Does It Mean?,” *Goodmenproject.com*, February 20, 2015, <http://goodmenproject.com/ethics-values/21st-century-masculinity-what-does-it-mean-gmp/>. Contributors to this article suggested that ascribing to normative masculine constructs induced a fear of failure of measuring up to the ideals of a good man. Thus, they are more concerned with being good people rather than good men.

⁵¹ Jocelyn Green, “Marriage: Order in the Home,” *Focus on the Family*, 2009, <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/military-marriage/the-chain-of-command-in-marriage/order-in-the-home>, accessed May 24, 2017.

⁵² Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986). The television version indicates that racism is no longer a social problem. Gender roles are rigorously enforced, and “gender traitors” (lesbians and gay men) are either executed or, in the case of fertile women, given clitoridectomies.

⁵³ Dustin Wax, “Being A Man in the 21st Century,” *Www.lifehack.org*, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/featured/being-a-man-in-the-21st-century-part-1.html>.

⁵⁴ See the arguments made by Roger Bagnall, “Missing Females in Roman Egypt,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 16 (1997): 121-38 (127), cited in Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 17.

⁵⁵ Maria Shriver, *The Shriver Report: A Woman’s Nation Pushes Back from the Brink: A Study*, Electronic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). See also “Equal Pay for Mothers Is Critical for Families,” *National Women’s Law Center*, accessed May 23, 2017, <https://nwlc.org/resources/equal-pay-for-mothers-is-critical-for-families/>.

physical power. Today, the advent of technology in the home and work-life makes physical power less and less needed.⁵⁶ Masculinity thus is increasingly under threat, and in communities where the masculine and feminine roles had already been destabilized and deformed by the legacy of slavery and the ongoing effects of racism, the threat can be severe.

One response to this threat, which is an option primarily for men who have no economic worries and high social status, is to carve out new presentations that attempt to eliminate gender categories. Jaden Smith, son of Will and Jada Pinkett Smith, is known for his gender-bending dress. Paparazzi have snapped him wearing skirts and dresses, and he has worn a flower crown in his hair.⁵⁷ Smith was the 2016 face of Louis Vuitton women's wear.⁵⁸ Queering categories, destabilizing the links between gender and sexuality, and recognition of the multiple ways gender is performed, all challenge the status quo. They also, given the way the status quo works, reinforce it. One cannot be transgressive unless there is something to transgress.

Another way of challenging the masculine norm, connected to transgressive performances, is to satirize the masculine markers or to equate them with something that displays neither *virtus* nor *pietas*. The various markers of masculinity typically deconstruct: the powerful athlete who should be remembered for the touchdown is remembered instead for domestic abuse; the stoic, cool male who shows no emotion is arrested, emotionally if not literally, by his refusal to obey anyone but himself; the judge who shows lack of self-control dishonors himself, his

⁵⁶ Wax, "Being A Man in the 21st Century."

⁵⁷ Zeba Blay, "How Jaden Smith and the #Carefreeblackboy Movement Are Redefining Black Masculinity," *Huffingtonpost.com*, June 5, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/05/jaden-smith-redefining-black-masculinity- n_7514846.html. The "carefreeblackboy" hashtag in social media is in response to the earlier "carefreeblackgirl" social media movement that afforded black women and girls the opportunity to eschew the restrictive stereotypes that have plagued African American women by providing an outlet for the expression of complexity and diversity.

⁵⁸ Vanessa Friedman, "Jaden Smith for Louis Vuitton: The New Man in a Skirt," *Nytimes.com*, January 6, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/07/fashion/jaden-smith-for-louis-vuitton-the-new-man-in-a-skirt.html?_r=0. See also Ali Giordani, "Is Jaden Smith the New Face of Androgyny?," *FourTwoNine*, January 13, 2016, <http://dot429.com/articles/6338-is-jaden-smith-the-new-androgynous-icon>.

court, and the judicial system. If the people in the positions of power are revealed to be illegitimate power-holders, then the system that props them up is more easily critiqued and so dismantled. Professional athletes, cool males, and judges can all be held accountable as violating masculine standards. Further, not only they, but their standards, may topple.

The Judge's Masculinity

The judge in the parable begins with his masculinity already compromised. The judge as a magistrate within the Roman system would be expected to imitate the pious character of the Emperor by demonstrating *virtus* in his courtroom. He is also to be the manly protector of the widow (Ps 68:5) and not pervert justice with respect to her (Deut 27:19). That he does not fear God compromises his *pietas*. He must take care to do no injustice in court (Lev 19:15), to judge rightly, and to show no partiality (Deut 1:16-17). That he does not care what others think of him could, as noted above, make him the ideal judge; it could also signal corruption. The Emperor is supposed to attend to the welfare of the people under his rule; the judge should do the same for the people in his court. While his refusal to acquiesce to the widow's demand displays his authority, her invading of his space shows that his power is limited.

The judge begins by not caring; he does not end that way. The widow, invading his space and threatening his person, causes him to change. She *penetrates* his stoic veneer; she gets under his skin. The judge's concern of even fear of being corporeally assaulted indicates both lack of courage and the inability to protect his body. His fear of the widow causes the judge to slip down the gender hierarchy; he is emasculated. He gives in to her, and he gives her what she wants, regardless of the merits of her case. At the same time, the widow, with her successful threat,

climbs the gender hierarchy. Like Sapphire, she is the masculinized public figure of authority, even while remaining anatomically female.

But parables do more than call into question the status quo when it comes to gender. They also call into question what “justice” means. At the end of the parable – as at the ends of many parables: the Laborers in the Vineyard, the Treasure in the Field, the Friend at Midnight, the Dishonest Steward, the various Wedding and Banquet parables, etc. —we do not know if justice has been served. We do not know the details of the widow’s suit; we do not know if she wanted justice or vengeance. We do not know if the verdict involved monetary payments, restoration of property, even capital punishment. The unnamed and unseen opponent has not pleaded his case, as far as we know. Thus the male voice of the opponent has also been silenced; off-stage, he is nevertheless unmanned when the suit does not go in his favor. In emasculating the judge, the widow has also emasculated her opponent. How the reader reacts to these observations may well depend on how the reader understands both justice and gender.

These topics lead us to the dialogue between the parable’s presentation of a male authority figure whose masculine traits are complicated and compromised and three stereotypes of African American men: the Cool Black Male, the Master-Pastor, and the Foolish Judge. In all three cases here as well, masculinity is performed, is complicated, and is ultimately compromised. And in all three cases, as we found with their sisters Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire, the stereotypes can also be sites of empowerment, if they are performed with cultural awareness.

African American Masculinity

African American masculinity, like African American womanhood, has been bound up in stereotypical images. Similar to feminine constructions created out of U.S. chattel slavery, African American masculine constructs also take their start from slavery. The first stereotype, the Tom, is a “socially acceptable” black man who “never turns against the white master, remains hearty in the midst of insults and floggings, is submissive, generous, and selfless.”⁵⁹ The Tom was the ideal black man; for some in today’s America, he still is. The Tom finds his more recent equivalents in the Oreo (black on the outside; white on the inside). The *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology* even lists the “Uncle Tom Syndrome” as describing “a ritualized, accommodating, sycophantic style of behavior in African Americans toward Caucasians.”⁶⁰ This article also notes the alternative: “Playing it cool is the practice of hiding one’s feelings and presenting an impenetrable wall of seeming indifference.”⁶¹ Thus, to “play it cool” is to “have no respect for people” (Luke 18:2, 4).

Alongside the Tom was the Coon, the African American man as buffoon. As Donald Bogle observes, “The Coon developed into the most blatantly degrading of all black stereotypes.”⁶² “The Coons were unreliable, lazy, subhuman creatures who butchered the English language.”⁶³

The Toms and Coons conceived during the years of slavery morphed upon emancipation. The Coon as subhuman creature became (the term “evolved” would be inappropriate) the Brute. This stereotype played upon white fears that black men were going to rape white women.

⁵⁹ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films*, 4th ed. (New York: Continuum, 2001), 6.

⁶⁰ Paul E. Priester, “Uncle Tom Syndrome,” in Yo Jackson (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006), 461-62 (461).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 461.

⁶² Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8.

Additionally, the Brute stereotype reinforced the view that African American men lacked intelligence; their bodies were strong, their physical desires without control, and their intellectual facilities almost non-existent. “Whites viewed African Americans as mentally inferior, physically and culturally unevolved, and in appearance apelike.”⁶⁴ Given that in the classical Roman world, physiognomy signaled an absence of virtue, black skin easily signaled to that Empire’s heirs a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder.

Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States (1801-1809), asserted that “blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.”⁶⁵ About a century later, Clifton R. Breckinridge, a United States Senator from Arkansas, described the African American man as “the worst and most insatiate brute that exists in human form. Its fierceness, its ferocity, is chiefly exhibited by the few in the perpetuation of crime.”⁶⁶ The black man could not control his emotions; he was driven by lust rather than by virtue or piety; he was therefore at best uncivilized. “The brute caricature portrays black men as innately savage, animalistic, destructive, and criminal, deserving punishment, maybe death.”⁶⁷ Although Breckinridge acknowledges that African American men are human, his description locates them as animals.

The Brute stereotype famously re-surfaced during the 1988 presidential campaign. Michael Dukakis, governor of Massachusetts and the presidential candidate on the Democratic ticket, supported a prison furlough program. William Horton, a convicted felon, was given a weekend furlough from a Massachusetts prison; out from behind bars, Horton committed rape.

⁶⁴ S. Plous and Tyrone Williams, “Racial Stereotypes from the Days of American Slavery: A Continuing Legacy,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 25.9 (1995): 797.

⁶⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia: With an Appendix*, 9th ed. (Boston: H. Sprague, 1802), 198.

⁶⁶ Clifton R. Breckinridge, “Southern Society for the Promotion of the Study of Race Conditions and Problems in the South” (Race Problems of the South: Report of the Proceedings of the First Annual Conference, Richmond: B.F. Johnson, 1900), 174.

⁶⁷ David Pilgrim, “The Brute Caricature,” *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, 2000, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/brute/>, accessed April 15, 2017.

The Republican Party seized the moment: presenting Horton as a brute and rapist, they not only challenged Dukakis's furlough program, they also reinforced the image of the black man as dangerous and animalistic. The Republicans eventually ceased running the Horton advertisements after criticism that the ads were racist, but the damage had been done to the Dukakis campaign. The ads, featuring Horton's mug shot, played upon white Americans' "fears of black crime."⁶⁸ Jimmy Williams, a Democratic strategist, stated, "That ad alone changed the course of the race. It absolutely changed the course, and it made white Americans—especially white southerners—raise an eyebrow and think, 'We can't have a man from Massachusetts releasing black criminals across the country and letting them rape our white women and children.'"⁶⁹ Instead of Willie Horton ads, the Bush campaign began to run ads that showed intimidating-looking men of various races walking in and out of prison through revolving doors.⁷⁰ But the image that remained in America's cultural consciousness was that of Willy Horton, the *black* man. Ironically, in a 1993 interview, Horton stated, "My name is not Willie. It's part of the myth of the case. The name irks me. It was created to play on racial stereotypes: big, ugly, violent, 'black Willie.' I resent that."⁷¹

Stereotypes of African American men inevitably raise the tropes of masculinity. The Tom who capitulates to white demands is feminized in that very capitulation. While ideal masculinity suggests that men should provide and protect their families, African American men are presented

⁶⁸ Morgan Whitaker, "The Legacy of the Willie Horton Ad Lives On, 25 Years Later," *MSNBC.com*, October 21, 2013, <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/the-legacy-the-willie-horton-ad-lives>, accessed April 10, 2017.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ "Candidate Ads: 1988 George Bush 'Revolving Door,'" *Insidepolitics.org*, accessed January 17, 2016, <http://www.insidepolitics.org/ps111/candidateads.html>, "1988 George Bush Sr. 'Revolving Door' Attack Ad," accessed January 17, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmwhdDv8VrM>. See also the Willie Horton attack ad, "Willie Horton 1988 Attack Ad," accessed January 17, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Io9KMSSEZ0Y>.

⁷¹ Dan Rodricks, "Trying to Find the Real Willie Horton," *Baltimoresun.com*, August 12, 1993, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1993-08-12/news/1993224224_1_willie-horton-willie-horton-jeffrey-elliott. Jeffrey Elliot, then a professor of political science at North Carolina Central University, who interviewed William Horton, acknowledges that "rather than appeal to the voters' nobler instincts, the campaign appealed to their prejudices and fears."

as Brutes or rapists. Missing from the stereotype is the fact that many African American men lack full access to education and jobs that would allow them to provide. That lack of education then feeds the Coon stereotype. Coupling and reinforcing the view that the black man is a Brute who cannot sustain a job, is the economic role of African American women; their single-parent households have preserved the family. This shifting in gender roles also makes African American men viewed as less than real men.⁷²

While the Tom, Coon, and Brute stereotypes questioned the masculinity of African American men, other African American male stereotypes developed to establish masculinity. Just as physiognomy focused on racial identity could produce negative categorizations, black male bodies could also be sites of masculine envy. Quoting Norman Podhoretz's 1963 essay "My Negro Program—and Ours," bell hooks provides the following line: "Just as in childhood I envied Negroes for what seemed to me their superior masculinity, so I envy them today for what seems to be their superior physical grace and beauty."⁷³ The envy is based on a definition of masculinity related to the body, not to the intellect and not to economic status. As the markers of masculinity change, the appropriation of the black body changes as well. As hooks summarizes, "black males have access to the 'cool' white men longed for."⁷⁴ In comparison with the Cool black man, the white man is feminized. To distinguish himself further from the feminized white

⁷² Townes, *Cultural Production of Evil*, notes that female-headed households have been the lightning rod for casting African American men as not up to the standards of real masculinity. The stereotype is that African American women are controlling, refuse to be passive, and thus prevent African American males from performing as real men. See Jamal Hagler, "The Media Narrative of Black Men in America Is All Wrong," *Newsweek.com*, March 19, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/black-men-today-dont-fit-old-stereotype-314877>. While African American males are gaining in educational pursuits [20.4% of African American males over the age of 25 have obtained a bachelor's degree], the unemployment rate, as of 2014, for African American males over the age of 16 [12.2%] is double that of the general population in the same demographic [6.2%].

⁷³ bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 13. I do recognize the irony that bell hooks, who is not a Cool Black Man, provides one of the best descriptions of the phenomenon.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

man, the Cool Black Male may drift into activities coded as hyper-masculine, including violence, indiscriminate (hetero-)sexual performance, and control over women.

Both the Cool Black Male and the Master-Pastor are stereotypes that sought to establish masculinity beyond the Eurocentric masculine construction; at the same time, both can be seen as responses to the Eurocentric and then American formulations of the ideal man. The Foolish Judge explodes the stereotypes of Tom, Coon, and Brute; his figure is so unintellectual, so physiognomically unappealing, so out of control, that he, along with the stereotypes, are rendered ridiculous. As the majority population laughs at the African American buffoon, the complete antithesis of the judge who would appear in the courtroom, the African American performer and his African American audience know the truth of the system they are mocking.

The Cool Black Man and the Master-Pastor are partially the products of historical contingencies. Historically, African American men had limited access to social outlets and professions that would allow them to demonstrate strengths presupposed in constructions of masculinity in the public sphere.⁷⁵ To respond to this lack, the images of both the Cool Black Male who performs with a stoic and serious public demeanor and the Master-Pastor who performs the virtuous leader (showing *pietas* and *virtus*) developed. The former image did not, officially, care how he was perceived, although his performance was all about perception; the latter image was the path to living the ideal masculine role of leadership, power, and authority. The Cool Black Male resisted the culture; the Master-Pastor is an excellent example of what has become known as colonial mimicry: he becomes the ideal imposed upon him even as it is withheld from him.

⁷⁵ Julius H. Bailey, "Masculinizing the Pulpit: The Black Preacher in the Nineteenth-Century AME Church," in Timothy R. Buckner and Peter Caster (eds.), *Fathers, Preachers, Rebels, Men: Black Masculinity in U.S. History and Literature, 1820-1945*, Black Performance and Cultural Criticism (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 83.

While the Cool Black Male and the Master-Pastor stereotypes allow African American men to perform masculinity, they both crumble in the masculine quest. Casting the judge in the parable as the Cool Black Male shows that coolness is impossible to maintain. The image of neither fearing God nor caring about public opinion is a façade; the judge's interior monologue, in which he repeats the narrator's description of him, can be taken as an attempt to reinforce the identity he has so carefully cultivated. It is this identity that the widow demolishes. The judge as Master-Pastor also fails: afraid of the uprising of those he considered beneath him, he eventually succumbs to the demands of the widow. Thus, he is ruled by the ones he supposed himself to rule. Finally, the Judge as Fool mocks the court system and its judges. Perhaps this is what the parable does as well: the judge who is to be the epitome of stoic control, intellectual rigor, and public morality is shown to be fearful, uncertain, and driven to adjudication not based on justice but based on self-protection. He, and thus the system he represents, are not only corrupt, they represent a form of corruption that can be easily manipulated.

The Cool Black Male

Philosopher and social critic bell hooks argues that black male cool was the manner in which “African American men used their imaginations to transcend any oppression that would keep them from celebrating life;” “it was a disposition that provided them the ability to self-define rather than be defined by others.”⁷⁶ hooks's explanation of black male cool is in contrast to what she calls the “dominator culture” of the 1960s Black Power Movement in which coolness was about exploitation, the con, and the hustle.⁷⁷ Both versions of this performance correlate

⁷⁶ bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 147.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

with ancient constructions of masculinity in which public persona—performance and its perception— is the basis for identity.

More recent expressions of Black Male Cool also echo ancient constructions of masculinity. *Ebony Magazine*'s 2008 cover feature celebrated the 25 “coolest” African American men: Politicians and social activists Barack Obama, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Malcolm X; actors Don Cheadle, Samuel L. Jackson, Sidney Poitier, Richard Roundtree, and Denzel Washington; musicians and entertainers Sean “Jay-Z” Carter, Miles Davis, Sammy Davis, Jr., Snoop Dogg, Marvin Gaye, Jimi Hendrix, Quincy Jones, Lenny Kravitz, Bob Marley, Tupac Shakur, Prince, and Billy Dee Williams; athletes Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordan, and Walt Frazier; and journalists Ed Bradley and Gordon Parks.⁷⁸ These men all demonstrate some type of public performance by way of musical, athletic, or political ability. This expression of coolness suggests that real masculinity is expressed in a public manner. *Ebony*'s list communicates a number of messages: masculinity must be obtained; certain fields showcase masculinity; one must be in the elite status of these fields to demonstrate the ideal black masculine role.⁷⁹ Missing from the list are judges and lawyers, doctors and university professors, men principally known as authors or painters, anyone who would fit the category of “disabled,” anyone who would fit the category, at least in appearance, of senior citizen. The men who make the list are cool in the body: they are cool in performance that can be watched. They are embodiments of cool. They are also (almost impossible) ideals. And they all work at cultivating their public persona.

Another shading of African American male cool designed to showcase masculinity is the cool pose. Richard Majors argues,

⁷⁸ Bryan Monroe, “25 Coolest Brothers of All Time,” *Ebony*, August 2008.

⁷⁹ This construction diverges from the ancient construct in that the 1st century notions of masculinity did not include performing artists as true men.

black men learned long ago that the classic American virtues of thrift, perseverance, and hard work did not give them the same tangible rewards that accrued to white men. Yet they [black men] have defined manhood in similar terms: breadwinner, provider, and procreator. Without the means adequately to fulfill these roles, many have become frustrated, impatient, angry, embittered, and alienated.⁸⁰

We have already noted how the dominant society's construction of the stoic male as ideal is unhealthy; for some African American men, already compromised by lack of education and resources, the difficulty of performance is compounded, and so is the reaction to the attempt to maintain it.

In April, 2017, as I was completing this chapter, Cleveland, Ohio resident Steven Stephens uploaded a video to the social media outlet Facebook in which he kills an elderly man named Robert Goodwin, Jr.; he explained his motives: disdain for an ex-girlfriend and financial difficulty. He also claimed that he was going on a murderous rampage because he "couldn't take it anymore."⁸¹ Stephens, posting on Facebook, stated, "always had to prove myself, always had to take the butts of people's jokes."⁸² Stephens, whose masculinity was in crisis, is an example of an African American man unable to fit within the confines of the breadwinner-provider masculine construct. A number of media outlets did not identify Stephens as African American; the Washington Post, for example, does not identify him by race, but it reproduced three selfies that he took and thus it

⁸⁰ Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson, eds., *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* (New York: Lexington Books, 1992), 1.

⁸¹ Tom Cleary, "Steve 'Stevie Steve' Stephens: 5 Fast Facts You Need to Know," *Heavy.com*, April 16, 2017, <http://heavy.com/news/2017/04/stevie-steve-stephens-cleveland-facebook-live-video-shooting-shooter-gunman-killer-photos-pictures-victims/>, accessed April 22, 2017.

⁸² *Ibid.*

invites the reader to draw racial implications.⁸³ All of Stephens's attempts to ascribe to the ideal American masculine model failed him. Ironically, while Stephens is a victim of crisis masculinity, he fulfills the stereotype of the brute; his actions were savage and animalistic.

This Cool Black Male identity is a mask that represents a restrained masculinity; "it is performed by a stoic, emotionless posture, an unflinching demeanor in the face of disruptive circumstances."⁸⁴ Jackson Katz, the creator and writer of the documentary "Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity," argues, "Masculinity is not a fixed inevitable state of being, but is a projection, a pose, a guise, an act, a mask that men often wear to shield our vulnerability and hide our humanity."⁸⁵ The message it conveys is one of "pride, strength, and control," which are also some of the markers for hegemonic masculinity.⁸⁶ The cool persona is not unfrequently performed in sun-glasses. The eye may be the window to the soul, as the old saying goes, but the Cool Black Man prevents access to his eyes. He sees, but he cannot himself be penetrated.

The Cool Black Man finds part of his origin in the 1970s, the time when Women's Liberation was also nurturing new constructions of the female. During the Blaxploitation era of film, the cool pose can be seen in movies such as *Shaft* (1971) and *Superfly* (1972). Both movies, coming at the end of the Civil Rights movement, "were made possible by the rising political and social consciousness of black people."⁸⁷ Moviegoers wanted Hollywood to depict

⁸³ See Avi Selk, Lindsey Bever, Peter Holley, and Wesley Lowery, "'Facebook killer' dies after three-day police pursuit in Pennsylvania," *Post Nation*, April 18, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/04/18/facebook-murder-suspect-steve-stephens-is-dead-police-say/?utm_term=.83abdb9c2353, accessed May 24, 2017.

⁸⁴ Majors and Billson, *Cool Pose*, 5.

⁸⁵ Sut Jhally, *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and Crisis in Masculinity*, DVD (Media Education Foundation, 1999).

⁸⁶ Majors and Billson, *Cool Pose*, 4.

⁸⁷ Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 69.

both the variety in African American characters and to go beyond the Uncle Tom and Coon stereotypes of African American men in general. The initial cool factor of these movies was seeing African American men “stick it to the man.” Moreover, both movies showcased the cool pose of “style, physical posturing, and crafted performances that delivered the message of strength and control.”⁸⁸ Entertaining, inspirational in their celebration of black freedom, inventing new forms of black culture, these cool films with their cool stars feasted off the exploitation of women as well as, ultimately, perpetuated negative stereotypes of African American men.

In *Shaft* (1971),⁸⁹ the movie version of Ernest Tidyman’s 1970 novel (the author is white), private detective John Shaft, played by Richard Roundtree of the *Ebony* Cool list, is the ultimate Cool Black Male. His cool pose is immediately signaled by physiognomy (Roundtree was a former *Ebony* Fashion Fair model) and style of dress. Majors and Billson indicate, “The African American male’s walk is a way to announce his presence, to accentuate his self, and to broadcast his prideful power”⁹⁰; Roundtree walked the walk. In the novel, Tidyman describes Shaft as wearing “plain-toed oxfords, a gray wool suit, a gray straw hat, and dark glasses.”⁹¹ The movie figure upgraded to cool, with leather pants and long leather coats, turtleneck sweaters, and leather oxfords. He had a neat haircut, was neatly shaved, and wore dark shades. The actor and his accessories projected confidence, style, and strength. “The cool pose furnishes Shaft as well as other African American men a sense of confidence and security.”⁹²

Shaft’s masculinity and coolness, however, were also predicated on the exploitation of women. The many women who found him attractive, and he them, indicate an unbridled

⁸⁸ Majors and Billson, *Cool Pose*, 4.

⁸⁹ Gordon Parks, *Shaft*, DVD (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1971).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁹¹ Ernest Tidyman, *Shaft* (New Jersey: Dynamite Entertainment, 1970), 1-8.

⁹² Majors and Billson, *Cool Pose*, 9.

sexuality. Speaking of Shaft along with Priest (from “Superfly”), Stephane Dunn comments that these figures “personify the sexual allure ascribed to the player or mack. Their soulful cool relies significantly on the display of their ability to ‘fuck’ any of the women they choose and on women constantly desiring to be ‘fucked’ by them. Likewise, other black popular films... and mass popular literature of the day... elevated glamorization of the pimp figure and male misogyny.”⁹³

The Cool Black Man’s lack of concern for women’s feelings and the use of women’s bodies (the Cool Black Man is by no means alone in such performance) is matched both by his withholding of emotions and by his inability to trust others. Majors and Billson also argue that while the cool pose precludes African American men from demonstrating trust, “it is a way for the black male to express bitterness, anger, and distrust toward the dominant society.”⁹⁴

In the 2000 update of *Shaft* starring Samuel L. Jackson, the cool takes on a more violent tone.⁹⁵ Jackson plays the nephew of the original John Shaft. He, too, wears cool clothes such as leather and dark glasses. His cool pose, however, is in how he asserts himself over others. Isaac Hayes, the composer of the original Shaft theme song, said while watching the shoot of the movie, “Sam was hard. Samuel Jackson was mean.”⁹⁶ Samuel L. Jackson, describing his portrayal of John Shaft, says, “I think my character is a little angrier than Richard Roundtree’s character was. And I tend to be a bit more volatile; I lash out at people; I hit people; I shoot people; I kick people; I do things to people.”⁹⁷ Thus, asserting black masculinity becomes equated with violence. “In American society, a potpourri of violence, toughness, and symbolic

⁹³ Stephane Dunn, “*Bad Bitches*” and *Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 51

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹⁵ John Singleton, *Shaft*, DVD (Paramount Pictures, 2000).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

control over others constitutes a prime means through which black men can demonstrate masculinity.”⁹⁸ This is the “cool pose.”⁹⁹

Superfly (1972)¹⁰⁰ followed *Shaft* (1971) in the portrayal of men with a cool pose, with the pose now more fully involved with drugs and the urban street. The stereotypes of African American men are reinforced. Ron O’Neal plays Youngblood Priest, also known as Superfly, a streetwise and tough drug dealer looking to get out of the drug game. He, too, wears stylish clothing such as “long, narrow-waisted overcoats with leather trim” and “big-brimmed hats, and he drives a Cadillac El Dorado.”¹⁰¹ He, like Shaft, also has multiple sexual partners, although unlike Shaft, Superfly has the one woman with whom he wants to spend his life.

While Nelson Guerrero notes that critics decried the movie’s depiction of African American males as drug dealers, Nelson George argues, “Ron O’Neal’s Priest was a glamorous vision of the commonplace drug wholesaler.”¹⁰² It is at his “priestly” altar that others are to worship, enthralled by his coolness. The Cool Black Male thus serves to reinforce negative stereotypes: to make drug-dealing glamorous is a counter-cultural message that leads to nowhere good. The movie does suggest that the life is not all that glamorous: Priest does get out of the trade, but he must live on the run. The cool pose might express African American masculinity, but it also limits a positive expression of African American masculinity.

Along with unsuccessful spin-offs such as the television version of Shaft, which aired as part of the New CBS Tuesday Night Movies (1973-1974) and also starring Richard Roundtree, the Cool Black Man arrived in homes in the 1980s by means of Hawk (Avery Brooks), the no-nonsense enforcer from the television show *Spenser: For Hire* (1985-1988) starring Robert

⁹⁸ Major and Billson, *Cool Pose*, 33.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Gordon Parks, Jr., *Superfly*, DVD (Warner Bros., 2004).

¹⁰¹ Nelson George, *Blackface: Reflections on African-Americans and the Movies* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 30. See also Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*, 96.

¹⁰² Ibid, 30.

Ulrich as Spenser. Hawk too wears long leather coats and dark sunglasses; he also carries a .357 Magnum Colt Python 8-barrel revolver. He describes himself as “a man of few words,” but when he speaks it is slow and deliberate.”¹⁰³ ABC later created a spin-off, *A Man Called Hawk* (1989), where Hawk returns to his hometown, Washington D.C., to help people who lacked resources to obtain justice. While Hawk has a female friend, he is not depicted as sexually promiscuous. His coolness, still evident in the spin-off, depicted him as “a man’s man, and a real genuine black masculine presence on TV when they were so rare.”¹⁰⁴

The image then changed again. Today the Cool Black Male is more identified not simply with select Hip Hop but with Gangsta culture; drugs, money, women as ho’s, guns, and dark glasses as his accessories. In hooks’s words, “Gangsta culture is the essence of patriarchal masculinity. Popular culture tells young black males that only the predator will survive.”¹⁰⁵ If they can make others fearful of them, then they have power. They do not, in American culture, require guns or knives: a black man in a hoodie is enough to strike fear. The old image of the black male as sexually unrestrained, socially apathetic, and the naturally violent Brute has returned, save that he is better dressed.

George M. Cross defines the “three personality traits of cool” as “narcissism (being stuck on one’s self), hedonism (wanting only pleasure), and ironic detachment (not caring about people or things).”¹⁰⁶ While the Cool pose, which indicates “a permanent state of private rebellion,” can rebel against whatever system prevents human flourishing¹⁰⁷ and thus suggesting the Cool Black

¹⁰³ Spenser: For Hire, September 4, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7U82V_NjhOs, accessed April 22, 2017.

¹⁰⁴ Sergio, “Remembering ‘A Man Called Hawk’ - The Coolest Brother on TV,” *IndieWire*, October 12, 2012, <http://www.indiewire.com/2012/10/remembering-a-man-called-hawk-the-coolest-brother-on-tv-141108/>, accessed April 22, 2017.

¹⁰⁵ hooks, *We Real Cool*, 26.

¹⁰⁶ George Cross, *Coolposing: Secrets of Black Male Leadership in America* (Ex Libris, 2010), 77

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Man can work for human betterment, the dominant trope is one less of social action than of disinterest.

Luke's Cool Judge

In a certain city there was a cool judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. He was too cool to be bothered with anyone else; he did not share details about his personal life, and he did not care about what details his associates may have to share. He came to work every day dressed in the finest linen and expensive leather sandals. He was always cleanly shaven and neat. He was emotionless and unflinching in his judgments. In that same city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice, grant me vengeance, against my opponent." Justice or vengeance – it was all the same to her, and it was the same to him as well. She felt that she had been shafted by the system, and she wanted the judge to fix it. She wanted her opponent taken down. She had heard that the judge was a Cool Black Man, but she didn't care; her concern was her own case.

For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and I don't give a damn about anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she won't sock me." When news traveled about that the judge had decided to do what the widow asked, suspicion arose that perhaps he wasn't as cool as he pretended. Maybe he did care about her. Or maybe he liked the idea of taking vengeance in the name of justice. Beneath his sunglasses, it was hard to get a reading on his motive.

The judge in Luke's parable begins as the Cool Black Male. He cares about no one and no thing; he trust no one; he has no companionship. Given that the widow threatens to hit him

under the eye (ὕπωπιάζω), we can picture him as wearing sunglasses and fearful that they might shatter. His continual resistance to her pleas shows his stoic nature. As the Cool Black Man, he may well figure that he could do with this widow whatever he wanted, sexually, physically, economically, emotionally. He rules his court, and those around him fear him...until the widow breaks through his guise and his gaze.

Attempting to maintain his posture of not fearing God and not respecting people, the judge demonstrates pride, strength, and control. Calm in the face of the widow's continuous coming, he strikes the cool pose. Yet in both Luke's narrative context and in the parable extracted from that context, the judge is not cool; he is at the very least ignorant. He is also likely to be evil, since he has no more authority outside of himself and since he has no love for God or neighbor. The parable gives no indication of what brought the judge to this state; it is as silent regarding the prompts about his lack of faith and lack of concern as it is regarding the details of the widow's case. As we have seen, commentators tend to fill-in details of the widow's case: she has been exploited; she is poor; she has been mistreated by the dead husband's family; the judge has been bribed to ignore her claims, and so on. Rarely if ever is the judge's back-story given. If we can ask, as literary critics do, "How many children had Lady MacBeth,"¹⁰⁸ we can also inquire into the judge's circumstances. Perhaps he, like Job, had reason to doubt the goodness of the god(s); perhaps all that could have been done to him has been done, and he therefore has nothing left to fear. Perhaps he had been, like Joseph, sold by his brothers into slavery and then consistently mistreated by those who purchased him. We readers extend our sympathies and empathies to the widow; we do not do the same for the judge. Had the petitioner been a similarly

¹⁰⁸ See the classic study by Lionel Charles Knights, *How Many Children had Lady MacBeth?: An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism*, Explorations (Cambridge, UK: G. Fraser, the Minority Press, 1933): 15-54. Knights himself saw this as a ridiculous question.

Cool Man, or the drug-dealing Superfly, our sympathies might have been more with the legal system and its representative.

Anyone today invested in what is broadly known as the counter-culture would sympathize with the widow and not the judge, for the legal system is part of “the system,” or what “the man” represents. Putting the Cool Black Man in the place of the judge works in that both figures share lack of fear and lack of general concern; it also works in the case of Shaft and Hawk, who do fall on the side of the Law, even if their methods are unorthodox. But as the Cool Black Man became increasingly the countercultural image, his relationship with the state legal system became increasingly tenuous. Thus, finding him on the bench might actually prove to be beneficial to anyone also alienated from the status quo or “the system” or “the man.”

The Cool Black Man, in the context of the parable, cannot maintain his cool. The widow has invaded his space, taken up his time, and now threatens him, whether metaphorically or literally, with physical assault. He relents, and in doing so, he compromises his position not only with respect to her, but with respect to everyone else. The court is public space. The public now knows that the Cool Judge can be threatened or provoked; he is not immune to pressure. He has lost the respect that powerful magistrates carry.

Reputation together with self-interest props up hegemonic masculinity. By looking to his own interests, the judge has lost his reputation of being dis-interested. He has also lost his cool masculinity as he has allowed the widow to best him. The “Man” – the judge, the system — can be beaten.

And yet, because Luke 18:1-8 is a parable, and because parables do not go the way one would expect, the judge as the Cool Black Man gives one more turn to the interpretation. Today the Cool Black Man can be marked by violence, patriarchal rule, and sexual aggression. In the

Parable, the judge refuses all these markers. He could have threatened the woman just as she threatened him: a man beating a woman in public is not an unknown phenomenon. He could have taken advantage of her; he could have traded a positive verdict for sexual favors – that is not an unknown phenomenon either. By ceding his privileges and by refraining from behaving in the way that marks him, he enters a new way of life. The guise is shed; the difficulty of maintaining it is lifted. Perhaps there is liberation for the judge after all.

The Master-Pastor

W.E.B. Du Bois suggested that “the preacher is the most unique personality developed by African Americans on American soil; they are leaders, politicians, orators, bosses, idealists and the center of their communities.”¹⁰⁹ Du Bois also argued that African American preachers, particularly those leading large congregations, are “the most powerful African American rulers.”¹¹⁰ These same sentiments are evident today both in smaller African American churches and in the mega-churches where African American pastors such as T.D. Jakes and Creflo Dollar command respect along with royalties. However, while African American pastors have been forces for progress and stability in the African American community, they have often come under criticism by both community insiders as well as outside critics for being exploitative, malfasant, and arrogant.¹¹¹

Recent notions of pastoral exploitation and arrogance arose with Creflo Dollar of the World Changers Church International of Atlanta, Georgia. In March 2015, citing the engine

¹⁰⁹ W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, “Of the Faith of the Fathers,” in *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 190.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹¹¹ William R. Macklin, “Rollins’ Words Summon the Worst Image of Black Ministers: The Stereotype of Greedy Clergy Is Aimed At Demeaning the Black Power Base, Pastors Say,” *Philly.com*, November 21, 1993, sec. Black Community. See also Donald H. Matthews, *Sexual Abuse of Power in the Black Church: Sexual Misconduct in the African American Churches* (Bloomington: WestBow, 2012). Matthews claims, “Black females are likely to experience three times the amount of sexual abuse as females in white churches” (xiii).

failure of the church's jet purchased in 1989, the World Changer's Ministry posted a fund raising video asking 200,000 of their ministry partners from around the world to donate \$300 towards the purchase of a \$65 million Gulfstream G650 jet.¹¹² The rationale for soliciting the donations was so that Dollar and his ministry team of 10-15 persons could take thousands of pounds of food and provisions when they go around the world spreading the message of Jesus.¹¹³ Amid public outcry concerning the church's need for a luxury jet at the expense of parishioners, the fundraising campaign was discontinued. Public sentiment regarded Dollar as greedy, unconcerned about the economic strain on his parishioners, and diverting funds that could be better spent in communities near his church.¹¹⁴ Persons outside of the church viewed his request to purchase a jet for conducting the business of the church as manipulation. Cultural critic Kirsten West Savali argues, "Dollar is busy scheming. Instead of putting millions into the community, he's pulling millions out of it just so he can fly above it all and tell his congregation to say 'praise the Lord' while he does."¹¹⁵ Although World Changers Church International rejected the idea that the purchase of this jet was an imposition on the community or took advantage of church members, the view of Dollar as a charlatan, exploiting his congregation for his personal gain, continues to summon the worst image of black ministers.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Nancy Badertscher, "Creflo Dollar's Need for \$65 Million Jet Never Gets off the Ground," *Www.politifact.com*, March 23, 2015, <http://www.politifact.com/georgia/statements/2015/mar/23/juda-engelmayer/creflo-dollars-need-65-million-jet-never-gets-grou/>, accessed May 24, 2017. The Gulfstream jet is viewed as the best and fastest high-end corporate jet ever built and is used by "world leaders, top business executives, and billionaires."

¹¹³ The Teal Group, an Aerospace and Defense Industry market analysis group, disputed this claim of the World Changers Church by suggesting that the luxury Gulfstream G650 does not have cargo space for thousands of pounds of food and supplies.

¹¹⁴ Badertscher, "Creflo Dollar's Need for \$65 Million Jet Never Gets off the Ground." See also Kirsten West Savali, "\$65,000,000 for Private Jet, Creflo Dollar? Negro, Please," *The Root*, March 13, 2015, <http://www.theroot.com/65-000-000-for-a-new-private-jet-creflo-dollar-negro-1790859080>, accessed May 24, 2017.

¹¹⁵ West, "\$65,000,000 for Private Jet, Creflo Dollar? Negro, Please."

¹¹⁶ Abby Ohlheiser, "Pastor Creflo Dollar Might Get His \$65 Million Private Jet after All," *www.washingtonpost.com*, June 3, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/03/pastor-creflo-dollar-might-get-his-65-million-private-jet-after-all/>. In a statement concerning the purchase of the jet, the ministry related that "they would be purchasing the jet at the time and price of their choosing." Moreover, they asked that "persons outside of the ministry respect their right to practice their beliefs and that the media report facts

In the 2012 movie *The Undershepherd*, African American writer/director Russ Parr spotlights this same critique: the manipulation of the congregation.¹¹⁷ The movie depicts two young men who served for fifteen years as youth ministers under the senior pastor. Desiring a higher level of church leadership, Roland (Lamman Rucker) decides to start his own congregation; the other pastor, Lawrence Case (Isaiah Washington), waits for his opportunity to seize the church's leadership. After Case exposes, by an anonymous email, the senior pastor's use of church monies for personal pleasure, he becomes the lead pastor. Case, holding the congregation's fidelity through personal charisma and fiery rhetoric, abuses his ministerial colleagues and is unfaithful to his wife. His behavior eventually lands him in prison. Isaiah Washington, the actor who portrays Case, stated, "This film is going to address many of the issues that are extraordinarily controversial in what we conceive and perceive as the black church. We are going to explore the political power plays, the corruption, the debauchery, sex scandal, adultery...we are also going to uncover a lot of things that need to be healed and addressed and hopefully debated about."¹¹⁸ Washington continues, "it is interesting to look at the character [of the pastor] one minute being completely not righteous or not spiritual in one scene and then the next scene he's in the pulpit leading people. It begs the question how many times we've been duped by leaders. We are also participants in the crumbling of these kinds of leaderships."¹¹⁹

rather than fictional reports and biased perspectives." See also Leonardo Blair, "Creflo Dollar Will Get \$70 Million Gulfstream G650 Jet Says Church; World Changers Board Says It Is 'Necessary' for Ministry," *www.christianpost.com*, June 2, 2015, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/creflo-dollar-will-get-70-million-gulfstream-g650-jet-says-church-world-changers-board-says-it-is-necessary-for-ministry-139858/>. See also Steve Siebold, "The Biggest Scam of All: Pastor Creflo Dollar Will Get His \$65 Million Luxury Jet," *www.huffingtonpost.com*, June 6, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-siebold/the-biggest-scam-of-all-p_b_7521170.html.

¹¹⁷ Russ Parr, *The Undershepherd*, DVD (Melee Entertainment, 2012).

¹¹⁸ The Undershepherd, Cast of "The Undershepherd" talk about the film, September 6, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RdndqTCO6A>, accessed April 22, 2017.

¹¹⁹ The Undershepherd, The Jazmine Brand Presents... The Undershepherd Cast Interview Part 1, March 28, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lw6dqFO9IF4>, accessed April 22, 2017.

The movie indicates how congregants outside the inner circles of church leadership are unable to critique persons in authority. It also notes how women in the church are both sexualized and disempowered. Case's one vocal detractor is deaconess Carter, played by Vanessa Bell Calloway. When she accuses him of improper behavior, Case laughs at her, kisses the top of the microphone he is holding, and then touches Carter's breast with it. His position is phallic, and he exults in it. He speaks, in a magnified manner, and he objectifies her. Her voice and leadership in the church means nothing to him.

The inner workings of pastoral leadership also find their way to the television screen. The television show *Greenleaf* (2016-present), produced by Oprah Winfrey and airing on the OWN network, follows the life of the Greenleaf family and their Memphis mega church. Bishop James Greenleaf (Keith David), the pastor of Calvary Church, is charismatic and caring, but also has his own demons to hide. Basie Skanks (Jason Dirden), the pastor of Triumph Church in downtown Memphis, resents him. *Greenleaf* scriptwriter Erica Anderson calls Skanks "a hustler" who "will hustle the gospel."¹²⁰ Dirden describes his character as "charismatic, smart, a chess player; some people call him diabolical."¹²¹

Accusations of ministerial malfeasance also plague African American clergy within politics. In the 1993 New Jersey Gubernatorial race, Ed Rollins, a white campaign manager for Republican candidate Christie Whitman, claimed that the Republican Party suppressed black voter turnout by paying off African American pastors.¹²² Acknowledging the importance and

¹²⁰ Lia Chang, "Getting to Know Jason Dirden - Pastor Basie Skanks on OWN's 'Greenleaf,'" April 10, 2017, <https://backstagepasswithliachang.wordpress.com/2017/04/10/getting-to-know-jason-dirden-pastor-basie-skanks-on-owns-greenleaf/>, accessed April 23, 2017.

¹²¹ OWN, "The Next Step in Basie Skanks' Master Plan," *MSN Entertainment*, February 21, 2017, <http://www.msn.com/en-au/entertainment/celebrity/the-next-step-in-basie-skanks-master-plan/vp-AAZ10D>, accessed April 23, 2017.

¹²² Richard L. Berke, "Whitman Funds Went to Curtail Black Turnout," *New York Times*, November 10, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/11/10/nyregion/whitman-funds-went-to-curtail-black-turnout.html>. See also Thomas

power of the pastor in the Black community, Rollins suggested that the goal was to “neutralize” the influence of the pastors by making contributions to the pastors and their congregations.¹²³ In addition to the payoff allegations, Rollins claimed that the Whitman campaign also ran an “outreach program” to suppress the potential vote of nontraditional voters.¹²⁴ Although campaign officials and African American clergy denied knowing about and receiving these payoffs, the idea that African American clergy have unlimited power over their congregations and can be easily bought perpetuates the view of clergy malfeasance.

The pastor can, in the Black Church (and not only there) recapitulate the role of the Plantation Master. The Church is his Plantation, and he runs it as the ultimate authority. The women are under his control and are to submit to him; his deacons follow his lead in relishing their power and exerting it over the congregation. The labors of church members serve less to help the poor than to line the pockets of the pastoral staff. Instead of “Yes, Master,” the refrain becomes “Yes, Pastor.”

Luke’s judge, like a pastor, rules his court/congregation. He answers to no one, for he has no consideration of what anyone else says. And yet he heeds this widow. The parable opens the way for readers to examine their relationship to clergy and the possibility of critiquing church leaders.

Luke’s Master-Pastor

In a certain city there was a Pastor who neither feared God, although he developed the reputation of being a God-fearing man; nor had he respect for people, although he was at his

B. Edstall and Daniel LeDuc, “Rollins: Black Vote Was Deterred,” *Philly.com*, November 10, 1993, http://articles.philly.com/1993-11-10/news/25944474_1_whitman-campaign-edward-j-rollins-campaign-manager.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Berke, “Whitman Funds Went to Curtail Black Turnout.”

most charming when addressing people with any money that he might be able to obtain. Yes, he was supposed to be a prayerful man, but his prayers, so rhetorically powerful, were more about him than about God. The congregation, responding to his call, seemed to be praising the pastor. He told them that his prospering was a sign of divine blessing; the richer he became, the more he would show everyone the power of Jesus. They were happy to be in his flock, and like sheep, they obeyed him and loved him for giving them the nourishment they wanted. He had one of the largest congregations in the city. He also had political clout. His standing in the church and in the community put him above critique; no one questioned his actions and or his judgments.

In that same city there was a widow who was a member of the Pastor's congregation. She kept coming to his office and saying, "Help me get justice against my opponent." For a while he refused. "Why bother with her," he thought to himself. "She's got no money left." She kept coming, now not just to his office, but she began to approach him in the sanctuary itself. The whole church knew that he had been ignoring her. Yet no one would speak up for fear of criticizing the Pastor. He was the man in authority.

She persisted. He thought of propositioning her: "Your justice for time in my bed." She refused. And so he dismissed her all the more. Yet she persisted. Finally he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for people, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will help her get justice, so that she won't strike me." The Pastor realized that he needed to keep up a pastoral pretense. One woman, who challenged him in public, forced him to look at her, and forced him to act.

While readers often ascribe to judges as well as pastors honesty and integrity, the reality of the Master-Pastor may be something different. The judge as Lawrence Case fully embodies

the judge who neither fears God nor has respect for people. Rather, he ignores God and demands people give him respect. He does not care about securing justice for the widow; his concern is retaining his position. His refusal therefore may be in service to determining whether it is more beneficial *for him* to continue ignoring the widow or to grant her request. That we do not know the terms of the suit or the concerns of the opponent makes this motive possible.

The widow's persistence becomes a thorn for the Master-Pastor. Her persistence questions his authority and also his power. She should have learned her lesson, as did the plantation slave: Master's will is not to be questioned. He determines what constitutes justice. For her to question him, in public, threatens to dismantle his entire hegemonic structure.

Further, if his authority and power are in question for too long, then his masculinity is in question also. When leading a congregation, the Master-Pastor's masculinity must always be in tact; Pastors lead congregations, and all others submit and follow. His statement, "I will grant her justice so that she may not wear me out by continually coming" is his way to rebuild his crushed masculinity. If he gives the widow what she wants, she will stop disturbing him and others in the congregation. Likely he will only engage in such yielding once, and woe to the congregant who seeks to step into the widow's role. She cannot bring down the structure, or the Master-Pastor, on her own, but by her example she might encourage others to join her.

Or perhaps she has made him realize that the congregation is not his kingdom to do as he pleases. The congregation is a group of people seeking to create a better society. The Master-Pastor can become the Good Shepherd when authority, power, and masculinity are not his primary concerns. In this configuration, Barbara Reid's suggestion that the widow is the figure for God becomes more plausible.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ See above in chapter 2.

Pastors, like judges, wield enormous power in their congregations. The pastor, or the judge, may be a man of integrity, Lukan hints and Roman history suggest otherwise at least for the judge. If we view the judge as Lawrence Case, or any in his mold, we find the widow engaging a man who is neglectful of his duties and hiding behind the authority of his office. Viewing the judge as Basie Skanks allows us to view the widow as engaging a man whose competitive fire is more important than seeking justice. In both cases, authority, power and the display of masculinity are the factors that propel the judge's actions. And in both cases, the widow disrupts the stereotype, gains what she seeks, and perhaps, just perhaps, motivates others in her church to do the same.

The Foolish Judge

Stereotyping African American men in a demeaning but ostensibly funny way had a history before film and television. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, when vaudeville and so minstrelsy provided entertainment for the masses, "blackface performers dominated the popular stage, many becoming nationally recognized celebrities, and the music, dance, and humor that was created by and for those performers dominated America's popular culture."¹²⁶ Although scholarly studies of minstrelsy has characterized it as the "Negro is reduced to a negative sign that usually appears in a comedy of the grotesque and the unacceptable"¹²⁷ or as "a symbolic slave code, a set of self-humiliating rules designed by white

¹²⁶ Mel Watkins, "Forward," in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1996), ix.

¹²⁷ William J. Mahar, "Ethiopian Skits and Sketches: Contents and Contexts of Blackface Minstrelsy, 1840-1890," in *Inside The Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1996), 180. See also Ralph Ellison, "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke," *The Partisan Review* (Spring 1958): 212-22.

racists for the disenfranchisement of the black self,”¹²⁸ Mel Watkins suggests that in addition to humor, “minstrelsy was a critical and complex phenomenon that revealed more about our national character and concerns than we would like to admit.”¹²⁹

The minstrel show also spoke to the question of Black masculinity. Valerie Palmer-Mehta and Alina Haliluic summarize:

Minstrelsy was symptomatic of many underlying social issues, one of which was whites’ fear of the potential power of black males. The degraded images of black masculinity provided by the minstrel show enabled whites to negotiate their fear and fascination with the African American male, while maintaining ultimate symbolic control over him.¹³⁰

They then cite Joseph Boskin’s conclusion:

To make the black male into an object of laughter, and conversely, to force him to devise laughter, was to strip him of his masculinity, dignity, and self-possession. Sambo [a minstrel figure] was, then, an illustration of humor as a device of oppression.... The ultimate objective for whites was to effect mastery: to render the black male powerless as a potential warrior, as a sexual competitor, as an economic adversary.¹³¹

Whether the performers, paid for their roles, recognized that they were being used to overcome fear of Black masculinity, envy of the Black body, or competition of the Black

¹²⁸ Ibid., 182. See also Berndt Ostendorf, “Minstrelsy & Early Jazz,” *The Massachusetts Review* 20.3 (Autumn 1979): 574–602 (575).

¹²⁹ Mel Watkins, “Forward,” in *Inside the Minstrel Mask*, ix.

¹³⁰ Valerie Palmer-Mehta and Alina Haliluic, “*Flavor of Love* and the Rise of Neo-Minstrelsy on Reality Television,” in Elwood Watson (ed.), *Pimps, Wimps, Studs, Thugs and Gentlemen: Essays on Media Images of Masculinity* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009) 85-105 (90).

¹³¹ Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an African Jester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 14, Cited in Ibid. See also Robin Means Coleman, *African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy: Situating Racial Humor* (New York: Garland, 2000).

entrepreneur, or whether they laughed on the way to the bank is another question. Hattie McDaniel and her sisters in film and television, condemned by theorists, nevertheless opened doors to other African American performers even as they necessarily raised for the majority population questions of race and gender.

Humor and black masculinity have been contentious bedfellows. From the vaudevillian Mantan Moreland to Flip Wilson's Geraldine as well as Reverend Leroy and the Church of What's Happening Now to Dave Chappelle's crack addict Tyrone Biggums, African American masculinity has often been depicted – by African American men – via buffoonery. In 1959, after appearing in vaudeville, comedies, and films as a jittery character, best known through his portrayal of Charlie Chan's chauffeur Birmingham Brown, Moreland declared that he would never play another stereotype: "The Negro race, has come too far in the last few years for me to dash his hopes, dreams, and accomplishments against a celluloid wall, by making pictures that show him to be a slow-thinking, stupid dolt. . . . Millions of people may have thought that my acting was comical, but I know now that it wasn't always so funny to my own people."¹³²

Following the rise of the Civil Rights movement, some black comics still traded on the older stereotypes. Yet at the time, comedy was also the medium by which African American men (as well as women who moved from the Chitlin' circuit to film and television such as Moms Mabley [1894-1975]) could communicate social and political critiques. Dewey "Pigmeat" Markham, one of the most successful African American comedians to perform in blackface, constantly defended his comedic performances against those who accused him of perpetuating negative stereotypes of African American men. He described his comedy as "Negro-born and

¹³² "Mantan Moreland 1902-1973," *Blackface.com*, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://black-face.com/Mantan-Moreland.htm>.

Negro-popular.”¹³³ He asserted, “It’s not aimed a ridiculing anyone; the characters I’ve created are no more a slur on the Negro than Jackie Gleason’s hot-headed bus driver or Art Carney’s sewer cleaner or Dean Martin’s drunk or Red Skelton’s fool or Jack Benny’s stinginess are a slur on white men.”¹³⁴ For Markham, blackface was an act of conformity. “You may wonder why a Negro had to do that, and all I can tell you is that’s the way it was. Just about every Negro entertainer in those days worked in burnt-cork and lip make-up.”¹³⁵

Markham’s most enduring routine, *Here Come Duh Judge*, was initially written in 1928 and first brought to television on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1947.¹³⁶ However, the comedy sketch did not achieve its cross-cultural popularity until Sammy Davis Jr. performed it on Rowan and Martin’s *Laugh-in* variety show in 1969. With his performance, all audiences knew that there was no coercion and no degradation of Davis himself; his significant stature (in respect if not in height) allowed him to engage in self-satire. While other artists such as Shorty Long (1968) and the Magistrates (1968) recorded their versions of the phrase, Markham’s 1968 recording remains the classic.¹³⁷ Markham begins, “Hear ye, Here ye, the court of swing is just about to do that thing. I don’t want no tears, I don’t want no lies. Above all, I don’t want no alibis. The judge is hip, and that ain’t all. He’ll give you time if your’re big or small.”¹³⁸ The patter-song model would eventually find its way into the classical Hip Hop genre, as would its critique of the judicial system. Although Markham is singing in a black dialect, the words have universal value: the judge and the court can be satirized, and if they can be satirized, they are not all-powerful.

¹³³ Kilph Nesteroff, “Last Man in Blackface: The World of Pigmear Markham,” *WFMU’s Beware of the Blog*, November 14, 2010, <http://blog.wfmu.org/freeform/2010/11/the-forgotten-pigmear-markham.html>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Hotrod.com notes that on June 15, 1968, Markham’s recording entered the Billboard Hot 100 chart at no. 83 and remained on the chart for eight weeks, with a peak on July 27 at no. 19. <http://www.hotrod.com/articles/here-comes-the-judge-timeline/>, accessed May 24, 2017.

¹³⁸ Pigmear Markham, *Here Comes the Judge*, Record (Chicago: Chess, 1968).

One could even get the impression that the hip judge would dispense justice better than the uncaring judge.

The second and third verses go on to skewer US policy in Vietnam and the failures of the Paris Peace Accords:

Everybody, near and far
I'm going to Paris, to stop this war
All those kids gotta listen to me
Cause I am the judge, and you can plainly see
I want a big, round table when I get there
I won't sit down until ones are square
I'm gonna lay down the law, they bet' not budge
I bust some heads because I am the judge.

Had a chat with Ho-Chi Minh
Took rice wine and chased my gin
Won't take long, as it missed my guess
I'll have yo outta this doggone mess

Send a cable to Ball & Mack
Let them know I'm coming back
Sit right there with Rock and Nicks
Teach them boys some of Pigmeat's tricks.¹³⁹

Following a few asides regarding beer and marriage, the song concludes with Markham saying,

Come November election time
You vote your way, I'll vote mine
Cases are tied, and money get spent
Vote for Pigmeat Markham president

Public opinion can be swayed through comedy as the American populace was beginning to tire of the United States' engagement in the Vietnam war.

The Flip Wilson Show, rated America's most popular variety program in 1972, epitomizes the new minstrelsy. "*The Flip Wilson Show* appropriated the very comedy-variety genre that minstrel shows made into a major institution of American entertainment in the

¹³⁹ <https://genius.com/Pigmeat-markham-here-comes-the-judge-lyrics>, accessed May 24, 2017.

nineteenth century.”¹⁴⁰ Clerow “Flip” Wilson, although often described as staying “far afield of politics and social satire,” did indeed provide a critical lens to African American life.¹⁴¹

The Flip Wilson Show, airing on NBC from 1970-1974, frequently featured its star in Pucci dresses as Geraldine, girlfriend to the unseen “Killer” and famous for phrases such as “The Devil made me do it” and “What you see is what you get.” Like Jonathan Winters’s Maudie Frickett or Tyler Perry’s Madea, Wilson’s Geraldine was funny, sympathetic, and not (at least to all eyes) a put-down of women. Another character in Wilson’s repertoire was Reverend Leroy, minister of the Church of What’s Happening Now. Reverend Leroy, dressed in a tuxedo with tails and spats, is a con artist who hustles the congregation for money. He thus brings into the public sphere and satirizes the Pastor-Master; the extent to which the audience, from whatever community, moved from Wilson’s satire to the actual working of the local church and local pastor, cannot be determined. Yet Wilson was often on target; not all churches promoted social-activism.

In one episode, Reverend Leroy announces he is going to Detroit for two weeks.¹⁴² While away, he leaves the congregation with another minister, ex-felon Reverend Pussyfoot Johnson (comedian Redd Foxx). After being introduced to the congregation, Reverend Johnson explains that he is concerned about the salary the congregation will provide him for his work. Reverend Leroy tells the deacons to get the collection plates, and he admonishes the congregation to “dig deep into their hearts and even deeper into their wallets” to show Reverend Johnson their generosity.¹⁴³ After the collection plate is returned empty, Reverend Leroy hustles

¹⁴⁰ Meghan Sutherland, *The Flip Wilson Show* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), xxvi.

¹⁴¹ Mel Watkins, “Flip Wilson, Outrageous Comic and TV Host, Dies at 64,” *NYTimes.com*, November 27, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/27/arts/flip-wilson-outrageous-comic-and-tv-host-dies-at-64.html>, accessed April 27, 2017.

¹⁴² Flip Wilson, “Reverend Leroy and the Church of What’s Happening Now,” *The Flip Wilson Show, 1970-1974*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmJati2W7uA>, accessed April 27, 2017.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

the congregation by saying he will expose the man that is sleeping with another man's wife. All the men in the church then dig into their pockets, as expected. The skit exposes how the church props up run-amuck masculinity in exchange for financial support. Comedians have the ability to say what others may be thinking. The comedic voice can set the stage for dialogue that leads to social transformation. Nevertheless, while white viewers laughed and sponsors made money, many African Americans and civil rights leaders thought Wilson's humor depended too much on race.¹⁴⁴ Social comedians have to walk a fine line: what the skits signaled to black viewers may have been quite different than how non-black viewers understood them. Airing dirty laundry can be salutary inside the community; it can be shameful if seen by outsiders.

Over thirty years later, in November 2004, Dave Chappelle wondered if his show was reinforcing stereotypes about African Americans after a white man laughed too hard and long during a taping. It was after this incident that Chappelle walked away from his successful cable show.¹⁴⁵ Comedy can be potent; it can also be both dangerous and draining.

For the black comedian to satirize the court, and to do so while appropriating negative stereotypes, can call attention to the racial biases that pervade the judicial system. In *Foster vs. Chatman* (1987), Tyrone Foster was given the death penalty for killing a white woman. Prosecutors had used peremptory challenges to dispose of jurors without providing a reason, i.e., to eliminate African Americans from the jury pool. Although a 1986 Supreme Court ruling in *Batson v. Kentucky* held that "racial considerations were out of bounds in jury selection," a judge went along with the prosecutor challenges and asserted that the prosecutors gave "neutral, non-

¹⁴⁴ "Flip Wilson," *Museum of Broadcast Communications*, accessed July 30, 2015, <http://www.museum.tv/eotv/wilsonflip.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ Corey Spring, "The Sketch That Made Chappelle Say 'Enough,'" *Newsvine*, July 14, 2006, http://spring.newsvine.com/_news/2006/07/14/287958-the-sketch-that-made-chappelle-say-enough, accessed April 27, 2017.

race based explanations for challenging black jurors.”¹⁴⁶ Foster was eventually convicted, but the US Supreme Court in May 2016 reversed the ruling; the Court acknowledged that prosecutors’ explanations were not neutral but were race based.¹⁴⁷ Twenty-nine years after his conviction by an all-white jury, Foster is spared of the death penalty and has the chance for a new trial.¹⁴⁸ Here comes the judge mocks the very space that should signify equality and justice for all.

As Luke’s judge has been cast as the cool black male and the Master-Pastor, the foolish judge in dialogue with the parable also provides new insight into both the parable and the present-day legal system.

Luke’s Here Comes the Judge

*In Burbank, near the studios
Came a hip hop judge in a robe and wig
He didn’t give a hoot about studs and ho’s
‘Bout the God-thing he didn’t give a fig*

*Into his court, the widow lady came
He banged his gavel and she shouted all the same
The widow didn’t yield and she didn’t back down
Under her threats, she made him the clown*

¹⁴⁶ S.M., “Courtrooms and Racial Bias: An Old Court Case Exposes the Racist Tricks Used to Ensure All-White Juries,” *The Economist*, November 3, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2015/11/courtrooms-and-racial-bias>, accessed April 25, 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Garrett Epps, “The Passive-Aggressive U.S. Supreme Court,” *The Atlantic.com*, May 23, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/05/im-not-saying-the-supreme-court-is-passive-aggressive-but/484007/>, accessed April 25, 2017. Foster’s lawyers, challenging his conviction, were able, through the Georgia Open Records Act, to review, in 2006, the prosecutor’s notes. They found that the word Black was circled on each black juror’s form. Moreover, as one of the potential jurors was a member of the church of Christ, there was notation that said, “no black church.” Ironically, although the United States Supreme Court voted 7-1 to overturn the conviction, Justice Clarence Thomas wrote the dissent. See also S.M., “Courtrooms and Racial Bias: An Old Court Case Exposes the Racist Tricks Used to Ensure All-White Juries.” The neutral, non-race based explanations for eliminating potential African American jurors included “they were too young to identify with the elderly victim, appeared bored, and had relatives who were social workers or did not make sufficient eye contact.”

¹⁴⁸ Associated Press, “Timothy Tyrone Foster: Supreme Court Overturns Death Penalty Sentence from All-White Jury,” *AL.com*, May 23, 2016, http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2016/05/timothy_tyrone_foster_supreme.html, accessed April 25, 2017.

*He didn't give a damn about studs and ho's
'Bout the God-thing he didn't give a fig
But the widow got up on her toes
And he gave her want she wanted, everything.*

*Here comes the Judge.
Here comes the Judge.
There goes the Judge.
There goes the Judge*

That a powerful judge acquiesces to a widow injects humor into the parable and complicates the judge's display of masculinity. His fear of the widow provides the humor that critiques the conventional understanding of the parable.

Humor functions socially to question what passes for conventional wisdom.¹⁴⁹ It liberates us from "prevailing truths" and "established order."¹⁵⁰ When a comic or a piece of comedy makes hearers laugh, that laughter becomes an acknowledgement of the absurdity of that which passes for conventional. The conventional logic for understanding the parable is that widows would not be in court making demands of a judge and that the judge would carry out his duties with integrity. When conventional characters act in an unconventional way, humor appears as does, often, satire and so, possibly critique of even the image of the Kingdom of Heaven.

When casting the judge as foolish, readers are at the best possible place to begin an interpretation of the parable. The story itself is foolish. A judge who neither fears God nor has respect for people is not fit to be adjudicating cases. His non-fear of God means he lacks wisdom; his non-respect for people suggests that he does not have compassion. The description

¹⁴⁹ Michael Billing, *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Laughter* (London: Sage, 2005), 2.

¹⁵⁰ Scott Balcerzak, *Buffoon Men: Classic Hollywood Comedians and Queered Masculinity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 6, citing Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of the *carnavalesque*.

of the judge is the perfect set up for depicting masculinity: dispassionate with the inability to follow rules and guidelines.

The story, however, turns when the judge contemplates his continuous refusal to grant the widow her request. Prov 14:15 says, “The simple believe everything, but the clever consider their steps.” The foolish judge shows himself to fit the model of the clever person. He refuses the widow for a while, but then he takes the time to think about why he should or should not grant the widow a positive decision in the case. While he may seem foolish on the surface, he is wise enough to evaluate what is best for him. In the foolish judge’s reevaluation of the case, he aligns with Pigeat Markham; he demonstrates that “he’ll give you time if you’re big or small.” While judges in antiquity were easy prey for corruption, the foolish judge shows that he keeps order in the court.

The foolish judge’s decision to reverse his prior rulings demonstrates his wisdom rather than his foolishness, or at least he does something wise even if his motives are sketchy and he does not realize the wisdom of his action. He says, “I will grant her justice so that she will not hit me.” He knows that the widow’s foolishness might turn into a physical altercation. Therefore, he is afraid of the widow, or afraid of his reaction if she does hit him, or afraid of what damage she will do to his reputation if not to his body. Doing something rather than nothing becomes the better option. He seeks to protect his masculinity by showing restraint rather than power and control; by yielding to her, he loses that masculinity in any case.

If we see the judge as Sammy Davis Jr., or Pigeat Markham, we might smile. We might also get justice, because a buffoon in a wig, or an actor in blackface and on the chittlin’ circuit, might be the one to make peace rather than war, make justice based on being heard rather than

on immutable rules such as “Three strikes and you’re out,” and show a form of political action based in comedy rather than in violence.

At that point, when Luke’s real Judge comes – “And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (18:8b) – he might find both justice and laughter.

Conclusion

Parables tie us up; they challenge us, and then they trap us. What seems a simple story becomes a complicated one, and with each interpretation, there are threads left over. Pull on one, and the reading unravels, only to be knitted into something new. Each reading can be productive, even inspirational; each reading is also insufficient. We bring to the text our own experiences, and like a quark, the parable changes for everyone who encounters it. If we are fortunate, the parable changes us as well.

The Parable of the widow and judge is no different. What seems to be a story about a poor widow attempting to gain a hearing is actually a story that asks its readers to acknowledge biases as well as to think and act ethically. If we take the parable seriously as a parable, then we find ourselves forced to reevaluate what and how we think about the biblical text and how we understand widows and judges. The parable forces us to consider questions—for this parable, questions about gender and power—that we hesitate to ask. This study has been a step in helping readers ask questions that need to be asked. Most readings of our parable begin with stereotypes. We typically view the widow as vulnerable and poor. Then we view her as aged and oppressed. When she shows up in court, we also automatically side with her version of the story without knowing the details. We today presume she wants justice, but ancient interpreters realized that she may instead be asking for vengeance. Already the parable has trapped us: what is justice in the eyes of one person or group may be vengeance in the eyes of another. Were the plaintiff not a widow but a rich man, perhaps we would assess motives differently; perhaps we would be less pleased when the verdict turns in his favor.

It is impossible for us to give the widow an objective assessment: we are trapped by biblical constructions of widows and our own biases about widows; the parable does not give us

enough information about her case, and we know nothing about her opponent. Jesus advises his followers to make friends quickly with their opponents lest they be dragged to court (Mt. 5:25). Paul advises, “When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints? ...but a believer goes to court against a believer—and before unbelievers at that? In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?” (1 Cor 6:1, 6-7). The widow in our parable has apparently not listened either to Jesus or to Paul. The Epistle of James asks “Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court?” (2:6). Is our woman one of the rich? We can never be sure.

We know a bit more about the judge, but still not enough to pronounce a clear verdict concerning either his attitude or his actions. At first glance, his character is suspect; he neither fears God nor does he care about people. On the one hand, he is beholden to no one; nor is he, at least from our twenty-first century perspective, a religious fundamentalist who would impose selective biblical views on the judiciary. On the other hand, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7; 9:10; Sir 1:14). The judge may not fear God, but he does fear the widow. Has this fear made him wise, or does it simply make him complicit in a bad decision?

The judge provides the widow what she wants not out of a sense of justice but out of a concern for himself. We are thwarted by translators, who miss the boxing term he uses; the translations have the widow “wearing him out” rather than having her threaten “to punch him under the eye.” Luke compares the judge to God, using the lesser to greater model: if the judge, who is unjust, will respond, how much more so will the just God respond. But this approach too is problematic. God does not always respond, and widows may still be in the courts, day after day, seeking what they want, or need.

Although biblical narratives can lead to many presumptions about our lived experiences, taking a moment to reread the parable in light of what is known can open us to different questions. For example, in reality widows are not necessarily poor and needy. They are some of the most powerful and economically secure persons: Christy Walton of the Walmart enterprise; France's Lillian Bettencourt, recently retired, of the L'Oreal Cosmetics; Iris Fontbana, the wealthiest person in Chile, who has a controlling interest in Banco de Chile as well as the world's largest copper mine Antofagasta; Germany's Elizabeth Mohn, who owns a controlling interest in Random House Publishing as well as the RTL Group, Europe's largest broadcaster; and Georgina Rinehart, chairperson of the Hancock Prospecting Group in Australia, which mines iron ore and oil.¹

If we cast any of these widows into the parable, we would not automatically presume the widow to be just and right. Christy Walton is associated with Walmart, which has cut the health insurance benefits of part-time employees.² Georgina Rinehart often comes under fire for being insensitive to the least economically secure Australians; she opines, "if one is jealous of those with more money, one should not complain...do something to make yourself more money and spend less time drinking, smoking, and socializing."³ Thus, "widows may be powerful, vengeful, insensitive, and exploit their positions in life."⁴

¹ Jenna Goudreau, "The World's 20 Richest Moms," *Forbes*, 2010, http://www.forbes.com/2011/05/03/worlds-20-richest-moms-billionaires_slide_12.html. While Christy Walton, Iris Fontbana, and Elizabeth Mohn received wealth from deceased husbands, Lillian Bettencourt and Georgina Rinehart inherited wealth from their fathers.

² Katie Lobosco, "Walmart Cuts Health Benefits 30,000 Part-Timers," *CNNMoney*, October 8, 2014, http://money.cnn.com/2014/10/07/news/economy/walmart-health-benefits/index.html?hpt=hp_t2.

³ Andrew Burrell, "Gina Rinehart Tells Whingers: Get out of the Pub," *The Australian*, 2012, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/gina-rinehart-tells-whingers-get-out-of-the-pub/story-e6f8gzx-1226461138251?nk=a963a5894b4c10cd29a2e989973e5e8b>. Rinehart is also in a court battle with two of her children concerning who will control a \$4 billion dollar trust fund. See Agence France-Presse, "Gina Rinehart, Australian Billionaire, Sued By Son For 'Sorry Payment' Of \$15 Million," *The World Post*, March 13, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/13/gina-rinehart-sorry-payment-australian-billionaire_n_2865582.html.

⁴ Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus*, 241.

Likewise, powerful judges can also be insensitive and exploit their judicial positions. Readers are easily convinced that the judge is a negative exemplar not only because Luke labels the judge as dishonest but also because judicial misconduct is ever visible. Most recently in Nashville, TN. Judge Casey Moreland was indicted on a federal bribery charge for “framing a woman who says he [Moreland] offered her judicial favors in exchange for sex.”⁵ A superior court judge in Atlanta was accused of conspiring with defense attorneys in granting their clients new trials in a school corruption case.⁶ In the “Kids for Cash” scandal in Luzerne County, PA, Judge Mark A. Ciavarella was sentenced to 28 years in prison for financial crimes related to his accepting \$2.2 million as a finder’s fee for the construction of a for-profit facility to hold juvenile delinquents.⁷ Judge Abel Limas of Brownsville, Texas was sentenced to six years in prison for taking bribes and kickbacks for favorable rulings from his bench.⁸ Judge Bensonetta Tipton Lane was under suspicion of providing a favorable ruling to Grammy award winning singer Usher in his child custody case. Lane eventually recused herself from the case, although she did receive campaign funds from Usher’s attorney’s law firm.⁹ Just as all widows are not poor, all judges are not corrupt. It is Luke who tells us that the judge is dishonest; when we read the parable for ourselves, we have to make up our own minds.

⁵ Stacey Barchenger and Dave Boucher, “Ex-Nashville Judge Casey Moreland Indicted on Federal Bribery, Tampering Charges,” *The Tennessean*, April 26, 2017, <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/crime/2017/04/26/casey-moreland-indicted-five-federal-felonies/100395790/>, accessed May 25, 2017.

⁶ Mark Niese, “Prosecutors Allege Judicial Misconduct in Dekalb Corruption Case,” *Ajc.Com*, November 13, 2014, sec. News, <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/prosecutors-allege-judicial-misconduct-in-dekalb-c/nh6XL/>, accessed November 13, 2014

⁷ Larry Getlen, “Corrupt ‘Kids for Cash’ Judge Ruined More Than 2,000 Lives,” *New York Post*, February 23, 2014, sec. News, <http://nypost.com/2014/02/23/film-details-teens-struggles-in-state-detention-in-payoff-scandal/>, accessed 11-13-14. Ciavarella was convicted with another judge, Michael Conahan, who assembled the investor group to build the private detention facility. Over 2400 conviction by Mark Ciavarella were reversed and expunged.

⁸ “Public Corruption: Courtroom for Sale: Judge Gets Jail Time in Racketeering Case,” *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, September 2013, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/public-corruption-courtroom-for-sale1>, accessed November 14, 2014.

⁹ Jeff Chirico, “Judge in Usher Custody Case Answers Tough Questions About Alleged Bias,” *CBS46.com*, August 9, 2013, <http://www.cbs46.com/story/21097108/judge-in-usher-custody-case-answers-tough-questions-about-alleged-bias>, accessed November 14, 2014.

The Parable of the Widow and the Judge enables us to be aware of how we deploy stereotypes. Both feminine and masculine constructions must be examined. Presuming the innocence of a widow because she is a woman and castigating the judge because he is a powerful man are not the ingredients for social transformation either in our churches or the broader society. The widow provides readers the lens to see that women might not behave in the best manner while the judge suggests that powerful men are not necessarily the enemy to the disenfranchised.

The reception history has shown how the parable has been and can be interpreted, and how those interpretations reflect the concerns of the authors and artists. The re-casting of the widow and the judge according to major stereotypes of African American women and men allows the parable to demonstrate how it can reify categories as well as liberate readers from stereotypes. This study has also demonstrated that interpretations of the biblical text can be and are often different depending upon the context of the reader.

I, an African American woman minister from Atlanta, Georgia, bring to the parable different concerns than my colleague Barbara Reid, a white woman and Catholic sister from Chicago. I read the parable to bring awareness of stereotypes by casting the widow and judge as the stereotypical images of both African American women and men. While Mammy appears to be satisfied with her secondary status, she fights for her own when necessary; Jezebel is smart and not ashamed of her sexuality; Sapphire speaks truth to power. Reading the widow through these stereotypes brings distinct nuances to her character, to the court system, and to our views of gender and power. The same revealing of new interpretations appears when the judge is cast as the Cool Black Male and the Master-Pastor, while the Foolish Judge can be the bearer of wisdom, the critic of the judicial system itself, and the unmasker of racial prejudice. Moreover,

just as all widows are not poor and all judges are not dismissive of the citizens who stand before them, not all African American women and men fit within these stereotypes. Reid sees the widow, rather than the judge, as representing God. I do not, but I do see the widow as perhaps representing truth. There have been far too many African American widows, and single mothers, caught up in legal cases.

The various readings across the centuries can be in service to transforming our respective reading communities. If the Bible is to have relevance in this 21st century, we readers must examine ourselves as we engage the biblical text and look to see the good in interpretations other than our own.

Bibliography

- “ACLU Is Challenging State’s Refusal to Allow Religious Oaths Not Sworn on the Bible.” *ACLU*, January 16, 2007. <https://www.aclu.org/news/north-carolina-appeals-court-allows-aclu-lawsuit-over-court-swearing-practice-go-forward>.
- “Actress From the Delta, Ernestine Wade.” *African American Registry*. http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/actress-delta-ernestine-wade.
- Adams, Allante. “Why Are Black Women Less Likely to Report Rape?” *CityPaper*, December 21, 2016. <http://www.citypaper.com/news/mobtownbeat/bcpnews-why-are-black-women-less-likely-to-report-rape-20150609-story.html>.
- Agence France-Presse. “Gina Rinehart, Australian Billionaire, Sued By Son For ‘Sorry Payment’ Of \$15 Million.” *The World Post*, March 13, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/13/gina-rinehart-sorry-payment-australian-billionaire_n_2865582.html.
- Alexander, Amy. “Think Big.” *Washingtonpost.com*, January 22, 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/19/AR2006011902738.html>.
- Alexander, Loveday C. “Sisters in Adversity: Retelling Martha’s Story.” In *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 3, 197-213. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: New York Press, 2010.
- Alexander, Van J. “Persistency Paid Off.” Christ Kingdom Church, 2012. <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=2984835184321>
- Alter, Robert. “How Convention Hells Us Read: The Case of the Bible’s Annuciation Type-Scene.” *Prooftexts* 3.2 (May 1983): 115–30.
- Ammons, Linda L. “Mules, Madonnas, Babies, Bathwater, Racial Imagery and Stereotypes: The African-American Woman and the Battered Woman Syndrome.” *Wisconsin Law Review* 1995, no. 5 (1995): 1003–80.
- Amos ‘n’ Andy. “Rare Coin.” February 19, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1Bsk9GZga8>.
- _____. “New Neighbors.” June 2, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTepP_Jvpwo.

- Appler, Deborah. "A Queen Fit For A Feast: Digesting the Jezebel Story (1 Kings 15:29-2 Kings 9:37)." Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2004.
- Arbiter, Gaius Petronius. *Petronius: Satyricon*. Translated by Sarah Ruden. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000.
- Arlandson, James M. "Lifestyles of the Rich and Christian: Women, Wealth, and Social Freedom." In *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 9, 155-170. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Associated Press. "Timothy Tyrone Foster: Supreme Court Overturns Death Penalty Sentence from All-White Jury." *AL.com*, May 23, 2016.
http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2016/05/timothy_tyrone_foster_supreme.html.
- Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986.
- Augustine. *Expositions On the Psalms*, translated by A. Cleveland Coxe, ANF viii. London: T&T Clark/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint, 1989.
- Aymer, Margaret. "Acts of the Apostles." In *Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed., 536–46. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012.
- Baartman, Sara 'Saartjie.' *South African History Online: Towards A People's History*.
<http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/sara-saartjie-baartman>.
- Bablitz, Leanne. *Actors and Audience in the Roman Courtroom*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- _____. "Roman Society in the Courtroom." In *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World*, edited by Michael Peachin, 317–35. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Badertscher, Nancy. "Creflo Dollar's Need for \$65 Million Jet Never Gets off the Ground." *www.Politifact.com*, March 23, 2015.
<http://www.politifact.com/georgia/statements/2015/mar/23/juda-engelmayer/creflo-dollars-need-65-million-jet-never-gets-grou/>.
- Bagnall, Roger S. "Missing Females in Roman Egypt." In *Scripta Classica Israelica: Yearbook of the Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies*, Vol. 16. Jerusalem: Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies, 1997.
- Bailey, Julius H. "Masculinizing the Pulpit: The Black Preacher in the Nineteenth-Century AME Church." In *Fathers, Preachers, Rebels, Men: Black Masculinity in U.S. History and Literature, 1820-1945*, edited by Timothy R. Buckner and Peter Caster, 80–101. Black Performance and Cultural Criticism. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011.

- Bailey, Kenneth E. *Through Peasant Eyes : More Lucan Parables, Their Culture and Style*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Baird, William. *History of New Testament Research: Volume 1: From Deism to Tubingen*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Baker-Fletcher, Karen. *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit : Womanist Wordings on God and Creation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998.
- _____. *Dancing with God : The Trinity From A Womanist Perspective*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2006.
- Balcerzak, Scott. *Buffoon Men: Classic Hollywood Comedians and Queered Masculinity*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013.
- Balch, David L. *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*. SBLMS 26. Chico: Scholars Press, 1980.
- Barchenger, Stacey, and Dave Boucher. "Ex-Nashville Judge Casey Moreland Indicted on Federal Bribery, Tampering Charges." *The Tennessean*, April 26, 2017. <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/crime/2017/04/26/casey-moreland-indicted-five-federal-felonies/100395790/>.
- Bardaglio, Peter W. "Rape and the Law in the Old South: 'Calculated to Excite Indignation In Every Heart.'" *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 60.4 (November 1994): 749–72.
- Barnett, Tamara. "Mammy's Image and Purpose" Applying the Mammy Myth to Contemporary Representations of African American Women." *All Academic*. http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p172283_index.html.
- Bauer, Walter, William F. Arndt, Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Beavis, Mary Ann, ed. *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom*. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Bede. "Exploration of the Gospel." In *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers III: From Pentecost to the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost*, M.E. Toal. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996.
- Berke, Richard L. "Whitman Funds Went to Curtail Black Turnout." *New York Times*, November 10, 1993. <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/11/10/nyregion/whitman-funds-went-to-curtail-black-turnout.html>.

- Bidnell, David. "Patrons and Clients." Oxford Institute Biblical Studies Working Group, August 2013. <https://oimts.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/2013-1-bidnell.pdf>.
- Billing, Michael. *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Laughter*. London: Sage, 2005.
- Bishop, Eric Francis Fox. *Jesus of Palestine: The Local Background to the Gospel Documents*. London: Lutterworth, 1955.
- Black, C. Clifton. "The Presentation of John Mark in the Acts of the Apostles." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 20.3 (Fall 1993): 235–54.
- "Black Lives Matter." *Blacklivesmatter.com*. 2012. <http://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>.
- Black, Matthew. "The Parables As Allegory." *BJRL* 42 (1960 1959): 273–87.
- Blair, Leonardo. "Creflo Dollar Will Get \$70 Million Gulfstream G650 Jet Says Church; World Changers Board Says It Is 'Necessary' for Ministry." *www.Christianpost.com*, June 2, 2015. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/creflo-dollar-will-get-70-million-gulfstream-g650-jet-says-church-world-changers-board-says-it-is-necessary-for-ministry-139858/>.
- Blay, Zeba. "How Jaden Smith and the #Carefreeblackboy Movement Are Redefining Black Masculinity." *Huffingtonpost.com*, June 5, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/05/jaden-smith-redefining-black-masculinity_n_7514846.html.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.
- _____. *Interpreting the Parables*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.
- Blum, Lawrence. "Stereotypes And Stereotyping: A Moral Analysis." *Philosophical Papers* 33.3 (November 2004): 251–89.
- Bock, Darrell. *Luke: Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.
- Boer, Esther A. de. "The Lukan Mary Magdalene and the Other Women Following Jesus." In *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 3, 140-161. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films*. 4th ed. New York: Continuum, 2001.

- Bonaventure. *Bonaventure Texts in Translation Series: Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: Chapters 17 - 24*. Translated by Robert J. Karris. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004.
- Bond, Jean Carey, and Patricia Peery. "Is the Black Male Castrated?" In *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, edited by Toni Cade Bambara. New York: Washington Square Press, 1970.
- Boskin, Joseph. *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an African Jester*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986
- Bovon, Francois. *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible: Luke 1*. Edited by Christine M. Thomas. Translated by Helmut Koester. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.
- Bounding, Maria. "Exposition of the Psalms (Enarrationes in Psalmos) 121-150." In *The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century*. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004.
- Boyarin, Daniel. *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*. Contraversions, Critical Studies in Jewish Literature, Culture, and Society 8. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Boyce, James L. "For You Today A Savior: The Lukan Infancy Narrative." *Word & World* 27.4 (Fall 2007): 371–80.
- Boyz II Men. *Jezzebel*. Motown Records, 1994.
- Breckinridge, Clifton R. "Southern Society for the Promotion of the Study of Race Conditions and Problems in the South." Richmond: B.F. Johnson, 1900.
- Bremmer, Jan N., and Lourens van den Bosch, eds. "The Public Image of the Widow in Ancient Israel." In *Between Poverty and the Pyre: Moments in the History of Widowhood*, 19–30. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Brooten, Bernadette J. *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*. Brown Judaism Studies 36. Chico: Scholars Press, 1982
- _____. *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Homoeroticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996
- _____. "Female Leadership in the Ancient Synagogue." In *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, edited by Lee I. Levine and Zeev Weiss, 215-223. Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series, 2000.

- Brown, Raymond E. "The Parable and Allegory Reconsidered." *Novum Testamentum* 5.1 (January 1962): 36–45.
- _____. *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.
- Givens, Sonja M. Brown, and Jennifer L. Monahan. "Priming Mammies, Jezebels, and Other Controlling Images: An Examination of the Influence of Mediated Stereotypes on Perceptions of an African American Woman." *Media Psychology* 7.1 (2005): 87–106.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. Translated by John Marsh. Rev. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- _____. *The New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*. Translated by Schubert M. Ogden. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.
- Burke, Sean. *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.
- Burr, Sherri. "Television and Social Effects: An Analysis of Media Images of African-Americans in Historical Context." *Gender, Race & Justice* 4 (2000): 159–81.
- Burrell, Andrew. "Gina Rinehart Tells Whingers: Get out of the Pub." *The Australian*, 2012. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/gina-rinehart-tells-whingers-get-out-of-the-pub/story-e6frg8zx-1226461138251?nk=a963a5894b4c10cd29a2e989973e5e8b>.
- Burrows, Virginia. "Mapping as Metamorphosis: Initial Reflections on Gender and Ancient Religious Discourses." In *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, edited by Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, 1–10. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Buttrick, David. *Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
- Byrd, Ayana. "Claiming Jezebel: Black Female Subjectivity and Sexual Expression in Hip Hop." In *The Fire This Time: Youth Activists and the New Feminism*, edited by Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin, 248–56. New York: Anchor, 2004.
- Byrd, W. Carson, and Matthew W. Hughey. "Born That Way? 'Scientific' Racism Is Creeping Back Into Our Thinking. Here's What To Watch Out For." *Washingtonpost.com*, September 28, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/28/born-that-way-scientific-racism-is-creeping-back-into-our-thinking-heres-what-to-watch-out-for/>.
- Byron, Gay L., and Vanessa Lovelace, eds. *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016.

- Calvin, John. *Calvin's Commentaries: Harmony of Matthew, Mark, Luke*.
Translated by William Pringle. Vol. II. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.
- Candidate Ads. "1988 George Bush 'Revolving Door.'" *Insidepolitics.org*.
<http://www.insidepolitics.org/ps111/candidateads.html>.
- _____. "1988 George Bush Sr. 'Revolving Door.'" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmwhdDv8VrM>.
- Cannon, Katie Geneva. *Black Womanist Ethics*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.
- _____. *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*.
New York: Continuum, 1995.
- _____. "Womanist Interpretation and Preaching in the Black Church." In *I Found God In Me*, edited by Mitzi J. Smith, 56–67. Eugene: Cascade, 2015.
- Carter, Warren. "Getting Martha Out of the Kitchen: Luke 10:38-42 Again."
CBQ 58.2 (April 1996): 264–80.
- Casey, Kenneth (song writer). *Sweet Georgia Brown*, 1925.
- Chang, Lia. "Getting to Know Jason Dirden - Pastor Basie Skanks on OWN's 'Greenleaf,'" April 10, 2017. <https://backstagepasswithliachang.wordpress.com/2017/04/10/getting-to-know-jason-dirden-pastor-basie-skanks-on-owns-greenleaf/>.
- Chirico, Jeff. "Judge in Usher Custody Case Answers Tough Questions About Alleged Bias." *CBS46.com*, August 9, 2013. <http://www.cbs46.com/story/21097108/judge-in-usher-custody-case-answers-tough-questions-about-alleged-bias>.
- Chroust, Anton-Hermann. "Legal Profession in Ancient Republican Rome." *30 Notre Dame Law Review* 97 (1954), 130-131. <http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndlr/vol30/iss1/5>.
- Clark, Donald. "How Rare Is That Gem?" *Gemsociety.org*.
<https://www.gemsociety.org/article/how-rare-is-that-gem/>.
- Cleary, Tom. "Steve 'Stevie Steve' Stephens: 5 Fast Facts You Need to Know." *Heavy.com*, April 16, 2017. <http://heavy.com/news/2017/04/stevie-steve-stephens-cleveland-facebook-live-video-shooting-shooter-gunman-killer-photos-pictures-victims/>.
- Clinton, Catherine. *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*.
New York: Pantheon, 1982.

- Cobbe, Francis Power. "Why Women Desire the Franchise." In *Before the Vote Was Won: Arguments For and Against Women's Suffrage 1874*, edited by Jane Lewis, 179–83. New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.
- Colman, Andrew M. *A Dictionary of Psychology*, 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199657681.001.0001/acref-9780199657681-e-7992?rskey=ZGX5yJ&result=1>.
- Coleman, Monica A. *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.
- _____. "Introduction: Ain't I A Womanist Too?" In *Ain't I A Womanist Too? Third Wave Womanist Religious Thought*, edited by Monica A. Coleman, 1–31. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.
- Coleman, Robin Means. *African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy: Situating Racial Humor*. New York: Garland, 2000.
- College of Education. "The Role of the Judge: Neither Force Nor Will, But Merely Judgement: A Guide for Students and Teachers." East Carolina University, 2014.
<https://www.ecu.edu/cs-educ/TQP/upload/tqpRoleOfTheJudgeAug2014.pdf>.
- Collins, John N. *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Conway, Colleen M. *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Cooke, Sam. *A Change Is Gonna Come*. 7". Hollywood: RCA Victor, 1964.
- Cooper, Brittany. "Talking Back and Taking My Amens With Me: Tyler Perry and the Narrative Colonization of Black Women's Stories." In *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses To Tyler Perry's Productions*, edited by LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, Tamura A. Lomax, and Carol B. Duncan, 235–49. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Copping, Harold. *The Parable of the Jude and the Widow*. Painting. Accessed March 11, 2017.
<http://www.biblepicturegallery.com/pictures/gparables/The%20parable%20of%20the%20Judge%20and%20the%20Widow%20-%20painting%20pa.htm>.
- Cotter, Wendy. "The Parable of the Feisty Widow and the Threatened Judge (Luke 18:1-8)." *NTS* 51.3 (July 2005): 323–43.

- Cotton, Hannah M., and Jonas C. Greenfield. "Babatha's Property and the Law of Succession in the Babatha Archive." *ZPE* 104 (1994): 211–24.
- Cross, George. *Coolposing: Secrets of Black Male Leadership in America*. Ex Libris, 2010.
- Crossan, John Dominic. *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction About Jesus*. New York: HarperOne, 2012.
- Crowder, Stephanie Buckhanon. "The Gospel of Luke." In *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, edited by Brian Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice J. Martin, and Emerson B. Powery, 158–85. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.
- _____. *When Momma Speaks: The Bible and Motherhood From A Womanist Perspective*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016.
- Curkpatrick, Stephen. "Parable Metonymy and Luke's Kerygmatic Framing." *JSNT* 25.3 (2003): 289–307.
- Cyril of Alexander. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke*. Translated by R. Payne Smith. New York: Studion Publishers, 1983.
- D'Angelo, Mary Rose. "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View." *JBL* 109.3 (1990): 441–61.
- _____. "The ANHP Question in Luke-Acts: Imperial Masculinity and the Deployment of Women in the Early Second Century." In *The Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 3, 44-69. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Davies, Percival Vaughn, trans. "Titius' Denouncement of Judges from Macrobius: The Saturnalia." Columbia University Press, 1969. <https://www.ecu.edu/cs-educ/TQP/upload/tqpRoleOfTheJudgeAug2014.pdf>.
- Del Gaudio, Sybil. "The Mammy in Hollywood Film: I'd Walk A Million Miles--For One of Her Smiles." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 20 (April 1983): 23–25. <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC28folder/Mammy.html>.
- Denhoed, Andrea. "The Forgotten Lessons of the American Eugenics Movement." *Newyorker.com*, April 27, 2016. <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-forgotten-lessons-of-the-american-eugenics-movement>.
- Dewey, Joanna. "The Gospel of Mark." In *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, edited by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza with the assistnace of Ann Brock and Shelly Matthews, 2:470–509. New York: Crossroad, 1994.

- _____. "1 Timothy." In *Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by Carol A. Newsome, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed., 595–601. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012.
- Dodd, C.H. *The Parables of the Kingdom of God*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1961.
- Donahue, John R. *The Gospel in Parable*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Dooley, Sallie May. *Dem Good Ole Times*. New York: Doubleday, 1906.
<https://archive.org/details/demgoodoletimes00doolrich>.
- Dornisch, Loretta. *A Woman Reads the Gospel of Luke*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996.
- Driscoll, Mark. "The Parable of the Persistent Widow." *MarkDriscoll.org*, March 11, 2011.
<http://markdriscoll.org/sermons/the-parable-of-the-persistent-widow/>
- Du Bois, W.E. Burghardt. "Of the Faith of the Fathers." In *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, 2nd ed., 189–206. Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903.
- Dunn, Stephane. *Baad Bitches and Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.
- Dyer, Richard. "The Role of Stereotypes." In *Media Studies: A Reader*, edited by Paul Marris and Sue Thornham, 2nd ed., 245–52. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Edstall, Thomas B., and Daniel LeDuc. "Rollins: Black Vote Was Deterred." *Philly.com*, November 10, 1993. http://articles.philly.com/1993-11-10/news/25944474_1_whitman-campaign-edward-j-rollins-campaign-manager.
- Ellison, Ralph. "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke." *The Partisan Review*, Spring 1958, 212–22.
- Ely, Melvin Patrick. *The Adventures of Amos "n" Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon*. New York: The Free Press, 1991.
- Ephrem. *Saint Ephrem's Commentary On Tatian's Diatessaron*. Translated by Carmel McCarthy. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Epps, Garrett. "The Passive-Aggressive U.S. Supreme Court." *The Atlantic.com*, May 23, 2016.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/05/im-not-saying-the-supreme-court-is-passive-aggressive-but/484007/>.
- "Equal Pay for Mothers Is Critical for Families." *National Women's Law Center*.
<https://nwlc.org/resources/equal-pay-for-mothers-is-critical-for-families/>.

- Erasmus, Desiderius. *Collected Works of Erasmus: Paraphrase on Luke 11-24*. Translated by Jane E. Phillips. Vol. 48. *Collected Works of Erasmus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Esler, Philip F. and Ronald A. Piper. *Lazarus, Mary & Martha: A Social-Scientific and Theological Reading of John*. London: SCM, 2006.
- _____. *Babatha's Orchard: The Yadin Papyri and an Ancient Jewish Family Tale Retold*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Fenton, Zanita E. "Domestic Violence in Black and White: Racialized Gender Stereotypes in Gender Violence." *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 8.1 (1998): 1–66.
- Finkelman, Paul. *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Gospel According To Luke X-XXIV*. Vol. 28A. The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985.
- Fleming, Victor. *Gone With The Wind*. DVD. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939.
- Flessen, Bonnie J. *An Exemplary Man: Cornelius and Characterization in Acts 10*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011.
- "Flip Wilson." *Museum of Broadcast Communications*. <http://www.museum.tv/eotv/wilsonflip.htm>.
- Floyd-Thomas, Stacey M., ed. *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*. New York: New York University Press, 2006a.
- _____. *Mining the Motherlode : Methods in Womanist Ethics*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2006b.
- Folkart, Burt A. "Alvin Childress, 78, of 'Amos "n" Andy' Series on TV, Dies." *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1986. http://articles.latimes.com/1986-04-22/local/me-1453_1_amos-n-andy.
- Ford, Richard Q. *The Parables of Jesus: Recovering the Art of Listening*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.
- _____. *The Parables of Jesus & The Problems of the World: How Ancient Narratives Comprehend Modern Malaise*. Eugene: Cascade, 2016.
- Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990 [ET 1978].

- Frampton, Travis L. *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible*. New York: T&T Clark, 2006.
- Freed, Edwin D. "The Parable of the Judge and the Widow (Luke 18:1-8)." *NTS* 33.1 (1987): 38–60.
- Freelon, Kiratiana. Pam Grier on Pam Grier!, March 18, 2013. <http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/pam-grier-looks-back-during-lincoln-center-film-fest#axzz4cMe7j07K>.
- Friedman, Mordechai A. "Tamar, A Symbol of Life: The 'Killer Wife' Superstition in the Bible and Jewish Tradition." *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 15 (1990): 23–61.
- Friedman, Vanessa. "Jaden Smith for Louis Vuitton: The New Man in a Skirt." *Nytimes.com*, January 6, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/07/fashion/jaden-smith-for-louis-vuitton-the-new-man-in-a-skirt.html?_r=0.
- Frost, Stanley Brice. "Judgment on Jezebel, Or A Wronged Woman." *ThTo* 20.4 (1964): 503–17.
- Fuchs, Esther. "The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible." *Semeia* 46 (1989): 151–66.
- Gaines, Janet Howe. *Music in the Old Bones: Jezebel Through the Ages*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999.
- George, Nelson. *Blackface: Reflections on African-Americans and the Movies*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.
- Getlen, Larry. "Corrupt 'Kids for Cash' Judge Ruined More Than 2,000 Lives." *New York Post*, February 23, 2014. <http://nypost.com/2014/02/23/film-details-teens-struggles-in-state-detention-in-payoff-scandal/>.
- Gibbs, L.V. "Hear What the Unjust Judge Saith." Grace and Truth Prayer Temple, 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1EMbbtKsk8>
- Gilhuly, Kathy. "The Phallic Lesbian: Philosophy, Comedy, and Social Inversion in Lucian's Dialogues of the Courtesan." In *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World*, edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Laura K. McClure. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.
- Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. *If It Wasn't For The Women: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

- Gimme a Break (Television). 1981-1987.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nL-ujbgRdoo&list=PLznaep8vEBgHNEt030JXRkG-YxM0SqDRx&index=42>
- Giordani, Ali. "Is Jaden Smith the New Face of Androgyny?" *FourTwoNine*, January 13, 2016.
<http://dot429.com/articles/6338-is-jaden-smith-the-new-androgynous-icon>.
- Glancy, Jennifer A. *Slavery in Early Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- _____. "Protocols of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles." In *New Testament Masculinities*, edited by Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, 235–64. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Glover, Steven L. "The Unjust Judge, Change His Mind." Perfecting Word Deliverance Ministries, 2008. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=betLfZ001x0>.
- Goering, Joseph W. "An Introduction to Medieval Christian Biblical Interpretation." In *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering, 197–204. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Goodmenproject.com. "21st Century Masculinity: What Does It Mean?" *Goodmenproject.com*, February 20, 2015. <http://goodmenproject.com/ethics-values/21st-century-masculinity-what-does-it-mean-gmp/>.
- Goudreau, Jenna. "The World's 20 Richest Moms." *Forbes*, 2010.
http://www.forbes.com/2011/05/03/worlds-20-richest-moms-billionaires_slide_12.html.
- Grant, Jacquelyn. *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- Graves, M. L. "The Persistent Widow." Revelation of God and Christ Ministries, 2012.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wb79gUI7St0>
- Green, Jocelyn. "Marriage: Order in the Home." *Focus on the Family*, 2009.
<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/military-marriage/the-chain-of-command-in-marriage/order-in-the-home>.
- Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- _____. "Wealthy...Who? Me?: Surprising Perspectives on Faith and Wealth from Luke-Acts." *The Living Pulpit* 12.2 (June 2003): 18–19.
- Guerrero, Ed. *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

- Gutman, Herbert G. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925*. New York: Vintage Books, 1976.
- Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. "The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the Nineteenth-Century Euro-American Imagination." In *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, edited by Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, 13–35. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- Haggerty, Ryan. "Giving to Chicago and Beyond: Oprah's Philanthropy Makes a Difference in Chicago, Around the World." *Chicago Tribune*, May 20, 2011. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-05-20/entertainment/ct-ae-0522-oprah-causes-metro-20110520_1_philanthropy-harpo-janice-peck.
- Haggins, Bambi. "The Black Situation Comedy." In *African Americans in Popular Culture: Theater Film, and Television*, edited by Todd Boyd, Vol. 1. Connecticut: Praeger, 2008.
- Hagler, Jamal. "The Media Narrative of Black Men in America Is All Wrong." *Newsweek.com*, March 19, 2015. <http://www.newsweek.com/black-men-today-dont-fit-old-stereotype-314877>.
- Harold, Christine, and Kevin Michael Deluca. "Behold the Corpse: Violent Images and the Case of Emmett Till." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* Vol. 8.2 (Summer 2005): 263–86.
- Harries, Jill. *Cicero and the Jurists: From Citizens' Law to the Lawful State*. London: Duckworth, 2006.
- _____. "Courts and the Judicial System." In *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, edited by Catherine Hezser. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Harris-Perry, Melissa V. *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Hauser, Christine. "Charleston, S.C., Church Shooting: Live Updates." *Nytimes.com*, June 18, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/live/updates-on-charleston-church-shooting/gunman-was-quoted-as-saying-i-have-to-do-it/>.
- Hays, Christopher M. "Hating Wealth and Wives?: An Examination of Discipleship Ethics in the Third Gospel." *TynBul* 60.1 (2009): 47–68.
- Hedrick, Charles W. *Parables As Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Heen, Erik M. "Radical Patronage in Luke-Acts." *CurTM* 33.6 (December 2006): 445–58.

- Hemelrijk, Emily Ann. *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Hens-Piazza, Gina. *The New Historicism*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.
- Herzog II, William R. *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994.
- Hicks, John Mark. "The Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8)." *Restoration Quarterly* 33.4 (1991): 209–23.
- Hill, Alec. "The Most Troubling Parable: Why Does Jesus Say We Are Like Slaves?" *Christianity Today* 58.6 (2014): 76–79.
- Hill, Jack. *Coffy*. DVD. American International Pictures, 1973.
- Hing, Julianne. "Jezebels, Welfare Queens--And Now, Criminally Bad Black Moms." *Colorlines.com*, August 8, 2011. <http://www.colorlines.com/articles/jezebels-welfare-queens-and-now-criminally-bad-black-moms>.
- Holmes, Rachel. *African Queen: The Real Life of the Hottentot Venus*. New York: Random House, 2007.
- "Home, Sweet Home: Gender in the Antebellum Household: Domestic Sphere." *Civil War Era NC*. <http://cwnc.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/exhibits/show/protect/1/domestic>.
- "Home, Sweet Home: Gender in the Antebellum Household: Men's Role as Head of Household." *Civil War Era NC*. <http://cwnc.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/exhibits/show/protect/1/men>.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Martin Hammond. London: Duckworth, 2000.
- hooks, bell. *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End, 1981.
- _____. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist Thinking Black*. Boston: South End, 1989.
- _____. *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Hopper, Hedda. "Hattie Hates Nobody." *The Chicago Tribune*, Deember 1947. <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1947/12/14/page/196/article/hattie-hates-nobody>.
- Huie, William Bradford. "The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi." *Pbs.org*, 1956. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/sfeature/sf_look_confession.html.
- Hultgren, Arland J. *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

- Hurst, Fannie. *Imitation of Life*. Edited by Daniel Itzkovitz. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Ibanga, Imaeyen. "Obama's Choice to Bare Arms Causes Uproar." *Abcnews.Go.com*, March 2, 2009. <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=6986019&page=1>.
- Jackson, Carlton. *Hattie: The Life of Hattie McDaniel*. Lanham: Madison Books, 1990.
- Jaffe, Sarah. "GOP's 'Bad Black Mother' Myth: Meet the Modern-Day 'Welfare Queens.'" *Salon.com*, August 14, 2014. http://www.salon.com/2014/08/06/gops_bad_black_mother_myth_meet_the_modern_da_y_welfare_queens/.
- Janine. "Widow's Voice: Seven Widowed Voices Sharing Love, Loss, and Hope." *Is It Just Me...*, December 28, 2011. <http://widowsvoice-sslf.blogspot.com/2011/12/is-it-just-me.html>.
- Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia: With an Appendix*. 9th ed. Boston: H. Sprague, 1802.
- Jenkins, Lizzie PRB. "History of Rosewood, Florida." *Rosewoodflorida.com*. <http://www.rosewoodflorida.com/>.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Parables of Jesus*. 2nd Revised. New Jersey: Prentis Hall, 1972.
- Jewell, K. Sue. *From Mammy to Miss American and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy*. Taylor & Francis e-Library. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Jhally, Sut. *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and Crisis in Masculinity*. DVD. Media Education Foundation, 1999.
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Gospel of Luke*. Vol. 3. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991.
- Jones, Jacqueline. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, From Slavery to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- Jordan, Clarence. *The Cotton Patch Version of Luke and Acts: Jesus' Doings and Happenings*. New York: Association Press, 1969.
- Jülicher, D. Adolf. *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Freiburg I. B.: J.C.B. Mohr, 1899.
- _____. *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*. 8th ed. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970.

Junior, Nyasha. "Womanist Biblical Interpretation." In *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World: An Introduction to Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Katherine Doob Sakenfeld*, edited by Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler, 37–46. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

. *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation*.
Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015.

Just A Sister Away Women's Ministry. *Ray of Hope Community Church, Nashville, TN*, April 21, 2014.

Kahl, Brigitte. *Galatians Re-imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished*. Paul in Critical Contexts. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010

Kartzow, Marianne B. and Halvor Moxnes, "Complex Identities: Ethnicity, Gender and Religion in the Story of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)." *Religion and Theology* 17 (2010): 184-204.

Kelley, Blair L.M. "Here's Some History Behind That 'Angry Black Woman' Riff the NY Times Tossed Around." *The Root*, September 25, 2014. <http://www.theroot.com/here-s-some-history-behind-that-angry-black-woman-rif-1790877149>.

Kern-Foxworth, Marilyn. *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994.

King, Hobart. "Ruby and Sapphire." *Geology.com*.
<http://geology.com/gemstones/ruby-and-sapphire/>.

Klutz, Todd. "The Value of Being Virginal: Mary and Anna in the Lukan Infancy Prologue." In *The Birth of Jesus: Biblical and Theological Reflections*, edited by George J. Brooke, 71–87. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.

Knights, Lionel Charles. *How Many Children had Lady MacBeth?: An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism*. Explorations. Cambridge, UK: G. Fraser, the Minority Press, 1933

Kopas, Jane. "Jesus and Women: Luke's Gospel." *ThTo* 43.2 (1986): 192–202.

Kozar, Joseph Vlcek. "Reading the Opening Chapter of Luke From A Feminist Perspective." In *Escaping Eden: New Feminist Perspectives on the Bible*, edited by Harold C. Washington, Susan Lochrie Graham, and Pamela Thimmes, 53–68. Washington Square: New York University Press, 1999.

- Kraemer, Ross S. "Jewish Family Life in the First Century CE." In *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, 537–40. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Kuruvilla, Abraham. *Text to Praxis: Hermeneutics and Homiletics in Dialogue*. London: T & T Clark, 2009.
- Labahn, Antje. "Observations On Women in the Genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9." *Biblica* 84.4 (2003): 457–78.
- Laine, Frankie. *Jezebel*. Columbia, 1951.
- Lawson, J.O. "The Unjust Judge." Holy Light Church of God in Christ. <http://www.texaswesternjurisdiction.org/Media.html>.
- Leclaire, Jennifer. "Have You Been Fooled by the Jezebel Deception?" *www.Charismamag.com*, June 28, 2013. <http://www.charismamag.com/spirit/spiritual-growth/18157-have-you-been-fooled-by-the-jezebel-deception>.
- Leff, Leonard T. "David Selznick's 'Gone with the Wind': 'The Negro Problem.'" *The Georgia Review* 38.1 (Spring 1984): 146–64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41398649>.
- Levin, Yigal. "Understanding Biblical Genealogies." *Currents in Research* 9 (2001): 11–46.
- Levine, Amy-Jill. "Discharging Responsibility: Matthean Jesus, Biblical Law, and Hemorrhaging Woman." In *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, 70–87. FCNTECW 1. London: T & T Clark, 2001.
- _____. with Marianne Blickenstaff, eds. *A Feminist Companion to Luke*. FCNTECW 3. New York: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- _____. "This Widow Keeps Bothering Me (Luke 18:5)." *Finding A Woman's Place: Essays in Honor of Carolyn Osiek*, edited by David L. Balch and Jason T. Lamoreaux, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 150, 124-150. Eugene: Pickwick, 2011.
- _____. *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of A Controversial Rabbi*. New York: HarperOne, 2014.
- _____. "'This Poor Widow...' (Mark 12:43): From Donation to Diatribe." In *A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer*, edited by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Nathaniel DesRosiers, Shira L. Lander, Jacqueline Z. Pastis, and Daniel Ullucci, 183–93. Brown Judaic Studies 358. Providence: Brown University, 2015.
- Lewis, Andrea. "Celebrating Hattie McDaniel, First African-American to Win Oscar." *The Progressive*, February 24, 2004. http://www.progressive.org/media_883mplewis.

- Lightman, Marjorie, and William Ziesel. "Univira : An Example of Continuity and Change in Roman Society." *Church History* 46.1 (March 1977): 19–32.
- Lindfors, Bernth. *Early African Entertainments Abroad: From the Hottentot Venus to Africa's First Olympians*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014.
- Linnemann, Eta. *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition*. London: SPCK, 1966.
- Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. Harcourt Brace, 1922.
- Lobosco, Katie. "Walmart Cuts Health Benefits 30,000 Part-Timers." *CNNMoney*, October 8, 2014. http://money.cnn.com/2014/10/07/news/economy/walmart-health-benefits/index.html?hpt=hp_t2.
- Lomax, Tamara A. "Mad Black Bitches and Ladylike Saints: Representations of African American Womanhood in Tyler Perry Films." In *Womanist and Black Feminist Responses to Tyler Perry's Productions*, edited by LeRhonda S. Manigault-Bryant, Tamara A. Lomax, and Carol B. Duncan, 125–46. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Lopez, Davina C. *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission*. Paul in Critical Contexts. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.
- Lord, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House." In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 110–14. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984.
- Lose, David. "Commentary of Luke 18:1-8." *Workingpreacher.org*, 2010. https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=810
- Louie, Sam. "Real Men Cry. Crying is Caring." *Minority Report, Psychology Today*, January 29, 2016. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/minority-report/201601/real-men-cry>.
- Lowe, James R. A Conversation with "Sapphire" and "Amos," 1979. <http://www.yodaslair.com/dumboozle/tmoore/intervue.html>.
- Lull, Timothy F., and William R. Russell, eds. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*. 3rd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.
- Luther, Martin. *Select Works of Martin Luther: An Offering to the Church of God in "The Last Days," 2 Tim. Iii. 1*. Translated by Henry Cole. Vol. IV. London: T. Bensley, 1826.
- M., S. "Courtrooms and Racial Bias: An Old Court Case Exposes the Racist Tricks Used to Ensure All-White Juries." *The Economist*, November 3, 2015. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2015/11/courtrooms-and-racial-bias>.

- MacDonald, Dennis R. "Lydia and Her Sisters as Lukan Fictions." In *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 9, 105-111. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
- MacDonald, J. Fred. "Postwar Radio." *Don't Touch That Dial!: Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960*. Accessed April 3, 2017.
<http://jfredmacdonald.com/postwar.htm>.
- Macklin, William R. "Rollins' Words Summon The Worst Image of Black Ministers: The Stereotype of Greedy Clergy Is Aimed At Demeaning the Black Power Base, Pastors Say." *Philly.com*. November 21, 1993.
- Mahar, William J. "Ethiopian Skits and Sketches: Contents and Contexts of Blackface Minstrelsy, 1840-1890." In *Inside The Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, edited by Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, 179-220. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1996.
- Majors, Richard, and Janet Mancini Billson. *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*. New York: Lexington Books, 1992.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "The Poor Widow in Mark and Her Poor Rich Readers." *CBQ* 53. 4 (1991): 589-604.
- _____. "The Gospel of Mark." In *Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed., 478-92. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012.
- "Mantan Moreland 1902-1973." *Blackface.com*. <http://black-face.com/Mantan-Moreland.htm>.
- Markham, Pigmeat. *Here Comes the Judge*. Record. Chicago: Chess, 1968.
- "Marla Gibbs." *Archive of American Television*, July 27, 2006.
<http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/marla-gibbs#>.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The New International Greek Commentary: A Commentary On Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.
- Martin, Clarice J. "Womanist Interpretations of the New Testament: The Quest for Holistic and Inclusive Translation and Interpretation." In *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume II 1980-1992*, edited by James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, 2:225-44. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.
- Matthews, Donald. *Sexual Abuse of Power in the Black Church: Sexual Misconduct in the African American Churches*. Bloomington: WestBow, 2012.

- Matthews, Mary W. "Go Thou and Do Likewise: A Homiletical Commentary." In *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom*, edited by Mary Ann Beavis, 47–53. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Maude (Television). 1972-1978. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQuvK2pBxrA>.
- Maximus, Valerius. "Of Remarkable Private Trials, Book 8.2." In *Valerius Maximus: Memorable Doings and Sayings*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, vol. 2. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- _____. "Women Who Pleaded Before Magistrates For Themselves Or For Others, Book 8.3." In *Valerius Maximus: Memorable Doings and Sayings*, translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, vol. 2. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- McCalla, Doreen. *Unsung Heroines in the Church: Singing the Praises of Black Women Now*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007.
- McDonnell, Myles. *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- McLaren, Angus. "The Inpenetrable Penetrator: Manhood in Greece and Rome." In *Impotence: A Cultural History*, 1–24. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- McLeod, Elizabeth. *The Original Amos "n" Andy: Freeman Gosden, Charles Correll and the 1928-1943 Radio Serial*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005.
- Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume V: Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*. Vol. 5. The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.
- Memphis May Fire. *Jezebel*. Rise, 2010.
- Merz, Annette. "How A Woman Who Fought Back and Demanded Her Rights Became An Importunate Widow: The Transformations of a Parable of Jesus." In *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity: Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus*, edited by Tom Holmen. London: T & T Clark, 2007.
- Migne, J.-P. *Patrologia Latina*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2013.
- Minnelli, Vincente. *Cabin in the Sky*. DVD. Warner Bros., 1943.
- Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind*. New York: Macmillan 1936.
- Monroe, Bryan. "25 Coolest Brothers of All Time." *Ebony*, August 2008.

- Moody, Mia Moody. "From Jezebel to Ho: An Analysis of Creative and Imaginative Shared Representations of African American Women." *Journal of Research on Women and Gender* 4 (2012): 74-94.
- Moore, Stephen D., and Janice Capel Anderson. "Taking It Like A Man: Masculinity In 4 Maccabees." *JBL* 117.2 (1998): 249–73.
- Morgan, Marcyliena and Dionne Bennett. "Getting Off of Black Women's Backs: Love Her or Leave Her Alone." *Du Bois Review* 3.2 (2006): 485-502.
- Morley, William H. "The Parable of the Unjust Judge." *Stthomasreidsville.org*, October 21, 2001. <http://www.stthomasreidsville.org/sermons/10212001.htm>.
- Morton, Patricia. *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Moss, Candida R., and Joel Baden. *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives On Procreation and Childlessness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Moynihan, Patrick. "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." *United States Department of Labor*, March 1965. <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/webid-meynihan.htm>.
- Nachman, Gerald. *Raised on Radio*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.
- Nelson, Janet L. "Review of Ziolkowski (Jan M.) *Jezebel*." *Recesses, Revue beige de philology et d'histoire* 73 (1995): 444-47
- Nesteroff, Kilph. "Last Man in Blackface: The World of Pigniteat Markham." *WFMU's Beware of the Blog*, November 14, 2010. <http://blog.wfmu.org/freeform/2010/11/the-forgotten-pigniteat-markham.html>.
- Niese, Mark. "Prosecutors Allege Judicial Misconduct in Dekalb Corruption Case." *Ajc.com*. November 13, 2014. <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/prosecutors-allege-judicial-misconduct-in-dekalb-c/nh6XL/>.
- Nouwen, Henri J.M. *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. New York: Doubleday, 1979.
- O'Brien, P. T. "Prayer in Luke-Acts." *TynBul* 24 (1973): 111–27.
- Ohlheiser, Abby. "Pastor Creflo Dollar Might Get His \$65 Million Private Jet after All." *www.Washingtonpost.com*, June 3, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/03/pastor-creflo-dollar-might-get-his-65-million-private-jet-after-all/>.

- Ostendorf, Berndt. "Minstrelsy & Early Jazz." *The Massachusetts Review* 20.3 (Autumn 1979): 574–602.
- OWN. "The Next Step in Basie Skanks' Master Plan." *MSN Entertainment*, February 21, 2017. <http://www.msn.com/en-au/entertainment/celebrity/the-next-step-in-basie-skanks-master-plan/vp-AAAnZIOD>.
- Palmer-Mehta, Valerie, and Alina Haliluic. "Flavor of Love and the Rise of Neo-Minstrelsy on Reality Television." In *Pimps, Wimps, Studs, Thugs and Gentlemen: Essays on Media Images of Masculinity*, edited by Elwood Watson, 85–105. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009.
- Parkhurst, Jessie W. "The Role of the Black Mammy in the Plantation Household." *The Journal of Negro History* 23.3 (July 1938): 349–69.
- Parks, Gordon. *Shaft*. DVD. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1971.
- Parks, Jr., Gordon. *Superfly*. DVD. Warner Bros., 2004.
- Parr, Russ. *The Undershepherd*. DVD. Melee Entertainment, 2012.
- Parsons, Mikeal C. *Acts*. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Penner, Todd and Caroline Vander Stichele. "Gendering Violence: Patterns of Power and Constructs of Masculinity in the Acts of the Apostles." In *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles* edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 9, 193-2009. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004.
- _____. "‘All the World’s a Stage’: The Rhetoric of Gender in Acts." In *Luke and His Readers: Festschrift A. Denaux* edited by Reimund Bieringer, Gilbert van Belle, and Jozef Verheyden, 373-398. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005.
- _____. "Script(ur)ing Gender in Acts: The Past and Present Power of *Imperium*." In *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourse* edited by Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, 231-266. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Perkins, Pheme. *Hearing the Parables of Jesus*. New York: Paulist, 1981.
- Peronni, Marinella. "Disciples, Not Apostles: Luke’s Double Message." In *Gospels: Narrative and History*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine, 2.1:173–214. *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopedia of Exegesis and Cultural History*. Atlanta: SBL, 2015.

- Perry, Tyler. *Why Did I Get Married?* DVD. Lionsgate, 2007.
- Peskowitz, Miriam. *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, and History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Phillips, Layli, ed. *The Womanist Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Pilgrim, David. "The Brute Caricature." *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, 2000. <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/brute/>.
- _____. "Jezebel Stereotype." Ferris Institutional Repository, 2002. <http://fir.ferris.edu:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2323/4778/Jezebel%20Stereotype.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- _____. "The Sapphire Caricature." *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, 2008. <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/sapphire/>.
- _____. "Jezebel Stereotype." *Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, 2012. <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/News/jimcrow/jezebel/>.
- Piper, John. "Always Pray and Do Not Lose Heart." *Desiring God*, January 9, 1983. <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/always-pray-and-do-not-lose-heart>.
- Pippin, Tina. "Jezebel Re-Vamped." *Semeia* 69–70 (1995): 221–33.
- Plous, S, and Tyrone Williams. "Racial Stereotypes From the Days of American Slavery: A Continuing Legacy." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 25.9 (1995): 795–817.
- Pollard, Edward A. "Black Diamonds." In *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South*, edited by Eric L. Mckitrick, 162–68. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1859.
- Pomeroy, Sarah B. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Antiquity*. New York: Schocken Books, 1975.
- Poulson-Bryant, Scott. *Hung: A Meditation on the Measure of Black Men in America*. New York: Doubleday, 2005.
- Powell, Mark Allan. *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Praeder, Susan M. *The Word in Women's Worlds*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988.
- Preminger, Otto. *Carmen Jones*. DVD. Twentieth Century Fox, 1954.
- Price, Kent. "The Widow and the Unjust Judge." Hillview Seventh Day Adventist Church, 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYm2FU2AAxM>.

- Price, Robert. *The Widow Traditions in Luke-Acts: A Feminist Critical Scrutiny*. SBLDS 155. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Priest, Josiah. *Bible Defence of Slavery: And Origin, Fortunes, and History of the Negro Race*. 5th ed. Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2010.
- Priester, Paul E. "Uncle Tom Syndrome." In *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology*, edited by Yo Jackson, 461–62. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006.
- "Public Corruption: Courtroom for Sale: Judge Gets Jail Time in Racketeering Case." *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, September 2013.
<https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/public-corruption-courtroom-for-sale1>.
- Rabin, Nathan. "Pam Grier," June 25, 2003. <http://www.avclub.com/article/pam-grier-13820>.
- Reeves, Frank. "When 'Gone With the Wind' Film Was Released, It Was Lauded and Lambasted," September 23, 2014.
<http://www.postgazette.com/ae/books/2014/09/24/When-the-movie-Gone-With-the-Wind-was-released-it-was-lauded-and-lambasted/stories/201409240007?pgpageversion=pgevoke>.
- Reid, Barbara E. "Luke: The Gospel for Women?" *CurTM* 21.6 (November 1994): 405–14.
- _____. *Choosing the Better Part: Women in the Gospel of Luke*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996.
- _____. "A Godly Widow Persistently Pursuing Justice: Luke 18:1-8." *Biblical Research* 45 (2000): 25–33.
- _____. "The Power of the Widows and How to Suppress It (Acts 6:1-7)." In *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaffe, 71–89. FCNTECW 9. London: T & T Clark, 2004.
- _____. "Prophetic Voices of Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna in Luke 1-2." In *New Perspectives on the Nativity*, edited by Jeremy Corley, 37–46. London: T & T Clark, 2009.
- _____. "The Gospel of Luke: Friend or Foe of Women Proclaimers of the Word?" *CBQ* 78.1 (2016): 1–23.
- Reimer, Ivoni Richter. *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective*. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

- Remnick, Noah. "Debra Harrell and the Mythology of Bad Black Mothers." *Latimes.com*, August 24, 2015. <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/opinion-la/la-ol-debra-harrell-mythology-black-mothers-20140718-story.html>.
- Remsberg, Rich. "Found In The Archives: America's Unsettling Early Eugenics Movement." *Npr.org*, June 1, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2011/06/01/136849387/found-in-the-archives-americas-unsettling-early-eugenics-movement>.
- Resner, Andre. "Widow's Mite or Widow's Plight." *RevExp* 107 (2010): 545–54.
- Riding, Christine. *John Everette Millais: British Artists*. London: Tate, 2006.
- Robertson, Iyana. "T.I. On Hillary Clinton: "I Can't Vote For The Leader Of The Free World To Be A Woman"." *Vibe.com*, October 13, 2015. <http://www.vibe.com/2015/10/ti-hillary-clinton-woman-president/>.
- Rodricks, Dan. "Trying to Find the Real Willie Horton." *Baltimoresun.com*, August 12, 1993. http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1993-08-12/news/1993224224_1_willie-horton-willie-horton-jeffrey-elliott.
- Rosenbaum, Thane. "Eye for an Eye: The Case for Revenge." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 26, 2013. <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Case-for-Revenge/138155/>.
- Rosenthal, Lisa and Marci Lobel. "Stereotypes of Black American Women Related to Sexuality and Motherhood." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 40.3 (2016): 414-27.
- Ruiz, Tammy. "Catholic Stand." *A Young Widow On How to Treat Young Widows*, August 6, 2013. <http://catholicstand.com/a-young-widow-on-how-to-treat-young-widows/>.
- Rushdy, Ashraf H. A. *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literar Form*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Sade. *Jezebel*. Epic Records, 1985.
- Sakenfeld, Katherine Doob. "Challenged and Changed." In *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse*, edited by Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace, 349–57. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016.
- Satchell, Michael. "Jezebel Was A Killer and Prostitute, but She Had Her Good Side." *U.S. News and World Report*, January 25, 2008. <http://www.usnews.com/news/religion/articles/2008/01/25/jezebel-was-a-killer-and-prostitute-but-she-had-her-good-side>.

- Savali, Kirsten West. “\$65,000,000 for Private Jet, Creflo Dollar? Negro, Please.” *The Root*, March 13, 2014.
http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2015/03/you_better_fly_commercial_creflo_dollar.2.html.
- Schaberg, Jane D., and Sharon H. Ringe. “The Gospel of Luke.” In *Women’s Bible Commentary*, edited by Carol A. Newsome, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed., 493–511. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012.
- Scheele, Barbara. “Will She Find Faith on Earth?” In *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom*, edited by Mary Ann Beavis, 62–70. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Schott, Landon. “Has America Compromised with the Jezebel Spirit.” *Charisma News*, January 25, 2017.
<http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/62599-has-america-compromised-with-the-jezebel-spirit>
- Schottroff, Luise. *Let the Oppressed Go Free: Feminist Perspectives on the New Testament*. Translated by Annemarie S. Kidder. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993.
- _____. *Lydia’s Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York: Crossroad, 1983.
- _____. *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- _____. *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001.
- Scott, Bernard Brandon. *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
- Scott, Patricia Bell. “Debunking Sapphire: Toward a Non-Racist and Non-Sexist Social Science.” In *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies*, edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith. New York: The Feminist Press, 1982.
- Seachrest, Love. “Antitypes, Stereotypes, and Antetypes: Jezebel, the Sun Woman, and Contemporary Black Women.” In *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse*, edited by Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace. Atlanta: SBL, 2016.
- Seim, Turid Karlsen. *The Double Message*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

- Selk, Avi, Lindsey Bever, Peter Holley, and Wesley Lowery. “‘Facebook killer’ dies after three-day police pursuit in Pennsylvania.” *Post Nation*, April 18, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/04/18/facebook-murder-suspect-steve-stephens-is-dead-police-say/?utm_term=.83abdb9c2353
- Sellew, Philip [Melissa]. “Interior Monologue As A Narrative Device in the Parables of Luke.” *JBL* Vol. 111.2 (1992): 239–53.
- Selvidge, Marla. “‘And Those Who Followed Feared’ (Mark 10:32).” *CBQ* 45.3 (1983): 396–400.
- Sergio. “Remembering ‘A Man Called Hawk’ - The Coolest Brother on TV.” *IndieWire*, October 12, 2012. <http://www.indiewire.com/2012/10/remembering-a-man-called-hawk-the-coolest-brother-on-tv-141108/>.
- Serrano, Andres Garcia. “Anna’s Characterization in Luke 2:36-38: A Case of Conceptual Allusion?” *CBQ* 76.3 (July 2014): 464–80.
- Shelley, Carter. “A Widow Without Wives.” In *The Lost Coin: Parables of Women, Work, and Wisdom*, edited by Mary Ann Beavis, 53-61. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Sherouse, Alan P. “The One Percent and the Gospel of Luke.” *RevExp* 110.2 (Spr 2013): 285–93.
- Sherwood, Yvonne. *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Hosea’s Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective*. JSOT, Gender, Theory, Culture 2. England: Sheffield Academic, 1996.
- Shriver, Maria. *The Shriver Report: A Woman’s Nation Pushes Back from the Brink: A Study*. Electronic. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Siebold, Steve. “The Biggest Scam of All: Pastor Creflo Dollar Will Get His \$65 Million Luxury Jet.” *www.Huffingtonpost.com*, June 6, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-siebold/the-biggest-scam-of-all-p_b_7521170.html.
- Singleton, John. *Shaft*. DVD. Paramount Pictures, 2000.
- Sirk, Douglas. *Imitation of Life*. DVD. Universal Pictures, 1959.
- Simms, Rupp. “Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women.” *Gender & Society* 15.6 (December 2001): 879–97.
- Simms, W. Gilmore. *The Scout or The Black Riders of Congaree*. W.J. Widdleton, 1854.
- Sims, Yvonne D. *Women of Blaxploitation: How the Black Action Film Heroine Changed American Popular Culture*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006.

- Singleton, John. *Shaft*. DVD. Paramount Pictures, 2000.
- Smith, Mitzi J., ed. *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015.
- Smith, Shanell T. *The Woman Babylon and the Marks of Empire: Reading Revelation with a Postcolonial Womanist Hermeneutics of Ambivalence*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014.
- Smith, Shively T. J. "One More Time With Assata On My Mind: A Womanist Rereading on the Escape to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-23) in Dialogue With An African American Woman Fugitive Narrative." In *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse*, edited by Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace, 139–63. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016.
- Smith-Shomade, Beretta E. *Shaded Lives: African American Women and Television*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- Snodgrass, Klyne. "From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus." In *The Challenge of Jesus Parables*, edited by Richard Longnecker. McMaster New Testament Studies. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- _____. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Spencer, F. Scott. *Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004.
- _____. *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows: Capable Women of Purpose and Persistence in Luke's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Spenser: For Hire (Television). September 4, 2008.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7U82V_NjhOs.
- Spring, Corey. "The Sketch That Made Chappelle Say 'Enough.'" *Newsvine*, July 14, 2006.
http://spring.newsvine.com/_news/2006/07/14/287958-the-sketch-that-made-chappelle-say-enough.
- Springer, Kimberly. "Good Times for Florida and Black Feminism." *Circles* 8 (2003): 122–35.
- Stahl, John M. *Imitation of Life*. DVD. Universal Pictures, 1934.
- Steel, Ronald. "Forward." In *Public Opinion*. Harcourt Brace, 1922.
- Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2009.
- Streeter, Gail Corrington. *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

- Strelan, Rick. "Elizabeth, Are You Hiding?" *Neotestamentica* 37.1 (2003): 85–93.
- Summers, Claude J. "Sapphire (Ramona Lofton) (b. 1950)." *GLBTQ Archives*, Entry Copyright @ 20009. http://www.glbqtarchive.com/literature/sapphire_L.pdf.
- Sutherland, Meghan. *The Flip Wilson Show*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008.
- Swan, L. Alex. "A Methodological Critique of The Moynihan Report." *The Black Scholar* 5.9 (June 1974): 18–24.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/41065735?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.
- Swidler, Leonard. *Biblical Affirmations of Women*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979.
- Talley, Kendra. "Portrayals of African American Women in Media."
<http://kendratalley.weebly.com/the-mammy.html>.
- Tannehill, Robert C. *Luke*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- Tatum, W. Barnes. "Did Jesus Heal Simon's Mother-in-Law of a Fever?" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27.4 (Winter 1994): 148–58.
- Taylor, Tate. *The Help*. DVD. Dreamworks Pictures and Reliance Entertainment, 2011.
- Tellegen-Couperus, O. E. (Olga Eveline). "The Role of the Judge in the Formulary Procedure." *The Journal of Legal History* 22.2 (2001): 1–13.
- 10,000 Maniacs. *Jezebel*. Electra Records, 1992.
- The Undershepherd. "Cast of 'The Undershepherd' talk about the film." September 6, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RdndqTCO6A>
- _____. "The Jazmine Brand Presents...The Undershepherd Cast Interview Part 1." March 28, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w6dqFO9IF4>,
- Thiselton, Anthony C. "The New Hermeneutic." In *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, edited by I. Howard Marshall, 308–33. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.
- _____. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- Thomas, Anita Jones, Karen McCurtis Witherspoon, and Suzette L. Speight. "Toward the Development of Stereotypic Roles for Black Women Scale." *Journal of Black Psychology* 30.3 (2004): 446–442.
- Thompson, Carlyle Van. *Eating the Black Body: Miscegenation As Sexual Consumption in African American Literature and Culture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.

- Thompson, Katrina Dyonne. “‘Taking Care of White Babies, That’s What I Do’: The Help and Americans’ Obsession with the Mammy.” In *From Uncle Tom’s Cabin to The Help: Critical Perspectives on White-Authored Narratives of Black Life*, edited by Claire Oberon Garcia, Vershawn Ashanti Young, and Charise Pimentel, 57–72. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Thornton, Dillon T. “‘Saying What They Should Not Say’: Reassessing the Gravity of the Problem of the Younger Widows (1 Tim. 5:11-15).” *JETS* 59.1 (March 2016): 119–29.
- Thrall, Margaret E. *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1962.
- Thurber, Cheryl. “The Development of the Mammy Image and Mythology.” In *Southern Women: Histories and Identities*, edited by Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genevieve, Theda Purdue, 87–109. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992.
- Thurston, Bonnie Bowman. “Who Was Anna?: Luke 2:36-30.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 28.1 (Spr 2001): 47–55.
- Tidyman, Ernest. *Shaft*. New Jersey: Dynamite Entertainment, 1970.
- Tolbert, Mary Ann. *Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.
- Townes, Emilie M. *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993.
- _____, ed. *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- _____. “The Road We Are Traveling.” In *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse*, edited by Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace, 359–67. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016.
- Turman, Eboni Marshall. *Toward A Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Tyson, Joseph B. *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006.
- Tyson, Timothy B. *The Blood of Emmett Till*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017.
- Ubieta, Carmen Bernabé. “Mary Magdalene and the Seven Demons in Social-Scientific Perspective.” In *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Re-Viewed*, edited by Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, translated by Lucia F. Llorente, 203–23. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

- U.S. Department of Justice. "Criminal Victimization in the United States." Statistical Table, 2005. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cvus05.pdf>
- Via, E. Jane. "Women, the Discipleship of Service, and the Early Christian Ritual Meal in the Gospel of Luke." *Saint Luke's Journal of Theology* 29.1 (December 1985): 37–60.
- _____. "Women in the Gospel of Luke." In *Women in the World's Religions, Past and Present*, edited by Ursula King, 38–55. New York: Paragon House, 1987.
- Vidor, King. *Hallelujah*. DVD. Memphis: MGM, 1929.
- Wailes, Stephen L. *Medieval Allegories of Jesus' Parables*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Walker, Alice. "Coming Apart." In *Take Back The Night: Feminist Papers on Pornography*, eds. Laura Lederer and Lunn K. Campbell, 95-104. New York: William Morrow, 1980.
- Walker Art Gallery. *Millais: An Exhibition Organized by the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool & the Royal Academy of Arts, London*. Liverpool/London: Walker Art Gallery/Royal Academy of Arts, 1967.
- Wallace, Michele. *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. New York: Warner Books, 1979.
- Wallace-Sanders, Kimberly. *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Walters, Jonathan. "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought." In *Roman Sexualities*, edited by Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner, 29–43. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Watkins, Mel. "Forward." In *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, edited by Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, ix–x. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1996.
- _____. "Flip Wilson, Outrageous Comic and TV Host, Dies at 64." *NYTimes.com*, November 27, 1998. <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/27/arts/flip-wilson-outrageous-comic-and-tv-host-dies-at-64.html>.
- Watson, Natalie N., and Carla D. Hunter. "'I Had To Be Strong': Tensions in the Strong Black Woman Schema." *Journal of Black Psychology*, July 30, 2015, 1–29.
- Wanzo, Rebecca. "Beyond a 'Just' Syntax: Black Actresses, Hollywood, and Complex Personhood." *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 16.1 (August 19, 2006): 135–52.

- Wax, Dustin. "Being A Man in the 21st Century." www.Lifehack.org.
<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/featured/being-a-man-in-the-21st-century-part-1.html>.
- Weaver, Dorothy Jean. "Luke 18:1-8." *Interpretation* 56.3 (2002): 317-319.
- Webbe, William James. *The Victorian Web: Literature, History & Culture in the Age of Victoria*. <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/webbe/>.
- Weems, Renita J. *Just A Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible*. San Diego: LuraMedia, 1988.
- _____. "Womanist Reflections On Biblical Hermeneutics." In *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Volume II 1980-1992*, edited by James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, 216–24. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.
- _____. "Re-Reading for Liberation: African American Women and the Bible." In *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*, edited by Silvia Schroer and Sophia Bietenhard, 19–32. London: Sheffield Academic, 2003.
- _____. Somethingwithin. 2007. <http://www.somethingwithin.com>.
- West, Carolyn M. "Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel: Historical Images of Black Women and Their Implications for Psychotherapy." *Psychotherapy* 32.3 (1995): 458–66.
- _____. "Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and their homegirls: Developing an "oppositional gaze" toward the images of Black women." In *Lectures on the Psychology of Women*, edited by J. Chrisler, C. Golden & P. Rozee, 4th ed., 286-299. New York: McGraw Hill, 2008
- Whitaker, Morgan. "The Legacy of the Willie Horton Ad Lives On, 25 Years Later." *MSNBC.com*, October 21, 2013. <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/the-legacy-the-willie-horton-ad-lives>.
- White, Deborah G. *Ar'n't I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. Revised. New York: Norton, 1999.
- Williams, Delores S. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.
- "Willie Horton 1988 Attack Ad." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Io9KMSSEZ0Y>.
- Wilson, Brittany E. *Unmanly Men: Reconfigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

- Wilson, Flip. "Reverend Leroy and the Church of What's Happening Now." *The Flip Wilson Show*, 1970-1974. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmJati2W7uA>
- Witherington, III, Ben. *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Early Life*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- _____. "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples--Luke 8:1-3." In *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 3, 133-39. London: Sheffield Academic, 2002.
- Wolter, Michael. "Eschatology in the Gospel According to Luke." In *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, edited by Jan G. Van Der Watt, 91-108. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.
- Woodard, J. B. and T. Mastin, "Black Womanhood: Essence and its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Blackblack Women." *JBS* 36 (2005): 264-81.
- Woods-Giscombe, Cheryl L. "Superwoman Schema: African American Women's Views on Stress, Strength, and Health." *QHR* 20 (May 2010): 668-83.
- Wright, Chely. *Jezebel*. MCA Nashville, 2001.
- Wyler, William. *Jezebel*. DVD. Warner Bros., 1938.
- Yarbrough, Marilyn, and Crystal Bennett. "Cassandra and the 'Sistahs': The Peculiar Treatment of African American Women in the Myth of Women As Liars." *Gender, Race & Justice* 3J (1999-2000): 625-57.
- Young, Brad H. *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998.
- Young, Lawrence. "Examining the 'Image' of Black Americans Through the Eyes of Hollywood." *Daily Collegian*, February 9, 1984. http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archives/article_9c48a375-e608-5fa8-a4cb-176dd12ae1c1.html.