

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.

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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

ways of reading the text, especially to historical criticism. A discussion of the varieties of interpretation of the Cain and Abel story in Genesis 4 intends to put into historical perspective historical-critical claims to truth, and to provide a backdrop against which Gunn and Fewell's approach to biblical narrative is more clearly defined. In subsequent chapters, the authors discuss characters and characterization, including the narrator and God, plot design, and the play of language through repetition, ambiguity, multivalence, metaphor and intertextuality. To highlight specific elements in their discussion of narrative, the authors provide extended readings of the stories of Abraham and Sarah, of Tamar and Judah, of David and his family, of the book of Jonah, and of the account of Nebuchadnezzar and the three men in the book of Daniel. A concluding chapter explores the ideological dimensions and the relationships between readers, texts and responsibility. It is here that particular attention is paid to Genesis 1–3.

Of special interest is chapter three, "Characters and Narrators." Here, the authors provide a unique discussion about readers and people. Gunn and Fewell ask what motivates the interest in modern readers about Genesis 38. The authors explore how the power of narrative lies in its ability to imitate life, to evoke a world that is like ours, to reproduce life-like events and situations, and to recreate people that we understand and to whom we relate. New to the study of narrative in recent years is Gunn and Fewell's concept of 'psychologizing insights' (cf. *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*, 1990). They argue that readers must not be dissuaded from imposing their own psychological insights onto the biblical text. By drawing upon solid literary scholarship (e.g., Seymour Chatman) for support, Gunn and Fewell encourage the reader to speculate about the behavior of biblical characters, just as "real" people speculate about other "real" people. They warn, however, that readers must recognize what inference and speculation are, and that the result of this strategy of reading should not be permitted to "masquerade as a final and definitive interpretation" (50). They believe that readers should use their understanding of human nature cautiously to enliven and envision the characters encountered in the biblical literature. The challenge is to be conscious of this speculation and, as a check, to relate it constantly to what other readers are likely to regard as explicit features of the text. From this theoretical discussion, the authors proceed by exploring the sources of information available from the text, that is, from what the narrator and the characters *say*. This chapter prompts several questions about the motivations of the narrator and the characters, encouraging more scholarly discussion about the role of the reader of biblical narrative.

This book is a delightful read with clear discussions and examples of the various aspects of reading narratives in the Hebrew Bible. As a textbook for undergraduates in a university setting, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* could be used as an important starting point for studying various literary features of narrative. A special quality of this book is its extensive bibliography, arranged by subject and biblical text, which is valuable for securing sources for further study.