

Derrida, and Michel Foucault is rather surprising, he shows himself to be a very capable thinker ready to brave the heights of truth wherever its unveiling is being dared. Those interested in homiletics will find the book particularly useful in its numerous unearthings of sundry elemental meanings from well-worn biblical passages. Both the scandalous and the inspirational are woven together in nuptial union, celebrating the biblical vision of God "as transcending all limits, as wild and out of control" (10).

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Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction. Ed. Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza. New York: Crossroad, 1993. ISBN 0-8245-1381-9. Pp v+397.

Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction is the first volume of a projected two-volume feminist commentary on the bible. It aims at addressing the "ambivalent relationship" which women as marginalized people have to the bible (x). According to Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza (editor), the goal of the volume is to "empower readers for the tasks of engaging in critical analysis [of scripture] and for developing a different sociohistorical and theo-ethical imagination" (xi).

As organizing principles for feminist biblical study and specifically for this project, Schüssler-Fiorenza advocates a *hermeneutics of suspicion* and a *hermeneutics of re-vision* (11). The former attempts to identify patriarchal crimes in the text by "carefully tracing [their] clues and imprints...in order to prevent further hurt and violations" (11). By contrast, a hermeneutics of re-vision "searches texts for values and visions that can nurture those who live in subjection and authorize their struggles for liberation and transformation" (11). Many of the contributors to this volume take up these two hermeneutical keys in their essays.

Searching the Scriptures takes seriously its heritage of biblical scholarship. Schüssler-Fiorenza attempts to contextualize the book in an ever-growing but still little-recognized tradition of feminist biblical study—she describes the book as the daughter of Elizabeth Cady-Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (8). Since this tradition has included work from "diverse locations and divergent traditions" (x), Schüssler-Fiorenza encourages those involved in feminist scholarship to transcend the boundaries of white, North-American and European thinking. They must "adopt a feminist hermeneutical perspective" which takes seriously not only problems of gender, but also of race, class, ethnicity and other structures of oppression (x). Schüssler-Fiorenza has sought out contributors from different geographical areas who address different cultural issues of interpretation. In addition, the book specifically attempts to treat the subjects of perspective, sociohistorical location, method and communication.

Part one, "Charting Interpretation from Different Sociohistorical Location," presents a brief, multicultural history of feminist biblical interpretation. This section contains a number of essays from various racial and cultural perspectives: Caucasian (American), African-American (womanist), Asian-American, African,

and South-American (*mujerista*). In its intention to provide a brief overview of the sociohistorical context of biblical interpretation by women, this section is somewhat disappointing. In part, it falls short of its potential because of restrictions on space, a common problem of most edited volumes. In addition, more attention is paid to a few specific, key figures than to the provision of a historical survey of the discipline. As a result, one feels that the book's place in its context of biblical scholarship has not adequately been established.

Part two, "Changing Patriarchal Blueprints: Creating Feminist Frames of Meaning," is directed at the evaluation of existing patriarchal frames of meaning ("forms of distorted patriarchal lenses" [xi]) which have influenced biblical study. This section involves some "consciousness raising," since it includes the discussion of feminist approaches, which, despite their efforts, are still quite patriarchal in nature.

There are a number of interesting contributions in this section. Particularly noteworthy is the essay "Racism and Ethnocentrism in Feminist Biblical Interpretation" by Kwok Pui-Lan, who argues that biblical study must be approached from a perspective of liberation and that it must be pursued with the benefit of the insight of *specific* interpretive communities. She proposes that the authority of the biblical text and the canon be demystified so that it can no longer be used against marginalized people (103). Finally, she advocates multicultural and multi-faith interpretations, counseling readers to recognize the multiple identities (and thus opportunities for multiple interpretations) of marginalized and oppressed peoples.

Part three, "Scrutinizing the Master's Tools: Rethinking Critical Methods," seems to be the strongest and best-developed segment of this volume. It comprises a number of essays which discuss previous biblical criticism and evaluate its appropriateness for feminist biblical study. This section includes, among others, discussions of the historical-critical method, sociological and anthropological approaches, and materialist biblical study.

Monika Fander's essay, "Historical-Critical Methods," proves to be most interesting. The author presents several approaches in conjunction with specific textual examples, showing how historical criticism can actually assist feminist analysis and, in fact, complement it. Fander argues that these methods protect scholarship against a "biblicistic fundamentalism" (222). She concludes that it is a hermeneutical issue that has made feminist and historical-critical methods incompatible up to now.

Somewhat disappointing is Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Janice Capel Anderson's essay, "Literary-Critical Methods." Rather than "claiming" the discipline for feminist biblical study, the authors really provide an overview of recent feminist-literary approaches, such as one might have hoped for in part one. The result is an interesting summary of useful literary method, which might, however, have been more evaluative in its approach.

Part four, the final section of the book, "Transforming the Master's House: Building a 'Room of Our Own'," is concerned with the amalgamation of *practice* and *theory* in order to produce new approaches for feminist biblical study. Unfortunately, practice in these essays is heavily weighted towards the influence of

feminist thinking in the Christian lay community. Only one of the four essays addresses practice in the academic community, which is the context of almost all of the volume's contributors and which seems to be their primary target audience (ix). The reader may feel somewhat cheated here. This section provides for the pulling together of some important strings which are presented in parts two and three, and yet the issues raised here are, unfortunately, downplayed.

Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza tries to address a broad range of topics in this volume and thus incorporates diverse material into the book. The result is some interesting reading which has helpful insights for the present and future contexts of feminist biblical study. Unfortunately, the diversity and quantity of the contributions tends to make the reader's head spin. In order to tie this wonderful diversity together, it would have been extremely helpful if the editor had provided introductions and summaries in each section, as well as a general conclusion or summary of the volume.

Though broad in scope, *Searching the Scriptures* does not seem to achieve the wide diversity it intends. Part one, for example, does not include Asian perspectives (as distinct from Asian-American)—a small, but growing field in liberation theology. With the exception of Kwok Pui-Lan's essay, this area is hardly well-represented. Nor does the book have Canadian contributors, who might have provided some North American diversity. Furthermore, contributors are limited to those who generally constitute the "academic elite," namely, those who occupy professorships or teaching positions in western (American) universities, with the exception of three or four women. The feminist perspective of women from other groups might have been enlightening. Finally, though the volume's interest is specifically biblical scholarship by women, it might have been profitable to invite some male participants, if not for "feminist" writing, then for the dialogue which the book seems to advocate.

Schüssler-Fiorenza should be praised for her attention to problems of ethnicity, race, sociohistorical context, and class, all of which are (or should be) by nature "feminist" issues. Though the volume is still heavily weighted toward North American interests (many times in its response to them), this collection paves the way for further studies which share its concerns and insights.

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***Narrative in the Hebrew Bible.* By David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. ISBN 0-19-213244-X. Pp. x+263.**

The primary focus of this book is to provide a guide to interpretive strategies and possibilities in the study of Hebrew biblical narratives. Gunn and Fewell attempt to be both theoretical and practical, combining discussions of method with illustrations through numerous readings of specific texts. In chapter one, "Strategies for Reading," they explore the means by which literary criticism is related to other