

Introduction

Remembering the Past in Creating the Future

The first volume of my collected essays, *Transforming Vision*, reflected on the articulation of a critical feminist the*logy of liberation, whereas the second, *Changing Horizons*, brought together articles on a critical feminist biblical hermeneutics. This third volume explores the intersections between memory, history, rhetoric, and movement from the perspective of a critical feminist the*logy of liberation. While it overlaps in many ways with the previous volumes, it is at once an autobiographical and a systemic exploration of both the interface of memory as heritage and as scientific history as well as that of interpretation, movement, and sociopolitical location. The autobiographical, the rhetorical, the historical, and the hermeneutic come together in the practices of remembering the past in creating the future.

Action for change with respect to both the present and the future is inspired by the memory of past struggles against injustices and is sustained by social movements for change today. This vision and commitment to the past and future have decisively shaped the entirety of my present work. Whether in the 1970s women's liberation movement in society and religion or in the 2000s global movement for women's rights, feminist movements have had to wrestle with religious scriptures, norms, and cultural institutions that threaten the well-being of wo/men. The work of feminist the*logy¹ and studies in religion provides rich resources in these struggles, although these contributions are often overlooked by feminist cultural-political movements. Moreover, feminist studies in religion is still not accepted in many places as an important field of academic inquiry. Few institutional structures exist to preserve the memory and heritage of feminist movements in religion and their intellectual work. For this reason, I have collected these essays and interviews in the hope that they not only will be helpful for wo/men struggling within religious communities but also that they will contribute to the knowledge of future generations about

1. Since *theology* (from Greek *theos*) is masculine-defined and *thealogy* (Greek *thea*) also would reinscribe gender, although the Divine transcends gender, I write *the*logy* in this fashion to alert readers to this problem and language use.

feminist the*logy and studies in religion. In a small way, these essays and interviews seek to articulate a politics of memory for feminist studies in religion and the*logy.

Although I understand my approach as explicitly political and decolonizing in line with the tradition of liberation the*logy, I hesitate to label a critical feminist the*logy simply as “liberation the*logy,” “postcolonial the*logy,”² or “political the*logy.” This is because all three forms of progressive the*logy are articulated in terms of an androcentric framework and have not theorized the fact that, until quite recently, all wo/men³ without exception were excluded from the*logy and the academy and in many countries still are. The largest portion of the poor and disenfranchised were—and still are—wo/men and their children, who in the three forms of progressive the*logy named above are subsumed under “the poor” but not explicitly mentioned nor are their specific problems taken into account.

The religious and cultural exclusion of wo/men from public and academic awareness occurs first and foremost through language.⁴ Feminist theory and the*logy have again and again pointed out that androcentric⁵ or, better, kyriocentric⁶ language functions as language of domination because it

2. I do not understand my own work as postcolonial the*logy, because postcolonial theories frequently lack a critical feminist analysis. Rather, I understand it as a critical feminist the*logy, whose processes of consciousness-raising (or conscientization) have the effect of being decolonizing. See my book *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 111–29.

3. Postmodern feminist studies have problematized the essentializing function of the categories “woman/feminine.” Critical postcolonial and liberation studies have warned against abstracting a feminist-theoretical analysis of gender from its sociopolitical function, because in so doing they reinforce the cultural ideal of the “White Lady.” This problematizing of the basic categories of feminist analysis has led to a crisis in the self-understandings and practices of the feminist subject. I try to mark this crisis by writing “wo/men” in a fractured form, whenever woman/women is not understood in essentialist terms of feminine gender but in socio-political terms. This way of writing wo/men also seeks to reverse andro-kyriocentric language which subsumes “woman” under the generic “man, mankind”. This mode of writing attempts not only to problematize the category of “woman” but also to show that “wo/men” are not a homogenous social group but are fragmented through structures of race, class, ethnicity, religion, heterosexuality, colonialism, and age. I introduced this form of writing because I do not believe feminists can completely give up the social-collective term “wo/men” and replace it with the analytical category of “gender,” unless we wish to marginalize or obliterate the presence of wo/men in and through our own feminist discourses.

4. Hadumod Bussmann, “Haben Sprachen ein Geschlecht? Genus/Gender in der Sprachwissenschaft,” in *Genus: Geschlechterforschung/Gender Studies in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften. Ein Handbuch* (ed. Renate Hof and Hadumod Bussmann; Stuttgart: A Kröner, 2005), 483–518.

5. Androcentric literally means “male-centered” and refers to the privileging of the male over the female, in which the female is viewed as marginal and peripheral.

marginalizes or even makes invisible the presence of women in history, society, and church—making our historical actions invisible. Kyriocentric language excludes wo/men as acting subjects from public discourse and consciousness by subsuming wo/men under the supposedly “generic masculine” and by trivializing our adamant demand for recognition. It serves the interests of kyriarchy.⁷

This exclusion of wo/men from public, cultural, and religious consciousness does not take place through language alone, however. Because of their gender wo/men were not only excluded by law and custom from the*logy and academy for centuries but were also forbidden to speak with authority in the public spheres of church and society. I remind you of just a few Scripture texts, such as 1 Cor 14:34 (“Women should be silent in the churches”) and 1 Tim 2:11-12, which forbids a woman to teach and exercise authority over men, or the contemporary papal ban against arguing in public for wo/men’s ordination or insisting on an ethics of abortion.

A critical feminist the*logy of liberation is thus first of all a “dangerous memory” about the many wo/men who have acted and spoken in the power of the Spirit and continue to do so, yet whose actions in society, religion, and the*logy have often been—and still are—passed over with silence or responded to with persecution. One might recall here the bloody history of the witch-hunts or that of the Beguines, part of a religious renewal movement toward the end of the Middle Ages, who were accused and banned because they were living freely and according to their own wills and desires.

As long as this explicit exclusion of wo/men from the public sphere of the*logy, church, and academy is not examined critically and acknowledged publicly, academic the*logy and biblical studies, just as all other academic disciplines, will continue to be forced either to legitimate the marginalization and exclusion of wo/men with theoretical the*logical arguments or to ignore it with silence. Neither the new political the*logy nor liberation and postcolonial the*logies, which are also male dominated, have explicitly developed their theoretical approaches in view of the exclusion and exploitation of wo/men;

6. In order to complicate the men-over-women dualism of androcentrism, kyriocentrism refers to the centrality of the emperor, lord, master, father, in relation to whom all others are marginalized and subordinated.

7. I have introduced the analytical terms *kyriarchy/kyriocentrism*, which are derived from the Greek *kyrios* = emperor, lord, master, father, husband in order to specify that in Western societies the system of domination and exploitation is not just patriarchal but kyriarchal; that is, it is defined not just by gender but also by race, class, ethnicity, imperialism, and age.

nor have they made this marginalization and exclusion a central point of their analysis.

Thus, it is not surprising that in establishment scholarship the prejudice against feminist theory and the*logy lingers on in the form of accusations of “ideology” rather than rigorous scholarship. Feminist research, it has been claimed time and again, is ideological. It allegedly uses academic research methods solely to corroborate preconceived outcomes. From the perspective of feminist scholarship, on the other hand, such an accusation seeks, whether consciously or not, *to hide dominant scholarship’s own ideological beholdenness and its own marginalizing interests.*

In this collection of essays and interviews, the personal is intertwined with the professional, the dialogic with the analytic, the biographical with the structural and political. But whereas cultural auto/biography and auto/ethnography are focused on social-cultural memory, I want to bring into play religious/the*logical memory and I do so in the interest of wo/men’s movements for human rights around the globe. The essays convened in this volume in one way or another seek to explore in autobiographical and disciplinary ways the structures and Scriptures that dehumanize wo/men and those that inspire us to struggle for the well-being of all. Such a resort to auto/biography is absolutely necessary since, as these essays state again and again, my work and self-understanding as a scholar are decisively shaped by both the women’s liberation movements and by my experience of religion and Scripture not only as a source of oppression but also as a resource of vision and transformation. I have used the tools of the discipline and my academic position for working in the interest of wo/men’s well-being.

AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATIONS

The slash in auto/biography and auto/ethnography, according to Wolff-Michael Roth, is deliberate and seeks to communicate that the boundaries between the self and the other, the personal and political, the biographical and the historical are permeable, since culture shapes us and we shape culture.⁸ The slash also acknowledges that “research, writing, story and method connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political.”⁹ According

8. Wolff-Michael Roth, ed., *Auto/biography and Auto/ethnography: Praxis of Research Method* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2005).

9. Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* (Ethnographic Alternatives 13; Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira, 2004), xix.

to the feminist sociologist Liz Stanley, auto/biography has no common method and, unlike oral history, does not belong to one discipline. For her it is a “coming together” across various disciplines

around the epistemological issues involved in investigating, using and analyzing the complex interconnection between “then” and “now” in people’s accounts of their own lives and those of others. This indicates my concern with textual politics, with the structures and processes which engender power relations between writers/texts and readers/hearers of these. . . . Its common focus lies in the notion of auto-biography as an epistemologically oriented concern with the political ramifications of the shifting boundaries between self and other, past and present, writing and reading, fact and fiction. . . . The writer or author and the researcher are certainly not treated as transparent or “dead,” but very much as agents actively at work in textual political production.¹⁰

In the context of the scholarly debates on postmodernism, a wide-ranging feminist discussion emerged in the 1990s on “personal criticism.” Nancy Miller, for instance, questioned the postmodern tenet that the author is dead and the subject along with him.¹¹ Since the writer/author is always implicated in the work, there are many different ways of writing the subject, and any writing may be judged autobiographical in this sense.¹² Hence wo/men cannot subscribe to the theory that the author or subject is dead without questioning the agency and subjecthood of wo/men and relinquishing the feminist project. Because of this political imperative, wo/men cannot cease “to establish themselves as subjects if they are to escape being never-endingly determined as objects.”¹³

Hence, Miller argues that *personal criticism* evolved out of a particular nexus of insights:

10. Liz Stanley, “Sisters under the Skin? Oral Histories and Auto/Biographies,” *Oral History* 22, no. 2 (1994): 88–89.

11. Nancy Miller, *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

12. Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (2nd ed.; New Critical Idiom; New York: Routledge, 2011), 82–83.

13. Anderson, *Autobiography*, 85.

1. Feminist theorists questioned the “absent subject of theory that did not question its locatedness as a social subject.”
2. This dissatisfaction gave rise to identity politics which did not avoid the equally contentious claim to representativity of “speaking as” or “speaking for.”
3. This relation of the subject to theory has a particular gender [I would say kyriocentric] inflection. While (educated elite) men have stated their critical theoretical authority, feminists have developed a theory of the personal as political.
4. The point is not to offer the personal and theoretical as contradicting and mutually exclusive, but to theorize their implication.¹⁴

In light of this discussion on auto/biography as personal voice criticism, all the essays in this volume and not just the biographical interviews and statements can be understood as “personal voice criticism” since they all claim a feminist scholarly subject position in biblical and the*logical studies. They all seek to inscribe a personal, theoretically reflected voice into scholarship in religion. This feminist subject position eschews all essentialist definitions. When reading through the interviews again, I was struck by the fact that the interviewers never asked me a question about one significant mark of difference. While the interviews and autobiographical reflections speak about my social, class, gender, national, and religious location, they do not explore my social bodily distinctiveness.

I was born with a non-debilitating form of Streeter’s Dysplasia, which is medically described as clearly related to rupture of the amnion in utero and is now most commonly referred to as premature amnion rupture. The deformities arise from amniotic bands that wrap about protruding parts and from uterine packing because of the accompanying oligohydramnios sequence. The disease is not genetic and has not been related to teratogen exposure, that is, an agent, such as a virus, a drug, or radiation, that causes malformation of an embryo or fetus.¹⁵ While this accident of birth deeply complicated my self-image as a girl and young wo/man struggling with feminine cultural ideals, it also enabled me to resist essentializing norms of femininity.

Although Catholicism still advocates the essentialist feminine ideals of the “White Lady,” such as virginity and motherhood, it also provides a religious imaginary of calling that relativized or negated such feminine essentialism. This calling to work for justice and radical equality relegated cultural femininity to

14. Miller, *Getting Personal*, 5.

15. Derek Moore, “Streeter’s Dysplasia,” <http://www.orthobullets.com/hand/6082/streeters-dysplasia>.

second place, making clear that it was to be resisted if need be according to this call. This experience of a calling that transcended or, if necessary, negated the injunctions of cultural femininity enabled me to the*logically articulate and develop my work. This pre-feminist the*logy of calling over and against the ideal of femininity made it easy for me to become a feminist the*logian who did not feel compelled to the exodus out of Christian religion and the*logy.

Personal voice criticism arrived in the biblical academy in the late 1990s. In a path-breaking volume, Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger introduced personal voice criticism to the field of N*T studies, which takes seriously into account that interpretation is always shaped by the interpreter's interests and life story.¹⁶ As a method of interpretation, personal voice criticism makes conscious in the act of interpretation that no value-free interpretation is possible—a key insight of hermeneutics. According to Kitzberger,

Personal voice criticism makes explicit that *no text is an autonomous and self-sufficient entity*, but is always open, literarily and pragmatically. . . . And it is especially the fragmentary nature of texts, the gaps and open ends . . . that enable, whether conscious or not, the personal voice of the reader or interpreter to enter into the text in a unique way, or—in musical terms—to compose the “end” for “an unfinished literary symphony” (Croatto).¹⁷

Personal voice criticism not only places the professional interpreter and the common reader on the same level but also “intensifies the ethical dimension” of all interpretation. This, in my opinion, calls for a methodology of interpretation accessible to both the professional and the common reader such as I have developed it in the “dance of interpretation.”¹⁸ Moreover, not only the auto/biographical reflections but also the biblical interpretations and the*logical explorations of this volume inscribe a hermeneutic and rhetoric of experience and a systemic analysis of social location. While such auto/biographical memories can easily be reduced to the personal and individual in a privatizing fashion, they are theoretically productive in feminist terms.

16. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, *The Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

17. Kitzberger, *Personal Voice*, 6.

18. See my book *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001).

Historians are increasingly paying attention to how individual recollections fit cultural scripts or templates. Whether we are aware of it or not, our culture and religion provide us with an “inner script” by which we are supposed to live our lives. Feminist conscientization seeks to engender “click” or “a-ha” experiences that allow us to recognize and deactivate such gender scripts by giving us alternative cultural or religious options. However, oral historians often allow little space for the role of experience and the consciously reflective individual. Hence, “oral history is often converging with collective memory studies, within which individual memory is either subsumed under ‘collective memory’ or assigned to the realm of the passive unconscious.”¹⁹ Thus, it is important to reflect on how movements for change interrupt such cultural scripts of collective memory.

MEMORY AND MOVEMENT: HISTORY AS HERITAGE

My understanding of history has been shaped and inspired not by cultural memory studies but by wo/men’s movements for change. Such emerging movements for liberation have claimed the heritage of those who were written out of history or did not have a written history of their own. Judy Chicago’s artwork *The Dinner Party*, which was produced from 1974 to 1979 as a collaboration and was first exhibited in 1979, proclaimed “our heritage is our power.” Alex Haley’s *Roots*, which appeared in 1976 and was eventually published in thirty-seven languages, emphasized that African Americans have a long history and that not all of that history is necessarily lost, as many believed. It was in this context of recognizing “that history is written by the winners” and that the “vanquished of history” need to write their own history, that I began to conceptualize and work on *In Memory of Her* in the late 1970s.

Such an undertaking of writing wo/men’s history as feminist heritage raised many theoretical and methodological issues that feminist historians had begun to explore. I recall that in the mid-seventies when a publisher asked me to write a book on “women in the N*T” I answered that I was not interested because I had researched everything that was to be said about this topic in my first book *Der vergessene Partner*, which was on ministries of wo/men in the church. This attitude drastically changed in the context of developing feminist the*ologies and emerging feminist historical scholarship. By the end of the 1970s I was excited to explore how to write early Christian history not as “woman’s”

19. Anna Green, “Individual Remembering and Collective Memory: Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates,” *Oral History* 32, no. 2 (2004): 35-44, here 36.

history but as feminist history that Christian wo/men could own as their roots and heritage. But, I queried, were there still enough traces left in our texts that would allow us to “quilt” early Christian history in a feminist key? Could one do so in a methodologically responsible way?

Yet, when trying to pull all my research together into a coherent narrative in the early 1980s, I was stymied. I recall that one day, when I had worked late into the night, it occurred to me that I was blocked because I was not sure that anyone would read the book. My colleagues in the biblical field and religious studies would not do so, I feared, because it was about wo/men and feminist theory, while wo/men in the movement, my intended audience, would not touch it because it was full of footnotes, complicated terms and so-called male scholarship. Nevertheless, I decided, I had to finish the study as a serious scientific work and not water it down to the popular level of the “women in the Bible” genre, nor succumb to a so-called value-free scientific approach. I did not want to buy into the prejudice that wo/men were not interested in intellectual work nor support the bias that feminist work was not scholarly. There were enough popular books on women in the Bible on the market, but no scientific feminist history of early Christian beginnings existed.

The ongoing feminist arguments and emancipatory struggles for human equality and well-being provide the basic frame, analogy, or story that structures the book. Such feminist struggles connect the past with the present. Today’s global feminist struggles inspired by religious visions of equality and well-being continue these emancipatory struggles, albeit in different ways. Therefore, the practices of a critical feminist interpretation for liberation that are inscribed in *In Memory of Her* and all of my work can claim the diverse feminist struggles to overcome kyriarchal oppression structured by racism, class exploitation, heterosexism, and colonialist militarism as the sociopolitical-religious site from where to speak.

Since the book seeks to recover Bible, history, and the*logy as memory and heritage of the *ekklēsia gynaikōn* (the democratic assembly of wo/men), it seeks to retrieve early Christian beginnings not only as the memory of the kyriarchal suffering and victimization of wo/men. Rather, by privileging wo/men it seeks to tell this heritage as the memory of those wo/men who have shaped Christian beginnings as religious interlocutors, agents of change, as well as both victims and survivors in the struggles against death-dealing exploitation and domination. This theoretical frame of *In Memory of Her* is akin to liberation and political the*logy and is also inspired by the Jewish writer Walter Benjamin.²⁰ But whereas Johann Baptist Metz stresses the subversive and redemptive power of remembered suffering, *In Memory of Her* insists on

the struggles against dehumanizing domination. It seeks the empowerment of wo/men in and through a subversive rhetorical practice of reading biblical texts “against the grain.” In so doing, it is inspired by Walter Benjamin while at the same time insisting that remembrance must attend not only to the wreckage and suffering of wo/men²¹ in the course of history but also to their survival and resistance.

According to Benjamin, historicism is accountable for the fact that the victims of kyriarchy do not have a written history because the adherents of historicism always empathize with the victor. Hence, one cannot contemplate any cultural treasures “without horror.”

They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to the other. A historical materialist therefore disassociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.²²

The sparks generated by this brushing against the grain of positivist historical discourses enable us to recognize the labors and sufferings of the many nameless wo/men workers, servants, and slaves whose invisible labor has made the great works of culture possible but who are forgotten and erased from the historical record as makers of history. In comparing Benjamin and my approach in *In*

20. See the very perceptive analysis of Marsha Aileen Hewitt, “The Redemptive Power of Memory: Walter Benjamin and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza,” *JFSR* 10 (1994): 75–89, and her book *Critical Theory of Religion: A Feminist Analysis* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 147–70

21. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in his *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257: “A Klee painting named ‘Angelus Novus’ shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.”

22. Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 256.

Memory of Her, Marsha Hewitt observes that we share the conviction that the past is not yet finished and done with. It remains open to the present in ways that redeem both.²³ In short, in my feminist work I seek to brush biblical texts and scholarly discourses against the grain so that their inscribed struggles and visions can become remembrances in contemporary struggles for justice and well-being. Such “brushing against the grain” is possible in a rhetorical understanding of text and history.

MEMORY AND HISTORY

The boom in memory studies that emerged in the 1990s and transcends disciplinary boundaries, however, does not claim so much Walter Benjamin but Maurice Halbwachs as its intellectual “master.”²⁴ Halbwachs developed the concept of collective memory influenced by the sociology of Émile Durkheim. As Alan Confino points out, collective memory is often broadly defined as “the representation of the past and the making of it into shared cultural knowledge by successive generations in ‘vehicles of memory’, such as books, films, museums, commemorations and others.”²⁵

Although memory studies have been criticized for their gender blindness, they nevertheless seem to flourish.²⁶ They also have found reception in biblical studies. In 2005, a volume edited by Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher appeared that seeks to explore the uses of the past in early Christianity.²⁷ In the introduction, Kirk states that the volume aims to outline analytical approaches emerging in memory studies and to introduce the work of leading theorists in the tradition of Halbwachs.

It was interesting and at the same time puzzling for me to note that the names of Benjamin, Metz, and my own did not appear in the bibliography.

23. Hewitt, *Critical Theory of Religion*, 150–51.

24. See, for instance, Green, “Individual Remembering and Collective Memory,” 35–44.

25. Alan Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1386; Wulf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,” *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 179–97.

26. Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, “Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction,” *Signs* 28, no. 1 (2002): 1–19. Anna Reading challenges current thinking on memory by examining the complex ways in which the social inheritance of the Nazi Holocaust is gendered (*The Social Inheritance of the Holocaust: Gender, Culture and Memory* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002]). See also Anne Whitehead, *Memory* (New Critical Idiom; New York: Routledge, 2009).

27. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, eds., *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (Semeia Studies 52; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

That *In Memory of Her* was not mentioned was surprising, since the essay of Holly Hearon refers to the same Scripture texts that had given *In Memory of Her* its name.²⁸ I was also surprised to see that Jan Assmann's work features prominently in the volume. Since Assmann's first explorations appeared in the same year as *In Memory of Her*,²⁹ the absence of reference to my contemporaneous work was puzzling. Hence, it may be useful to compare Hearon's interpretation with my interpretation of the story in order to see how "social memory" analysis deals with the victims of history.

In a careful, painstaking analysis, Hearon examines "how the extant versions functioned as social memory. . . . This suggests an approach that focuses not on historical origins or 'original' versions but rather on stable and unstable elements in the shared memory."³⁰ A review of the texts indicates that the three Gospel versions of the story (in Mark and Matthew, in Luke, and in John) are stable, since they conform to the same narrative structure and general narrative setting: a meal in the home of a person who is named. There are, however, a fair number of differences which evoke the image of the anointing of Jesus "as establishing the identity of Jesus within the narrative." However, the narrative "is not yet stable in its christological focus. . . . This conclusion places the story within the context of competing responses to the question 'Who is Jesus?' and invites us to reflect on how the story goes beyond a 'simple act of recall' to become a reflection of 'identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms and social interaction.'"³¹

Although Hearon understands herself as a feminist, her social memory analysis does not allow her to read the text "against the grain" in order to be able to decenter Jesus and place the anointing wo/man in the center of attention. In short, memory studies need to be queried for the extent to which they allow us to bring into view those whom the kyriocentric text marginalizes or silences. This is especially important with respect to Scripture and its interpretations.

28. Holly Hearon, "The Story of 'the Woman Who Anointed Jesus' as Social Memory: A Methodological Proposal for the Study of Tradition as Memory," in Kirk and Thatcher, *Memory, Tradition, and Text*, 99–118.

29. Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, and Christof Hardmeier, eds., *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* (Mnchën: Fink, 1983), 265–84.

30. Hearon, "Story of 'the Woman Who Anointed Jesus,'" 106.

31. Hearon, "Story of 'the Woman Who Anointed Jesus,'" 117–18.

SCRIPTURE: SITE OF MEMORY, STRUGGLE, AND VISION

The prism through which we negotiate the past is not only memory but also commemoration and the fashioning of monuments. A *monument* is generally defined as an example of historical architecture or type of structure, either explicitly created to commemorate a person or significant event that has become important to a social group as a part of their remembrance of historic times or cultural heritage. The word comes from the Latin *monere*, which means “to remind” or “to warn.” The term is often used to describe any structure that is a significant and legally protected historic work. If it is understood as an unchanging congealed monument rather than as a site of remembrance and memory, then Scripture becomes an unchangeable monolith.

Scripture as a site of memory can be understood in hermeneutical terms as a reservoir of a multitude of often contradictory meanings that need to be interpreted and that mean differently in different social-religious cultural contexts. It is ancestral memory, evoking ever new meanings in different times and contexts. Scripture, however, can also function as monument in the liturgy, when the celebrant lifts it high, surrounds it with incense, and proclaims it as the word of G*d. Or, it can be understood in terms of unchanging monument when it is believed to be the unchangeable, fixed, inerrant word of God. In such a fundamentalist literalist understanding Scripture, it is no longer understood as nourishing bread for the community in struggle but as hard stone that cannot be changed by interpretation but must be obeyed whether it makes sense or causes harm.

My own hermeneutical work has sought to understand Scripture as nourishing bread in the struggles against kyriarchal dehumanization as well as a site of memory and struggle. As a *lieu de mémoire*, a place of memory, Scripture is “symbolic in context,” as Pierre Nora has argued,³² “because of the way it explains the nature and fundamental basis from which the collective identity” of religious community and culture arises. The *ekklēsia of wo/men* needs Scripture as such a *lieu de mémoire*.

However, as a site of memory Scripture is also a site of struggle over meaning and interpretation. Since religious wo/men’s identity is shaped not only by cultural values and memories but also by scriptural texts and interpretations, it is important to understand the sites of struggle—not only the diverse voices inscribed in Scripture but also the diverse interpretations of Scripture proclaimed in sermons, religious instruction, and publications, as well

32. Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* . 26 (1989): 7–24.

as the diverse cultural images and mandates internalized through education, religious celebrations, and personal readings. All these need to be brought to awareness and critically analyzed in the process of conscientization.

Finally, Scripture is also a site of vision and encouragement in the struggles against kyriarchal dehumanization and self-negation. Its images of justice and well-being, of calling and love, of hope and survival encourage us to see Scripture as the rich table of Divine Wisdom who invites all without exception to her table and to “walk in the ways of wisdom.” I hope that the essays in this volume will enable readers to approach Scripture as a site of memory and struggle but also to see it as an invitation to walk in wisdom/Wisdom’s ways and to join the global movements for wo/men’s rights and well-being on grounds of religion.