WOUNDING VISIONS: A DE-COLONIZING, RE-POLITICIZING APPROACH TO TRAUMA AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

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ABSTRACT

Wounding Visions: A De-colonizing, Re-politicizing
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From major tragedies - the execution of a savior, the destruction of the Temple - to the daily insidious violence and terror perpetuated by an exploitative empire, the texts of the New Testament negotiate, perpetuate, and resist trauma and its aftermaths. Presently, biblical interpretations of trauma remain overwhelmingly rooted in Euro-American definitions and understandings of trauma, neglecting the increasingly diversified field of trauma studies. This dissertation offers a critical intervention into current New Testament explorations of trauma by calling for the de-colonization and re-politicization of interpretations. It argues that an interdisciplinary, intersectional approach rooted in postcolonial trauma studies is needed to fully explore not only the ways that traumas shape the New Testament but also the traumatic legacies perpetuated by New Testament texts.

Three exegetical chapters highlight the adaptability of this approach in engaging the varied forms of trauma that intersect the New Testament. The multiple endings of the Gospel of Mark are read from four different perspectives demonstrating how individual and communal processing of trauma can produce varied, even conflicting interpretations of the same event. The next chapter reads the destruction of Babylon in Revelation 17-19 through the lens of chosen trauma. It explores John's violent fantasy as response to present and multigenerational traumas experienced by his community. The chapter challenges the way in which the violence against

Babylon is imaged as well as how the ideologies it produces continue to justify contemporary violence against female and queer bodies. In the third exegetical chapter, focus shifts to the ways in which New Testament texts can perpetuate trauma. Using collective trauma theory, the 1 Peter household code is examined as a textual monument to the wounding legacy of white supremacy and racism in the United States. The household code is utilized as a tool to challenge white Christians to explore systemic and intersectional aspects of white supremacy as well as to critically assess contemporary conceptualizations of perpetration and theological images of suffering. The dissertation closes with an excursus on the topic of witnessing exploring how Christians might engage the New Testament in their efforts to address and prevent trauma.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I am the mayfly metamorphosing on the surface of the river,
and I am the bird which, when spring comes, arrives in time
to eat the mayfly.

I am the frog swimming happily in the clear pond,
and I am also the grass-snake who, approaching in silence,
feeds itself on the frog.

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones,
my legs as thin as bamboo sticks,
and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate,
and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving.

I am a member of the politburo, with plenty of power in my hands,
and I am the man who has to pay his "debt of blood" to, my people,
dying slowly in a forced labor camp.

My joy is like spring, so warm it makes flowers bloom in all walks of life.
My pain is like a river of tears, so full it fills the four oceans.

Please call me by my true names,
so I can hear all my cries and laughs at once,
so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Thich Nhat Hanh[1]

Trauma connects. It joins victim to victor, pain to joy, and present to past and future. Arising in concrete contexts and cultures, it nevertheless transcends time and space to connect individuals, communities, and generations. It joins together peoples whether through violence, solidarity, fear, anger, victory, or the promise to never forget. Trauma not only connects people and communities to one another, it intimately weaves them (even if only through resistance) into larger political systems and power structures. For trauma is inherently political with regards to how race, ethnicity, socio-economic

[1] Thich Nhat Hanh, "Please Call Me by My True Names," in *Call Me by My True Names: The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1999), 72.

status, gender, and sexuality affects community members' vulnerability to trauma, ability to traumatize, and access to resources for healing and restoration.

While politically- and socially-based inequalities shape experiences of trauma, trauma does not discriminate by deeming only some victims and others perpetrators. Instead, everyone possesses varying levels of potential to inflict trauma or be traumatized. Often both potentials reside within the same person or community. Many seek to deny this reality by definitively assigning individuals and communities the label of victim or perpetrator and developing accounts of history that shore up these polarizing dichotomies. They further solidify these divisions by imaging trauma as that which violently splits psyches, communities, and histories. But in truth, trauma refuses such containment, existing instead within the depths of our messy, power-laden interconnectedness.

Thich Nhat Hahn's "Please Call Me by My True Names" calls us to confront the unsettling connections between the potentiality to traumatize and realities of experiencing trauma. He asks us to expand our vision to see the fragility of the barriers that we construct in our desire to separate rapist from raped, predator from prey, exploiter from exploited. This is not meant to meld everyone together and remove accountability from where it is due. Rather Hahn's words preserve the specificity of violence and trauma, while troubling the barriers that many erect to deny the (in)direct power we all possess to wound others as well as our vulnerabilities to experience woundings. In doing so, it asks us to see the social nature of trauma and the entanglements it creates that transcend temporal and theoretical boundaries.

In the following dissertation, I explore how trauma forges complicated layers of connection within and in relation to the New Testament. I ask how traumas have affected the composition of certain New Testament texts, examining the ways in which political structures, desires for power, embodied realities, and internal community dynamics shaped the texts' responses to and depictions of trauma. In doing so, I acknowledge not only the traumas, real or perceived, that are depicted within or behind the texts, but also the traumas and trauma perspectives left out of the scripture's witness. From within these interconnected layers of textual trauma representations, I ask how these New Testament texts connect to the broader *ekklēsia* throughout history and the traumas it has endured and perpetuated. I seek to examine how contemporary experiences of trauma entangle with the New Testament and its representations of the sacred in the midst of the traumatic, the aim of which is to develop decidedly political trauma readings that take seriously the embodied realities and ethical implications of such interpretations of the New Testament.

This exploration builds upon and departs from current treatments of trauma studies of the New Testament (which I survey in Chapter 2). While still an emerging field of biblical criticism, New Testament trauma studies is developing a propensity for engaging Euro-American[2] theories and conceptualizations of trauma. This project builds upon and challenges some of the trends emerging within these frameworks. In doing so, it offers ways in which the field's engagement with trauma can be redirected and/or

[2] Throughout this project, I will be utilizing the term "Euro-American" to represent those individuals with European origins presently residing in Europe and North America, in place of the term "Western" which is used by many of the scholars engaged. I do so because the term "Western" can universalize the identity of those living in Europe and North America, erasing the traumas experienced by indigenous peoples, particularly the U.S. genocide of indigenous peoples, as well as the wound(ing)s experienced by other marginalized minorities in Europe and North America, not least those of African Americans.

expanded to better reflect the multifaceted, dynamic experiences of trauma found within the New Testament and today's world. This work is guided by two overarching principles – to de-colonize and re-politicize approaches to trauma and the New Testament.

De-colonizing Trauma Interpretations

The act of de-colonizing New Testament trauma readings is inspired by postcolonial criticism, particularly postcolonial biblical criticism. Edward Said explains that postcolonial criticism carries the social goal of engendering "non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom."[3] For biblical studies, the production of this non-coercive knowledge involves close examination of the colonial and imperial histories and power structures surrounding the formation and sustained engagement with the texts. Kwok Pui-Lan explains that postcolonial perspectives have created means to "scrutinize the colonial entanglements of the texts, highlighting the impact of empire and colonization in shaping the collective memory of the Jewish people, the literary production and redaction of the biblical texts, and the process of the formation of the cannon."[4] They also make "visible the ways modern readings of texts collude with colonial interests of the West."[5] Biblical postcolonial and empire-critical scholars have drawn upon the insights of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak along with others such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Albert Memmi. In doing so, a rich array of scholarship has emerged exploring how imperialism and colonialism shaped and continue to shape texts.[6] This scholarship has heightened attention to how issues of

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[3] Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 29.
[4] Kwok Pui-Lan, "Making the Connections: Postcolonial Studies and Feminist Biblical Interpretation" in *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology,* Kwok Pui-Lan (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2005), 78-79.
[5] Ibid., 79.
[6] This introduction cannot provide a full history of postcolonial biblical scholarship and its intersections with postcolonial scholarship more broadly. For such overviews and engagements, see works such as R.S.

ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry have affected individuals and communities on political, spiritual, social, and economic levels. It also drew attention to the experiences of previously un-/underexplored groups such as societal subalterns and those in contacts zones within ancient and contemporary societies.

Postcolonial biblical criticism is a critical "optic" for this project because of its fundamental aims within biblical studies.[7] As Fernando Segovia outlines, postcolonial biblical criticism is "self-conscious of itself as a construct" while calling for "self-consciousness on the part of its would-be practitioners" to see themselves as located, embodied readers. It acknowledges the "interconnected and interdependent dimensions of criticism" that span ancient and contemporary contexts with a commitment at its core to engage issues of colonialism and imperialism on ideological and political levels within texts.[8] Such commitments welcome and draw upon a wide array of interpretational methodologies that intimately intersect with concerns of power, race, gender, class, etc. As such they open spaces to engage the topic of trauma in the New Testament in concrete and critical ways.

The intersection of postcolonial theory and trauma studies has not yet gained significant sustained attention from New Testament scholars. Biblical scholars reading through the lens of trauma studies have relied primarily on Euro-American trauma theorists, while scholars working in postcolonial biblical criticism have inherently engaged issues of trauma but have not done so through a critical engagement with trauma

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Sugirtharajah, ed. *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, eds. *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007); and Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000).

[7] Fernando F. Segovia, "Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic" in *The Postcolonial Bible,* ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 63-64.

[8] Ibid., 64.

theory. Thus, the act of de-colonizing New Testament trauma interpretations displays how insights arising from postcolonial trauma studies can engage and enhance readings of biblical texts saturated with the traumas emerging from life under imperialism and colonialism.

De-colonizing interpretations involves a process of reorienting and expanding New Testament studies' present engagement with trauma studies to more fully engage the political, interconnected, and contextualized aspects of traumas. It challenges dominant conceptualizations of trauma that have arisen within Euro-American trauma studies and the favoring of these conceptualization within New Testament trauma readings. In particular, the act of de-colonizing challenges definitions arising from psychoanalytic literary theory that tend to narrowly define trauma in terms of event-based, individual experiences such those arising from natural disasters, sexual assault, or accidents.[9] These experiences also produce a certain conceptualization of trauma and its effects on victims. This conceptualization is typified by the work of Cathy Caruth who building on Freud, envisions trauma "as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind."[10] Trauma results in a "breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world."[11] As such, trauma lies not so much as the event itself, but in the ways in which the victim experiences the event "too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" resulting in the inability to process or assimilate it into conscious thought.[12] Uncontrollable repetitions of the event couple with gaps in memory renders the victim powerless and passive. By

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[9] Stef Craps, whose work will be explored in detail in the following chapter, provides a comprehensive postcolonial critique to Euro-American perspectives on trauma in *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1-43.
[10] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.
[11] Ibid., 4.
[12] Ibid.

constructing this image of trauma and its victims, scholars become limited in both the scope of their analysis of trauma and the textual instances of trauma that they deem worthy of analysis. As such, a trauma canon begins to emerge in biblical studies that contains only those texts that fit within Euro-American constructions and definitions of trauma.[13]

Such definitions, while capturing certain traumatic encounters, overlook other major forms of trauma and their aftermaths. To provide a corrective, this project insists on reorient conceptualizations of trauma to look beyond the experience of an individual to better engage the relational and structural aspects of trauma. With regards to individual experiences of trauma, this involves engaging not only the experience of victims, but also their relationship to perpetrators, bystanders, cultural systems, and political structures. This shifts the focus from solely examining victims' responses to trauma to seeing how such responses are conditioned by and arise from within their surroundings and social location.

Expansion also requires giving greater attention to collective traumas. While still frequently rooted in analyzing event-based phenomena, such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks, collective traumas call greater attention to how systems understand, respond to, and represent trauma. Collective trauma focuses neither on "individual suffering nor actual events."[14] Rather it is concerned with the "symbolic representations" of trauma and cultural processes that are used to shape collective representations of

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[13] For example, there was an early focus on the prophets, particularly Ezekiel, examining their psychological responses to trauma with some even deducing that such characters were experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). David Garber's "Traumatizing Ezekiel: Psychoanalytic Approaches to the Biblical Prophet" provides a productive overview of this phenomena (*Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read Scripture,* ed. J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins [Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004], 215-35). I review previous approaches to trauma within biblical studies more fully in Chapter 2.

[14] Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 4.

trauma and the subsequent ideologies emerging from them.[15] Collective trauma theory, while lacking critical attention to the diverse lived realities within the collective, nevertheless brings much need attention to the ways in which power defines, validates, and/or erases experiences of trauma on systemic levels.

Examinations of trauma must also expand beyond event-based traumas to include other forms of trauma. Particularly important to this work is what Maria Root identified as *insidious trauma*.[16] Insidious traumas arise from the effects of colonialism, racism, economic domination, and displacement, as well as from the offshoots of conflict. It most often affects minoritized groups within society. Traumatization arises from "cumulative micro-aggressions: each of which is too small to be a traumatic stressor, but together they can build to create an intense traumatic impact."[17] Such experiences of trauma and oppression also interact with multigenerational traumas that are passed down by communities. These forms of trauma are regularly overlooked. Thus, the act of de-colonizing trauma readings requires that all of these forms are afforded attention and analysis. This allows lived realities and the powers that influence them to dialogue in the face of trauma. It acknowledges the systemic and embodied aspects of trauma. In doing so, it opens space to consider the multiplicity of responses that arise depending on individuals' and communities' social location. Finally, it brings attention to the complex reality of compounding traumas in which an individual and/or community "may experience simultaneously multiple traumas, and that these are not necessarily equally

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[15] Ibid., 2.
[16] Maria P. Root, "Reconstructing the Impact of Trauma on Personality," in *Personality and Psychopathology: Feminist Reappraisals,* ed. Laura S. Brown and Mary B. Ballou (New York: Guilford Press, 1992), 229-265. Root also provides foundational work on vicarious trauma in this piece.
[17] Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing*, 26.

weighted."[18] As such, experiences of trauma are not imaged in isolation but rather as relational, dynamic, and interconnected.

The de-colonization of New Testament trauma interpretations also requires that we dispel myths around what are considered acceptable responses to trauma. Euro-American psychoanalytic trauma theory images the victims of trauma primarily through their grappling with the inaccessibility and repetitious nature of trauma.[19] Such attention to the mental processes often decontextualizes the individual's experience of trauma, focusing instead on identifying, diagnosing, and treating the internal distress of the victims. This leads to neglecting or only displaying a surface level concern for how broader political and social systems shape trauma responses. The individualized, internalized nature of this approach reifies not only Euro-American understandings of trauma but the acceptable ways to treat or attend to trauma. Traditionally, Euro-American approaches to addressing trauma rely on the "talking cure" in which victims share their (partial) memories as a means of mastering them coupled with all pervasive practices of medicating symptoms. While beneficial for some, such approaches have proven ineffective and dangerous in numerous non-Euro-American contexts.[20] These approaches to victims also negate the possibility that victims may have full, assessable knowledge of the trauma they experienced and/or may have active responses to their traumatic experiences. Such responses may include not only disjointed narratives and repetition of memories, but the ability to fully narrate experiences of trauma and actively deploy a

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[18] Abigail Ward, "Introduction" in *Postcolonial Traumas: Memory, Narrative, Resistance,* ed. Abigail Ward (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.
[19] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience,* 4-8.
[20] See for example, Ethan Watters' overview of the harmful effects of Euro-American approaches particularly with regards to PTSD in Sri Lanka following the 2004 tsunami (*Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche* [New York: Free, 2010], 65-126).

range of responses including protest and violence. De-colonizing New Testament interpretations requires that a diverse, at times conflicting, range of responses are considered when interpreting trauma responses within texts, as well as in the contemporary responses to trauma read alongside the texts. It also requires consideration of trauma responses that are not captured or purposely erased by the texts. In doing so, richer interpretations arise that allow for a broader range of trauma responses to speak.

The act of de-colonizing trauma interpretations is multifaceted. At the heart of the process is a commitment to examining how sociopolitical power structures and contexts shape trauma. De-colonizing interpretations requires that an ever-expanding number of voices add their perspectives on and experiences of trauma to interpretational models so that Euro-American understandings become one among many. In doing so, it opens space for engagement with a broader range of ancient and contemporary traumas and the responses they engender.

Re-politicizing Trauma Interpretations

My call for politicized New Testament trauma interpretations is rooted in the conviction that issues of trauma cannot be divorced from their sociopolitical contexts nor from the politics of representation that surround legacies of traumas. The call to re-politicize New Testament interpretations comes in response to current tendencies within the field that lean into the theoretical and/or spiritual aspects of trauma without fully attending to the concrete ethical and political impacts of trauma on ancient and contemporary societies. These tendencies manifest in multiple ways ranging from universalizing experiences of trauma such that any life-altering experience, whether positive or negative, might be deemed traumatic to de-contextualizing and overly-

spiritualizing experiences of trauma within texts and contemporary contexts. While on theoretical levels, such moves may seem innovative or an intriguing mental exercise, they are undergirded by academic privilege that has the potential to (inadvertently) negate and trivialize the realities of trauma experienced by those within and behind the texts as well as in today's world.

Re-politicizing trauma asks that we take seriously the implications that biblical interpretations have on people's lives. This is not to overinflate the importance of biblical interpretation, but rather to take seriously the roles that the New Testament and its interpretations play in perpetuating, justifying, and responding to trauma. Thus, it asks that we engage trauma in particularized, concrete, and political ways. It takes seriously that trauma cannot be engaged in isolation, but rather that we need to explore "the way we are implicated in each other's traumas."[21] But it does so while acknowledging that unless our interpretations are grounded in particularity, they run the risk of universalizing trauma. Some biblical scholars may reject that all trauma interpretations need to be inherently political. However, I hold that such a view not only originates from a position of relative privilege in believing that we can divorce power and politics from interpretations, but also negates the inherently political nature of trauma. In addition, I believe we neglect a critical opportunity, as well as an ethical responsibility, to the living text of the bible if we relegate engagement with the political to only certain forms of interpretation or engagement with the texts.

To re-politicize understandings of trauma, this project employs a linguistic turn. Trauma (τραῦμα) derives from the Greek word τιτρώσκω which means "to wound."

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[21] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience,* 24.

Keeping the action of wounding and the image of the wound alive in one's discourse on trauma, as I do throughout this dissertation, allows trauma to be imaged as active, dynamic, and relational. Some wound. Some are wounded. Some experience both the ability to wound and the vulnerability of being wounded. Wounds are not limited to the mind as Freud and Caruth imaged them. Instead, these wounds manifest in various ways internally and externally on individual and collective bodies. Some wounds leave scars that have consequences for generations. Other wounds refuse to heal creating endless cycles of closing, festering, and reopening, while still other wounds are constantly re-wounded and violently reopened. These wounds and the experiences they create do not occur in isolation. Rather they connect, unify, and/or separate bodies. Bodies can contain multiple wounds that connect them in different ways to others. Bodies can experience wounding while in the process of wounding others. Even when acts of wounding violently or gradually tear the social fabric, unraveling interconnected networks, the experience itself causes connections. Similarly, and troublingly for many, the act of wounding causes connections, even if only through revulsion, fear, or pain, between victim(s) and perpetrator(s)/perpetrating systems. For both wounds and bodies are sticky surfaces.[22] Within wounds are centripetal and centrifugal forces that bring bodies into contact and, at times, simultaneously rip them apart.[23] But nevertheless, residues and remembrances remain.

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[22] I draw this notion from the illuminating affective work of Sara Ahmed who explores the sticky and sliding relationship of emotion, signs, and objects. Though the present work does not allow space to fully engage the possibilities of affect theory in relation to wound(ing)s, it is indebted to Ahmed's exploration of "how emotions can move through the movement or circulation of objects." Particularly, the ways that such "objects become sticky, or saturated with affect" and serve as "sites of personal and social tension" (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* [2nd ed.; New York: Routledge, 2015], 11). There are clear points of contact between the surfaces of bodies, texts, and other objects connected through wound(ing)s.

[23] Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community" in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 186.

Reactions to wounds vary depending on the social location of the wounded and wounder(s). Some wounds receive holistic, urgent attention with swift actions implemented to prevent further woundings, while others are met with repulsion, erasure, or indifference. Similarly, some wounders are held accountable for their actions while others are allowed to continuing wounding, with their actions justified, if not glorified. Power, perceptions, politics, and ideologies shape these responses and are integral to examining any wounding experience.

Imaged in this way, trauma is interconnected and dynamic. I believe that the concept of the wound and the act of wounding helps to bring to life these connections as well as disrupting the general apathy and sensationalism that has formed around the term trauma. Thus, for the remainder of this dissertation "wound(ing)" will regularly replace the word "trauma," the "dead" metaphor etymologically underlying the term "trauma" being strategically reactivated.[24] Wound(ing) encapsulates within it several dynamics and meanings. It contains the "wound," the specific trauma, whether time-bound or insidious, and its aftermath(s). The wound carries life-altering effects for its victim(s). This is experienced by both individuals and collectives in varying relations to one another. Wound(ing) also contains the act of wounding, of perpetration. It highlights the structures and persons who wield the power not only to wound but to represent, erase, or alter the legacy of woundings.

The term "wound(ing)" refuses to let either the wound or the act of wounding to stand in isolation. Instead, it asks readers to see the dynamism of the term. Every

[24] There are, however, certain instances throughout this dissertation in which the word "trauma" will be utilized such as in the technical terminology associated with theoretical frameworks (e.g. cultural trauma theory, trauma theorists, etc.) as well as certain derivatives of trauma that do not easily translate into the wound(ing) framework, such as the word "traumatic."

wound(ing) connects perpetrators, victims, bystanders, perpetrating systems, and traumas of past, present, and future. This does not erase the specificity of individual or collective experiences but rather refuses to read aspects of trauma in isolation from the interpersonal, collective, historical, and systemic forces at play within them. Finally, "wound(ing)s" breaks down the boundaries erected between perpetrator and victim. It shows how individuals and communities can embody both roles, carrying the wounds of trauma while inflicting wounds on others. The use of "wound(ing)" at times renders readings messy, awkward, and/or unclear. I ask that you lean into its disruptiveness and recognize that it allows space to pause with, perhaps be frustrated by, and reflect on the complexities of trauma.

Beyond employing this linguistic change, re-politicizing interpretations of wound(ing)s requires greater attention to the multiplicity of ways in which wound(ing)s are represented. The messy interconnectedness of wound(ing)s is captured and receives voice through a multitude of media. Oral traditions, literary works, artistic expressions, and political movements all find ways to name and memorialize wound(ing)s as do deafening silences, immobilizing shame, and the violent erasures perpetrated by those in power. But wound(ing)s elude full containment in one medium. Instead, they demand a multiplicity of accounts that morph and develop over time and are dependent on positionality. Thus, even though biblical interpretations are inherently based on textual accounts, engagement with other disciplines such as archeology, art, and sociology that help capture the lived, material realities of the texts in ancient and contemporary contexts are important for readings of wound(ing)s.

Re-politicizing engagements with these accounts demands particular attention to the political, cultural, and historical contexts out of which these retellings arise as well as the social location of the creator, victim/survivors, and perpetrators.[25] It requires an examination of the ways in which a dominant culture "codifies" and commodifies the traumatic so that it is "a tool in the hands of those who shape public perception and national myth."[26] Similarly, it necessitates attention to the ways in which traumatic representations emerge to counter and challenge dominant myth making as well as the ways the two processes are connected.

Interpreting the New Testament's Witness to Wound(ing)s

With this framing, the New Testament is engaged as a witness to wound(ing)s. Trauma saturates New Testament texts. From major wound(ing)s - the execution of a savior, the destruction of the Temple - to the daily insidious violence and terror perpetuated by an exploitative empire, the texts of the New Testament negotiate, perpetuate, and resist wound(ing)s and their aftermaths. These texts also connect to a legacy of theologies and ideologies that have contributed to the perpetuation and justification as well as liberation and healing of wound(ing)s. The following interpretations enter into this interconnectivity, glimpsing one possible way to engage the wound(ing)s present.

The method for accomplishing this is guided by the principles of de-colonizing and re-politicizing outlined briefly above. To further concretize these aims, five guiding areas of interpretational concern (theory, relationality, context, voice, and witness) are

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[25] Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17-19.
[26] Ibid., 18-19

outlined in the next chapter. These areas of concern allow for a fluid methodology that enables certain concerns to gain more extensive attention than others depending on what the text and its dialogue partners require. Each of the three exegetical passages were selected because they allow me to highlight a different aspect of the New Testament's relationship to wound(ing)s.

At times the exegetical chapters examine the wound(ing)s within and behind these sacred texts, while at other times they concentrate more fully on the ways in which the texts have perpetuated woundings throughout history and into the present day. Overall, the chapters acknowledge that the expressions of and engagements with the traumatic are partial at best, lacking a full range of perspectives. Thus, the chapters seek to honor that these sacred texts are living. Within each text are bodies and communities, ancient and contemporary, with lived experiences that connect to, reject, and entangle with the texts as we have them. The need to dialogue with contemporary contexts, communities, and histories arises from the commitment to re-politicize interpretations of wound(ing)s. The sacredness of the New Testament and the power it wields requires that its current interconnectivity with wound(ing)s are examined. I accomplish this not only through literature and other textual accounts of wound(ing)s, but also through visual and performance art. This multiplicity of media allows different aspects and expressions of wound(ing) to emerge.

Three final caveats are necessary regarding the methodology I have created and employ in this dissertation. First, I do not label the entire New Testament as a trauma text. There are elements of wound(ing) expressed in and influencing many parts of the New Testament, but I do not hold that the New Testament's authors wrote the texts solely

to convey narratives and experiences of wound(ing)s. Similarly, the contemporary visual and performative art that I place in dialogue with the New Testament passages are not specifically trauma art. Instead, they also capture the ways in which wound(ing)s influence artistic expressions as one element that shapes lived realities in relation to the particularized experiences of colonialism, racism, homophobia, patriarchy, socioeconomic domination, etc.

My second caveat is that the exegetical interpretations in the following chapters are very intentionally meant to serve as one possible interpretation of these texts among many. For me, interpretations of wound(ing)s are inherently open-ended and dialogical. I believe as a field, we need to more fully create and embrace opportunities to have dialogical approaches to texts. This is especially the case for texts addressing wound(ing)s. For one interpretation can never fully capture the experiences of wound(ing)s found within and connected to a text. This is particularly true because wound(ing)s defy temporal boundaries and require new interpretations as they intersect with present and future realities. Thus, I believe that interpretations should not only dialogue but also conflict and contradict. This encourages readings from different social locations, temporalities, and perspectives that highlight the multifaceted relationality of wound(ing)s.

My final caveat is that though my efforts to de-colonize and re-politicize trauma readings are inspired by and taking its directives from postcolonial criticism, the readings in this dissertation do not purport to be postcolonial trauma readings of the New Testament. This is due to my awareness of my own social location. As I am a white woman of Germanic and English decent living in the United States, I have limited

understandings, perspectives, and experiences of colonialism and the oppressive ideologies and destructive legacies it creates. Therefore, while committed to the work and the subject, I acknowledge my boundaries, given my social location, enculturation via white supremacy, etc. As such, the contemporary experiences and expressions of wound(ing) I dialogue with are not drawn from my own experience. Instead, my connection to them arises from my experiences working on issues of wound(ing) and violence within communities in New York City as well as my academic pursuits. I aim not to appropriate these experiences or claim them to speak for them and I welcome those who will show my missteps in this process as part of the larger dialogue. Alongside my limitations, I also acknowledge that my experiences as an anti-racist, queer, white feminist provide unique perspectives, biases, and insights. My experiences of homophobia, sexism, and the racism of white feminism shape my perspective, as do the wound(ing)s I have inflicted because of my white privilege, cisgenderism, economic status, ableism, and other factors of which I am not fully cognizant. Thus, all aspects of my identity influence my interpretations of the texts and the aspects of wound(ing)s I engage on conscious and unconscious levels. From within my locatedness, the communities that have influenced me, and the methodology I have developed, the dissertation unfolds.

Chapter 2 lays the theoretical foundations for the exegetical chapters that follow. It begins by providing an overview of two major Euro-American veins of trauma theory employed within biblical studies: psychoanalytic literary criticism and collective trauma theory. This is followed with a brief exploration of the history of engagement with trauma studies within biblical studies and the trends developing within New Testament

studies more specifically. In final section of the chapter I outline my critiques of the current theoretical trends drawing from the work of postcolonial trauma theorists. I then offer suggestions for reorienting and expanding interpretational approaches to wound(ing) and the New Testament, the aim of which is to foster intersectional and interdisciplinary interpretations.

The next three exegetical chapters display how such an interpretational approach is applied to New Testament texts. Each of the chapters illuminates different ways to diversify and expand engagements with wound(ing)s in the New Testament. Chapter 3 examines the multiple endings of the Gospel of Mark as a site of narrating and processing wound(ing)s. This gospel is emerging as a favorite site to explore wound(ing)s given the traumatic circumstances it emerged from. I read the endings as communal processing of the wound(ing)s of Jesus' execution as well as multiple layers of conquest-based, ideological, and religious wound(ing)s experienced under the oppression of Roman imperialism. The chapter seeks to display how textual representations of wound(ing)s can be read in multiple, contradictory ways depending on one's perspective and social location. It seeks to provide an example of how to de-center, but not erase, Euro-American approaches. I offer two ways to read the original ending of Mark 16:8 focused on the author of Mark. The first utilizes a more traditional, Euro-American psychological approach to understanding how wound(ing)s effected the gospel's author. The second reading assumes a survival-based perspective that is based in womanist theology, reading the abrupt, non-triumphal ending as rooted in concepts of survival rather than liberation. Then the chapter provides two further interpretations focusing on the longer ending of Mark (16:9-20). These interpretations approach the longer ending from two different

positionalities – reading it first as a depiction of communal resistance and resurrection "from below" and then as an oppressive effort to solidify group identity and community power structures "from above." Chapter 3 dialogues with performances of Reggie Harris's modern dance piece, *Exodus,* as well as contemporary wound(ing)s surrounding the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

Chapter 4 focuses on the violence committed against the woman Babylon in Revelation 17-19. Using Vamik Volkan's notion of chosen trauma, the chapter explores how John's violent fantasy of the divinely justified destruction of Babylon can be read as a response to the multigenerational and present wound(ing)s of John and the *ekklēsia*. This reorients engagement with the text from the traditional debate between liberationists and feminists of whether Babylon is a woman or the imperial city of Rome, or some combination of the two. Instead, Babylon is imaged as holding the precarious position of being a wounded wounder. She is a "bad" victim, who garners little sympathy due to the wound(ing)s she has perpetrated. Nevertheless, her violent demise cannot go unexamined or unchallenged. Wrestling with Babylon's complicated positionality raises questions about the relationships and entanglements of victim and perpetrator that are rarely addressed within trauma theory. Read alongside the artwork of Kara Walker, the chapter also asks how communities come to justify or decry violence against certain bodies. This chapter names and critiques how John images his quest for liberation through the violent murder of the queer woman, Babylon. It highlights and challenges the ways in which the ideologies stemming from John's fantasy continue to justify contemporary violence

against female and queer bodies, as well as certain individuals and groups within the broader collective body.

Chapter 5 examines the legacy of racially-based wound(ing)s emerging from the United States' history of slavery through the lens of the household code in 1 Peter 2:18-3:7. The chapter recognizes the ways in which the text was utilized to justify slavery as well as to perpetuate ideologies of white supremacy and privilege into the present day. Rather than delineating and critiquing the ways in which the household code has served as a text that perpetuate wound(ing)s, the chapter's treatment focuses mainly on how the text can function within broader questions about racism and white supremacy in the United States today. Employing cultural trauma theory's concern for the ways in which representations of wound(ing)s are created, dispersed, and recreated by each generation, the chapter seeks to examine how the 1 Peter household code could be represented for the present generation. Specifically, it is interested in how the text, which many have relegated to the margins of Christianity, might be employed as a tool for white Christianity to better examine and confront racism and white supremacy in the public square. The household code is read alongside the debates about confederate monuments in public areas raging across the United States at present as well as the artwork of Titus Kaphar to explore issues of representation of racial wound(ing)s. Such a reading produces four main areas for consideration around representing and addressing racial wound(ing)s: the systemic underpinnings of wound(ing)s, the intersectional nature of wound(ing)s, the representation of perpetrators, and understandings of suffering. This chapter is written from within the experience of and explicitly directed towards progressive, white Christianity in the United States. It seeks to highlight the need for

reflection by white Christianity on its roles in perpetuating racism, whether through benefiting from white privilege, overt and covert racism, or general apathy. The aim is to image how white Christians might re-represent the 1 Peter household codes for the present day as a reminder, tool, and commitment to address, and hopefully prevent, racial wound(ing)s.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, focuses on the act of witnessing. It gestures to the roles that the field of biblical studies and Christian faith communities might play in addressing wound(ing)s within the New Testament and contemporary society. It calls for increasingly diversified responses to wound(ing)s that acknowledge the complex positionalities of those affected. Within biblical scholarship this requires further attention to acts of de-colonization and re-politicization regarding interpretations of wound(ing)s in the New Testament. For faith communities, engagement requires increased acknowledgment of the legacies of wound(ing) perpetuated by biblical texts and the theologies that emerge from them. It also calls communities of faith to reflect on an ethical level about the ways in which they utilize biblical texts in the face of wound(ing)s so that they might move beyond empathizing to action. All of these engagements seek to promote justice and a form of witnessing that responds to and disrupts cycles of wound(ing).

Wound(ing)s necessitate ongoing engagement and attention. This project signals but one attempt to address wound(ing)s in the New Testament. It inadvertently has its own gaps, erasures, and missteps as well as insights and points of connection. The following seeks to invite an ever-evolving dialogue with other scholarly treatments of and lived engagements with New Testament wound(ing)s. Through this process, we might

see that despite our varied experiences with wound(ing)s, wound(ing)s connect and interconnect us in destructive and life-giving ways. Wound(ing)s invite us to explore a reality in which we embrace and are challenged by the knowledge that our collective cries and laughs, joys and pains are indeed one.

CHAPTER TWO

Theorizing Wound(ing)s

Wound(ing)s are social. Sara Ahmed states that "the experience of pain may be solitary; it is never private"; similarly while wound(ing)s may affect the individual or specific demographic, they are never divorced from the broader collective.[1] Instead, acts of wounding and their oft long festering wounds manifest upon, within, and between individuals, cultures, and generations. Wound(ing)s are sticky and slick creating friction and slippages that simultaneously cause disruptions and reinforcements of temporality, ethical frameworks, and social structuring. Wound(ing)s are a site of public curiosity and spectacle. This can evolve into what Mark Seltzer calls "wound culture: the public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound."[2] Wound cultures have amplified, skewed and/or erased the personal testimonies and collective accounts that emerge around wound(ing)s. Those expressions that escaped erasure or defied censure entered into public consciousness through local lore, communal mythologies, ritual reenactments, public memorials, and sacred canons.

The New Testament contains a variety of wound(ing)s, some officially sanctioned and controlled while others occur organically and unexpectedly. New Testament wound(ing)s are met with a range of responses from radical defiance and resistance to justification and accommodation. These wound(ing)s are woven within and protruding out from its texts. Examining these entangled expressions has gained increasing attention among scholars in recent years. They have turned to modern trauma theories to assist

[1] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 29.
[2] Mark Seltzer, "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere," *October* 80 (1997): 3.

with understanding and interpreting these expressions of wound(ing)s. Despite a wide diversity of theoretical frameworks, psychoanalytical literary and sociological cultural/collective criticism have come to dominate the field. The first half of this chapter explores the advent of these two theoretical frameworks within the landscape of trauma theory and particularly their rise in popularity within biblical studies. The latter half of the chapter challenges the overreliance on these frameworks for examining wound(ing)s in the New Testament. It offers critiques stemming from postcolonial trauma criticism and correctives that seek to disrupt and expand the field's theoretical and ethical engagement with wound(ing)s. My aim is to de-colonize and re-politicize New Testament interpretations of wound(ing)s, for the ways in which wound(ing)s are defined and understood shape not only where the traumatic is identified in the New Testament, but also how wound(ing)s are framed in relation to individuals, communities, and the divine today.

Dominant Treatments: An Overview of Euro-American Trauma Theory

Tracing the history of trauma theory is, as Ruth Leys notes, anything but linear; it is filled with "perpetually resurfacing theoretical and practical difficulties."[3] This history is one traditionally located within a Euro-American discourse with roots tracing back to Janet's, Charcot's, and Freud's work on hysteria, with particular interest in Freud's developments around war neurosis and latency among others. As Judith Herman notes, it is a history with underlying political and ideological impetus bringing wound(ing) into and out of mainstream public discourses.[4] Historical events such as World War I and II,

[3]Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 8. It should be noted that for Leys, this history focuses around issues of imitation, particularly hypnotic imitation or mimesis.
[4] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 17.

shell shock and the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnostics, and the delayed processing and witnessing of Holocaust survivors reignite and shape the discourses about wound(ing) in the early and mid-twentieth century.[5]

Contemporary trauma theory arises in the late twentieth century. Work begins in the 1980s examining psychological issues connected to experiences such as the Vietnam War and sexual abuse. Notable is the contribution of Judith Herman that engages the political and ethical ramifications of trauma theory for individuals and communities. Through carefully tracing and "rediscovering" the history of psychological trauma Herman aims to highlight the commonalities and connections between survivors of various forms of wound(ing)s.[6] Herman helps to expand the conversation to place issues such as PTSD and violence against women within dominant discourses of wound(ing) in critical, though at times troubling and universalizing, ways.

Much of contemporary trauma theory emerged under the influence of the Yale school of deconstruction and later post-deconstruction work as part of the "ethical turn" taking place within the humanities at that time. Interest in trauma theory spans multiple disciplines including psychology, history, legal studies, social sciences, and literary studies. This produces an array of theoretical aims and methodologies that cannot be properly accounted for in this brief overview. Instead, developments in literary criticism (with its strong ties to Freudian psychoanalysis) and approaches found within the social sciences, namely collective criticism or as some refer to it, cultural criticism, will garner attention.

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[5] For a comprehensive overview of these historical developments that furthered the trauma field, see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* 7-32. Ruth Leys provides another approach to understanding this history via her genealogical overview of trauma in *Trauma: A Genealogy*.

[6] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* 2-3.

Drawing from its deconstructionist framework, literary criticism helps to develop a trauma theory that "attempts to unite…a formalist concern for text and problems of interpretation…with a historicist concern for application and response to the world."[7] At the forefront of this approach are the works of Shoshana Felman and Cathy Caruth who draw influence from Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and deconstructionism. Caruth provides a foundational definition of wound(ing) that later theorists will build upon, critique, revise, and resist. She states that wound(ing) exists "in the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it."[8] For Caruth, drawing upon Bessel O. van der Kolk's work on dissociation, the traumatic event cannot be accessed or represented directly due to its overwhelming nature and the immediate forgetting of the wound(ing) that takes place within the victim. From these insights, her work becomes foundational for exploring the relationship of wound(ing) and representation, particularly with regards to examining symptoms of wound(ing) found within literary texts (repetition, language choice, etc.). Literary critic, Shoshana Felman, in collaboration with the psychoanalyst, Dori Laub, utilizes poststructuralism and psychoanalysis to explore the "strangeness" and "otherness" of encountering wound(ing).[9] Influenced by work with the Yale Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies project, they pay particular attention to the shape of testimony and to witnessing – the multiple levels it embodies, the

[7] Robert Eaglestone, "Knowledge, 'Afterwardsness' and the Future of Trauma Theory," in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, eds. Gert Buelens et al. (London: Routledge, 2014), 12.
[8] Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 4.
[9] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 69.

performative and artistic relationships it engenders, and ultimately, "the collapse of witnessing" itself.[10]

While the work of literary critics and their psychoanalytic colleagues focus primarily on the individual – their experiences, representations and manifestations of the traumatic experience – sociological contributions to trauma theory provide insights into cultural trauma. This work, also finding roots at Yale, looks at the mechanisms and means by which cultures (governments, dominant groups, and meaning-making bodies) contain, package, and distribute understandings of events deemed traumatic. The work of Ron Eyerman, Giesen Smelser, and Jeffery Alexander represents a major vein of this approach. Claiming that wound(ing) is "made, not born," cultural trauma theory pays little attention to the issues of individual suffering and the intrapsychic dynamics of trauma that drive the work of literary critics and psychoanalysts.[11] Nor do they have particular concern for acquiring the details of traumatic events. Instead, cultural trauma's interest lies in the created "symbolic representations" of wound(ing) and cultural processes that cultures use to channel emotions and create ideologies.[12] This approach carries a more pessimistic view of wound(ing). With little recognition of the hope for transformation or ethical engagement that early trauma theorists purported, cultural trauma theorists come to view trauma theory as a vehicle for examining how the cycles of violence repeat throughout history.[13]

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[10] Ibid., 79.
[11] Neil J. Smelser, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004), 37.
[12] Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory*, 2.
[13] Jeffrey C. Alexander and Elizabeth Butler Breese, "Introduction: On Social Suffering and Its Cultural Construction" in *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective* Suffering, ed. Ron Eyerman et al. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2013), xxxiii.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism and collective/cultural criticism approach wound(ing) from different perspectives – the individual/psychological and the collective/structural respectively. They each bring an important, yet incomplete, perspective for examining the complexities surrounding the traumatic. Yet both are joined by their indebtedness to Euro-American ideologies that define the boundaries of wound(ing)s and the responses that emerge out of it. Feminist trauma theorists within the Euro-American context have worked to critique some of these ideologies and the methodological biases they create. For example, Laura Brown's feminist analysis challenges gendered assumptions about wound(ing). Brown demonstrates that the experiences that are deemed "real" trauma are only those that disrupt the "lives of men of the dominant class"[14] She also develops a crucial understanding of "insidious trauma," the oft overlooked and undertheorized "constant presence and threat of trauma" in the lives of non-dominant members of society – girls, women, men of color in the United States, LGBTQIA+ persons, persons with disabilities, etc.[15] The work of postcolonial theorists add some of the strongest critiques of Euro-American ideologies around wound(ing) to those of feminist theorists. Their work, which will be discussed in detail below, undergirds the current project's aim to decenter and disrupt the dominance of these two popular Euro-American trauma theories in biblical criticism so that space may open for other methodological approaches to emerge. But before examining postcolonial critiques and correctives, we turn to survey the current intersection of biblical criticism and trauma studies.

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[14] Laura S. Brown, "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma," in Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* 102.
[15] Ibid.

Debilitating Repetitions: Biblical Criticism and Trauma Studies

Nearly two decades after the ethical turn swept across the humanities igniting an interest in wound(ing), biblical studies began to engage the work of contemporary trauma studies. In the late 1990s, biblical scholars primarily within Hebrew Bible started investigating how trauma studies might provide a lens to read texts imbued with and responding to wound(ing), particularly exilic experiences. David Garber explains that the application of contemporary trauma theory within biblical studies has its roots in the psychological biblical criticism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Here scholars sought to apply psychoanalytic approaches to diagnosis the "oddities" of biblical characters. The prophet Ezekiel garnered particular attention acquiring diagnoses throughout the years with everything from catalepsy to schizophrenia as well as Freudian sexual concerns and PTSD.[16] Of particular note is David Halperin's psychoanalysis of the prophet that led to a diagnosis that Ezekiel's disturbing imagery and blatant misogyny stemmed from damaging childhood experiences perpetuated by his parents.[17]

Directly in response to Halperin, David Jobling and later others, came to question this approach calling for a shift from psychological diagnosis to a focus on literary criticism.[18] Heavily indebted to the work of trauma literary critics such as Caruth, Lifton, Felman, and Laub, biblical scholars in the late 1990s and early 2000s began to explore texts for the signs of wound(ing) inscribed within them.[19] Repetitions, fragmentations,

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[16] David G. Garber, "Trauma Theory and Biblical Studies," *Currents in Biblical Research* 14, no. 1 (October 2015): 25.
[17] David J. Halperin. *Seeking Ezekiel: Text and Psychology* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).
[18] See David Jobling, "Review of David J. Halperin's *Seeking Ezekiel: Text and Psychology*," *Religion* 25 (1995): 392-394.
[19] Tod Linafelt's *Surviving Lamentation: Catastrophe, Lament, and the Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) and David Garber's "Traumatizing Ezekiel Psychoanalytic Approaches to the Biblical Prophet" (In *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the*

silences, melancholy, and other rhetorical features came to signal the woundings experienced by biblical authors and the communities they lived within and wrote about.

New Testament scholars' interest in and engagement with trauma studies developed slightly slower than that of their Hebrew Bible colleagues. Still a fledgling field with monograph length engagements of the topic a scarce commodity, in-depth work at the intersection of New Testament and trauma studies remains limited. Several different approaches to interpreting wound(ing) in the New Testament have emerged, though psychoanalytic literary leanings continue to dominate the field. The following provides a brief, though not comprehensive, survey of some of the works that have emerged in the quest to read New Testament texts through the lens of trauma theory.

Some of the earliest contemporary engagements arise at the intersection of trauma theory, theology, and the New Testament. Shelly Rambo, indebted to the work of Caruth, Van der Kolk and others, provides readings of Jesus' witness to the hemorrhaging woman in Mk 5:25-34 and the Gospel of John's witness to the vacillating "middle movements" of the disciples around Jesus' death and resurrection.[20] In her reading of the hemorrhaging woman, Rambo explores concepts of testimony, healing, and bodily encounter to reframe Jesus' role in the story as an embodied witness to, rather than direct agent of, the woman's healing process.[21] Rambo, a theologian, focuses on the spiritual, ethical, and theological significance of texts relating them to contemporary experiences of disaster and illness. Themes of survival and the complicated place of witnessing

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Scriptures, ed. J.H. Ellens and W.G. Rollins [Westport, CN: Praeger, 2004]: 215-35) are representative of the shift towards integrating literary criticism with more traditional psychoanalytic approaches.

[20] Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 12.

[21] Shelly Rambo, "Trauma and Faith: Reading the Narrative of the Hemorrhaging Woman," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 13, no. 2 (2009): 251.

between life and death come to define her interpretations. While Rambo's work has its limitations with regards to the populations she addresses and her methodological scope, her integration of trauma theory, biblical texts, theology, and contemporary realities is commendable as a model of the interdisciplinary work that is possible (and necessary).

Adele Reinhartz utilizes similar theorists and texts to Rambo. Indebted to the work of Cathy Caruth, Reinhartz explores how the Johannine community forged its unique identity over and against the Jews through its framing of the Christ event. Using Caruth's concepts of latency, "departure and return, knowing and not knowing, and life and death," Reinhartz images wound(ing) as that which ruptures and breaks open the world order requiring individuals and communities to reorient their identities.[22] Building from this definition, the central traumatic event of the Gospel of John becomes Christ's incarnation, rather than Christ's death. The incarnation creates a "disorientation and destabilization…essential for salvation" as well as new identity and covenant with God.[23] While Reinhartz provides an innovative and nuanced argument for envisioning wound(ing) in positive terms, she runs the risk of framing every event that reorients or redefines identity as traumatic – an issue that will be attended to in greater detail below.

Both Eve-Marie Becker et al.'s edited volume, *Trauma and Traumatization in Individual and Collective Dimensions*, and David Carr's *Holy Resilience* aim to survey wound(ing)s across the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and early Christianity. In Becker's volume, a theme shared by several contributors concerns the methodological and ethical concerns of applying contemporary (Euro-American psychoanalytic) trauma

[22] Adele Reinhartz, "Incarnation and Covenant: The Fourth Gospel through the Lens of Trauma," *Interpretation* 69, no. 1 (January 2015): 40.
[23] Ibid., 47.

concepts to ancient texts. [24] For example, Nadine Metzger cautions that there are limitations to providing a "retrospective diagnosis" of psychological trauma for biblical characters due to time bound nature of cultural and medical understandings of wound(ing).[25] While cautions such as Metzger's raise important questions of (mis)appropriation and over identification, they nevertheless perpetuate ideas of scholarly objectivity, rigid temporality, and Euro-American exclusivity in the ways wound(ing) is identified and interpreted in texts.

Carr's monograph provides a sweeping overview of the biblical canon aiming to show how Jewish and Christian scriptures were written in part "as a response to communal suffering."[26] In doing so, Carr seeks to situate suffering "as part of a broader story of redemption."[27] Carr sees "Western culture" still haunted by these "catastrophic disasters that shredded…group identity" such as the violence inflicted by the Assyrians and Romans.[28] For Carr, exploring the traumas and survival in the past aids in navigating the "disenchanted" secular Western world.[29] While commendably ambitious, the breadth of material covered and its aim to be accessible for popular audiences, leaves little room for close readings of texts or robust engagement with trauma theory. This results in more

[24] It should be noted that the volume is not entirely psychoanalytically driven. An entire section of the volume is devoted to collective trauma with some of the contributors (R. Castro and J. Erviti, J. Dietrich, E. Holt) employing cultural criticism. But many contributors posing questions about retrospectively applying contemporary trauma theory to ancient texts come from the psychoanalytic literary criticism camp.
[25] Nadine Metzger, "Railway Spine, Shell Shock and Psychological Trauma: The Limits of Retrospective Diagnosis" in *Trauma and Traumatization in Individual and Collective Dimensions: Insights from Biblical Studies and Beyond,* ed. Eve-Marie Becker, et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 44.
[26] David M. Carr, *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 5.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 8.
[29] Ibid., 10, 250.

of a metanarrativizing overview of suffering in the bible that while compelling, leaves one desiring greater critical assessment on the level of trauma theory.[30]

Other scholars are beginning to move beyond a chiefly literary critical approach. Maia Kotrosits and Hal Taussig's *Re-Reading the Gospel of Mark Amidst Loss and Trauma* takes a step in this direction placing the wound(ing)s found in the gospel of Mark in dialogue with contemporary wound(ing)s through a unique blend of critical cultural theory and pastoral theology. They explore wound(ing)s throughout the gospel, such as the ways in which the original ending of Mark resonates with those who have experienced pain and loss. The ending defies simple closure and resolution, inviting readers to see where "pain, recovery, the future, and failure are connected" in the gospel and their own lives.[31] Though at times, Kotrostits and Taussig's interpretations could benefit from greater theoretical grounding to complement their use of lived experience and intuition, their readings grippingly capture the intimate and intense ways in which Mark speaks to contemporary readers and their wound(ing)s.

Kotrosits' *Rethinking Early Christian Identity: Affect, Violence, and Belonging*[32] and Alexis Waller's "Violent Spectacles and Public Feelings: Trauma and Affect in the Gospel of Mark and The Thunder: Perfect Mind" make an important contribution by

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[30] I use the term "meta-narrative" intentionally to describe Carr's work. While this is not the place to elaborate my critique, Carr's conceptualizations of events such as the "Parting of the Ways" narrative lack acknowledgment of the complexity of interpretations currently present in the field. In this particular instance, attention to the work of Daniel Boyarin and others would help not only to more accurately present the diversity of perspectives in the field but could further support some of his overarching ideas of how trauma influences communities and texts.

[31] Maia Kotrosits and Hal Taussig, *Re-Reading the Gospel of Mark Amidst Loss and Trauma* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 20.

[32] Maia Kotrosits, *Rethinking Early Christian Identity: Affect, Violence, and Belonging* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

introducing affect theory into their interpretational framework.[33] Both scholars work at the intersection of affect, wound(ing), and identity in New Testament and extra-canonical texts. For example, Waller engages the gospel of Mark and The Thunder: Perfect Mind to explore both victimization and the innovative and "counterpublic" affective responses that arise in the face of wound(ing)s.[34] Indebted to Ann Cvetkovich,[35] Waller demonstrates the fragility and fickleness of both human and divine responses to wound(ing)s and the way they disrupt and reinvent relationality, power dynamics, and gender norms. Though she does not follow the political potential of this reading to its end, Waller insightfully teases out counterpublic sites of resistance within the texts.

Some scholars are traveling even farther from psychoanalytic literary criticism into the realm of cultural trauma theory. Zorodzai Dube's "Jesus' Death and Resurrection as Cultural Trauma" interprets Jesus' death and resurrection in Mark as cultural trauma.[36] Using the sociological trauma theory of Jeffrey Alexander and Ron Eyerman assisted by oral and memory studies, Dube traces how Jesus' brutal demise came to take on communal significance for the Markan community during their own violence- and trauma-induced crisis of identity. Dube traces how carrier groups within the community

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[33] Affect theory may be briefly described as "the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability" (Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader,* ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigwoth [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010], 1). For a critical assessment of present applications of affect theory within the humanities and social sciences, see Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 434-72.

[34] Alexis Waller, "Violent Spectacles and Public Feelings: Trauma and Affect in the Gospel of Mark and The Thunder: Perfect Mind," *Biblical Interpretation* 22, no. 4-5 (2014): 452.

[35] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[36] Zorodzai Dube, "Jesus' Death and Resurrection as Cultural Trauma," *Neotestamentica* 47, no. 1 (2013): 107-22.

working on cultic and domestic levels, meld the community's multivalent experiences of suffering and wound(ing) at the hands of Rome with Jesus' suffering. In addition to suffering, concepts of vindicated righteousness and resurrection are embraced as cultural symbols that foster group identity and resilience. Dube's conclusions could benefit from further nuancing and a firmer textual basis. Nevertheless, Dube presents one of the few fully integrated trauma theory readings currently present in the field. It signals the possibility for interdisciplinary work that places text, context, wound(ing)s, and transmission in dialogue to bring new perspectives to the text.

Warren Carter applies the work of collective trauma theory to the tax scene of Mark 12 in "The Things of Caesar: Mark-ing the Plural (Mk 12:13-17)."[37] Carter seeks to demonstrate that this scene is a pre-Markan saying used to help explain the wound(ing)s from the Jewish War (66-70 CE) and cast Rome in an idolatrous light. Carter engages Jeffrey Alexander's work on collective trauma to show how this passage should not be attributed to the historical Jesus, but viewed as a text created to help reconstruct group identity and boundaries formed in the face of the war wound(ing)s. Carter uses Alexander's theory to highlight the text's ambivalence towards Rome. In doing so, Carter demonstrates the ease with which trauma studies might dialogue with empire critical interpretative methods. Carter's work requires further theoretical reach and integration, however, in order to display the full potential of trauma theory within New Testament scholarship.

The above overview of current scholarship displays the present possibilities for integrating trauma theory into New Testament interpretation. Though brimming with

[37] Warren Carter, "The Things of Caesar: Mark-ing the Plural (Mk 12:13-17)," *HTS* 70, no. 1 (2014): 1-9.

potential and still in its early stages of development, New Testament scholars' application of trauma theory is also producing trends that require critical assessment, critique, and correction within the field. Methodological issues related to power, privilege, and race require attention so that work on trauma interpretations do not become yet another line of interpretation dominated by Euro-American perspectives that must later be corrected to acknowledge multiculturalism and diversity. In addition, there is an urgent need to expand the ways in which New Testament scholarship explores and engages the traumatic.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the project of this dissertation, namely de-colonizing and re-politicizing New Testament trauma readings. It seeks to open dialogue around disconcerting trends within the field and potential avenues for expanding scholarship, the outcome of which is decentering and disrupting, but not necessarily erasing, current interpretational practices. Instead, there is an aim to expand the field to more fully and intentionally include political and ethical trauma readings that acknowledge globally diverse conceptualizations of trauma. In doing so, these readings holistically attend to issues of context, identity and, power on individual and collective levels.

Re(ad)dressing Wound(ing)s: De-colonizing and Re-politicizing New Testament Trauma Interpretations

The process of re(ad)dressing wound(ing)s within New Testament interpretation requires a critical examination of current interpretational practices. The following seeks to build upon and/or shift the foci of current methods. At the same time, alternative methods for conceptualizing and addressing wound(ing)s will be suggested drawing

primarily upon the work of postcolonial trauma theorists. Postcolonial perspectives on wound(ing) have raised critiques about the Euro-American-centric nature of trauma theory including its overwhelming focus on the Holocaust, reliance on Euro-American understandings of psychology and healing, divisions between individual and community, and lack of attention to the historical/contextual/political realities that shape responses to wound(ing)s. Subsequently, postcolonial theorists have provided theoretical frameworks that expand the field methodologically through the theorists engaged (Fanon, Glissant, etc.) and the "texts" deemed relevant (narrative, oral history, resistance literature, storytelling, etc.), while also broadening the political, structural, and geographical contexts engaged.

The following addresses five areas for de-colonizing and re-politicizing New Testament trauma interpretations: theory, relationality, context, voice, and witness. The shifts that take place in each of these areas shape the exegetical interpretations that follow in this dissertation. The act of shifting or reorienting current practices is not to reify yet another "better" method for approaching wound(ing)s. Rather I seek to expand practices and considerations to engender more holistic, globally conscious, and political readings. In doing so, I hold the position that addressing New Testament wound(ing)s carries with it an ethical responsibility to the individual and collective bodies that experience and inflict wound(ing)s in the past and today. For me, New Testament interpretation cannot remain indifferent or solely in the realm of theory with regards to wound(ing)s. Instead, it must illuminate wound(ing)s as embodied politicized realities that require responses from scholarship and faith communities.

Framing Wound(ing)s

Adele Reinhartz aptly states that "the ways in which we identify and talk about trauma in relation to the New Testament will depend to some degree on the definitions that we adopt and the theorists we choose to follow."[38] Reinhartz is correct. Definitions and theoretical frameworks of wound(ing) are political constructs shaped by the contexts and fields within which they arise. Most of contemporary trauma theory has its origins in Euro-American contexts, which have constructed theories primarily centered upon the experiences of "white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men."[39] These frameworks have created "hegemonic definitions of trauma which are not scientifically neutral but culturally specific."[40] Yet such frameworks are universalized and applied cross-culturally without attention to their prejudices and assumptions.

As noted above, New Testament interpretations have perpetuated these practices, relying on Euro-American definitions and theoretical frameworks of wound(ing), primarily those stemming from psychoanalytical literary and sociological cultural perspectives. While these perspectives are not necessarily inadequate, to engage them uncritically normalizes and reifies Euro-American trauma logic as the authoritative lens for identifying and reading the culturally different wound(ing)s of the New Testament. This can lead on one hand to an overdependence on Euro-American psychological concepts such as knowing and unknowing, latency, the incomprehensibility and unrepresentability of wound(ing). The reliance on these Euro-American-centric concepts limits which texts scholars deem "trauma texts" as well as how they construct and

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[38] Reinhartz, "Incarnation and Covenant," 48.
[39] Brown, "Not Outside the Range," 101.
[40] Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing*, 21.

identify victimhood, wound(ing) responses, etc. On the other hand, New Testament scholars tend to use overly-generalized, popular culture constructs of wound(ing) that deem everything troubling or disruptive as traumatic. This desensitizes readers to the reality of and varying levels of gravity surrounding wound(ing)s, while simultaneously over-sensationalizing every mishap as traumatic.

These tendencies are witnessed in a number of current theoretical frameworks undergirding interpretations. For example, Kotrosits and Taussig set aside "technical vocabulary" to allow the concepts of trauma, pain, and loss to be used collectively and interchangeably.[41] They assert that this fluidity highlights the relationality of the terms. They rightly gesture to the ways in which the experiences signaled by these terms "are not always suited to simple categorization."[42] It is clear that such fluidity of terms proves useful for the explorations of knowing and unknowing that Kotrosits and Taussig embark on as well as in their aims to explore the more pastoral aspects of processing wound(ing)s. However, there is also a certain level of privilege and potential danger behind such an approach. For such an approach carries the potential to depoliticize the term "trauma," opening its definition too broadly and softening its critical focus on the particular ways in which sociopolitical factors shape wound(ing)s. Thus, such an approach falls prey to Euro-American tendencies that attend to the psychological and visceral aspects of wound(ing), but not the political.

A second example was highlighted above in the work of Adele Reinhartz. Reinhartz (inadvertently) perpetuates a scholarly privilege of disconnecting from those who are daily experiencing wound(ing) and instead living in the realm of the theoretical.

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[41] Kotrosits and Taussig, *Re-Reading the Gospel of Mark Amidst Loss and Trauma*, 5.
[42] Ibid., 6.

She does this through her reframing of wounding in the Gospel of John as a positive experience. Reinhartz claims that the incarnation rather than the crucifixion of Jesus serves as the primary wounding of John (unlike the other gospels or Paul). This assertion relies on the fact that Jesus and his followers appear "accepting and unafraid – un-traumatized – by his impending death."[43] This understanding occludes the fact that when faced with a traumatic event many groups cope with the wound(ing) by showing strength, indifference, or mythologizing the event to prevent signs of weakness in the face of adversity.[44] Thus, to base her argument on the lack of fear or traumatization presented by the text relies on Euro-American trauma logic and ignores the multiplicity of ways in which groups cope with woundings when faced with continued adversity (the expulsion from the synagogue, etc.). [45] Both these tendencies diminish the political and ethical efficacy of the texts as well as their ability to witness to the vast array of wound(ing)s that take place in the New Testament and today's world.

Beyond generating overly narrow or broad definitions of wound(ing), Euro-American theoretical frameworks also highly favor event-based wound(ing)s. Event-based wound(ing)s such as terrorist attacks or natural disasters are more easily analyzed because they are contained events, geographically and temporally, often with defined victims. The bounded nature of the event also helps contain and categorize witness accounts and later literary productions. For example, David Carr's *Holy Resilience* is an

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[43] Reinhartz, "Incarnation and Covenant," 39.
[44] See Kali Tal's analysis of Vietnam veteran W.D. Ehrhart as an example of how coping mechanisms play out through daily life and literature (*Worlds of Hurt,* 77-114).
[45] The debate over framing aspects of trauma in positive ways raises some of the concerns (and potential) of lifting up the erotic as a site of agency within martyr accounts as the work of Karmen MacKendrick has explored (see *Counterpleasures* [Albany: State of New York University Press, 1999], esp. 25-88). Both conversations require further assessment and greater concern for position and privilege, but nevertheless provide interesting acts of reorienting perspectives.

ambitious undertaking to trace wound(ing) and its hauntings throughout the development of both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Yet Carr focuses primarily on event-based traumas, defining trauma as "an overwhelming, haunting experience of disaster so explosive in its impact that it cannot be directly encountered and influences an individual/group's behavior and memory in indirect ways."[46] This definition rooted in psychoanalytic and literary trauma theory, masks insidious traumas and inadvertently minimizes their impact on scriptural production, and later religious and spiritual formation.

It is acknowledged that the prolonged wound(ing)s of oppression, racism, sexism, etc. prove more challenging to analyze due to the unbounded temporality of the wound(ing)s, the dispersion of victims, and the expanse of creative representations that express experiences of the wound(ing). The ongoing ability of dominant sectors of society to perpetuate and naturalize such wound(ing)s can also minimize the awareness, attraction, or empathy of theorists to engage in such work. But insidious trauma requires more in-depth engagement by the field, particularly concerning how oppressions shape individuals, families, generations, and cultures, and in turn how this affects the responses to event-based wound(ing)s.

Postcolonial trauma theory aids in reorienting the field's definitions of wound(ing) beyond Euro-American conceptualizations to better look at a variety of wound(ing)s and their political and ethical consequences. Jay Rajiva explains that the contemporary traumatic realities emerging from "collective violence, environmental disaster, migration and diaspora, colonization, rape culture or systemic poverty," require

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[46] Carr, *Holy Resilience,* 7.

us to "vault trauma out of solipsism – one's personal trauma only – into a wider community spread across lines of space, culture, and history."[47] Such realities require wound(ing)s of past and present to be viewed not "merely as an occurrence – an event or series of events with bounded, measureable effects, - but as an ongoing cultural phenomenon that demands radical adjustments to how one lives in and moves through the world."[48] Acknowledging the ways that contemporary and historical wound(ing)s overlap, layer, and collide opens space to see the ways wound(ing)s shape individuals and communities for generations. In turn, "an inclusive and culturally sensitive trauma theory can assist in raising awareness of injustice both past and present and opening up the possibility of a more just global future."[49]

Thus, definitions and the theoretical frameworks that emerge from them matter with regards to wound(ing)s. They erect boundaries, define victims, assign power, and (in)validate wound(ing)s. I suggest that New Testament interpretations must diversify their theoretical frameworks of wound(ing)s to engage more globally diverse perspectives. Such perspectives expose wound(ing)s that are not always visible to the Euro-American eye. They call for greater attention to how instances of insidious and intergenerational trauma, such as the overall wound(ing) effects of Roman imperialism and colonialism on early Jesus followers, shaped texts (see Chapter 4). It asks that responses to wound(ing)s be assessed beyond the limitations of the DSM-5 to more fully incorporate the variety of ways in which cultures process wound(ing)s. Thus, scholars must look for more than gaps and inconsistencies in texts as signals of wound(ing)s. They

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[47] Jay Rajiva, *Postcolonial Parabola: Literature, Tactility, and the Ethics of Representing Trauma* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 2.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing,* 127.

need to look for concrete responses to wound(ing)s while also leaving space for the silent acts of survival and/or resistance as well as the responses that never found voice within the texts (see Chapter 3). Most importantly, it calls for biblical scholars to reach out to scholars and practitioners outside of their own contexts to collectively examine wound(ing)s from different cultural and disciplinary perspectives to discover wound(ing)s that are invisible to the Euro-American perspective.

The aim is not to formulate a(nother) dominate theoretical framework for the field or to preference a postcolonial trauma theory, particularly since no such systematized theory exists in the field at this time. Rather it is a commitment to engage diverse, dynamic methodologies that take seriously the political and ethical gravity of wound(ing)s and their links to broader systems and ideologies of dominance. They require intersectional and interdisciplinary methods for approaching wound(ing)s. These must stretch beyond Euro-American perspectives and give attention to the areas of concern highlighted in this section and the remainder of the chapter. In doing so, the New Testament field can work to develop multicultural, multi-perspectival interpretational approaches to biblical wound(ing)s from its genesis rather than having to provide correctives years after reading practices have been established.

Relational Wound(ing)s

Euro-American trauma theories generally work from a mindset of isolationism rather than relationality. Because of these theories' psychoanalytic underpinnings, and the individual orientation of the psychoanalytic tradition, focus falls on the individual experience of wound(ing), usually that of the victim or on homogeneous collectives. These tendencies erase the relational, environmental, and structural factors influencing

the individual or individuals within a collective. This makes it easier to define experiences of wound(ing) as well as to commodify and pathologize them. Postcolonial and cultural trauma theories, as well as this present dissertation, call for an expansion of focus to look at the individual victim in relation to, rather than in isolation from, others involved in the wound(ing).

This involves focusing on the relationality of victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and the systems they exist within. Lambek and Antze propose that the focus of trauma theory shift from compartmentalizing traumatic experiences and categorizing individuals into "absolute victims and villains" to incorporating "collective forces and issues" in understanding victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and perpetrating systems.[50] Individuals are viewed relationally within their environment rather than as separate, contained entities. This reorients focus for many forms of trauma theory by challenging the boundedness of the individual. For example, within psychoanalytic perspectives this would require the reorientation around understandings of concepts such as dissociation to view them not solely as individual pathologies but as also influenced by social demands.[51]

Most importantly, the shift to a relational focus better highlights the complexities and messiness that exists within, between, and around those connected to wound(ing)s. It goes beyond merely seeing the ways in which systems encourage or enable perpetrators to wound certain individuals or groups. Instead, it shows the complex and diverse power

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[50] Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, "Introduction: Forecasting Memory," in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory,* ed. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996), xxvii.
[51] Laurence J. Kirmayer, "Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative, and Dissociation," in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory,* ed. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996), 189.

relations that exist within the realities of wound(ing). As is highlighted in Chapter 4, this relationality highlights how individuals can be both a victim and perpetrator of wound(ing). It shows how within violent systems of colonialism, mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity not only connect colonized and colonizer, but how they shape enactments of, responses to, and fantasies around wound(ing)s for both parties. Similarly, such relationality calls attention to the ways in which not only perpetrators, but also bystanders and victims, can perpetuate oppressive ideologies that cause or encourage future woundings. Such a relational approach also challenges how Christians see themselves in relation to biblical characters and historical realities. Often we seek the role of the righteous victim with regards to wound(ing)s. This approach seeks to disrupt this vision and the masked power it wields to ask Christians to seriously reflect on their role(s) within past, present, and future wound(ing)s.

The complexity and unboundedness of relationality around wound(ing)s also requires that the present boundary between individual and collective wound(ing)s. Euro-American logic either focuses too heavily on the individual experience devoid of context and community (psychoanalytic literary criticism) or on the communal structure erasing the varied responses and experiences of individuals based on their social locations (cultural/communal criticism). Both perspectives carry different forms of blatant and masked privilege through their ability to ignore and/or separate individual and collective experiences of wound(ing)s. Thus, interpretations must find ways to hold these two realities in tension. For the wounding of an individual always connects to the communities and power structures surrounding the individual. Similarly, the wounding a community experiences affects individual community members in varying, sometimes

oppositional, ways depending upon their social location. Naming and exploring both individual and collective experiences creates dynamic, more realistic interpretations of wound(ing)s.

Feminist and postcolonial trauma theorists, along with certain collective trauma theorists, have raised additional challenges to the divisions between individual and collective constructed by these two approaches. Instead, they call for an intersectional approach to trauma that looks at the relationality of individual to community and culture and vice versa. Collective trauma theorists, Robben and Suárez-Orozco, for example, call for an approach that links intra-psychic, social, and cultural approaches to trauma. In doing so, they see space not for allowing the collapse or oversimplification of the category "culture," but as an expansion to look more closely at aspects of culture such as ideology, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, etc. on their own terms.[52]

From a postcolonial perspective, Ifowodo explains that for trauma and violence to be examined in the post-colony, the materialist and psychoanalytic must be linked so that the ways in which the psyche and society shape identity in the face of trauma can be examined.[53] Specifically, in the post-colony this opens to the ways in which colonial trauma haunts present realities. It examines the ways in which colonialism-induced trauma has warped the psyche of individuals and the ways in which it manifests at systemic levels such as the continued corruption of officials appointed within newly formed governments. For Ifowodo, influenced by Fanon and Glissant, official corruption

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[52] Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco and Antonius C.G.M. Robben, "Interdisciplinary perspectives on violence and trauma," in *Cultures under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma,* ed. Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.
[53] Ogaga Ifowodo, *History, Trauma, and Healing in Postcolonial Narratives: Reconstructing Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 20.

stems from power and a desire to take the place of the colonizer mixing with historical trauma.[54] Using the context of Nigeria, he shows that this produces continued trauma for communities and individuals dealing with both present oppressions and the insidious trauma of colonialism.[55] In doing so, Ifowodo exposes how a history of colonialism creates complex dialogical relationships between individual psyches and collective lived realties seeking identity amidst wound(ing)s in the post-colony.

Embracing relationality also expands understandings of temporality. It challenges Euro-American linear understandings of time with regards to wound(ing)s. This allows past histories and contemporary realities to more fully integrate with one another, creating a cyclical relationality in which individuals and communities can simultaneously experience present realities as well as the past histories that shape them. Issues of intergenerational trauma and varying means of transmission and reception arise. Several of the following chapters will explore the ways in which past wound(ing)s shape identity within the New Testament. Such connections across time also exist today such as through identification with past wound(ing)s or more corporally through the spirits and ancestors that can figuratively and literally possess individuals, creating living historical memories that have import for present political realities.[56] In doing so, the past remains open and affective in the present through a dynamic, unbounded, and embodied influence. The individual is not a separate entity from the community or its history. Thus, the wound(ing)s of the past impact the present and present wound(ing)s can gain wisdom from past experience.

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[54] Ibid., 135-8.
[55] Ibid., 135-7.
[56] Michael Lambek, "The Past Imperfect: Remembering as Moral Practice" in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory,* ed. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996), 243.

This is particularly important within biblical studies where the taboo of anachronism frequently prevents simultaneous engagement with or comparison of contemporary and ancient realities. For example, concern has been raised about applying postcolonial understandings to ancient texts because postcolonial situations involve different circumstances and understandings then those present within the Roman Empire. But wound(ing)s create an opening to challenge this separating of past and present. Instead, they ask scholars to approach texts honoring ancient contexts while seeing how present realities shape their understanding of such texts. Such an approach also allows wound(ing)s' hauntings and lingering affects to more fully permeate the present.

Wound(ing) Contexts

The lack of contextualization for wound(ing)s has concerned many postcolonial and cultural theorists. Euro-American individualism has perpetuated a myth that a person is a bounded entity who can be analyzed apart from their social context. Preoccupations with the psychic responses of an individual, her/his memories, and symptoms, often artificially "separates facts from causes," extracting individuals from the social forces shaping their experience.[57] This extraction does not cause concern for members of dominant societies because their context is assumed and their identity has never been in question. Neither have their experiences of and witnessing about wound(ing)s come into question, for as Lambek and Antze point out, "when identity is not in question, neither is memory."[58] But such separation often erases the experiences of minorities and further reifies dominant wound(ing) logic. Christianity has contributed to this issue through its

[57] Delores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allu, "Introduction," in *The Splintered Glass: Facets of Trauma in the Post-Colony and Beyond*, eds. Delores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allu (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), xi.
[58] Lambek and Antze, "Introduction," xxii.

over-spiritualization of wound(ing)s, which, even if inadvertently, divorces biblical wound(ing)s from their historical context(s) to serve as a theological or ethical illustration. To counter this trend, contextualization of wound(ing)s on multiple levels is needed. Within the exegetical chapters of this dissertation, one will notice that extensive amounts of time are given to laying contextual foundations for the wound(ing)s explored. This attention aims to prevent the universalizing, coopting, and/or over-spiritualizing of the wound(ing)s.

Such attention to context must occur on multiple levels in relation to New Testament texts. Understanding the historical context from which texts emerge is a regular practice within New Testament studies, particularly with the dominance of historical criticism. But attention to historical context requires further nuancing and expansion. It must look for dominant and marginalized and/or erased historical contexts within the texts, as well as the public and hidden transcripts they may contain.

Exploring the context of wound(ing)s within a text must expand beyond the immediate historical context of the text to the past histories that influence the text, scriptural and otherwise. As mentioned in the last section, wound(ing)s defy temporality, bringing past, present, and future in contact. Thus, the histories and traditions of a community around past wound(ing)s are examined for how they shape identities and influence conceptualizations of present wound(ing)s. Additionally, the history of interpretation that extends beyond the text and the wound(ing)s that influence these interpretations require attention. Holding past and future realities of wound(ing)s with wound(ing)s within the text encourages a way of reading for context that disrupts linear temporality as reading wound(ing) texts necessitates.

Reading for wound(ing) contexts also destabilizes the desire to extract purely factual histories of wound(ing)s from texts. It encourages what Dominick LaCapra calls, "radical constructivism," which places value on the "performative, figurative, aesthetic, rhetorical, ideological, and political factors" that structure histories and give them meaning.[59] The importance of such a reading lies in its disruption of the notion of a singular, linear, objective history. It also troubles the common conflation of facts with truth. Instead, radical constructivism allows for multiple, at times conflicting, histories of insidious or event-based traumas to be true. A famous, often cited example of this phenomenon comes from Dori Laub's interview with a Holocaust survivor who was an eyewitness of a prisoner uprising within Auschwitz. Her retelling of the event focuses on the vivid image of "four chimneys going up in flames, exploding."[60] Yet historical evidence shows that only one chimney fell on the crematorium that day. But as Laub posits, her testimony was not "to the number of chimneys blown up, but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence…to the breakage of a framework [of Auschwitz]. That was historical truth."[61] This example points to an image of history that is no less important or "true" than factual history, but that creates another sense of history in the face of trauma and resistance. Thus, it requires a questioning of the "normalcy of research and ethnography in the face of the traumatic."[62] It also challenges the current "periodization of trauma" and its focus on

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[59]Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 1.
[60] Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History,* ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 59.
[61] Ibid., 60.
[62] Mark Jarzombek, "The Post-traumatic Turn and the Art of Walid Ra'ad and Krzysztof Wodiczko: From Theory to Trope and Beyond," in *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity,* ed. Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg (Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), 254.

short term events, seeking instead to connect related traumatic events across generations utilizing more expansive ideas of temporality and connectivity of traumas.[63] In doing so, the history of wound(ing)s garners a complex understanding of truth and history that includes but stretches beyond analytically confirmed data or facts. But I underscore that this does not reduce wound(ing) texts to "anti-historical, transhuman and mythic trauma of Freudian theory."[64] Instead, mixed with the truths that the texts portray about wound(ing)s are concrete, lived realities of wound(ing)s.[65] This allows exploration for how the facts and truths about wound(ing)s impact victims' lives in a variety of ways, ways that also contain fantasy and emotion shaped by the context and social codes they exist within.[66]

Alongside attention to the historical context(s) of the biblical text, careful consideration is required when providing the context(s) of the contemporary examples of wound(ing)s that are placed in dialogue with the text. This not only helps raise awareness around issues of anachronism, it uncovers issues of power and privilege that lurk in interpretations. For example, Rambo's treatment of the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5 is interwoven with the story of Rambo's friend Ellen who suffered debilitating migraines. Though initially citing the importance of context, Rambo inadvertently focuses on the interchange of the hemorrhaging woman and Jesus, removing the exchange from its

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[63] E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang, "From Traumatic Paralysis to the Force Field of Modernity," in *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, eds. E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang (Pokfulam Road: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 16.
[64] Irene Visser, "Trauma Theory: Global Aspirations and Local Emendations," in *The Local and Global in Postcolonial Literature,* ed. P. Punyashee (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2014), 50.
[65] Visser provides the example of Maori writer Patricia Grace's *Baby No-Eyes* in which colonial trauma in concretely narrativized in a way that seeks survival, empowerment, and justice for her community. It does so in a way that does not live in myth, but instead captures the concrete historical factuality: of dispossession, of land loss, and of instances of racial discrimination" (50).
[66] E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 42.

social context. While insightful, particularly with her challenges to the traditional connection of faith and healing, Rambo perpetuates a spiritualizing of the woman's trauma that decontextualized and depoliticizes it, save for briefly acknowledging the woman's unique agency in the face of her trauma.[67] Rambo places the hemorrhaging woman in conversation with Ellen's lack of cure to investigate important questions of remaining and witnessing to "life in its extremities."[68] Unfortunately, such extremities remain focused on the individual, Ellen, devoid of the broader socio-political factors that shape her and her community's experience of and ability to even access potential resources to heal from intersecting traumas. It also masks intersecting structural and political aspects of wound(ing)s that arise from contextualized readings that postcolonial trauma theory seeks to give voice to. Thus, contemporary contexts of wound(ing)s require attention at the level of biblical contexts.

A level of final contextualization focuses on the interpreter themselves. For both traditional biblical criticism and trauma theory have professed an air of objectivity in their interpretations and analysis.[69] Though efforts to discredit and curb the fantasy of objectivity exist in both fields, it is important to reiterate the importance of the interpreter providing context for themselves when addressing wound(ing)s. When one neglects to contextualize themselves, they run the risk of assuming an expert position in which they become the authoritative reader and interpreter of any given text. For Craps, much of modern textual interpretations of wound(ing)s create a dichotomy between silent victim

[67] Rambo, "Trauma and Faith," 256.
[68] Ibid., 257.
[69] This is prevalent not only in psychoanalytical trauma theory but also is foundational for certain cultural trauma theories. Alexander explains, that his sociological, "empirical, scientific" approach to trauma theory lifts it above the fray of "lay" theorists and the public's overuse of the concept of trauma (*Trauma: A Social Theory,* 6). Eyerman furthers this idea by stating that the empirical focus of cultural theory creates space for the world to reflect on its condition while withholding "solace" ("Social Theory and Trauma," 50).

and expert/reader mirroring the patient/therapist relationship of the Euro-American "talking cure."[70] In this dichotomy the expert/readers either hold a privileged position that allows them to accurately and objectively name and assess the wound(ing) of the Other, or they become vicarious victims of the wound(ing) they are engaging. These positionalities do not require the reader to reflect on their own privileges and role in ongoing oppressions. Irene Visser provides an example of this in the language of Cathy Caruth. In her treatment of *Moses and Monotheism*, Caruth uses unqualified collective pronouns (we, our) when discussing her textualist approach to trauma theory and history. Caruth's "hegemonic system of address" creates an unqualified (Euro-American) collectivity that does not assess Caruth's participation in dominant historical discourses and the way they shape her image of a global or cross-cultural understanding of history.[71] Instead, it posits a Euro-American view of history and trauma as universal. In doing so, Caruth does not take into account the implications of her reading of Freud's reconstructed, fictive history of the Jews for concrete communities or, as Ruth Leys points out, the actual theoretical value of her own selective reading of the text.[72]

Thus, New Testament interpreters must explore their context in relation to the text and to contemporary realities. This expands beyond typical identification of social location to critical reflection on how one's own lived experience of wound(ing)s shapes one's approach to textual wound(ing)s. By examining these multiple contexts and their points of (dis)connection with the wound(ing)s in New Testament texts, interpreters can

[70] Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing,* 41.
[71] Visser, "Trauma Theory," 47.
[72] Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy,* 282.

better strive to provide engaged readings that reflect lived realities, ancient and contemporary.

Voices of Wound(ing)s

Multiple voices are always present when wound(ing)s occur. Which voices are captured by a literary account depends on power, social location, able-ness, accessibility to resources, strength, and chance. The voice is not always the voice of victim(s), but rather can it be a voice that perpetuates further victimization through the ways in which the narrative of wound(ing)s is expressed. At times, silence speaks volumes. Thus, one should strive to hear multiple voices, from multiple positionalities in the text. As postcolonial and liberationist biblical interpretations have insisted upon, this also requires a "preferential option" for hearing the stories of the poor and marginalized whose frequent experience systemic wound(ing)s are silenced along with the subaltern whose voice may not be present at all. But the following approach to reading for wound(ing)s asks that we also listen for the voices of the perpetrators, bystanders, and systems that perpetuate wound(ing)s. It also asks that we hear the ways in which the texts themselves and the ideologies they uphold have perpetuated legacies of wound(ing) that stretch into the present (see Chapter 5). In doing so, temporality is blurred so that while each voice arising from the text and its legacy is contextually located in a particular time and space, these voices dialogue and display the dynamic, haunting nature of wound(ing)s.

To explore the many voices of wound(ing)s related to a text requires an examination of the medium through which we experience them. Literary sources are the dominant method for hearing the voices of wound(ing)s. But wound(ing)s are conveyed in many forms beyond literature. Engaging broader representations of wound(ing)s

(beyond and in connection with the textual) moves engagements with wound(ing)s beyond the dominant focus of it as unrepresentable to "focus on the specificity of trauma that locates meaning through a greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience."[73] This specificity allows for greater attention around differing responses to, expressions of, and valuations of trauma. Particularly, the arts have employed this specificity in order to explore a broader range of affective responses to trauma – even the most disconcerting ones. For example, art forms such as "destruction art" can push viewers to new levels of facing pain, particularly the pain that destroys language.[74] Stiles explains that in this form of art, artists use the body to provide an aesthetic and political discourse on pain, survival, and power.[75] The performance art of Marina Abramović is one of the better known examples of such art. Using self-mutilation and elements of bodily and emotional vulnerability, Abramović creates subversive performance art. Highly gendered in its production and reception, the performances seek to critique systemic erasings of violence and traumas. She also seeks to evoke feelings of danger and being out of control in a space that seeks no redemption. For Stiles, such art highlights the discourse of the survivor on an affective level that does not seek to conceal her pain nor to find a way to resolve it for those around her.[76] Instead, observers are asked to be present with the performer and the affective responses that arise.

Artistic representations also call attention to aspects of trauma that texts can mask. Artistic representation can challenge attempts to sanitize conflicting views of

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[73] Michelle Balaev, "Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered," in *Contemporary Approaches to Literary Trauma Theory,* ed. Michelle Balaev (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.
[74] Kristine Stiles, *Concerning Consequences: Studies in Art, Destruction, and Trauma* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 41. Stiles generates this concept in conversation with the work of Elaine Scarry.
[75] Ibid., 44-46.
[76] Ibid., 30-31.

trauma. This challenges making trauma into a "fetishized taboo" that is sealed off from contradictory forms of meaning-making, expression, and critique.[77] Instead, multiple experiences of trauma can arise and be given space for expression. Within this expression, artistic representations can also provide a reminder of the embodied nature of trauma that may be lost in texts, particularly with regard to affect and spatiality. For as Saltzman and Rosenberg state, "the traumatic is rooted in the material reality of an event."[78] They challenge trauma theory's choice to focus on "the domain of language as opposed to the visual."[79] Instead, they seek to explore how monuments, architecture, film, etc. witness to, interpret, and interrupt trauma – and how they are complicit in commodifying trauma and making it into a trope.[80] For Seltzer, building upon Wendy Brown, explains that the public can use arts, culture, and media to "[represent] itself to itself as a culture of suffering, states of injury, and wounded attachments."[81] Thus, care is required when engaging the arts as well.

The call for pluralistic, dynamic understandings of trauma invites New Testament studies to engage a greater variety of disciplines when interpreting texts. It particularly calls for biblical studies to pay attention to the materiality of wound(ing)s. This should include not only ancient material culture, but also the use of contemporary visual and performance art. It also serves as a reminder to engage the embodied aspects of wound(ing)s found both within the texts and within those reading them. To encourage this broadening, all of the exegetical chapters will engage some form of visual or

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[77] Kaplan and Wang, "From Traumatic Paralysis," 11.
[78] Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg, "Introduction," in *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity,* eds. Lisa Saltzman and Eric Rosenberg (Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), xii.
[79] Ibid.
[80] See also Jarzombek, "The Post-traumatic Turn," 253.
[81] Seltzer, "Wound Culture," 4. Cf. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

performance art in conversation with the biblical text. These representations are not specifically "trauma art," but rather connect to and glimpse experiences of wound(ing)s.

Finally, to engage the many voices affected by any wound(ing) in a New Testament text requires more than approaching a text from multiple perspectives or placing it in dialogue with different media for conveying wound(ing)s. It requires multiple interpretations. For a single interpretation of wound(ing)s is sure to erase, distort, or neglect to illuminate certain experiences of wound(ing)s and the power related to them that are found within the text, their history of interpretation, and contemporary reading. Thus, I hold that multiple interpretations of wound(ing)s are needed for texts. They may be complementary, contradictory, or create impassable differences that refuse resolution. Multiple interpretations of the wound(ing)s in a text may be offered within one exegetical reading as seen in Chapter 3. But I strongly encourage that a dialogue of interpretations comes from different scholars, practitioners, and communities bringing their various readings into conversation. Such a project challenges the myth of an authoritative reading of a text and honors the ever fluid dynamics of wound(ing)s. It encourages more dialogical interpretational projects that not only increase collegiality but require those who participate and those who partake in what comes from the collaboration to embody a practice of engaging wound(ing)s in texts and those generated by texts from multiple perspectives.

Witnessing Wound(ing)s

The final area of consideration revolves around the ethics of witnessing. While this topic will be investigated in greater depth in the final chapter, a cursory examination of witnessing and the politics surrounding it is provided here. The

reader/spectator/interpreter of wound(ing)s inhabits a complex sphere when engaging representations of wound(ing)s. There are countless dangerous engagements and further wound(ing)s that can arise from the interaction between readers/spectators/interpreters and representations of wound(ing)s. As noted above there is the danger of readers appropriating or over identifying with victims of wound(ing)s, erasing their agency or specific circumstance. There is also a danger of what Sophie Ann Oliver building on Elie Wiesel calls "unethical spectatorship" of the traumatized body.[82] Through unethical spectatorship, the traumatized body becomes a spectacle and commodity that is decontextualized, dehumanized, and/or eroticized. The spectator responds with ethical apathy, "morbid fascination," or some combination of the two.[83] Oliver calls for care by the spectator to contextualize traumatic events and acknowledge the power they hold in gazing upon victims.[84] Without such acknowledgment the spectator runs the risk of "becoming complicit in the very logic of degrading, marginalizing, dehumanizing effect of atrocity upon the victim."[85]

The potential violence that the reader/spectator can commit has led several trauma theorists to examine the concept of empathy. LaCapra proposes the idea of "empathetic unsettlement" in which one feels for another's experience but does not appropriate that experience nor claim full understanding or mastery of it.[86] This provides "a barrier" to oversimplified meaning-making and challenges "harmonizing or spiritually uplifting

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[82] Sophie Anne Oliver, "Trauma, bodies, and performance art: Towards an embodied ethics of seeing," in *Interrogating Trauma: Collective Suffering in Global Arts and Media*, ed. Mick Broderick and Antonio Traverso (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 121.
[83] Ibid.
[84] It should be noted that Oliver primarily engages visual and performative art, though her comments are easily applicable to textual representations as well.
[85] Ibid.
[86] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* 41.

accounts of extreme events from which we attempt to derive reassurance or a benefit."[87] Bennett builds upon LaCapra through her concept of "empathetic vision." Empathetic vision refers to how certain artistic representations evoke affective and political responses that contribute to embodied conversations about traumatic events without reducing wound(ing)s to the avant-garde or overly identifying with victims.[88] These forms of intentional empathy seek to prevent over-identification with victims or traumatic experiences while creating space to engage, react, and choose courses of action in the face of the traumatic. The efficacy of empathy to serve in this manner is examined in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Biblical interpreters must consider their aims in reading and interpreting wound(ing)s in biblical texts. There are ethical considerations concerning how wound(ing)s are presented in scholarship and the intended effects of such a presentation. This carries a particular weightiness given the long tradition of identifying with biblical victims of wound(ing)s, such as Jesus, while neglecting to see the power of one's own position, the violence one inflicts on others, etc. Consideration is also necessary when introducing contemporary instances or representations of wound(ing)s into conversation with biblical texts so that contemporary and ancient victims are not furthered victimized by the reader's gaze. Another factor of consideration is the spiritualization of wound(ing)s that can take place within interpretations and the faith communities that engage them. The intersection of faith/spirituality and witnessing to wound(ing)s requires

[87] Ibid., 41-42.
[88] Jill Bennett, *Empathetic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 21, 31-32.

careful examination with regards to engaging the political and ethical aspects of wound(ing)s.

This connects to a final point of consideration with regards to the (in)actions produced through witnessing as well as the desired goals and outcomes of witnessing. For some, the goal of witnessing is an active performance of breaking the silence around wound(ing)s to bring about peace or some form of healing.[89] Others, such as Ann Cvetkovich, are less optimistic about this goal of witnessing, seeing it as "a shift from movement politics toward therapeutic culture," a shift from the social to personal that de-politicizes wound(ing)s and can engender social apathy or provoke violence.[90] This highlights the ways in which ambivalence can arise around witnessing.[91] For it is not safe for certain individuals or groups, but can instead provoke further wound(ing)s against them. Thus, witnessing must return to the realm of the political and ethical, so that the power dynamics imbued in witnessing are taken seriously. For New Testament interpretations of wound(ing) this requires careful attention to both the texts and contemporary contexts that are brought into dialogue with it. It also requires that responses move beyond empathy to action. Witnessing requires an embodied response from people of faith. The potential of this witness will be examined at the close of this work.

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[89] For example, Laub holds peace as the goal of witnessing and hold that speaking of one's experience is necessary for "none find peace in silence, even when it is their choice to remain silent." ("An Event Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony, and Survival" in *Testimony*, 79.)
[90] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings,* 33.
[91] Ibid., 22.

Engaging Wound(ing)s

The diverse and dynamic nature of wound(ing)s necessitates equally expansive and adaptive interpretational methods and responses. These methods of engagement, as gestured to above, require comprehensive attention not only to wound(ing)s but the contexts, power dynamics, and relationalities within which they occur. Similarly, responses require attention not only on theoretical, but also political and ethical levels. The aim is to seek textual engagements and interpretations that take into account the complexities of lived realities within ancient and contemporary societies and their effects on wound(ing)s.

The five areas of concern outlined above guide the three exegetical chapters that follow. Each chapter leans into and engages the areas at varying levels. Each chapter also falls short in some way of fully engaging the potential these areas of concern possess. This highlights the ways in which these areas of concern are meant to a produce fluid, dynamic means for engaging wound(ing)s that are ever-evolving and being built upon by future interpretations. Honoring both the successes and shortcomings of engaging these areas, the following three chapters nevertheless remain committed to de-colonizing and re-politicizing interpretations.

CHAPTER THREE

When the World Comes Crashing Down: Reading Mark as a Gospel in Trauma

Fig. 1 Paul Kolnik, *Members of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Exodus*, David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center, New York, June 2016.

Lifeless bodies litter the stage, save for a woman seated on the floor trapped in an inconsolable pieta. A holy man appears and walks among the bodies animating the once dead corpses as strains of gospel and street music collide in the air around them. Awakened from death, from ignorance, these bodies move towards enlightenment with every beat of hip hop that increasingly courses through their veins and out their limbs. Each individual expresses themself in unique, yet collectively syncopated ways. Suddenly a light, perhaps a headlight or a search light, shines upon the collective ensnaring them like prey.

But this collective is not just any community. It is a community of black bodies hauntingly mirroring the communities depicted day after day on U.S. news hours. These bodies trapped in and by the light, slow their movement but defy surrender to the power controlling the light. A gunshot pierces the air. The community falls backwards, ricocheting from the impact of the continued gunning down of black bodies that violently tear at the flesh and fabric of society. In this moment of senselessness, the stage fades into darkness. Another death disrupts the cycle of living. Another wound pierces the collective. Another attempt to find a way to live on in the face of tragedy begins.[1]

With their eyes still trying to adjust to the glaring light of Roman domination that entrapped their community and violently extinguished the light of hope from their world, the women set out for the tomb. Whether out of disbelief, resistance, or dutiful adherence to ritual, the women went to tend to the body of their friend and messiah. Perhaps

[1] Based on the June 17, 2016 live performance of *Exodus* by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center, New York.

witnessing (to) his body, would help to make sense of the senseless acts of violence committed against their community. But the women were robbed of their witnessing, of their inconsolable pieta. Instead, they found the body missing and received an incomprehensible message from a stranger that only compounded their grief, terror, and disorientation: οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε· *With this they fled in fear into a deafening silence that the writer of the Gospel of Mark did not seek to dispel. What happened next to the women and the Markan gospel account was up to the broader community to narrate.*

Rennie (Lorenzo) Harris's *Exodus* by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the end of the Gospel of Mark vividly animate the dynamic, ongoing nature of insidious trauma – compounding wounds, aftermath(s), acting out, working through, resistance, and further traumatization. For *Exodus*, questions of violence, resistance, and hope for individual and collective transcendence in the face of wound(ing)s erupt, engaging the religion of the black church and the pulse of the street. Harris' piece begs the question of the place and relevance of religion, of resurrection, in the face of insidious and interconnected event-based traumas. It asks what story is told and from whose perspective. It inquires how a community lives on (with or without healing) after continual wound(ing)s. Similarly, the following investigation of the multiple endings of Mark's gospel asks how the Markan community and later communities of believers responded to, shaped, and memorialized the wounding of their messiah and their community. It seeks to live into the multiple responses to wound(ing)s that are present within the text, honoring the messy multiplicity and the contexts from which they arose. In doing so, Mark's multiplicity is invited to dialogue with the complex web of responses

to contemporary wound(ing)s that emerge today and to expose the political and power structures that influence such responses.

Asking (New) Questions of an Overly Questioned Text

Mark concludes, "So they went out and fled the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid [ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ]" (Mk 16:8, New Revised Standard Version). Full stop. Readers are left with fear, terror, and a pesky dangling γάρ.[2] Misunderstanding chokes out the good news of resurrection glory. Women are running, Jesus is nowhere to be found, Rome's dominance remains seemingly undisturbed, and grammatical obscurities leave philologists in a tizzy. On top of it all, Mark's "flustered" ending "offers no concrete proposal for future action," no direct way out of the chaos.[3] Rather than let the chaotic uncertainty of Mark 16:8 stand, a host of individuals, communities, and canonical siblings have tried to tame and sanitize Mark's ending to better fit dominate imagings of the Good News.

Countless scholars have wrestled with how to interpret the gospel's peculiar ending, or lack thereof. The question of validity serves as a central concern for many scholars. Is Mark 16:8a or 16:8b the gospel's true ending? Or is Mark 16:20? Was the original ending lost? Were new endings fabricated? Such questions have inspired entire conferences and books. Because so many others have rehearsed the history of debate

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[2] Much debate has arisen concerning the γάρ abruptly ending Mark 16:8. Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort dispute the likelihood of using such a grammatical construction to end the gospel given the few textual examples available (*The New Testament in the Original Greek: Introduction and Appendix* [New York: Harper, 1882]). Scholars such as P. W. van der Hosrt ("Can a Book End with γάρ? A Note on Mark 16:8," *Journal of Theological Studies* 23 [1972]: 121-4) and Joel Williams ("Literary Approaches to the End of Mark's Gospel" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42.1 [1999]: 21-35) outline the grammatical possibility of such a construction and its use in a number of biblical and classical texts (e.g., John 13:13; Plato, *Protagoras* 328c; Plotonius, *Ennead* 5.5; and Musonius Rufus, *Tracatus* 12). See also, R. H. Lightfoot, *Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 80-97, 106-16.

[3] Danna Nolan Fewell, "The Work of Biblical Narrative," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative,* ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 17.

around the endings, I will provide only a cursory overview of the variety of positions held. Debates over the validity, dating, and authorship of the endings comprises much of traditional scholarship about the endings. This often involves tediously parsing out opinions about Mark's ending(s) employing a mix of source and textual criticism, closely examining internal rhetorical structures and external manuscript evidence. Conclusions are varied - to put it lightly. Scholarly claims include viewing 16:8 as Mark's conclusion, asserting the validity of each additional ending (16:8b, 16:9-20) separately or in some combination, adding other verses found in single manuscripts, and speculating about lost endings.[4] The never-ending character of this textual debate is witnessed in works such as *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: Four Views,* which provides a concise overview of four major positions on the endings.[5] The monograph's four contributors all land in different places on the subject ranging from maintaining that Mark 16:8 was the original ending (Daniel Wallace)[6] to arguing for the orthodoxy of the longer ending (Maurice Robinson)[7] to claims that the original ending was lost or removed (J. K. Elliott)[8] or even

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[4] Countless overviews of these positions exist. An example of concise treatment is Alan H. Cadwallader's "The Hermeneutical Potential of the Multiple Endings of Mark's Gospel" *Colloquium* 43, no. 2 (2011):129-146.

[5]See David Allan Black, Darrell L. Bock, Keith Elliott, Maurice Robinson, and Daniel Wallace, *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: Four Views* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2008). Each author provides his distinct view in a separate chapter mostly void of reflection on the subjectivity of their approaches and/or the privileges of their social location.

[6] Westcott and Hort's "Notes on Select Readings" that accompanied their critical edition of *the New Testament in the Original Greek* provided influential claims for the inauthenticity of Mark 16:9-20 based on the absence of these verses from the recently discovered Codex Sinaiticus as well as Codex Vaticanus (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882). Raymond Brown, James Dunn, Paul Achtemeier, and a number of other scholars later developed similar arguments that combined to generate consensus in the field for Mark 16:8 as the original ending of the gospel.

[7] For a more recent case forwarding the originality of the longer ending through extensive examination of internal and external evidence, see Nicholas P. Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2014). Lunn ultimately suggests that the longer ending was intentionally removed by Gnostic-Christian groups in Egypt who opposed physical resurrection. For Lunn, this explains the manuscript discrepancies that are traditionally used to discredit Mark 16:9-20 as the original ending of Mark (346-60).

[8] Clayton Croy also theorizes extensively against the general consensus of Mark 16:8 as the original ending, suggesting instead that Mark is missing its original ending. He elaborates three theories concerning

to the weakly supported and highly unlikely idea that the Markan author went back and added on the longer ending (David Allen Black).

Beyond overly rehearsed arguments based on manuscripts and minutiae, scholars also turn to the intent of the Markan author to explain Mark 16:8 and the later endings.[9] For some, such as Brian Blount, Mark 16:8 is a most fitting ending to Mark, continuing the gospel's overall use of irony and desire for action from the reader in the wake of the constant failings of the textual characters.[10] Furthering the theme of reader participation, Alan Cadwallader views Mark 16:8 as the Markan author inviting communities to generate a range of endings, for "verse 8 is not, and was not meant to end the Gospel even if it was intended to be the end of the text of the Gospel."[11] For Cadwallader, the multiple endings of Mark are testimony that no one person, including Mark, could control

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Mark's original ending: 1) the actual ending was lost; 2) Mark was unable to complete the gospel due to persecution or death; and 3) the ending was deliberately suppressed (*The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003], 174). Of these three theories, the idea that the ending was lost continues to hold sway with some scholars, such as Philip Comfort, Robert Gundry, Martin Hengel, and Ben Witherington. Bruce Metzger also views this as a most probable explanation for Mark's ending, adding the theological aspect that he "cannot believe that the note of fear would have been regarded as an appropriate conclusion to an account of the Evangel or Good News" (*The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration.* 3rd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992]*,* 228). For a comprehensive list of scholars holding this position, see Croy, *Mutilation*, 174-77. David Hester forwards another perspective on the longer ending, namely that the ending, while added later, was authentically Markan, "being his notes" (*Does Mark 16:9-20 Belong in the New Testament?* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015], 150).

[9] A wide array of reader-response critical and narrative critical readings of Mark's endings also exist. These particular approaches have sought to explain the gospel's abrupt ending as a means "to draw the reader into [Mark's] account" (David E. Garland, *Mark: The NIV Application Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011], 622). J. Lee Magness suggests that 16:8 invites readers to participate in and supply the ending, generating a level of experience that could not be possible if the author supplied the ending (*Marking the End: Sense and Absence in the Gospel of Mark* [Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002], 47) See also Robert M. Fowler's *Let the Reader Understand* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 157-59 and, on the gospel more broadly, Stephen H. Smith, *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) and David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel,* 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

[10] Brian Blount, "Is the Joke on Us? Mark's Irony, Mark's God, and Mark's Ending" in *The Ending of Mark and the Ends of God: Essays in Memory of Donald Harrisville Juel*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 16.

[11] Cadwallader, "The Hermeneutical Potential of the Multiple Endings of Mark's Gospel," 130.

the resurrection; instead the Markan community was invited to wrestle with Mark 16:8 and formulate its own answers and action plans.[12] Cadwallader's claim that the Markan author displays no ideological leanings with regard to the resurrection or the desired communal response provides an enticing space to imagine democratic, community-centered processing; it may, however, be too generous an opinion of the author's intent.

Others remain less optimistic about the abilities of the community to form its own (acceptable) opinions in response to the resurrection and rely on divine grace in the face of human failings.[13] For example, Anne Moore provides a more pastoral take on Mark 16 suggesting that the fear of the women and the overall ambiguity of the ending allows space to accept the confusion and failure of understanding of those reading the gospel and to allow for reconciliation with God in spite of it.[14] Though reassuring, this reading downplays the amount that Mark appears to trust the reader to understand his intent in the face of the failings of those closest to Jesus. Regardless, no one interpretation prevails as the proper way to read Mark 16. The above interpretations of Mark 16 range in their plausibility, yet each uniquely seeks to bring some sense of understanding and closure to the openness and ambiguity of Mark's jagged ending.

Trauma theory shifts the conversation about how to approach Mark's endings. Rather than seeking to definitively conclude the gospel, it seeks to endlessly open it. Questions of validity and authorial intent or individualized reader-response seeking to claim a singular definitive ending are replaced with questions of communal and

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[12] Ibid., 138, 141.
[13] Donald H. Juel posits that Mark 16:8 leaves readers suspended between the tension of disappointment and anticipation that only God can bring to resolution at a future time (*Mark* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990], 233-5).
[14] Anne Moore, "Enigmatic Endings and Delayed Signs: The Ending of Mark's Gospel," in *Text and Community: Essays in Memory of Bruce M. Metzger,* ed. J. Harold Ellens (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 120.

individual responses to and processing of the traumatic. Mark's intimate connection to traumatic events has drawn attention from the still small number of biblical scholars reading with a trauma theory lens. The following takes a different approach to reading the traumatic in Mark 16 than those of previous interpretations.[15] It uses the lens of wound(ing)s to delve deeply into the multiple endings of Mark, embracing the messy complexity of the endings along with all the unwritten, erased, or lost endings connected to the gospel. It seeks to hold the gospel's multiple expressions of and reactions to wound(ing)s in connection and tension, refusing to invalidate any viewpoint. For too often, experiences of wound(ing)s, particularly among oppressed and marginalized groups, are silenced, coopted, and/or rewritten by those in power. The aim of this approach is to provide a space that does not erase, invalidate, or rank Mark's multiple endings. Rather it sees the endings as an entry point through which to explore a small and incomplete sampling of the Markan community's and future communities of believers' responses to the state sponsored execution of their friend, leader, political revolutionary, and healer Jesus.

Reading Mark 16 in/by the Light of Imperial Violence

Reading through a wound(ing) lens begins by examining the contexts and histories hovering around and entangled within the text and the wound(ing)s it contains. Mark was written in the shadow, reverberation, and anticipation of systemic wound(ing)s. Under the control of a foreign power, daily life was saturated with the realities and residues of the traumatic. As postcolonial trauma theorists such as Jay Rajiva explain, wound(ing)s in such contexts are "frequently not exceptional…not an unusual or singular

[15] For summaries of those interpretations, see pp. 34-36 above.

occurrence that takes places against a social and cultural backdrop of normalcy."[16] Instead, wound(ing)s are "woven into the political structure" making them a "pervasive daily reality, the outgrowth of an ongoing collective violence."[17] While the everyday reality of life amidst wound(ing)s impacts individual bodies and spirits, it also generates collective understandings of and responses to those wound(ing)s.[18] These collective actions, justifications, and validations come to impact the ways in which communities image themselves and how tell their stories.[19]

Mark and the stories it contains are shaped by communal wound(ing)s that emerge in an era of empire. The Roman Empire, growing in power since the end of the third century BCE, spanned from Portugal to Turkey reaching north to Britain and south to the northern coastal region of the African continent. The growth of the empire depended upon brutal conquest, military strength, and political prowess.[20] The tactics employed instilled fear and created wounds for those subsumed within the *imperium Romanum*. Though the acute relationship to such wound(ing)s varied depending on social location, the wounds it caused or threatened to create saturated society and engorged the

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[16] Rajiva, *Postcolonial Parabola*, 4.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Here it is helpful to think with Sara Ahmed's work on the "sociality of pain." Though Ahmed does not directly address trauma, her insights on pain show how witnessing and external responses influence individual experiences of pain. This pushes against the idea of viewing pain, and I would add trauma, as an individual experience. See *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 28-31.
[19] Mark has a propensity for creating space for communities to work out communal narratives and understandings of their identity through Jesus' ministry and death. For as Joanna Dewey highlights Mark "was a popular story, widely known orally" which made it not only easily transmissible, but also ensured its inclusion in the canon ("The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123.3 [2004]: 496). For a more extensive exploration of the ways in which Mark functions as story, see Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, esp. 1-8.
[20] Warren Carter provides an assessable overview of the diverse tactics and forms of presence (spatial, religious, political, etc.) employed by the Roman Empire to maintain control in *The Roman Empire and the New Testament an Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006). C. I. David Joy provides a multifaceted postcolonial perspective on Roman conquest and colonization related to the Markan context in *Mark and its Subalterns: A Hermeneutical Paradigm for a Postcolonial Context* (London: Equinox, 2008), 63-81.

exploitative lifeblood used to run the empire. These wounds existed on individual and collective levels within several temporalities, spilling in from the past, enlivening the present, and threatening the future. I highlight three interconnected modes of wound(ing) affecting bodies, psyches, and spirits in the time of Mark's composition, which, with the majority of scholars, I take to be the late 60s, or, more probably, the early 70s of the first century CE.[21]

First, the direct violence of conquest and re-conquest left a multitude of physical scars upon communities. Accounts of Roman conquest are extensive and well-documented through Roman propagandistic writings, histories, and material culture. One only needs to witness a small sampling of Rome's brutal and totalizing tactics, even in cases of "peaceful" conquest, to understand the wounds they created. Plutarch writes of Caesar in Gaul, "he took by storm more than eight hundred cities, subdued three hundred nations, and pitched battles at different times with three million men, of whom he slew one million in hand to hand fighting and took many more as prisoners" (*Caes*. 15). Tacitus describes the Germans' defeat stating, "the enemy [the Germans] were slaughtered from the fifth hour of daylight to nightfall, and for ten miles the ground was littered with corpses and weapons" (*Annals* 2.18). When peoples did not willingly submit to Roman rule and subduing and dominating them was deemed unlikely, Rome "had no compunction about employing the tactics of extermination where it was felt inadvisable

[21] The dating of Mark generally falls between 60-80 CE, with a majority of scholars locating the gospel between 65-75 CE. Much of the determination for the exact dating of the gospel depends on whether one reads the apocalyptic discourse of Mark 13 in which the destruction of the temple is predicted as referencing events that have occurred or that are an imminent reality. Joel Marcus, in agreement with Gerd Theissen, provides an example of post-70 CE dating ("The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111.3 [1992]: 460), while Adela Yarboro Collins champions the pre-70 CE dating, suggesting that Mark was written in response to Menahem emerging as a messianic leader following the summer of 66 CE ("The Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13 in Historical Context," *Biblical Research* 41 [1996]: 5-36).

to offer a safe pardon to defeated enemies."[22] The largescale violence left gaping wounds in its wake. As Horsley notes, "[t]he Roman killing or enslavement of tens of thousands of Galileans and Judeans around the time Jesus was born must have left mass trauma among the people in its wake."[23] In addition to the wound(ing)s from acts of conquest, the potential for persecution and/or scapegoating also existed as is witnessed in Nero's supposed mass persecution of the Christ-followers in Rome in 64-65 CE following the Great Fire of Rome in 64 CE.

Amidst the hauntings and festering wounds of past violence, the Markan community faced present wound(ing)s related to the Jewish War (66-73 CE), including the (recent or imminent) destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.[24] This war, like so many others, was comprehensive, inflicting wound(ing)s directly and indirectly on whole communities. Disease, starvation, and despair plagued communities. During the siege of Jerusalem, Josephus writes of the Jews:

> Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market-places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead, wheresoever their misery seized them (*BJ* 5.12.3).

The conquered also experienced compounding violence and loss through the confiscation of their lives and property to support the Roman agenda. Enslavement, reallocation of

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[22] David J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 25.
[23] Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 30.
[24] In addition to temporal proximity, Joel Marcus argues that Mark was written in geographical proximity to the Jewish revolt (*Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* Anchor Bible Commentary 27 [New York: Doubleday, 1999], 28-39).

land, and redistribution of resources crippled populations contributed to the second mode of woundings – ideological wound(ing)s.

Ideological wound(ing)s are a direct by-product of colonialism. These wound(ing)s gesture towards Roman tactics of domination that fall outside of direct military aggression. They are the insidious wound(ing)s that seep into all aspects of daily life creating, at times, suffocating effects. They are inflicted and justified through colonial logic that seeks to control and dehumanize the conquered. Rome used numerous tactics to inflict long-term insidious trauma.

One such tactic was the ways in which Rome publically celebrated and justified its ability to wound and exploit. Triumphs lavishly celebrated Rome's victory, using the conquered as props in the spectacle.[25] After the fall of the Second Temple, Josephus describes the victory procession. The spoils of war including prisoners and pillaged goods; particularly, sacred items from the Temple were on display, as were "[m]oving stages three or four stories high." These stages depicted episodes from the war such as "a prosperous countryside devastated, whole battalions of the enemy slaughtered, others led into captivity,…an area deluged with blood,…a country in flames on every side" (*BJ* 7.132-55). Additional daily reminders of Roman victory and the ideologies stemming

[25] The Roman triumph not only publically celebrated military victory but served multiple societal functions. As Peter Holliday states, triumphs were "didactic" spectacles operating on political, religious, and social levels that included purification of the military after war, honoring the gods, bestowing political power on the conquering general, and reinforcing social hierarchies. Thus, their public celebration of Rome's ability to wound resonated on multiple levels ("Triumphal Painting: Its Function, Development, and Reception," *The Art Bulletin* 79.1 [March 1997]: 134). For the history and development of the Roman triumph, see Robert Payne, *The Roman Triumph* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1962) and for attention to the captives' roles and participation, see Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 107-42.

from it were populated throughout the empire taking the form of Roman literature, art, architecture, jewelry, currency, epigraphy, and public monuments.[26]

The Roman propaganda machine framed such conquest as natural, necessary, and divinely ordained. Josephus produces a speech of Agrippa to the Jews before the destruction of the Temple, begging that they submit to Rome to avoid further violence. In it, Agrippa describes Roman conquest as inevitable and divinely ordained. He chastises the Jews for claiming a right to freedom from Roman domination and slavery stating, "for slavery is a painful experience and a struggle to avoid it once and for all is just; but the man who having once accepted the yoke then tries to cast it off is a contumacious slave, not a lover of freedom" (*BJ* 2.256). Once again, Rome is depicted as the benevolent victor who had the right to bring nations under its control and sought to do so peaceably. Those who resisted or rose up again against Rome were in the wrong and deniers of freedom. Thus, Rome absolved itself of culpability for the violence, leaving the conquered responsible for their own destruction. Such a position distorts and silences the wounds of the conquered. It erases their history and denies their understanding of events.

Ideological wound(ing)s also take the form of tactics used to sub- or de-humanize the conquered. Rome drew upon and further developed Hellenistic tropes depicting the

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[26] Paul Zanker's *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* provides a foundational overview of the evolution of public and private Roman visual culture and its roles in shaping and propagating Roman ideologies (trans. by Alan Shapiro [Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988]). No more relevant a public monument to this discussion is the Arch of Titus, which prominently depicts the victory procession following the fall of the Temple. For an engaging treatment of how Romans may have understood the God of Israel in light of this monument, see Jodi Magness, "The Arch of Titus at Rome and the Fate of the God of Israel," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59.2 (Autumn 2008): 201-17.

enemy as mythical giants, threatening barbarians, or submissive women.[27] The conquered are disempowered, emasculated, and vulnerable to the penetration of Rome on sexual, economic, and cultural levels. Their cultural/ethnic identity markers are embellished and used to diminish and differentiate them from Romans. Their equation in Roman art with barbarians and other mythical creatures casts them as wild, violent, and unruly sub-human beings that require the taming control of Rome. Such depictions not only function to reinforce Roman supremacy and normalize Roman culture, they impress ideas of inferiority and sub-humanness upon the conquered.

Finally, a third mode of wound(ing) exists within the interconnectedness of the religious and political in society. Questions around the nature of the divine and its relationship to creation often arise in the face of the traumatic. Because in Mark's time the political and religious were intimately interconnected parts of the "web of power that formed the fabric of society," the wound(ing)s the Markan community experienced at the hands of Rome also affected their religion.[28] The Markan community wrestled with and bore witness to multiple layers of violence and wound(ing)s that would naturally raise questions about their relationship to God and God's presence in the face of the community's suffering. But the Markan community also had to attempt to process the direct attacks on their religious beliefs and practices with the torture and execution of their Son of God as well the defeat of God witnessed in the destruction of the Temple. All of these wounds also rubbed against the rhetoric of Roman divinely sanctioned victory

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[27] Davina Lopez provides an astute and detailed account of the evolution of these tropes in Roman visual imagery and their use to further ideologies of Roman conquest. See *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 26-55.

[28] S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 248.

and rule in which the gods stood on the side of the Romans. These compounding events and ideologies created disruptions that impacted understandings of the divine, ritual life, and their identity as people of God.

These are but three modes of wound(ing)s that shaped the Markan community. Military aggression, colonialism, and divine defeat produce wounds that can both galvanize and destroy collective identities, histories, and relationality. The Markan community was living simultaneously amidst festering wounds stemming from the legacy of Roman conquest and the violence of the Jewish War which would result in the destruction of the Second Temple. But it is important to note that community members experienced these wound(ing)s in a variety of ways and at varying levels of intensity. The colonialism of the Roman Empire was fluid and evolving with different groups assimilating, accommodating, and/or resisting it in a variety of ways. Factors of identity, location, etc. shaped one's experience of colonialism. Gosden posits that Roman colonialism was generally a "middle-ground colonialism" that allowed for accommodation between colonizer and colonizer and multilateral cultural exchange.[29] The intricacies and effects of such exchanges and the acuteness of their related wound(ing)s depended on one's social and geographical location within the empire. But nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that within this "middle-ground" form of colonialism, propensities towards violence and de-humanization had space to flourish.[30]

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[29] Chris Gosden, *Archaeology and Colonialism: Cultural Contact from 5000 BC to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 82-113, quoted in Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity,* 31.
[30] Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity,* 34-37.

As we turn to the gospel's endings, it is thus important to acknowledge Mark's[31] own relationship to Rome, its power, and its wound(ing)s. Mark's engagement with and response to the Roman empire has produced varying opinions among scholars. Early work from Fernando Belo and Ched Myers helped to pave the way for postcolonial scholarship on Mark.[32] These treatments viewed Mark as resistance literature highlighting issues of class, economics, and politics. Richard Horsley continues the model.[33] Drawing upon empire critical studies and related approaches, he views Mark as anti-colonial resistance literature. The gospel takes on a radical political agenda in which the kingdom of God subverts the kingdom of Caesar. As Seong Hee Kim notes, however, in doing so Horsley "oversimplifies the plots of the Markan story with a binary structure" inverting and reinforcing oppressor/oppressed hierarchies.[34] The work of Tat-siong Benny Liew and Simon Samuel provide greater nuance to imperial dynamics in their readings of Mark. Liew reads Mark as resisting the Roman empire but doing so through mimicry.[35] Drawing on Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry, the gospel is viewed as seeking power and liberation by mimicking and utilizing the tools and strategies of the

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[31] For simplicity, I will refer to the (unknown) author of the gospel of Mark simply as "Mark" using the pronouns "he, him, his" for the remainder of the chapter.

[32] Belo and Myers start to tease out topics vital to later postcolonial readings in the work they produced in the 1970s and 1980s. Belo provides a materialist reading of Mark examining how Jesus holds an anti-Roman perspective from which he reaches out to and supports the powerless (*A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark,* trans. by Matthew J. O'Connell [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981]). Myers provides a socio-literary perspective indebted to Gandhian non-violence that explores Mark as a response to the pressures the community experienced from both Jewish insurgents and Roman forces (*Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

[33] Horsley provides an extensive corpus of work exploring power, resistance, and empire. For one example of his political reading specifically of the gospel of Mark, see *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

[34] Seong Hee Kim, *Mark, Women and Empire: A Korean Postcolonial Perspective* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 43.

[35] Tat-siong Benny Liew, *Politics of Pariousia* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 93-107. For a concise summary, see his "Tyranny, Boundary and Might: Colonial Mimicry in Mark's Gospel," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73 (1999): 7-31.

Roman Empire. Simon Samuel further complicates the Markan discourse seeing it as neither fully anti- or pro-colonial. Instead, it is a gospel marked by postcolonial ambivalence and transcultural hybridity that accommodates and disrupts both Jewish and Roman cultures.[36]

The following reading leans towards Samuel's ambiguous reading of Mark. It creates spaces to feel the stickiness of wound(ing)s laying on the surface and between the lines of the text. It allows the insidious and event-based wounds connected to imperial conquest, Jesus' execution, and the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem to reverberate against one another, creating resonances and dissonances. It also opens spaces for a variety of responses to these wound(ing)s to exist simultaneously, emerging and evolving from different locations within the community and beyond.

This reading, and the gospel in general, also requires contemporary readers and their wound(ing)s to collide with the text. For Mark does not allow its readers to remain safe and separate from its "unflinching address to life falling apart."[37] Instead, the gospel invites its readers to cross over the boundary that should separate text and audience to participate in the sticky and unpredictable negotiations of wound(ing)s, faith, and identity that take place throughout the text. Thus, temporality is simultaneously fixed and collapsing in the text, remaining rigidly contextualized yet defiantly porous. It welcomes continual engagements with Mark's endings, engagements to which we now turn.

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[36] Simon Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 154-7.
[37] Kotrosits and Taussig, *Re-Reading the Gospel of Mark,* 9.

Fig. 2 and 3 *Exodus*, by Renee Harris, performed by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center, New York, June 2016.

The Open-ended Endings of Mark

The endings of Mark open space to explore how wound(ing)s can shape communities and the texts arising from them. Though the original and additional endings emerge out of different contexts, they signal to how individuals and communities may process wound(ing)s and the sources of power that can guide these processes. The following provides two readings of the original ending of Mark in light of the wound(ing)s outlined above. Then focus shifts to the longer ending of Mark, which arising from a later time period and within a different community than that of the rest of the gospel, nevertheless also helps us think about how wound(ing)s are processed over time. The longer ending will be read from two divergent perspectives to highlight how differing desires and motivations can shape the processing of wound(ing)s.

Two Openings in the Original Ending

In Harris' *Exodus* individuals arise from death to dance. Traveling towards enlightenment their movements grow in intensity and power. Rapidly, the music and the dancers' confidence crescendo. Witnessing their movements, one is caught up in their resilience and the hope they embody for breaking free from cycles of violence and isolation. Audience and dancers alike seem to rush towards a newly attainable goal of transcendence. But in a spilt second, these dreams are literally shot down. Without time to prepare or comprehend what has happened, life and transcendence are cast down into the depths of despair, death, and emptiness. *Exodus* feels very akin to the gospel of Mark. Always in a rush and sparse on detail, the gospel of Mark appears to be pushing its readers towards a climatic ending. Despite misunderstandings and mystery, the ending appears to hold a promise of transcendence from the oppressions and occlusions of the

day. But after hurrying the readers through the gospel (εὐθὺς, "immediately," is one of Mark's favorite words), Mark 16 throws them into a void. There is no transcendence, no readily available hope.

For Mark and the community he is writing for and from within, the emptiness that immobilizes and swallows hope can be read through the lens of wound(ing)s. They are grappling with wound(ing)s that reach across multiple temporalities and histories. As displayed above, Mark and his community are impacted not only by Jesus' execution but by cataclysmic social and political wound(ing)s. They are experiencing collective trauma, which Kai Erikson defines as "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality."[38] With their identity, faith, and ultimately the power of their God challenged ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" –15:34), the community lives at the precipice of defeat and disintegration. Mark (and likely parts of his community) cannot move to Good News, to resurrection.

Instead, Mark allows readers to peer into the heart of his community's traumatic response through the visual and the visceral. The empty tomb is an open wound swirling with misunderstanding and fear. The familiar feelings of powerlessness and defeat cause bodies to recoil. The frenzied sound of the women's retreating steps and their impending silence are equally deafening and gut wrenching. Vision of past promises are overpowered by the numbing pain of present wounds.

Perhaps the most gaping wound is the one that is visually missing from this scene: Jesus' body. There lies an inability to either face Jesus' brutalized body or to resurrect it.

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[38] Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," 187.

Lurking behind Jesus' missing body, missing Good News, could be the inability to see clearly beyond or differentiate Jesus from so many other crosses that were presently overflowing with bodies. For Jesus did not bear the cross alone. Many others met a similar fate. For example, during the siege of Jerusalem Titus ordered the mass murders of inhabitants trying to flee the city:

> They were accordingly beaten and subjected to torture of every description…and then crucified opposite the walls. Some five hundred or more were captured daily…[Titus] hoped that the spectacle might induce the Judeans to surrender for fear that continued resistance would involve them in a similar fate. The soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different postures; and so great was their number that space could not be found for the crosses nor crosses for the bodies. (*BJ* 5.449-51)

The absence of Jesus' body could also build upon the gospel's greater inability to describe fully the extent of the violence Roman officials likely committed against Jesus in an effort to humiliate and ultimately dehumanize him. Manuel Villalobos Mendoza details the ways in which Jesus' body was sexually penetrated both through the gaze of his mockers and the physical beatings he endured.[39] David Tombs adds to this image stating that "crucifixion in the ancient world appears to have carried a strongly sexual element and should be understood as a form of sexual abuse," an element that neither Mark nor any of the other gospels openly disclose.[40] Thus, despite the visceral nature of Mark's account at Jesus' passion, there are literal and figurative voids throughout the story. Psychoanalytic literary trauma theory suggests that such holes might be caused by

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[39] Manuel Villalobos Mendoza, *Abject Bodies in the Gospel of Mark* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 122-45.

[40] David Tombs, "Crucifixion, State Terror, and Sexual Abuse," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 53 (Autumn 1999): 101, 104. Raymond E. Brown adds to this discussion in his analysis of the likelihood that Jesus was crucified completely unclothed (*The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave,* Vol. 2 [New York: Doubleday, 1994], 952-3). Xavier Pikaza goes even farther stating Jesus dies "totalmente desnudo (en rostro y sexo) – completely naked (in face and sex) – exposed for all to gaze upon (*Pan, casa palabra: La iglesia en Marcos* [Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1998], 408, quoted in Mendoza, *Abject Bodies,* 140).

factors such as an inability fully to assimilate past and present wound(ing)s[41] or the incomprehensible immensity of the collective experience of violence resulting in a partial "collapse of witnessing."[42]

Thus, the original ending of Mark could be read as a manifestation of the psychological effects of wound(ing)s. Repeating the traumatic story of Jesus' death and reliving the destruction of the Second Temple and its aftermath, the author of Mark is trapped in the fear and terror of the tomb. As Judith Herman explains, temporality is altered via the experience of trauma such that the past and present can mix, allowing two realities to exist simultaneously.[43] Jesus' execution and the Temple's destruction could become intimately intertwined, leaving Mark unable to see beyond the tomb, beyond the Temple's rubble to image the liberation and reassurance of the resurrection. Mark might also feel a "fidelity" to the wound of Jesus' death.[44] LaCapra explains that such fidelity arises from one's bond to the dead which "invest[s] trauma with value and make its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated."[45] Unable or unwilling to move beyond the tomb, Mark requires readers to sit with the violence, terror, and fear that continues to plague the community rather than providing a cathartic outlet.

A second way to view Mark 16:8, beyond a traditional psychoanalytic literary approach, is to read the silence of the tomb as a tactic of survival for the Markan community. With the violence of the Jewish Wars and compounding insidious traumas

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[41] Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 4.
[42] Laub, "Bearing Witness," 79.
[43] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 89.
[44] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 25.
[45] Ibid.

choking the air, silence around the resurrection could prove a tactic to protect the community. Even though telling the story of Jesus' life, ministry, and execution could be read by some as an act of defiance, Mark stops short of presenting his audience with the resurrected body of Jesus. Rome remains ambiguously victorious. What happened to Jesus is up for interpretation. Grave robbing, poor eyesight, hallucination, miscommunication, and/or resurrection and apotheosis are all viable options. But Mark does not come firmly down on a definitive interpretation, instead providing his community a protective layer of ambiguity. Thus, the original ending falls more in line with a public transcript telling of an insurgent leader easily crushed by those in power, instilling fear in those who sided with him. In this terror-filled vision of the tomb, Mark leaves little room for hidden transcripts of resistance through resurrection.[46]

Such a reading may seem unsatisfactory for those who depend upon liberation as resurrection having the final word. But womanist tradition, particularly the work of Delores Williams, highlights that in certain circumstances liberation is not the goal or possibility for God's people, particularly for black women. Instead survival, quality of life, and community formation become the focus and work of the people of God.[47] God accompanies these individuals in their quest for survival, but is "no liberator God."[48]

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[46] Here I am engaging James Scott's concepts of communication between dominators and the oppressed in which there are public, direct forms of communication (public transcripts) as well as subversive communication that critiques the power of the dominate (hidden transcript). See *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[47] Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Boks, 1993) 161, 175. Williams illustrates this perspective using the biblical character of Hagar in Genesis 16 and 21. One example is Hagar, having run away from Abram and Sarai into the wilderness, is encouraged by the angel of Yahweh to return to her oppressive situation rather than being liberated from it.

[48] Ibid., 21.

This survival is, as Derrida suggests, the "living on" that arises in the face of death.[49] Shelly Rambo builds on Derrida explaining, "[s]urviving is not a state in which one gets beyond death; instead, death remains in the experiences of survival and life is reshaped in light of death – not in light of its finality but its persistence."[50] Reading with survival in mind makes the ending of Mark strategically silent. Though oral stories of resurrection appearances may circulate within the community, in an act of survival Mark does not include them in his gospel. The threats of annihilation that emerge from past, current, and future traumas invoke a survival tactic that emerges in the gospel. From Williams' perspective, this desire to protect the community and ensure its survival is in and of itself the embodiment of Jesus' "ministerial vision" and ethic.[51]

Reading the original ending of Mark with lenses of wound(ing) highlight some of the complex negotiations that may be taking place behind and within the text. In both readings, the three levels of Roman wound(ing)s described above go ultimately unaddressed and unchallenged. As I have argued, the reasons for this silence may have varied. But the negotiations and attempts to address such wound(ing)s did not end with the author and his immediate community. Instead, they produced further conversations and wrestling that refused to let a silent ending have the final word. The gaping wound of Jesus' death and missing body required (ad)dressing by later communities.

Two Openings in the Additional Endings

Trauma theory shifts the conversation around how to approach Mark's additional endings from a question of their validity to one of communal and individual processing of

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[49] Jacques Derrida, "Living On: Border Lines," trans. James Helbert in Harold Bloom et al., *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York, Seabury, 1979), 76.
[50] Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 25.
[51] Ibid., 165.

the traumatic. The importance of this shift is the ability to hold the gospel's multiple expressions of and reactions to wound(ing)s without having to invalidate contradicting viewpoints. For as mentioned above, all too often, experiences of wound(ing)s, particularly among oppressed and marginalized groups, are silenced, invalidated, and/or completely erased by those in power. The beauty of Mark's multiple conclusions is that they provide a space not to erase or rank the endings but to see them as a small sampling of the responses to the state sponsored execution of their friend, leader, political revolutionary, and healer Jesus.

Turning to the gospel's additional endings found in Mark 16:8b-20, it appears that the Markan community was not alone in grappling with the story of Jesus. Parts of the broader community of later Christ-followers might have also lived in a mixed temporality, in a reality filled with flashbacks and repetitions of the multiple event-based and insidious traumas they individually and collectively experienced. In seeking to break cycles of repetition, there may have been an attempt to fill in the gaps or change the memory that the Gospel of Mark provides concerning Jesus' death and the future of the movement. It is an attempt to deny the empty tomb as a signal of the end of Jesus' spiritual and political vision.

It is clear that the original ending did not to fully satisfy and bring to a close the memory of Jesus' execution. Identifying with the women and acknowledging their fear is clearly not enough for the later followers of Jesus. Other gospel accounts provide much clearer, less fear-filled resurrection appearances where any chaos or misunderstanding is resolved and the Good News is successfully proclaimed. Such a desire, whether for coherence, consistency, resolution, or some other longing did not leave the Gospel of

Mark untouched. Instead, others, apparently scribes, in the second century CE added endings to Mark, drawing from and more closely aligning Mark with its gospel siblings.[52] As Lars Hartman notes, however, the additional endings do not smoothly transition from the original ending so as to give the appearance of a continuous, resolved post-resurrection account.[53] Instead, they added further textual tension to an already tense ending. Without any real transition the content of the shorter ending of Mark jumps from the fear and silence of the tomb to the women having miraculously found their voice. They go on to share the news as they had been commanded, followed by a brief resurrection appearance by Jesus in which "Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of external salvation" (16:8b). Mark's longer ending expands to include an ever-growing number of encounters with the risen Jesus and the increasing powers of his followers (16:9-20). It reads:

> Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. **10** She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. **11** But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.**12** After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. **13** And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.**14** Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. **15** And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. **16** The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. **17** And these signs will accompany those who

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[52] James A. Kelhoffer forwards this harmonizing position that the creation of the longer ending emerged from a desire to "bring the ending of the Second gospel into greater conformity with the conclusions of writings like Matthew, Luke and John" (*Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and the Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 243*)*. Other positions include ideas that the longer ending existed as a separate missionary tract (Henry Barclay Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* [London: Macmillan, 1902], cx) or that the longer ending was meant not only to provide a more acceptable closing to Mark but also to better fit the gospel within the Western gospel canon (Christian B. Amphoux, "La 'Finale longue de Marc': Un epilogue des quatre evangiles", in Camille Focant, ed., *Synoptic Gospels* [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993], 548-55).

[53] Lars Hartman, *Mark for the Nations: A Text- and Reader-Oriented Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Pinwick Publications, 2010), 669-71.

> believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; **18** they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." **19** So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. **20** And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it. (Mk 16:9-20)

The question is how to read the significance of, power behind, and witness of these additional endings in relation to the Jesus followers' processing of wound(ing)s. This question guides the following engagement the longer ending of Mark, the aim of which is not to definitively posit the circumstances through which the longer ending was composed or added to the gospel nor speculate about what sources were used to generate the text. Instead, it is to explore what the content of this ending might expose about yet further communal grappling with and processing of Jesus' execution and their own wound(ing)s, as well as the human desire to respond to wound(ing)s more broadly. For Christ-followers experienced further compounding wound(ing)s in the second century CE – the second Jewish revolt (132-5 CE), and the abiding, catastrophic consequences for Jews and Jewish Christ-followers of its suppression, and the empire-wide persecution of Christ-followers under Decius (249 CE). Later Christ-followers' experience of compounding wound(ing)s may have engendered space to revisit (and rewrite) Mark's open wound of an ending as a means of processing present and past wound(ing)s. But regardless of the reasoning for the addition, contemporary readers can think with the content of the longer ending as a means to explore the extended, multidimensional process communities undergo in grappling with wound(ing)s. I gesture towards two potential ways to read the longer ending as an image of communal processing of wound(ing)s – communal resurrection from below and structural silencing from above.

A Response from Below: Mark 16:9-20 as Communal Resilience

The longer ending of Mark moves the reader from the terror of the tomb to the reassurance of resurrection. It depicts a community moving from mourning and disbelief into a state of action. Such movement often occurs in varying ways and at different times for community members, echoing the text's struggles with stubborn disbelieving believers (16:11, 12). The longer ending glimpses but one resurrection narrative that emerged from communal memories and partial memories of the events that occurred, all of which may have been "influenced by fantasies and desires, or by a wish that things had been different."[54] But in the end, the memories coalesced to collectively claim and embody the command to proclaim the good news to the whole of creation. This good news of salvation did not rest solely in another realm but is accompanied by further concrete, worldly assurances. These assurances do not guarantee a world free of pain, suffering, and trauma. Rather the text reassures believers that God is present with the community. God will protect and heal them in the face of the traumatic – demons will listen to them, poison will not harm them, disease will not devastate them (16:17-19). This is the good news that they take out and share publically with God actively working by their side. Thus, just as God did not allow Jesus' execution to have the final word, so God actively participates in the salvation of believers. Disbelief and mourning shift to divinely and communally empowered action.

This transformation from trauma-induced immobilization to empowered communal action can be read as a community's attempt to "[foster] attunement to previously unheard suffering and [put] into global circulation memories of a broad range

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[54] Kaplan, *Trauma and Culture*, 42.

of trauma histories."[55] Specifically, it could read as part of the process that Dominick LaCapra calls "working through." [56] Working through challenges traumatic paralysis and repetition, instead showing that through processes like mourning, critical analysis, etc. those experiencing trauma might (partially) free themselves from its effects. The community is not trapped in an endless cycle of rushing to and running from the empty tomb. Instead, they are able to process, speak about, and reshape the traumatic through oral and narrative forms. But as Jay Rajiva cautions of LaCapra's perspective, such working through cannot assume that "trauma is a singular laceration of a wider social fabric" that has been previously untraumatized.[57] This would create the idea that working through a trauma helps to return a community to a state of normalcy. Instead, the working through should be framed not as a return, but rather as a transition that the community undergoes. The complex web of wounds remains, but relationships to and understandings of these wounds change and remain in flux.

Such transitions in perspective are seen throughout the additional ending. The ending signals a transition in attitude of a community from disbelief and fear to belief and empowerment. The post-resurrection community does not hide in fear but rather proclaims the good news everywhere. But the ending does not mask the difficulty of such a transition. The process is gradual and troubled as witnessed in the initial disbelief of the accounts of Mary Magdalene and the other two followers. This is further intensified by Jesus berating the eleven for their stubbornness in refusing to move to resurrection belief, a stubbornness that could easily mirror difficulties a community experiences in its

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[55] Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing* 127.
[56] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* 21-22.
[57] Rajiva, *Postcolonial Parabola,* 21.

transition to a resurrection perspective in the midst of its present, past, and future wounds.

Another transition moves believers from a vulnerability to wound(ing)s to a state of invulnerability and immunity. The community moves into a superior position where all that seeks to oppose or harm it is condemned. Previous agents of wound(ing)s (disease, snakes, disbelief, etc.) are not removed from the earth. Rather they become signs of the power of the community's strength to triumph in the face of potential harm.

Finally, this is a transition from abandonment and emptiness in the face of the traumatic to collectivity and expansiveness. The community is united with one voice sharing the message of resurrection and salvation, a message it proclaims everywhere. The community is also reconnected with God, who works beside them providing signs of support. Thus, the scattered are reconnected and the community is strengthened.

The longer ending can read as a communal attempt to process and reprocess the traumatic event of Jesus' execution and create a narrative that addresses not only that event but larger issues faced by the community. As Danna Nolan Fewell points out, "our stories tend to mutate, reflecting our own evolution as selves and our ability to adapt to changing social contexts."[58] Cultural trauma theorist Ron Eyerman echoes Fewell's sentiment, explaining that "cultural traumas are not things, but processes of meaning making and attribution," and that they can take on different meanings (or no meaning) from generation to generation.[59]

For the community depicted in the longer ending, the narrative(s) around Jesus' death took on new meaning. The empty, fear-laden tomb no longer fulfilled the needs of

[58] Fewell, "The Work of Biblical Narrative," 9.
[59] Ron Eyerman, "Social Theory and Trauma," *Acta Sociologica* 56.1 (2013): 43.

believers. Instead, the written narrative of the community came to include resurrection and salvation. This could evince that the community went beyond merely processing the Christ event to formulating an active sign of resistance to society's erasure of Jesus' message. Telling and retelling not only about the crucifixion but also the resurrection allowed space for counter narratives to arise and challenge dominant narratives about Jesus and the communities aligned with him. But it also empowers the community. It shows the ways in which a community never forgets the wound(ing)s inflicted upon it, but also that in the face of those wound(ing)s, it has the power to resurrect. Jesus did not remain a victim of Rome. Instead, Jesus and his message were reanimated. Though in another form (16:12), he became the vehicle through which to proclaim a message that guided, empowered, and protected the community. The community gave Jesus and his message resurrected life, a power that is truly divine.

In doing so, the narrative of communal resurrection directly confronts, reshapes, and "works through" not only the wound(ing) within the Christ event, but various wound(ing)s of the past. Despite the direct violence of quashed rebellions and in the lingering shadow of the destroyed Temple, the community does not allow the violence to have the final word. It moves from the fear-inducing crucifixion to renewed life and salvation. It proclaims this salvation not just for humanity, but to all of creation (16:15) including restoration for the scorched, depleted earth. The good news also flips Rome's threats of violence, instead promising condemnation for all who refuse to believe in salvation through Jesus rather than Rome.

It also challenges the ideological wound(ing)s that sought to control and demean the community. On the most basic level, the longer ending challenges the dominant

narrative that portrayed Jesus as a rebel, a false god, and a criminal. The resurrection narrative restores and re-humanizes Jesus from being the "derealized" Other whom the dominant powers sought to dehumanize and erase.[60] Instead, Jesus and those who follow him become not only human, but they possess powers greater than normal humans as described above.

Finally, the communal resurrection narrative challenges the image of God found on the cross, in the empty tomb, and amidst the rubble of the Temple and various other catastrophic defeats. This image was of a dead, absent, weak divinity who was unable to escape mockery, conquest, and death. The longer ending provides an image of an active God who protects and accompanies God's people. This is a God that challenges and triumphs in the face of the Roman gods.

Despite the claims of the longer ending, the historical and material realities of Jesus' death and the community's life under Rome did not necessarily change. But this is one of the important pieces of witnessing to wound(ing)s. Historical and factual realities are not the primary concern of witnessing. Instead, the narrative captures the spirit of the community in the midst of the many wound(ing)s it was experiencing. It provided social connectivity in the face of the disintegration of many of the major objects of communal life (Jesus, the Temple, communal cohesion, etc.). Some may say it captured their mere fantasy or escape from the violent realities of their day, but I believe it is something more than fantasy. For the longer ending does not create utopia, it provides means to survive and promote quality of life in the midst of deadly powers. But it does more than this. It

[60] Judith Butler builds upon Levinas' idea of the derealization of the Other. The process of derealization engenders a level of dehumanization that allows for violence against such individuals and communities to be ideologically negated, easily repeated, and ultimately not grieved (*Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* [London: Verso, 2004], 33-38).

empowers a community to look beyond merely solidifying bonds internally. Instead, they are called to go forth and connect others. The community's ability to resurrect is not dictated by Rome or gospel writer. Communal resurrection goes beyond Jesus to allow the community to daily resurrect those whom their world tries to kill, erase, and silence.

Throughout history, the story of communal resurrection has become central to stories of resistance in the face of adversity. For example, in the midst of the terror, violence, and human rights abuses of the Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno, such a sentiment can be heard echoing in Archbishop Oscar Romero's proclamation that, "If they kill me, I will rise again in the people of El Salvador." Despite his own assassination and the massacre that occurred at his funeral mass, his life and message of liberation lives on to this day. More recently we see this in the contemporary counter narratives arising from within the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. These challenge the depictions of the black bodies killed by police as "thugs" or "criminals" instead showing a father or a child with a bag of skittles. Speaking the names of those killed and remembering their lives challenges their erasure and allows their lives to become part of a larger movement challenging systemic racism and injustice. Such bearing witness is not easy or safe. But as Kali Tal explains,

> Bearing witness is an aggressive act. It is born out of a refusal to bow to outside pressure to revise or to repress experience, a decision to embrace conflict rather than conformity, to endure a lifetime of anger and pain rather than to submit to a seductive pull of revision and repression. Its goal is change.[61]

These stories of communal resurrection and resistance alongside Mark's additional endings signal the power of the masses to generate change and new life in the midst of the traumatic.

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[61] Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, 7.

A Response Imposed from Above: Mark 16:9-20 as Structural Silencing

The construction of the resurrection narrative in the longer ending of Mark can also take on a different character in relation to processing trauma. For such resurrections can arise not only from within the collective power of the masses but also be manufactured or promoted by those in power. Wound(ing)s collapse and unsettle boundaries not only of temporality and history, but community and identity. Such a disruption, while often solidifying the power structure of the wounder(s), creates vulnerabilities in power structures and societal ordering of the wounded. Wound(ing)s effect relationality, simultaneously alienating and uniting individuals or groups. The rigidity and malleability of identities and the power structures that enforce them are exposed. Thus, whether triggered by a specific event and/or the gradual buildup of insidious traumas, wound(ing)s expose the porousness of boundaries. Responses to this porousness and fluidity vary. For some, there is a need to shore up the boundaries and return to a past state of being. Others see it as an opportunity to dismantle past boundaries (and more often than not erect new ones in their place).[62] The longer ending of Mark can be read as such an attempt to shore up and (re)define boundaries of identity in light of a community's wounds. The question remains though, who has the power to erect such boundaries and were they the desire of the whole community?

Here it is helpful to read the longer ending of Mark alongside the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. South African apartheid

[62] Such a negotiation of boundaries is witnessed throughout Mark. "Thus he declared all foods clean" (7:19) might be seen as a dismantling of past boundaries. "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be fist among you must be slave of all" (10:42-44) might be seen as erecting new boundaries in place of the old ones, the colonized uniting the colonizers.

legalized white supremacy and racial segregation/discrimination in 1948. However, these ideologies emerged from a much longer legacy of the wound(ing)s of colonialism such as "[t]he importation of slaves, systematic hunting and killing of indigenous nomadic people, and the dispossession of land from indigenous people."[63] With the negotiations for the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, the need arose not only to examine how to transition the country towards democracy, but how to address all of the atrocities and human rights violations committed under apartheid. The TRC formed as a means of restorative rather than retributive justice. The TRC provided a space for naming, working through, and moving beyond the trauma of apartheid to heal and reunite a broken community.[64]

But for some black South Africans, the TRC was not a liberating event. Instead, it was viewed as a push by those in power to erase the wounds of apartheid. Nytagodien and Neal explain the TRC was grounded in elite (capitalistic) interests that did not threaten elites with penalty for their (in)actions nor require a change in ideology or racist practices.[65] Manjoo adds that narrow definitions of human rights violations and the gender-neutral approaches the TRC employed left many crimes committed against women, particularly black women, unspoken or underrepresented. This silence around violence against women occurred "on many levels viz. the silence of women who are

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[63] Rashida Manjoo. "Gender Injustice and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission," in *Gendered Peace: Women's Struggles for Post-War Justice and Reconciliation,* edited by Donna Pankhurst (New York: Routledge, 2008),139; cf. South Africa. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report,* Vol. 1 (Cape Town: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998), 25.

[64] Sarah L. Lincoln, "This Is My History: Trauma, Testimony, and Nation-Building in the 'New' South Africa," in *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, eds. E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang (Pokfulam Road: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 36. It should be noted that Lincoln has a more optimistic rendering of the TRC than does Nytagodien, Neal, and a number of other post-colonial trauma theorists.

[65] Ridwan Nytagodien and Arthur Neal, "Collective Trauma, Apologies, and the Politics of Memory," *Journal of Human Rights* 3.4 (2004): 469.

violated, silence by the world community, silence by perpetrators, and also silence by the societies and communities that these women live in."[66]

These inactions, silencings, and erasures created an artificial, though official, closure to apartheid. This allowed those in power to quickly shut the door on the past without having to address structural issues and oppressions with regards to race, gender, class, etc.[67] Such a swift closure of the wounds of apartheid provides social, economic, and psychological benefits to those in power. Many in power in South African society could "move on" with a clear conscience, not having to revisit its wounds or work to establish structures to prevent further wound(ing)s.

Similarly, the need to give closure to Jesus' life and death as a political revolutionary and to shape the message around him also carried immense power and potential within the fledgling group of Jesus followers. Shifting and reworking the narrative of Jesus' death away from that of a state sanctioned execution of a criminal was important for the group's efficacy and prosperity. For a group working to solidify its porous identity in the face of political and religious "Others," the heroic resurrected Jesus provides an important propagandistic tool. Jesus moved outside the control of and assumed powers greater than Rome, as did (some of) his followers. They gained a position of (inflated) social superiority – even if this was only the reality of a few (cf. 16:17-18). For as well as bringing mourning and grief of past tragedies to a close, it allowed the group to claim an identity as the "vindicated righteous."[68] Any lingering emotions of shame and defeat could be erased and replaced by a sense of not only social,

[66] Manjoo, "Gender Injustice," 150.
[67] Nytagodien and Neal, "Collective Trauma," 473.
[68] Dube, "Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 117-9.

but divinely sanctioned superiority which included the ability to exclude and judge those they deemed an enemy (16:16).[69] This is an important and necessary shift in perspective for claiming a new group identity. Because as Erikson posits,

> Traumatized people often come to feel that they have lost an important measure of control over the circumstances of their own lives and are thus very vulnerable…they also come to feel that they have lost a natural immunity to misfortune and that something awful is almost *bound* to happen.[70]

Thus, claiming a narrative as seen in the longer ending filled with Jesus' resurrection appearances and the new-found community powers and signs became a "soother and reversal of [the community's] situation" and afforded them a new relationship to power.[71]

Such a triumphal closure and the new identity it created can carry with it negative effects, as witnessed by the TRC. For such abrupt and complete closure challenges the fluid, non-linear nature of trauma. It has the potential to deny a variety of healing processes. It also erases the communal and individual narratives around the wound(ing)s arising from differing social locations, instead seeking to unify the collective under one master narrative.

This singular metanarrative addresses the past forms of wound(ing) in a much different way than the communal resilience reading. Conquest moves into the hands of believers as their message and identity become the dominate source of power. For as Bridget Gilfillan Upton explains, the depiction of the disciples in the longer ending moves them "[f]rom being a fragmented and demoralized group of individuals" to "a powerful group, secure in the knowledge of their own salvation and their ability to

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Erikson, "Notes on Trauma," 194.
[71] Dube, "Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 120.

demonstrate the promised σημέια."[72] Their power reaches throughout the world, promising eternal destruction for those who do not comply. Ideologically, Roman social structures within the community do not transform. Instead, they maintain the relational status quo while further isolating any who waver from the emerging metanarrative. This desire to solidify group identity and consolidate power (further) marginalizes parts of the community. The women remain silen(t)ced with their experiences not believed (16:12). Those continuing to feel the terror of Jesus' and their own wounds are erased. This process further erects artificial boundaries around the community, seeking to condemn and other those deemed "unbelievers." It is a consolidation of power (supposedly supported by divine power), that often merely reverses present power structures allowing for the continuance of a domination-logic society. Finally, the wound(ing) against God is replaced by an image of a present, active God who protects and ensures the prosperity of God's people. In doing so, God triumphs alongside (at least some of) God's people.

These two readings from "below" and "above" will resonate differently for contemporary readers depending on their own experiences and social locations. Though the first provides a more comfortable, inspiring reading and response to wound(ing)s, the reality of the second should not be too quickly overlooked. For Christianity has a long triumphal history filled with wound(ing)s that it has and continues to inflict in the name of resurrection glory. The multifaceted, contradictory nature of these readings is meant to open space to honestly explore the complexities of Christianity's relationships to

[72] Bridgett Gilfillan Upton, *Hearing Mark's Endings: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts through Speech Act Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 167.

wound(ing)s. It asks that we closely examine how our experiences, privileges, and oppressions shape the ways in which we emerge from Mark's empty tomb and all the empty tombs found throughout history.

Mark 16 as a Contested Site

"[T]o utter the word 'trauma' is to invite controversy; it is a name for always contested ground."[73]

The endings of Mark can be read as psychological processing, communal identity formation, signs of communal resistance or dominant suppression. In reality, all of these perspectives hold partial truths and glimpses at the range of realities the Markan community and later Christ followers were experiencing. Each reading and ending makes unique claims upon and about communities, identities, ideologies, and the divine. The aim is not to rank or negate any of these perspectives, but rather to see the endings as a window into the messiness and multiplicity of trauma. In this messiness, the intersecting traumas of Christ followers across time haunt the gospel's endings. The multiplicity of endings leaves the gospel endlessly open to engage future tellings and retellings of death and resurrection that transcend time and space. For cycles of violence and trauma and the attempts to interrupt these cycles continue shaping past, present, and future. Each retelling or reenactment carries the potential to expose new dimensions and interconnections of the traumatic, oppression, and liberation.

It is in and from this place of multiplicity, contestation, and potential that I return to Harris' *Exodus*. For the piece embodies, rejects, and constantly reinterprets the affective quality of this multiplicity. I witnessed *Exodus* twice, first at its premier in 2015

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[73] Roger Luckhurst, "The Trauma Knot," in *The Future of Memory,* ed. Richard Crownshaw, Jane Kilby and Antony Rowland (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 191.

during the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and then again a year later just days after the June 12, 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida. Though the choreography and themes remained the same, the stories embodied transformed in each performance. The deaths of black bodies on the streets, of queer Latinx bodies in nightclubs intertwined and dialogued with and through the dancers' bodies. Yet the performances, the movements, and the massacres remained unique. Time was not linear, history not factual, but visceral. Wound(ing) expressed itself before us in fits and repetitions unique to each individual. Some lingered in the darkness, others definitively danced out their resistance. In the midst of the diversity of experience and expression, space formed for the community to rise together in defiance and to be torn apart once again by cycles of violence. Through it all, the sense of the holy walking amidst the mundane, the communal power to resurrect remained as did the palpable destructive power of violence and insidious trauma.

Exodus left the audience suspended, haunted by image of the community propelled backwards into darkness from the impact of the bullet. For me, it was reminiscent of Mark 16:8. It was a tomb moment. It was hard to breathe. Hard to take in what we collectively had just witnessed. Some in the house jumped to their feet with vigorous applause while others remained seated with pained looks and tears streaking their faces. What each viewer and performer did with their emotions and experience in that evening and in the days following the performance – suppressing, acting out, processing, dealing with triggers, embracing indifference, seeking justice – was unique to the individual. It allowed space for each to create her/his own ending or beginning. So it was with the tomb. The multiple endings of Mark allow us a glimpse of what happens

when people leave an experience but continue to be haunted by the wound(ing)s they have lived through or become conscious of. The effect is visceral and embodied, oral and textual, but most of all it is ongoing. Running, proselytizing, dancing, hiding, the wounds live on transforming (within) bodies and the texts they create.

CHAPTER FOUR

Burning Flesh: Chosen Trauma and the Violence of Revelation 17-19

Fig. 4 Kara Walker*, Libertine Alighting the World*, 2017,
Sumi ink and collage on paper, 241.3 x 182.9 cm, New York, Sikkema, Jenkins & Co.

In Kara Walker's *Libertine Alighting the World* a flag burns. It is a woman, a black woman reminiscent of Athena or Roma, who lights this symbol of nationalism ablaze. Such an act of protest, mockery, and defiance is often met with unbridled outrage by those who are protected and privileged by the powers and ideologies woven into the symbol. Alongside the image of this gendered and racialized act of protest/treachery, a woman burns. A single-breasted Justice grimaces, peering through her blindfold as her sword and arm are engulfed in flames mimicking/morphing into Lady Liberty's torch. Yet this sight of burning feminine flesh and all she represents draws far less public vitriol than the piece of cloth burning in the foreground.

Walker is acutely aware of and exhausted by the deadly irony of prizing flag over flesh captured not only by her work but also her lived reality as an African American female artist in the United States. Walker acknowledges that despite achieving fame and bearing the unsolicited burdens of becoming a "featured member of [her] racial group and/or [her] gender niche," she is not protected from danger.[1] Instead, she explains,

> my right, my capacity to live in this Godforsaken country as a (proudly) raced and (urgently) gendered person is under threat by random groups of white (male) supremacist goons who flaunt a kind of patched together notion of race purity with flags and torches and impressive displays of perpetrator-as-victim sociopathy.[2]

This logic (or sociopathy) allows flesh to be burned, violated, lynched and shot – and it takes glee in the process through some illogical declaration of security or God-given right. The question arising from Walker's image and the lived realities it mirrors is what is the link between symbol and flesh? Why is there greater outrage over the destruction of

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[1] Kara Walker, "Artist Statement," *Sikkema Jenkins & Co,* accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.sikkemajenkinsco.com/?v=exhibition&exhibition=5970cdfe8fd13.
[2] Ibid.

some symbols and bodies but not others? Why is it that the bodies most likely to be violated or de-realized are female and non-conforming bodies? How are we to understand the ideologies behind such violence and the responses of desire and repulsion it engenders?

I use these questions that arise from the current realities of gendered, racialized, and rationalized violence to look back upon an ancient reality. I turn to the figure of Babylon in Revelation seeking to explore how John (and many current readers) could conjure and rejoice in the image of the violated, destroyed, and smoldering Babylon. Trauma theory, particularly the notion of chosen trauma, generates a reading of the contested image of Babylon and the violence perpetuated by/against her that unveils a new way to interpret the entanglement of flesh, symbols, and, wound(ing)s within John's apocalyptic fantasy.

Contextualized Burnings

John of Patmos wrote amidst the influences, oppressions, and crises of empire.[3] Readers have long sought to understand what turbulence or events could have caused such a vibrant vision of violent clashes and totalizing victory. The desire to locate the precipitating crisis that provoked John has led to multiple proposed dates for Revelation. Scholarship generally leans towards dating the work either in the immediate aftermath of the reign of Nero (54-68 CE) or the end of Domitian's reign (81-96 CE).[4] For the

[3] There is general scholarly consensus that John was on the island of Patmos due to some form of imperially imposed sanction or banishment. Such a predicament could surely heighten awareness of the oppressions of empire, though his privileged social status provided him protections and benefits as well. For an overview of John's circumstances, see David Aune, *Revelation 1-5.* World Bible Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 76-80; Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), xxvi-xxvii.

[4] For the arguments for dating Revelation close to the Neronian era (68/69 C.E), see George H. van Kooten, "The Year of the Four Emperors and the Revelation of John: The "Pro-Neroian Emperors Otho and Vitellius and the Images and Colossus of Nero in Rome," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30

following treatment, I employ the nuanced approach to dating Revelation posited by David Aune. Using internal and external textual evidence, Aune builds the case that while the composition of Revelation was completed post-70 CE, most likely in the 90s, it nevertheless contains material dating from Nero's reign or its immediate aftermath.[5] This approach to dating allows Revelation to be understood as encompassing a long period of wound(ing)s under empire – an incremental testimony to colonial wound(ing)s. But even with this approach to dating, the exact catalyst for John's writing remains an open, and often contested issue. Traditionally, debates focus around whether a real, perceived, or any sort of crisis fueled John's apocalyptic vision.

At one end of the spectrum are those who seek to locate a real crisis that led to Revelation's composition. Imperial persecution of Christians who stood in contradiction to the Roman worldview was a traditionally proposed rational, though contemporary scholarship has shown that no widespread systematic persecution of Christians was documented during the time of Domitian.[6] The early work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza suggests that the crisis of persecution was real in the years of Domitian.[7] Later she softens her stance on the actuality of systemic imperial persecution under Domitian, while still maintaining that Christians nevertheless possessed an intimate familiarity with persecution in this period.[8]

(2007): 205-48. For the arguments for the Domitianic dating, see Adela Yarbro Collins's classic treatment, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 53-83.

[5] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, lvi-xx.

[6] Claims of imperial persecution of Christians during this time are linked to patristic accounts such as a passage of Melito's *To Antoninus* quoted by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4. 26. 5-11), rather than concrete contemporary evidence.

[7] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgement* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1984), 36, 199.

[8] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World,* Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 127.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who do not connect Revelation's composition to a specific crisis. Leonard Thompson, for example, presents the view that Revelation does not emerge from a crisis, but rather utilizes basic tenets of the apocalyptic genre to formulate the appearance of crisis. For Thompson, Revelation "tells us nothing about the social and political situation" of John's community.[9] While it is clear that John utilizes apocalyptic literary features, it is, however, unreasonable to claim the work is devoid of social or political cues. On the contrary, Revelation may be viewed as the most explicitly political work in the New Testament.

Adela Yarbro Collins provides a slightly different perspective. Collins rejects the idea that a past or present specific crisis compels John to write. Instead, Collins highlights how one's perception of feeling oppression can create crisis, regardless of whether an actual crisis exists.[10] The invention of a crisis between John's *ekklēsia* and Rome, particularly as centered on the imperial cult, allows John to heighten awareness about the conflicting worldviews and cathartically resolve the conflict.[11]

I fall in between these two ends of the spectrum concerning the catalyst for John's writing. I reject the view that Revelation is devoid of contextual crises as well as the idea that presently occurring formal persecution underlies Revelation's composition. Instead, I view Revelation as fueled by grappling with past, perceived, ongoing, and future wounds experienced by the *ekklēsia*. From the past, specters of Nero's persecutions haunt the text.[12] Tacitus chronicles that following the fire that wreaked destruction upon Rome in

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[9] Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 192.
[10] Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis,* 77.
[11] Ibid., 141.
[12] It should be noted that Brent Shaw has challenged the existence of the Neronian persecution. But even he maintains that localized persecutions occurred during Nero's reign. See "The Myth of the Neronian Persecution," *JRS* 105 (2015): 73-100.

64 CE, Nero diverted blame for the fire and "fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace" (*Annals* 15.44). Tacitus describes the wounds publically inflicted upon the Christians stating, "Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired." Such images sear deep wounds into communities and the smell of the burning flesh of ancestors long lingers in the air (long enough to provoke revengeful fantasies of the perpetrator's flesh burned in turn; see Rev. 17:16). Present woundings from insidious traumas of empire also surrounded John's composition. The process of Roman colonization and ongoing occupation left wounds on the collective identity of John and the *ekklēsia*. While social location and privilege shaped the extent to which community members experienced such wounds, the realities of exploitation, slavery, and domination nevertheless impacted the group. Finally, the potential of future woundings arising from internal and external conflicts infused the air. Tensions (real and imagined) arising around issues of identity and relationality with Jews and non-Christian Gentiles produced anxieties about threats of violence against the group whether physical or ideological.[13] Such constant anxiety and the desire to minimize future wound(ing)s keeps flesh tense and psyches on edge.

Within this context, Revelation emerges saturated with real wounds, perceived anxieties, and fantasies of a different way of being in the world. With this reality, I now

[13] See David Arthur DeSilva's "The Social Setting of the Revelation to John: Conflicts Within, Fear Without" for a detailed exploration of internal and external community threats such as accommodation, etc. (*Westminster Theological Journal* 54, no. 2 [Fall 1992]: 273-302).

turn to examine how Revelation can be read, not only as a response to wound(ing)s, similar to the last chapter's reading of the Gospel of Mark, but also as expressive of a desire to wound. Through the lens of chosen trauma (a term defined below), Revelation is read, not to determine the specific crises precipitating it, but to better understand how compounding crises and insidious traumas generated this specific response.

Chosen Trauma: A Community Licks Its Wounds

Wounds are sticky and life altering. Left untreated they can fester, become infected, and leave scars both above and below the skin's surface. Communal wounds are even trickier as groups, even in their attempts to (ad)dress the wound, can tear at the delicate skin and negate a healthy healing process. Such festering wounds and jagged scars are passed on to the next generation for them to tend to. The stories of wound(ing)s are passed on, morphing, erasing, intensifying, and negating the origins of the wounds. The past wounds demand attention of future generations. Responses vary. Some amputate, excising the wound from the community's body and history. Others create short- and/or long-term treatment plans, seeking to find ways to best restore the body to health. The methods for treatment vary, though the ones that best treat the wounds are often excruciatingly painful and require ongoing check-ups to address emerging side effects. They employ conventional and unconventional means that meet varying levels of approval by local and global communities.

Revelation can be read as one such method for addressing the wounds of a community. As an apocalyptic literary work, it opens space to explore wounds inflicted by powers and principalities and transform them into the celebrated battle scars of totalizing victory. The process by which this fanciful form of healing takes place can be

read alongside the framework of chosen trauma. According to political psychiatrist, Vamik D. Volkan, chosen trauma "refers to the shared mental representation of a large group's massive trauma experienced by its ancestors at the hands of an enemy group, and the images of heroes, victims, or both connected with it."[14] It often involves "drastic losses of people, land, prestige, and dignity" or the perception of such loss.[15] It creates a pathway for intergenerational transmission and processing of wounds by allowing a community to take an experience of victimization from its past and "choose" a specific way to mythologize the event in the present. According to Volkan, the need for such a mythologizing of wounds arises from the inability of previous generations to address the victimization they have experienced. It leaves a festering wound in the community that requires the attention of a future generation.

The unhealed wound can go unattended for generations. But eventually, something or someone reopens it, exposing the pus below the surface. Sticky and infectious, it clings to the group, dispersing pain and anxiety throughout the collective body. The group becomes preoccupied with the wound, "carry[ing] the mental representation of the traumatic event—along with associated shared feelings of hurt and shame, as well as mental defenses against perceived shared conflicts that these feelings initiate—from generation to generation."[16] Though Volkan focuses on the psychological effects, I would extend the focus to the somatic, with the preoccupation with wound(ing)s

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[14] Vamik D. Volkan, "Chosen Trauma: The Political Ideology of Entitlement and Violence," paper presented in Berlin, June 10, 2004. At www.vamikvolkan.com/Chosen-Trauma%2C-the-Political-Ideology-of-Entitlement-and-Violence.php/. Accessed January 31, 2015.

[15] Vamik D. Volkan, *Killing in the Name of Identity: A Study of Bloody Conflicts* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Pitchstone Publishing, 2006), 173. Volkan provides examples such as the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire as a chosen trauma for Christianity. He notes how this event connects to past traumas such as the fall of Jerusalem, a point that connects to Christianity's continual building upon the tradition of claiming traumas explored in this chapter.

[16] Volkan, "Chosen Trauma."

infusing a community's environment on socio-political, cultural, and affective levels. The end goal of this preoccupation is "to enhance the group's identity and strengthen it to face [a] threat."[17] This preoccupation, when guided by the hands of a destructive political or religious leader with an agenda, can spiral into something far beyond the creation of communal mythology. Volkan explains that in such cases, leaders increase the group's sense of victimization in the face of a current threat or the prospect of one. They reactivate chosen traumas from the past to further cement group cohesion. At the same time, the leaders clearly identify, dehumanize, and other-ize an enemy. Finally, they create an "excessive attitude of entitlement for revenge" against the enemy.[18]

In reading Revelation alongside Volkan's framework of reactivating chosen trauma and seeking revenge, I do not seek to claim that Revelation utilizes this framework to the full or label John as a destructive leader. Rather, I seek to use Volkan's framework as another lens through which to view John's apocalypse, and particularly, the violence he enacts against Babylon. In doing so, the reading opens space to explore not only the violence and wound(ing)s committed against Babylon, but also particular contemporary bodies.

(Ad)dressing a Legacy of Wound(ing)s

Revelation reads as an all-encompassing preoccupation with wound(ing)s and identity. As noted above, John and his *ekklēsia* experienced compounding forms of wounds that transcended temporality and passed through the generations of the communities. John draws upon and amplifies a legacy of wound(ing)s against God's people when addressing the more immediate wounds imposed by Rome against his

[17] Volkan, *Killing in the Name of Identity,* 174.
[18] Volkan, "Chosen Trauma."

ekklēsia, never more obviously than in Rev. 18, in which numerous prophetic protests against the wounds inflicted by the historical Babylon are repressed and (re)dressed in relation to the current Babylon, Rome. In doing so, recent generations' festering wounds – the violence of conquest, the execution of Jesus and others, the destruction of the Temple, the persecutions of Nero, the oppression of colonization – rub against fresh wounds. Though some wounds had gained partial healing, such as through the resurrection narratives about Jesus, many were left gaping.

But it appears that John's identification with wound(ing)s went deeper than even the wounds of recent generations of the *ekklēsia*. John draws upon a much lengthier history of God's people identifying as victims of wound(ing)s. For the history of God's Chosen People is one punctuated by cycles of violence and wound(ing)s. Major wound(ing)s come to define God's people – destruction, slavery, exiles, wars, and devastation. As David Carr infers from his survey of wound(ing)s found throughout the biblical canon, both Jewish and Christian scriptures were written in part "as a response to communal suffering."[19] Through such experiences of wound(ing), God's people identify as the victims of violent enemies and oppressive empires. Thus, repeated identification as the victim creates a pattern that John and the *ekklēsia* can easily fit into. Like the generations before them, John is a victim of God's opponents (1:9). But more than that, John also identifies as one of God's Chosen. Thus, like the other Chosen ones throughout history, when threatened by evil forces and oppressions that kill the saints, John knows the opponents of God/John can never fully annihilate them.[20] Instead, the victimized and

[19] Carr, *Holy Resilience*, 5.
[20] Carr outlines how the concept of "chosenness" becomes a recurring theme and method for imaging survival throughout the Torah (see *Holy Resilience*, 121-27). Though it cannot be attended to in detail in the present treatment, it is important to note the ways in which "chosenness" has functioned also as a means

slaughtered Chosen are gathered, clothed, and tended to en masse under the altar awaiting their day of vindication (6:9-11).

All of which is closely woven into the group's identity and the relationship of God and God's people. For the source of wound(ing)s is often connected to God's people turning from God (e.g., Hosea 13:1-3, 2 Kings 17:18-20, Psalm 78). Returning to God becomes intimately linked with liberation and victory for God's people, as well as revenge against and destruction of the enemies of God's people. But as Volkan points out, identification with past traumas is much more deeply felt than with past glories.[21] Wounds are more tender than divinely healed scars. For God's closeness is felt most acutely after the wound. A desire to keep this closeness and the identity of God's people, makes wound(ing)s an integral part of identity as God's Chosen – an identity John clings to vehemently.

Thus, the pattern for creating mythology to address present wounds and reactivate chosen traumas from past wounds is readily accessible for John within the history of God's people. The creation of this myth leaves space for artistic license and personal/political agendas to infiltrate. For as Volkan explains, the generation that claims chosen trauma develops a mythology that only needs to bear a faint resemblance of the actual past experience(s) of insidious or event-based trauma(s).[22] Temporality is transcended allowing generations and wound(ing)s to morph, collide, and haunt one another. Great potential lies within this entanglement as it can awaken and give voice to wounds. It can create a group cohesion that unites various sectors of society ("…there

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of valorizing difference so as to promote hierarchical and dualistic thinking. See Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 96-106.

[21] Volkan, "Chosen Trauma."

[22] Ibid.

was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white, with palm branches in their hands." – 7:9). But it also carries the danger of violently erasing wounds and stamping out those who do not fit within the emerging mythology (14:17-20). This leaves internal powers to control the wounds and the wounded.

The chosen trauma myth that develops, even if fuzzy on historic accuracy, relies heavily upon the identification of a common enemy. For John's mythic fantasy, Rome and all the unbelievers associated with it are labelled the enemy. This enemy is multifaceted, allowing community members to identify with the aspects that most closely link to their particular socio-political location and history of wound(ing)s. It encompasses not only the religious and political ideologies celebrated by the imperial cult, but also the broader imperial system connected to it including its "economic exploitation, its politics of seduction, its violence, and its imperial hubris or arrogance."[23] The empire/enemy is monstrous and beastly, blaspheming God (13:6) and branding all within its grasp (13:16). It empowers its followers to become agents of wound(ing)s, commodifying human life (18:13) and devastating creation (18:11-13). No one is exempt from Rome's present wound(ing)s and all the prior wounds it aggravates. While John calls for "the endurance of the saints" (13:10, 14:12) in the face of these woundings, he does not stop at passive endurance.

Instead, with a common enemy identified, revenge becomes John's primary response to his community's (chosen) wounds. The fantasy of revenge can provide space

[23] Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 116. Pablo Richard echoes this insight showing the relations occurring on political and economic levels that result in the systemic oppression of the poor (*Apocalypse: A People's Commentary on the Book of Revelation* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995], 128).

for a community to lick its wounds and potentially heal. Such a desire to seek revenge can empower communities to claim agency and/or liberation.[24] But revenge when displayed in excess through such overinflated entitlement can prove devastating and dangerous. Here the community licks its wounds not to promote heal(th)ing but to irritate and inflame them. Such irritation leads to radical, rash responses that seek cures that center around eradicating the perceived enemy and cause of the wound. It creates space to develop a mentality in which group members are empowered to "destroy the current enemy and even become involved in cultural and ethnic cleansing, thereby purifying themselves of any contamination by unwanted and devalued *'others.'"*[25] John applies such a destructive antiseptic to his community's wounds in Revelation. Revenge against and annihilation of Rome found throughout Revelation is graphic and totalizing. It seeks to restore the community through the destruction of another. But this fanciful revenge does not heal the community, instead its logic creates its own wounds through the ideologies it perpetuates. This is most visibly witnessed in the fury unleashed against Babylon.

Destroy the Enemy, Heal the Wound?

Render to her as she herself has rendered,
and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed.
As she glorified herself and lived luxuriously,
so give her a like measure of torment and grief. (18:6-7)

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[24] Surekha Nelavala provides an insightful exploration of the topic of revenge in relation to Babylon from a postcolonial, feminist, Indian perspective. Reading Babylon alongside the story of a sexually exploited girl, Phoolan Devi, who comes to enact violent revenge against the men who attempt to rape her, Nelavala explores how through acts of revenge in a quest for liberation, the victimized colonized become victimizers and the complicated responses that ensue with this dual categorization ("'Babylon the Great Mother of Whores' (Rev 17:5): A Postcolonial Feminist Perspective," *Expository Times* 121.2 [2009]: 64-5).
[25] Volkan, "Chosen Trauma."

John's response to Babylon's actions is to enact double the violence against her that he perceives Babylon (and a history of others) having committed against him and the *ekklēsia*. To do so, the figure of Babylon, "the ancient enemy of Israel, is summoned from the biblical past and called into service."[26] John vividly brings Babylon to life, clothing her in the exquisite finery of disgust and desire. He unleashes a call for revenge, "that repeats and amplifies the revenge imagined by the Hebrew prophets," against the mythic Babylon, "making revenge a biblically approved thematic in both Jewish and Christian testaments."[27] With unbridled voracity, he destroys her. The destruction is not an unbridled, out of control rage. Instead, it is systematic, excruciating, all-encompassing fiery annihilation that unleashes waves of wound(ing)s on all who associate with her. Babylon burns bit by bit for an extended time and space in the text (17:16, 18:8, 19:3). Each account of her demise illuminates a different aspect of wound(ing) against Babylon and those associated with her.

In John's first pass (17:15-18), he tells of the divine orchestration of her fatal wound (17:17) and how it will be inflicted by the hands of those she knows intimately. This wound is personal with known perpetrators, making the violence all that more tragic. Desire is replaced with disgust in the course of the wound(ing). Babylon is thoroughly hated, made desolate, and stripped naked then her flesh devoured and body set ablaze (17:16). John's second swipe (18:1-24) occurs as Babylon's flesh burns, simultaneously increasing her pain to John's delight. Babylon's infectious, treacherous

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[26] Christopher A. Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 58.

[27] Erin Runions, *The Babylon Complex: Theopolitical Fantasies of War, Sex, and Sovereignty* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 17. Runions details the recurring use of Babylon as an ambiguous figure in prophetic texts such as Jeremiah, Isiah, and Ezekiel. Babylon's depiction vacillates as she holds the position as "both the servant of Yahweh and destined for destruction" (15).

sins are recounted and she is set ablaze again by God's judgement. Her body ablaze, much like the Christians who Nero set aflame as human lanterns years before, illuminates the wounds inflicted upon those associated with her. Systematically, Babylon is made desolate and dark as culture, trade, resources and progeny are removed from within her (18:22-23). All that finally remains of her is the symbol of the wounds she inflicted, the blood of the prophets, saints, and others (18:24). She is dehumanized, derealized, and dematerialized to the point that all that remains are the wounds of John's community. Weeping and mourning come to temporarily fill the space her body once occupied. But John does not stop with bringing to light the *ekklēsia*'s wounds and seeking justice for them. He continues with a third and final vengeful pass (19:1-5), this time surrounded by the smoke of Babylon. This account details the joyous victory of revenge. God has "avenged on her the blood of [God's] servants" (19:2). Babylon is no longer the embodiment of John's wounder. She is nothing but smoke, a phantom memory easily dispelled. This is cause for rejoicing. John has healed the community's wounds through the violence committed against Babylon. To ensure the wounds' permanent closure he wraps them in the fine linen of the saints (19:8) and stuffs them with the fleshy gauze of God's feast (19:18). The wounds of the past are avenged and "healed." Therefore, there is no longer the need to memorialize past wounds because vindication has taken place. Instead, the New Jerusalem descends replacing/erasing the past and promising that future wound(ing)s and the tears they produce will be no more (21:1-5). God (and John) is in control.

What Do We Do Amidst the Smoke of Babylon?

John's repetitious description of Babylon's destruction creates a seductive revenge fantasy that provides a fitting conclusion to the processing of chosen trauma. John named the community's wounds and identified their common enemy. He separated her from the community, dehumanized her, and enacted revenge upon her. All of which is to generate healing and solidify group identity.[28] But (ad)dressing the *ekklēsia*'s wounds through the destruction of Babylon did not completely heal the *ekklēsia* or erase Babylon, despite John's best efforts to do so. Instead, like many wound(ing)s, the figure of Babylon and the violence committed against her continue to haunt the apocalyptic visions of Christianity (The smoke goes up from her forever and ever – 19:3). Thus, it is important to investigate John's chosen trauma response further to explore why there is conflicting opinions about rejoicing in her demise. For gazing and gawking at this spectacular violence has left many an uneasy witness. The uneasy and mixed emotions around Babylon have led scholars to focus on the character of Babylon. Is Babylon a symbol or something more? In many ways, her violent demise has been reduced to its own flag verses flesh debate. Is Babylon symbol/city or woman? Does her burning represent the destruction of a symbol of empire or does the smell of burning feminine flesh waft from between the lines of the text? Scholars have taken varying positions concerning this debate.

One perspective within the debate takes as its point of departure John's implicit identification of Babylon with the great city, Rome (17:9a, 18, 18:9-19). Liberationist

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[28] Volkan outlines that such a process around chosen trauma is often used to codify group identity, but that when taken to an extreme at the hands of destructive political or religious leaders, this can devolve into terrorism against groups deemed "other" or internalized masochism if there is no actual outlet for violent revenge. See "Chosen Trauma."

perspectives utilizing this identification provide some of the clearest explanations for welcoming Babylon's demise. For this interpretational perspective, acknowledgment that Babylon represents Rome is vital to understanding the message of Revelation. John uses Babylon to lodge a critique against the Roman imperial system that threatens both the lives (through exploitative economic practices, slavery, etc.) and faith (through assimilation, imperial cult practices, etc.) of the people of God.[29] Thus Babylon's primary function in the text is symbolic or metaphorical. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's political, rhetorical reading clearly explains that Babylon serves as a "steno-symbol" within Revelation possessing a one-to-one symbolic meaning between Babylon and Rome.[30] Therefore, Babylon solely represents a discourse on the domination by the imperial city of Rome and "[a]t no time does Revelation 17-18 refer to any individual flesh-and-blood wo/man."[31] Building upon the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible, Schüssler Fiorenza explains that the figure of Babylon provides a critique of Roman idolatry and exploitation that are extravagantly highlighted within the imperial city. Babylon's destruction and the call for the people to "come out" of her mark a site for the inversion of and liberation from oppressive and seductive imperial structures. It engenders resistance to an exploitative economic system whose lifeblood is the depletion of natural resources and the commoditization of human souls (18:11-13). Howard-Brook and Gwyther agree, stating that Babylon is not about a real woman and her whoring "does not

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[29] For a full treatment of these topics, see e.g., Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 466-72; Alan Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse from a South African Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 15-39, 108-25; Pablo Richard, "Resistance, Hope, and Liberation in Central America," in *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective,* ed. David Rhoads (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 146-64.
[30] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 134.
[31] Ibid.

refer to sexual activity."[32] Similarly, Barbara Rossing upholds that John's depiction of Babylon is of a city, "not the torture and rape of a woman's body."[33] She serves a symbolic function and reading her as a human woman is a "gross misuse of the text."[34] Instead, Babylon provides a stark warning about Rome's "idolatrous claims of invincibility" by displaying the "once-invincible city stripped of its imperial power, unjust wealth, and adornment."[35] Babylon's destruction signals hope for liberation and power reversals in the midst of overwhelming oppression and exploitation.[36]

The other main position of this debate refuses to view Babylon solely as a stand in for Rome. Instead, Babylon must also be viewed as a woman. The work of Tina Pippin best represents this position. Pippin states, "Having studied the evils of Roman imperial policy in the colonies, I find the violent destruction of Babylon very cathartic. But when I looked into the face of Babylon, I saw a woman."[37] Thus, Pippin does not deny that Babylon symbolizes Rome, but she takes issue "with the way in which this image of a prostitute is portrayed and used as a female symbol."[38] Pippin's Marxist/materialist-

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[32] Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire,* 180. Schüssler Fiorenza does note that this does not preclude the possibility of misogynistic interpretations (see *The Power of the Word*, 131).
[33] Barbara Rossing, *The Choice Between Two Cities: Whore, Bride, and Empire in the Apocalypse,* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 87-90.
[34] Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire,* 162.
[35] Rossing, *The Choice Between Two Cities,* 97.
[36] The power of this hope and liberation for John's community and contemporary communities is not taken lightly in the present treatment. Clarice Martin's "Polishing the Unclouded Mirror: A Womanist Reading of Revelation 18:13" (in Rhoads, *From Every People and Nation*, 82-109) provides just one example of how the text can be vital and life-giving for addressing issues such as slavery in the United States. However, it should be noted that such liberation is not a total freedom from practices such as slavery. Instead, as Craig Koester illuminates, Revelation institutes a different form of slavery where the faithful become God's slaves. Though Koester paints this as a positive and liberative act, the means of such redemption remain troubling ("Roman Slave Trade and the Critique of Babylon in Revelation 18," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70.4 [October 2008], 768-69).
[37] Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John,* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 80. Similarly, Marla Selvidge views the violence enacted against Babylon as a rape that concludes with cannibalism ("Powerful and Powerless Women in the Apocalypse," *Neotestamentica* 26 [1992]: 164).
[38] Tina Pippin, "The Heroine and the Whore," in Rhoads, *From Every People and Nation*, 137.

feminist interpretation highlights how John creates "the ultimate misogynist fantasy" that has damaging, destructive repercussions for the women of Revelation as well as real women.[39] This perspective refuses to remove the flesh from Babylon and reduce her to a political symbol.[40] Instead, without denying the dangers of Rome, it highlights how the characterization and joyful destruction of characters like Babylon carries real, embodied effects on the lives of women – a topic I will return to later in the chapter.

Identification with both positions of this debate has led some to try to hold the tension of both images together. Shanell Smith highlights her "ambi*veil*ence" towards Babylon, viewing her as an "object of ambivalent identification."[41] For Smith, Babylon is "a woman, an enslaved prostitute, and an empress/imperial city" as well as "a literary character in a narrative."[42] The tension of these multiple identifications finds resonance with Smith in her own life as a privileged African American woman. Smith summarizes her tense identification with Babylon "because she reflects ever so sharply and bitingly my continual conflicting reality of being simultaneously a victim of, and participant in

[39] Pippin, *Death and Desire*, 67.
[40] Rossing and others raise an important concern that readings such as Pippin's situate the texts and their meanings in contemporary rather than ancient contexts. Also, that a focus on Babylon as woman preferences issues of sex and violence over economic, political, etc. desires and concerns (*The Choice Between Two Cities*, 14). While this is a valid concern, I hold that issues of sex and violence are inherently political. In the case of non-conforming bodies this is especially true as they are painted as posing a greater threat to normative society and its functioning. For an ancient example, one only needs to look at the Altar of Pergamon where the politics surrounding the non-normative converges in the defeat of the giants (the monstrous). Only through (or in the midst of) this defeat is one allowed to ascend the staircase of the monument to view the Telephos Frieze which memorializes the city's founding (i.e. the founding of that which is normative, civilized, and under proper political control). See Adela Yarbro Collins, "Satan's Throne: Revelations from Revelation," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32:3 (May-June 2006): 26-39.
[41] Shanell T. Smith, *The Woman Babylon and the Marks of Empire: Reading Revelation with a Postcolonial Womanist Hermeneutic of Ambiveilence* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 4.
[42] Ibid., 133.

empire."[43] Smith's perspective is just one example of the ways in which readers continue to negotiate relationality with the complex figure of Babylon.[44]

The "Great Whore" debate over how to identify (with) Babylon highlights important aspects of the text and its implications for ancient and contemporary lived experiences. I seek to provide another way to approach and accompany Babylon, reading again with the lens of trauma theory. For trauma theory reframes the dis-ease and ambivalence connected to Babylon. It shifts the focus from a symbol versus flesh debate to an exploration of the ambivalence surrounding what Babylon unveils about the relationship between victims, perpetrators, and the wound(ing)s that connect them.

Babylon the Wounded Wounder

In our world, we yearn for a clear identification of and distinction between victim and perpetrator. As displayed above, the ideologies surrounding chosen trauma work diligently seek to establish these boundaries. You either wound or are wounded. Though this is far from reality, for the logic of chosen trauma and its propensity for revenge to function there must be a clear victim and/or enemy. This logic permeates contemporary trauma culture and shapes responses to those perceived as inflicting and/or receiving wound(ing)s. For victimhood and perpetration are inherently political constructions. We are confronted with assumptions about these concepts on a daily basis through media,

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[43] Ibid., 4.

[44] Numerous other treatments join Smith in attempting two hold the two images of Babylon in conversation. Two examples of such efforts are Caroline Vander Stichele's position that Babylon must be considered as both "Great City *and* Great Whore, as dominant colonial power and prostitute" so as to not divorce issues of gender from rhetorical-political concerns ("Re-membering the Whore: The Fate of Babylon According to Revelation 17.16," in *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins. Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings, 13 [New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2009], 116) and Susan Hylen's depiction of Babylon as an irreducible, inseparable "blended metaphor" ("The Power and Problem of Revelation 18: The Rhetorical Function of Gender," in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible*, ed. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], 210.).

political rhetoric, religious philosophies, and the list goes on. In the United States, many will endlessly watch coverage of bombings in Manchester or an attack on Malala Yousafzai and turn to social media to express their outrage and empathy for these victims, while the Rohingya genocide or the detention of the Palestinian teen, Ahed Tamimi, are barely a blip on the public's radar with victims quickly forgotten. Wound(ing)s and their victims engender divergent levels of attention, empathy, and outrage.

For all forms of victimhood are not treated equally, but rather reflect the dominant social logic and hierarchies of the individuals assessing the trauma. "Good" and "bad" victims emerge within public perception based on "the extent to which politicians, aid workers, and mental health specialists are able to identify with the victims, in counterpoint to the distance engendered by the otherness of the victims."[45] These artificially constructed, morally and culturally saturated definitions of victimhood have the power to stigmatize, erase, and render inauthentic certain victims. This in turn denies them access to empathy and resources, and can possibly leave them more vulnerable to further victimization.

This is the case for Babylon. Not only is Babylon a perpetrator of unconscionable atrocities, but she is a "bad" victim. So "bad" a victim is she in the minds of most readers of Revelation through the ages that she is a "deserving" victim (she gets only what she deserves) – and so is no victim at all. For Babylon does not fit the mold of an innocent victim in need of saving. Instead, she is a bold, confident, and intimidating woman. Unrepentantly flaunting her fornication, infatuated with finery, and drunk on the blood of

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[45] Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy, *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 10, quoted in Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing,* 13.

saints, it is hard to label her a victim. Even if she also identifies as a tattooed, controlled brothel slave, it hardly excuses or erases her excesses.[46] This makes blaming her for her demise (a topic we will return to) an easier task for many than trying to identify with her. Identification with victims is an important (and potentially dangerous) part of witnesses' ability to sympathize and/or empathize with victims. Babylon is difficult for many to identify with because, as Shanell Smith summarizes, Babylon blurs the identification of colonizer and colonized.[47] Deep ideological guilt and denial from privileged persons and the wounds of colonization of minoritized populations prevent many from willingly identifying with Babylon or feeling empathy at a level that would cause them to seek to defend her or memorialize her as a victim. Instead, they seek to "otherize" her and lean heavily on her identification as a perpetrator, a wounder. The violence and wounds Babylon inflicts as Rome (and all the other "Babylons" of Israel's history) leave devastation, death, wounds, and scars in her wake. For many, these wound(ing)s far outweigh the wound(ing) she experiences during her fiery demise.

Yet the contradictions surrounding and ambivalence about Babylon's role as wounder and wounded are not unique to this figure. They pervade trauma theory as well. This is partially because there is relatively minimal attention to the role of perpetrators within trauma theory on the whole. Discussing the possibility of victim and perpetrator status existing within the same individual is even less frequently acknowledged. A prime

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[46] For a detailed exploration of this topic, see Jennifer A. Glancy and Stephen D. Moore, "How Typical a Roman Prostitute Is Revelation's 'Great Whore'?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011): 543-62.

[47] Smith, *The Woman Babylon and the Marks of Empire,* 154. Jean Kim provides another postcolonial exploration of this dynamic, understanding Babylon as "standing not only for the city of Rome (colonizing power) but also for a colonized woman, who is sexually exploited by two sets of men (foreign and native)." Through this lens, Kim illuminates the importance of "inter(con)textual" deconstructionist readings that use the lived realities of women to bring new meaning to the text ("'Uncovering Her Wickedness': An Inter(con)textual Reading of Revelation 17 from a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective," *Journal for the Study of New Testament* 73 [1999]: 64, 79-81).

example of this revolves of Tasso's infamous tale of Tancred and Clorinda.[48] Highly analyzed among trauma theorists, this epic poem, set against the backdrop of the Crusades, tells of mistaken identity which ends in Tancred twice murdering the object of his affection, Clorinda. Yet as Cathy Caruth's (in)famous naming of the twice murderous Tancred as the victim of trauma rather than the twice wounded Clorinda demonstrates, the clear line delineating perpetrator from victim is anything but.[49] Stef Craps does not deny the reality that Tancred is a murderer, specifically a European crusader who kills an Ethiopian woman (a crucial point that Caruth fails to acknowledge).[50] But Craps does not deny Tancred the possibility of holding the space of both experiencing trauma and acting as a perpetrator of it, identifying him as a "survivor of (perpetrator) trauma."[51] Similarly, within Babylon there are the polarizing, yet intimately integrated experiences of wounding others and being wounded.

The general lack of acknowledging the dual embodiment of perpetrator and victim within an individual or community is due to the fact that such dual identification is complicated and can easily go awry. For example, the work of Gabriele Schwab demonstrates the complication that arise when the identification of victim and perpetrator intersect. Schwab draws on her experience as a German born in the generation after

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[48] Torquato Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered (Gerusalemme liberata)*, ed. and trans. by Anthony M. Esolen (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).
[49] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 1-9. Many have pointed to the issues in Caruth's interpretation, perhaps none so strongly as Ruth Leys whose numerous critiques of "Caruth's logic" seek to draw a clear line between perpetrator and victim. Otherwise, such logic (taken to an extreme by Leys) "would turn the executioners of the Jews into victims and the 'cries' of the Jews into testimony to the trauma suffered by the Nazis" (Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy,* 297). This logic is too over-exaggerated to be productive in my opinion.
[50] Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing*, 15.
[51] Ibid.

WWII, and thus a "child of a perpetrator nation."[52] She highlights the ways in which labels were placed upon the German collective, whether or not they directly participated in the Holocaust. She explores how labeling a community as a perpetrator shapes self-understandings for generations, in her case, that Germans were "weak" and "savage."[53] She also highlights the social, political, and educational ramifications of such constructed ideologies. Unfortunately, she demonstrates another danger associated with the blurring of victimhood and perpetration – that of trying too quickly to assume the role of victim and soften the label of perpetrator. As is witnessed in Schwab's analysis, this results in the absence of any accepted accountability and recognition of one's relationship to perpetration along with lack of adequate concern for other communities affected by the violence committed.

Work around perpetration and trauma is not meant to engender sympathy for perpetrators nor to excuse or explain away the violence they commit. Instead, it opens space to see the entangled relationality of the concepts of perpetrator and victim, along with the possibility of an individual or culture possessing both these labels in varying degrees. It also illuminates the need for further discussions about the intersections of individual and collective culpability particularly for those, who because of their socio-political, religious, or ethnic identity, have become labeled as perpetrators without having personally committed violence. Finally, it asks that the systems and structures that foster, produce, and replicate cycles of wound(ing)s are more fully integrated into the conversation about perpetrators and victims.

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[52] Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 68.
[53] Ibid., 68, 75.

Holding these two realities of Babylon in tension does not seek resolution. Nor does it seek to definitively rule if she is more perpetrator or victim. Instead, it asks that we see the fluidity of these roles and the systems that undergird them. They merge and cannot be separated. It also asks the reader to acknowledge that where one falls on identifying Babylon is highly subjective and related to their own socio-political location. For example, as a queer, white feminist from the United States, the smell of burning female flesh overpowers my desire to rejoice in the destruction of Rome. While I seek liberation, I cannot do so through the murdered body of a queer woman (more on this below). However, other persons with different social locations will have different perspectives on the subject. The point is that we recognize the fluidity of these boundaries and seek to examine how social location and relation to power shape our understandings and interpretations. It also asks that the dialogue about victims and perpetrators be contextualized and holistic. To this extent, examining Babylon's wound(ing)s requires that we shine a light on John's as well.

For we must acknowledge that John is also both perpetrator and victim. As a male with status under a colonial power, John is both a victim and beneficiary of Rome, as are those in the *ekklēsia* to varying extents. John's vision provides glimpses of liberation from the wounding power of Rome, but his vision in Revelation also wounds and perpetuates oppressive practices, mimicking the Roman practices he critiques. As Stephen Moore aptly states, "Revelation's anticolonial discourse, its resistance to Roman omnipotence, is infected with the imitation compulsion, and hence with ambivalence, it contains the seeds of its own eventual absorption by that which it ostensibly opposes."[54]

[54] Stephen D. Moore, *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation: Sex and Gender, Empire and Ecology* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 31.

Importantly, we must acknowledge the dynamic relationship between the wound(ing)s of Babylon/Rome, John, and the *ekklēsia*. Within them is an ever-shifting dynamic of power and relationality that builds upon, transforms, and destroys societal norms. For wounds can be infectious and sticky. Like affect, wounds rub against and slide off one another. Their festerings, (re)openings and healings are non-linear and unpredictable. But the stories and realities linked to the wounds possess power. This power, with its liberative and destructive potential, continues beyond the narrative, shaping future mythologies, ideologies, and identities.

The Power of Wound(ing)s

With the acknowledgment that John holds the role of both perpetrator and victim, the final part of this chapter turns to examine questions surrounding the nature of the violence that John images and the ideologies it perpetuates. For John's destruction of Babylon raises important questions about how ancient and contemporary communities use violence and violent fantasy to (ad)dress their wound(ing)s. Euro-American trauma theories tend to shy away at best or blatantly condemn victims' use of violence in response to being wounded – at least violent responses by certain (minority) sectors of the population. This tendency is mirrored by feminist, postcolonial, and other critics of Revelation who condemn it for its fantasies of retributive violence. Instead, Euro-American trauma theorists image the individual trauma victim as fragmented, psychically tortured, and passive, too "broken" and immobilized by trauma to be dangerous or to disrupt society. Or the acceptable victim may be one who actively helps move the dominant community towards normalcy after wound(ing)s, maintaining the status quo. In creating these acceptable versions of victimhood and encouraging victims to conform to

these molds, victims are de-politicized. This allows those in power to control the boundaries around who can use violence in response to the traumatic along with the forms such violence can take. Unapproved responses of violence and resistance are met with suppression whether through force, mockery, or medication. Deeming responses as unacceptable falls along racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and class lines. For example, within the United States, anger, outrage, and calls for retributory violence are acceptable responses by dominant society when they come from a white man who survived an ISIL bombing. But the same responses are depicted as out of control, a threat to civil liberties, and even dangerous when they come from a black woman nearly killed by police brutality or a parent whose child died in a mass shooting at an elementary school. Suppression of "violent" responses is also witnessed in over-medicalization or re-traumatization that takes place during cross-cultural attempts to provide aid in the wake of the traumatic. In these situations, Euro-Americans come into communities seeking to provide assistance, but do so without understanding or disregarding the cultural contexts that they are entering. They apply Euro-American dominant methods that either further damage the social fabric of the community they are within or provoke violent responses which have been traditionally met with aggression or abandonment by those providing aid.

Such responses to violence in the face of the traumatic may be due to the fact that violence is stigmatized as a response from below. It is viewed as a response generated by un(der)civilized sectors of society that forgo proper channels for reacting to woundings or have limited access to them. It feeds into the colonial logic that the "native" is "impervious to ethics…[a] corrosive element, destroying everything within his reach, a

corrupting element, distorting everything which involves aesthetics or morals…"[55] This also contributes to the idea that violence is a lashing out rather than processing of wound(ing)s. But the role of violence requires critical examination to challenge the dismissive or fearful attitude towards it, while also critiquing the ways violent trauma responses can further perpetuate cycles of wound(ing)s.

In the case of Revelation, John produces a violent fantasy response to wound(ing)s that arises from below. It is a response that uses violence to respond to the numerous wounds inflicted throughout the history of God's people and that continue to be inflicted by the Roman Empire in the present. It represents the struggle to respond to the insidious and event-based wound(ing)s of a long line of colonizing powers. Such a response can necessitate violence, for as Fanon has declared, "decolonization is always a violent event."[56] Numerous liberationist biblical interpretations would agree.[57] But this does not negate that attention must be paid to the nature and quality of the violence John's employs. Thus, what I seek to recognize is that violence should be envisioned within the realm of accepted responses to wound(ing)s. More than anything because this is reality.

The question that remains however, is how to fully engage and analyze violent responses. This seeks not to erect a boundary of acceptable and unacceptable responses that employ violence – whether fictional or actual. Instead, it raises questions to explore

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[55] Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Richard Philcox, 1963 (New York: Grove Press: 2004), 6.
[56] Ibid., 1.
[57] For example, Allen D. Callahan posits that "the vexing presence of injustice in the world created by a just God is not a conundrum to be solved, but a violet contradiction to be violently resolved." Callahan affirms that John's actions "must include punishment of the offending parties" and that such actions are divinely justified and transcend "unbridled lust for revenge" ("Apocalypse as Critique of Political Economy: Some Notes on Revelation 18," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 21 [1999]: 64). However, in making such a claim, while leaning into the socio-political lived realities of the oppressed, he fails to fully explore the gendered and sexual nature of the punishment that he endorses.

the nature of the violence exhibited along with the benefits, excesses, and consequences that may emerge from such violence. The aim is to avoid the underdeveloped analysis of the consequences of violence or wholesale rejection of violence that can occur. But neither does it allow for a carte blanche acceptance of violence. Instead, I acknowledge how images of violence produce positive and negative effects upon the psyches and bodies of those wounded. But I ask what we must consider about the nature of violence when utilizing it in response to wound(ing)s, namely those wound(ing)s inflicted by Babylon.

Chosen trauma helps us think about the relation of trauma responses and violence as it claims space for revenge as a trauma response. Revelation desires revenge, amplified by the "souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given" crying to God to avenge their deaths (6:9-11). Such a desire for revenge not only seeks justice and acknowledgment of wound(ing)s, it can also aid a group in securing its identity. However, as noted above, this revenge when exaggerated can lead to grave harm to the perceived enemy group, perhaps those whose names were not written in the book of life (20:15). Volkan explains that chosen trauma when fueled by certain factors such as exaggerated entitlement ideologies, motivated leadership, or political propaganda can "initiate massive violent acts, including genocidal ones, directed toward a current *'enemy'* group."[58] But the dangers of such vengeful violence do not only threaten harm against the enemy. For "under certain circumstances the large group, without realistic means to be *'sadistic'* toward the current enemy, may idealize their own victimization and become *'masochistic.'*"[59] This may take many forms. I posit that

[58] Volkan, "Chosen Trauma."
[59] Ibid.

John's excessive imaging of violence and his inability to enact it against Babylon/Rome have the ability to induce and/or continue (self-)harm and wound(ing)s within the *ekklēsia* through the oppressive ideologies it perpetuates. The power of these ideologies and the violence they condone carries the capability of wound(ing) generations into the present day. I highlight three.

Wound(ing) One: Against the Female Body

John depicts Babylon as a woman who is both a seductive object of desire and a death-dealing embodiment of exploitative Rome.[60] His response to her is to violently destroy her. While this response may appear justified in relation to the wounds inflicted by Rome, the body it is committed against requires attention. Ultimately, it begs the question of whether John's "vision of justice boils down to the burning and devouring of a woman's body" and whether this is the type of justice we should desire?[61]

Scholars, such as Tina Pippin, who are willing to engage Babylon's female body are quick to point out that John's goal in Revelation is not to realize an alternate gender reality. Rather, a pattern emerges throughout Revelation of violently silencing and erasing its female characters. Pippin aptly states that they are objectified and stereotyped victims lacking "power and control over their own lives or the real or fantastic worlds" surrounding Revelation.[62] Babylon is the object of male desire with her seductive allure. Yet the power she possesses, both over men and as a wounder, is dangerous and upsets the patriarchal ideology that views women as objects of male conquest and domination.

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[60] I draw upon Tina Pippin's exploration of this dichotomy and its Bakhtinian carnivalesque nature. See *Death and Desire*, 57-68.
[61] Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 76.
[62] Pippin, "Heroine and Whore," 69

For women are meant to serve as "objects of speculation," devices for discourse, and malleable subjects prime to be shaped by men "into qualities perceived to be admired by men."[63] The female body and its (re)productivity needs to remain perpetually accessible to and under the control of men. Females who do not conform to this ideal by refusing to relinquish their power are deemed dangerous. They become monsters, whores, and dangerous (m)others that must be eliminated to protect the common good.[64]

This notion is amplified by the ways in which the ideology of female conquest is replicated not only on social but political and cosmic levels throughout the Roman Empire. Roman conquest and colonization are saturated with the logic of male domination. One only has to look at the visual imagery of conquest. Conquered nations (*ethnē*) are depicted and encapsulated within an ethnically specific female body, such as in the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias. At times, this imagery captures the gendered violence of conquest depicting the male emperor subduing and physically dominating the feminized nations. One only has to look at the imagery of Emperor Claudius pinning the bare breasted Britannia to the ground to graphically witness the ways in which gender "makes intelligible power relations and hierarchies correlated with ethnicity and social status."[65] As Davina Lopez explains, such imagery and the ideologies expressed within it function not only to display the gendered nature of conquest and colonization but the overall view

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[63] Gail P. Streete, *Redeemed Bodies: Women Martyrs in Early Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 20.

[64] On numerous occasions, mythological narratives employ such a construct that justifies violence against unruly females as necessary for the protection and continuance of society. A particularly gruesome account is found in the destruction of Tiamat in the *Enuma Elish*. To a slightly less graphic degree, John's account of Jezebel being thrown on a bed and her children being struck dead (2:20-23) also displays how dangerous women and their offspring are to be handled.

[65] Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered,* 50.

that "pacification" of these feminized bodies is "necessary for continued peace and abundance" within the empire.[66]

Babylon is the victim of this ideology. Her power must be defused and destroyed in order to shore up the unstable, fluid gender constructs functioning within Roman society and to ensure peace and abundance for John's (male) *ekklēsia*. To accomplish this, her character is flattened and reduced to a single element – that of a dangerous, monstrous, blood thirsty *woman*. This flattening of Babylon's character mitigates a nuanced evaluation of her contextual situation, inviting and inciting violence upon her. She is "literally stripped of her humanity and presented as an incarnation of evil." [67] Any ambivalence towards this powerful woman (or the city she is associated with) is removed as followers of Christ are called to stand in opposition to the dangerous, murderous Whore and rejoice in her demise. Mary Daly summarizes this point well stating,

> The harlot "deserves" to be hated and destroyed, of course, for she symbolizes the uncontrollable Babylon, the wicked city. No one asks who are the agents of wickedness. It is enough to have a scapegoat, a victim for dismemberment. Everyone knows that the woman is at fault.[68]

The use of this ideology justifying and normalizing violence against women continues today. It functions on all socio-political levels, affecting women to varying degrees in relation to their race, ethnicity, class/caste, socio-economic status, geographic location, etc. Its acute ability to wound cannot be understated. For it is a "dangerous divine sanction" that, as Avaren Ipsen explains, "is enacted by so many men, from wife beaters to rapists and serial killers of prostitutes…mak[ing] the experienced ideology of

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[66] Ibid., 51.
[67] Vander Stichele, "Re-membering the Whore," 107.
[68] Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 104.

the text incredibly potent and lethal."[69] For Ipsen and the sex workers she reads the text with, the "whore metaphor" and violent ideologies it perpetuates cannot be justified. From their perspective, John's desire for liberation cannot come at the price of beaten and dead bodies of women and is "no excuse for using the whore metaphor."[70] This ideology also functions within broader political systems and structures as a tool of war, conquest, and colonization. Rape and murder continue to serve as a weapon of war, where dominance and peace is built upon the victor's ability to penetrate and control the feminized nation and the bodies of its women.

John's brutal destruction of the woman Babylon and Christianity's complacency and ambivalence towards his actions are dangerous and deadly. They contribute to the perpetuation, normalization, and justification of patriarchal domination and violence against women. I agree that trying to separate Babylon from her characterization as a woman in order to celebrate John's quest for liberation is impossible. Instead, the dangers of John's gendered violence must be named so that a different kind of liberation might be more fully realized – a topic we will discuss further in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Wound(ing) Two: Against the Queer Body

While feminists, womanists, and others rightly point out the patriarchal, hegemonic logic that justifies female bodies having to bear the brunt of male aggression and anxiety, there is further anxiety and aggression turned towards Babylon. Imaging Babylon as a queer and non-conforming figure exposes a fear latent in Revelation that encapsulates and extends beyond the fears of imperial idolatry and feminine power. It is

[69] Avaren Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible* (London: Equinox, 2009), 169.
[70] Ibid., 170.

fear of undefined, shifting boundaries and desires that threaten John's clearly defined community. Babylon's identity constantly mutates, never quite coming completely into focus.[71] She is fleshy whore and commercial city, seductive desire and disgusting filth, uncontrollable power and complete folly. Babylon's identity challenges and queers the clear delineation between Babylon as woman and Babylon as Rome that many scholars construct. She is fully whore and fully city, fluidly embodying and selectively performing both. For as readers, we cannot wholly forget the woman when we shift our focus to Rome, nor can we look back at the woman without seeing imperialism pulsing through her veins.

But even the troubling of the whore-city dichotomy does not fully capture Babylon's queerness. For her body contains many more bodies – goddesses, warriors, and conquerors – poking out from beneath the excessive layers of purple, scarlet, and gems that John's vision drapes upon her. As Stephen Moore explains, Babylon is a parody of the goddess Roma. Roma is a masculinized and militarized figure, leaving Moore to describe her as "hegemonic Roman manhood encased in female flesh that is clad in hypermasculine garb."[72] Thus, Babylon, embodying "Roma stripped of her military attire and reclothed as a prostitute" further blurs lines as she masquerades in a sort of quadruple drag.[73] Furthermore, as Lynn Huber suggests Babylon's sex acts in and of themselves can be read as queer for the ways that they "queer heteronormativity" and

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[71] I would add that this lack of clear definition that has allowed communities to re-appropriate and inscribe their own particular "enemies" upon the figure of Babylon (e.g., Reformation propaganda depicting the papacy/Catholic Church as Babylon).
[72] Stephen D. Moore, "Metonymies of Empire: Sexual Humiliation and Gender Masquerade in the Book of Revelation," in *Postcolonial Interventions*, ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew. The Bible in the Modern World, 23 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 87.
[73] Ibid.

its "assumptions about what constitutes acceptable sex and work."[74] It is these (sexually active) bodies slipping in and out of view that further elicit such strong, violent reactions from John. For these bodies, encapsulated in one body, represent slippages that challenge gender and sexual norms, public decorum, and most importantly, the faith John prescribes for his community. Thus, John may have affirmed her demise not solely to critique Rome or in disdain of women, but out of fear for his community slipping into the queer, the non-conforming and thus out of his vision for the *ekklēsia*. Ironically, as Lynn Huber highlights, the consequences of such a slippage would not be the ostracization and exile that many queer individuals experience, instead it would be an act of assimilation bringing the *ekklēsia* back into dominate culture.[75]

By violently reinforcing boundaries both through the destruction of Babylon's body and the constructing of New Jerusalem's high walls, John perpetuates an extreme form of separatism and isolationism. Chosen trauma reinforces this ideology with its "us versus them" mentality. John takes this to an extreme with the destruction of those outside the *ekklēsia*, and perhaps, some inside as well. For the desire to prevent the community from mingling with(in) Babylon generates a mixture of inward- and outward-directed aggressions that manifest as "imagined sexual violence directed against the [non-conforming] female" in Revelation.[76]

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[74] Lynn R. Huber, "Gazing at the Whore: Reading Revelation Queerly," in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship,* ed. Teresea J. Hornsby and Ken Stone (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 309.

[75] Ibid., 312-3. Huber's overall interpretation offers a slightly different, yet insightful, queer angle on the text. Huber demonstrates how some of Babylon's actions queer normative societal practices and expectations (as noted above), yet Babylon's ultimate allure is in her promise of assimilation into dominate culture. Huber insightfully unpacks how Babylon's assimilationist allure provides insight into the ways in which contemporary queer communities have fallen for similar imperial enticements promising acceptance and power from mainstream American society (317-8).

[76] Moore, *Untold Tales*, 148-9.

This draws attention to the violence that happens against queer and non-conforming bodies. It also highlights the ways in which these bodies come to be blamed for the violence committed against them. The work of Michael Foucault helps to further illuminate the violent abuse of Babylon as part of a perceived need to punish (if not destroy) non-conforming bodies. Foucault explains that that "the whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable."[77] Punishment seeks to "normalize" the figure and bring her/him back into line. By doing so, the figure can once again become part of a "homogenous social body" (the 144,000 male virgins, perhaps).[78] To reinforce proper Christian identity and prevent any possible slippages, John makes an example out of Babylon.[79] Her punishment fits the choices she made to defy God by glorifying herself and living a luxuriously, scandalous life (18:7). Unlike Jezebel before her, who at least receives time to consider repenting of her evil ways (2:21), Babylon has strayed too far from the normative to be afforded such courtesies. Instead her punishment must be of the capital variety.

This desire, justification, and glee for punishing Babylon and Christianity's ambivalence around questioning the violence points to another danger of the ideologies that emerge from within the text. For the lack of sympathy towards Babylon can arises from her being a "bad" victim as explored above, but also can stem from the logic of victim blaming. The logic of victim blaming holds that victim somehow "facilitated,

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[77] Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 178-9.
[78] Ibid., 184.
[79] Howard-Brook and Gwyther note that the call for the people to "come out" of Babylon functions as both "encouragement and warning to the *ekklesiai.*" Thus, her demise both strengthens the resolve of those resisting Rome and warns those "colluding with the empire...that the time to leave was *now*" (*Unveiling Empire,* 183).

precipitated, or provoked the crime committed against him or her."[80] Venessa Garcia, expanding upon the work of Andrew Karmen, explains that victim blaming functions on the "just world hypothesis" that is grounded in the premise that:

> (1) Victims are different from nonvictims, (2) something the victim has done or failed to do has resulted in the victimization, and (3) if the victim changes that behavior, then the victimization will not reoccur.[81]

This line of thinking further colludes with the conceptualization that punishment can serve as a corrective agent to prevent unfavorable actions or behaviors.

Elaborate ideologies of victim blaming have developed to even assess the level at which victims are claimed to be responsible for the violence committed against them. Roughly speaking, three levels of victim responsibility exist: victim facilitation, victim, precipitation, and victim provocation.[82] The third level, victim provocation pertains most closely to our text. For in cases of victim provocation, the victim is actually guiltier than the one committing violence against her.[83] This ideology is at play with Babylon's demise. John desires the reader to believe Babylon designed her own fate. This begins in John's formal introduction of Babylon in the opening verses of Rev. 17. Dripping in finery and doused in fornication, John's description centers on her sumptuous, male-beguiling attire (17:4-5). He continues layering and embellishing the justification for her demise. She "glorified herself and lived luxuriously" (18:7). She sinned against God, drinking the blood of saints and sleeping around with all the kings of the earth. Her

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[80] Venessa Garcia and Patrick McManimon, *Gendered Violence: Intimate Partner Violence and the Criminal Justice System* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 49.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., 52.
[83] Ibid., 53.

hubris remained unchecked ("I rule as a queen; I am no widow, and I will never see grief" – 18:7).[84] Therefore, "[r]ender to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed" (18:6). Babylon was a deserving victim. She was not only an evil empire but a queer female body. She was responsible for the mix of desire and disgust she elicited and thus the violence against her was justified as her own doing. But this line of thinking carries deadly ideological potential for the perpetuation of victim blaming.

My insistence on resisting the desire to blame Babylon for the violence committed against her stems from the realities of victim blaming against contemporary queer bodies. This victim blaming comes in many forms from the spiritual violence of proclaiming eternal damnation of queers because they do not pray for God to heal them of their "affliction" to justifying that queer sexual practices or stylized gestures, for example, necessitate and encourage physical, sexual, verbal or emotional violence against queer persons in order to "teach them how to be a real (wo)man" or as corrective practices to assert "normative" social behaviors.

An example of such victim blaming that has gained international attention are the "corrective rapes" of black lesbians and queer-identified women taking place in South Africa. Lesbians are perceived as threatening to South African society because of their non-normative sexual practices (i.e. their sexual inaccessibility for men) and their challenges to masculinity. As such, lesbians are often deemed "un-African" or under the "influence of the global North."[85] Amanda Lock Swarr points out that among lesbians,

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[84] Lynn R. Huber, *Thinking and Seeing with Women in Revelation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 71.
[85] Amanda Lock Swarr, "Paradoxes of Butchness: Lesbian Masculinities and Sexual Violence in Contemporary South Africa," *Signs* 37:4, "Sex: A Thematic Issue" (Summer 2012): 962.

butch lesbians in particular are targets of sexual violence because their performativity challenges not only heterosexual and gender norms but what is expected of the "somatically female bod[y]" through their own claims to male bodies via binding, packing, etc.[86] The intersection of cultural norms, gendered power dynamics, external threats of assimilation, and the fragile constructs of masculinity lead perpetrators to justify the targeted rape and in some cases murder of lesbians. The most immediate reasons that the victims deserve such violence include "punishment for behavior or attitude, the need to assert authority, and the assertion of 'rights.'"[87] On a broader level, the violence is meant to help the women become "better women," to "transform the sexual identity of the survivor," and to preserve cultural normativity and identity.[88]

The experience of these lesbians is not unique to South Africa, but instead is one example of an epidemic taking place around the globe that manifests itself in a multitude of ways. The reasons that justify the sexual violence committed against these women are not so different from the justifications for Babylon's demise or Jezebel's punishment (2:20-23).[89] Threats to cultural identity whether through assimilation, fluid gender expression (uncontrolled femininity, for example) or behaviors deemed non-normative become justifiable openings for violence. Those for whom the violence is not curative or

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[86] Ibid., 963, 983.
[87] Nonhlanhla Mkhize, Jane Bennett, Vasu Reddy, and Relebohile Molestane, *The Country We Want to Live In: Hate Crimes and Homophobia in the Lives of Black Lesbian South Africans*, Policy Analysis and Capacity Enhancement Research Paper Occasional Paper 1. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), 45.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Numerous scholars are now interpreting Jezebel's treatment from the perspective of sexual violence rather than the earlier "cause to become ill" translation (R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation to St. John,* vol. 1 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920], 71-72). Colleen Conway views the "double reference to [Jezebel's] sexual deviance – prostitution and adultery (πορνεία, μοιχεία) – for her to be thrown on a bed unavoidably (however disturbingly) evokes images of sexual humiliation, if not assault" (*Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 162). Others, such as Stephen Moore, build upon perspective and view the action against Jezebel as implying "punitive sexual violence" (*Untold Tales,* 148-9 n.52).

instructive are an uncontrollable threat that must be ostracized or eliminated. Babylon was forced into the flames partly by her non-normative actions and the anxieties they caused. These actions, the actions of Rome, were horrific and needed to be resisted. But instead of naming the crimes as those of Rome, they were placed on a queer female body. Black South African lesbians presently are raped, beaten, and killed for their queerness and the threat they pose to "traditional" culture, namely patriarchy. Both Babylon and the lesbians of South Africa and queer persons around the globe are deemed deserving victims for the violence inflicted upon them. Such a mindset only further perpetuates cycles of violence and wound(ing)s by rationalizing the violence as the victim's fault and a necessary means of upholding the greater good. Thus, this form of violence must be critically examined and challenged.

Wound(ing) Three: Against the Collective Body

Chosen trauma's focus on the acts of the enemy and its desire to retaliate against them also poses the threat of masking violence and wound(ing)s taking place internally within the community. As noted above, John perpetuates gender oppression and violence within the community. He also seeks to violently reinforce identity boundaries around the community which clearly define who is in and who is out. He perpetuates these oppressions under the guise of liberation by focusing the reader's gaze on Babylon, her sins, and ultimately, her destruction. But by focusing the gaze externally on the divine violence against the "enemy" Babylon, attention is drawn away from other violence and wound(ing)s that take place internally within the communal body of the *ekklēsia*. Thus, a final aspect of violence that John perpetuates is the masking of internal violence within the community. Though John opens his revelation with letters to the *ekklēsiae* detailing

their shortcomings and exposing internal divisions, by the time we reach Babylon, the community is blameless, sin-free. This unified, undefiled *ekklēsia* (14:1-4) is established through violence against and erasure of all who do not fall within John's vision for the community This is witnessed nowhere more clearly than in the treatment of the woman, Jezebel, and her followers (2:19-23). For her unrepentant behavior, Jezebel is violently thrown on the bed, her children are killed, and all those connected to her are assured an equally distressing fate (2:21-23). Those who do not align with John get what they deserve (2:23), which presumably includes their own experience of burning in the lake of fire (20:14-15). Such an image violently suppresses the realities existing within the community and serves as a warning to all who might considering challenging John's vision for the community. Such an action turns the community's attention away from critical self-reflection around its own shortcomings to focus on the justified suppression of the internal enemy and destruction of the external one (as well as the internal ones that do not fall in line). Thus, the quest for liberation comes at the price of perpetuating the silencing and erasing of internal strife and wound(ing)s taking place internally, which might tarnish the community's image or challenge its supposed unity.

Contemporary liberation efforts perpetuate this as well. In situations where apartheid, dictatorships, or oppressive regimes are overthrown, there is a desire to present an image of the government or society emerging as without fault. Continuing or new issues of violence and corruption are suppressed. Wound(ing)s are hastily stitched up and covered. Furthermore, those who seek to expose the violence and wounds produced under the new regime are often threatened, silenced, and left outside the walls. Journalists, political commentators, activists, and other whistleblowers can face threats,

imprisonment, exile, and death. A small survey within the world of journalism displays the use of violence to suppress those who seek to name internal wound(ing)s. Baher Mohamed, an Al Jazeera journalist, was jailed in Egypt under the accusation of propagating "false" news when covering the 2013 protests against the military overthrowing President Mohamed Morsi. Suna Venter, a South African radio producer, died from a stress and trauma induced cardiomyopathy after unceasing harassment and physical assaults stemming from her public objection to the censorship of airing governmental protest footage. Indian journalist, Gauro Lankesh, was shot and killed, many believe, for her outspoken critiques of the central government and right-wing groups. And the list goes on.

The denial, masking, and suppression of internal, intra-communal violence does not produce liberation or justice. Instead, it undermines the very foundations of communal idenity/ies that it seeks to promote. Within Revelation, the focus on seeking revenge and wound(ing) Babylon does not ultimately promote healing. It hinders it by refusing to take a holistic look at the wide-ranging wounds and ongoing wound(ing)s found within of the *ekklēsia*. Only by being willing to expose and examine all wound(ing)s is communal processing and healing possible.

Choosing Communal Heal(th)ing

Revelation provides insight into communal desires for liberation, revenge, and healing of its wounds. Chosen trauma helps explore how these desires arise when a collective's wounded history entangles with present realities of wound(ing). It exposes the desire to move forward, to claim collective identity, and to survive. But it also unveils how such desires can perpetuate wound(ing)s of their own.

In Revelation, Babylon burns. Her burning is divinely justified and celebrated. Yet the glare of her flames, even if seen from the heavens, cannot ultimately illuminate the path of healing and liberation for John and his *ekklēsia*. Instead, the smoke of Babylon and all those who burn with her clouds the community's vision of liberation. For the smoke of Babylon is more than that of the smoldering cloth of a flag or a symbol of an oppressive empire. It is the smoke of the flesh of those deemed "other" or "enemy" as well as all who inadvertently are harmed by the process of otherizing. This smoke clogs the *ekklēsia*'s wounds and creates new ones. These wounds, oozing with the pus of patriarchy, homophobia, and isolationism, continue to fester and demand the attention of today's *ekklēsia*. The wound(ing)s in Revelation and those perpetuated by the text, demand witness for the health of contemporary readers. The legacy and current reality of the wound(ing)s call the *ekklēsia* to seek further ways, beyond the scope of the text's vision, to promote healing, justice, and liberation. Such a vision of collective health requires vigilance. It requires that healing be sought through critical and multi-positional engagements with the complexities of each wound. Only then, can the desire for healing, and the smoke of all the flags that may burn in the process, never overpower or rejoice in the smell of burning flesh.

CHAPTER FIVE

Representing A Wounding Legacy: Re-Politicizing 1 Peter's Household Code

Fig. 5 Robert Edward Lee Statue, Emancipation Park, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. (1 Peter 2:18)

On August 12, 2017 crowds assembled in Emancipation Park in Charlottesville, Virginia. Unite the Right, a rally organized by white nationalists, white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and various militias had gathered in the park along with growing numbers of counter-protesters led by local activists and clergy persons. With events escalating into a state of emergency, law enforcement assembled to break up the Unite the Right rally. At the center of the controversy was the monument pictured above. The weathered, seemingly benign monument portrays a uniformed, bearded man with a stately and somber expression riding atop his striding horse. The man resolutely clutches his hat at his side as both horse and rider enact a perpetual tableau saluting the "great cause" to which their lives were dedicated. Inscribed on either side of the monument's base are the words, "Robert Edward Lee 1807-1870."

The monument of Confederate general, Robert E. Lee, had presided over the originally named Lee Park since 1924. The monument and many like it were erected during this period of U.S. history that saw an increased glorification of the Confederacy amidst the era of Jim Crow and a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.[1] It stood in Charlottesville as a memorial of past glories for some and a monument to dehumanizing, systemic oppression for others. The city's decision to remove the monument and rename the park it was located within served as the genesis for the white nationalist rally. Despite being a symbol of the past, this sculpted piece of bronze provided a catalyst for the

[1] The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that there were two periods in which the dedication of Confederate monuments spiked, the Jim Crow era particularly during 1900-1920s and the civil rights movement in the 1950-1960s ("Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy," *Southern Poverty Law Center* [2016], accessed January 21, 2018, https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/whoseheritage_splc.pdf, 9).

spewing of hatred and spilling of blood in the present. For the events of that day spiraled into violent clashes between the white nationalist protesters and counter-protestors. By nightfall, counter-protester, DeAndre Harris, and at least nineteen other individuals were injured and Heather Heyer was dead.

The violence and wound(ing)s witnessed at Charlottesville mirrored growing tensions across the United States. In the wake of the 2015 Charleston massacre at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in which white supremacist, Dylann Roof, murdered nine African American parishioners, a movement arose to remove symbols glorifying the pro-slavery Confederacy from public spaces. Bree Newson scaled the flagpole at the South Carolina State Capitol to remove the Confederate flag. “Racist,” “Black Lives Matter,” and blood red paint covered numerous Confederate monuments across the nation. Crowds toppled monuments from their bases, while others were officially felled by cities as witnessed in New Orleans, despite the vocal protests of those seeking to preserve the statues’ public presence.

These works of bronze, concrete, and linen are imbued with the wounding legacy of slavery and the power of white supremacy. Though appearing static and depicting a reality over a hundred years old, the monuments are very much alive, possessing the ability to trigger memories of past wound(ing)s and wound in the present. This reality is captured by the words of Mamie Garvin Fields, an African American educator from Charleston. Speaking about a monument to John C. Calhoun in Charleston, Fields says,

"As you passed by, here was Calhoun looking you in the face and telling you, '…you may not be a slave, but I am back to see you stay in your place.'"[2]

Every generation in the United States wrestles with how to image, engage, and memorialize the cultural wound(ing)s of slavery. This process is filled with competing histories and conflicting viewpoints about how to respond to the wound(ing)s. Each generation assesses and considers the possible adjustment of past generations' textual, visual, and visceral representations. For how a wounding legacy is represented intimately connects to the current sociopolitical context it exists within. In our present sociopolitical climate where the KKK marches across cities and campuses, the murder of black and brown bodies compels protestors into the streets, and racial and ethnic profiling are deemed necessary for public safety, the need to assess monuments and memorials to America's[3] history of systemic racism is urgent and unavoidable.

This is an important task not only for cities and legislatures, but also for faith communities who carry their own monuments and memorials to America's wounding legacy of slavery manifested through systemic racism and white supremacy. Sacred texts and traditions have served as weapons of oppression and shields of apathy allowing for the continuation of supremacist logic. Too often the wounding potential of these textual and ritual monuments have either been normalized, spiritualized, or anachronized to mask the racist ideologies alive within them. The following engages one such monument

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[2] Ethan J. Kytle and Blain Roberts, "Take Down the Confederate Flags, but Not the Monuments," *The Atlantic,* last modified June 25, 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/-confederate-monuments-flags-south-carolina/396836/.

[3] I use the term "America," as a synonym for "the United States," recognizing that it is a freighted term at the center of an ideological and affective struggle. I acknowledge the ways in which this blanket term is colonizing in the ways that it erases the realities of other cultures and nations within the North and South American contexts.

to racial wound(ing)s in the United States, the household code (*Haustafel*) found in 1 Peter 2:18-3:7.

Historically, this text has been weaponized to, as Ms. Fields highlights, put and keep people in their place. It has perpetuated wound(ing)s by providing divine protection and justification not just for actions of domestic violence, but also for actions of racially-based violence, enslavement, lynchings, white supremacy, and discrimination. The work of generations of African American, liberationist and abolitionist preachers, scholars, and practitioners have named the wound(ing)s instigated and perpetuated by this text. They have represented and interpreted it in new ways that have sought to disarm it of its potential to continuing wounding black bodies.

Though some white preachers, faith communities, and scholars assisted in this liberatory effort, they have provided relatively minimal critical reflection on the text's present ability to perpetrate racially-based wound(ing)s. Instead, they have chosen to focus on the wound(ing)s of intimate violence the text perpetuates as the most urgent concern. This is particularly true of white feminists who have most thoroughly attended to the text's continuing ability to wound women in society. Such actions have rendered the text's legacy of racial wound(ing)s a relic that many have convinced themselves that we, as a society, have evolved beyond or rendered mute in our post-Civil Rights, "colorblind" society.[4] The text has become like a Confederate monument that is passed every day. Most (but certainly not all) acknowledge its wounding past, but learn to walk by or flip past it without a second thought in relation to present racial wound(ing)s.

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[4] Michelle Alexander astutely articulates the multitude of ways racial bias exists and thrives in an a supposed "era of colorblindness" in the United States, particularly within the criminal justice system and its War on Drugs (*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* [New York: The New Press, 2010], esp. 97-139).

But just as the country has a renewed interest in the Confederate statues dotting its landscape, so now is time for white Christianity to renew its interest in the 1 Peter household code. It is time for white Christians to name how the text covertly continues to support the white supremacist logic running throughout the country. Such engagement also asks how white Christianity will choose to represent the text as a monument to the wounding legacy of slavery for present and future generations. Thus, I hold that in the age of Black Lives Matter, Charlottesville, and the Trump presidency more broadly, it is time to reassess and re-politicize interpretations of 1 Peter 2:18-3:7.

Unlike the previous two chapters that gave greater attention to how ancient wound(ing)s shaped and influenced the production of texts, this chapter primarily focuses on the text's ability to perpetuate and/or justify wound(ing)s in contemporary times. I speak out of my own context as a progressive, white Christian. My reading of the text is directed primarily to white Christians as a call to examine what it means to both claim accountability for white supremacy as well as to promote anti-racism from a faith-based perspective. To accomplish this, I utilize cultural trauma theory (defined in detail below) to guide the discussion about how white Christianity might shape its engagement with the 1 Peter household code given the present racial climate in the United States. I begin by situating the text in relation to cultural trauma theory and biblical interpretation. Then I highlight four areas in which the 1 Peter household code provide strategic insights for white Christians responding to the wounding legacy of slavery: systemic influence, intersecting woundings, perpetrator perspectives, and understandings of suffering. To further expand understandings of representation, the artwork of Titus Kaphar will visually guide this discussion.

Representing a Wounding Legacy

Slavery is perhaps the cultural trauma most deeply imbedded in the conscience of the United States. Slavery and its legacy shape not only African American identity, but the basic social fabric of the United States.[5] Cultural traumas (as outlined in Chapter 2) interpret wound(ing) on a collective level and view it as "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the fabric the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion."[6] Such a tear to the social fabric "damages the texture of community" and the relationality of its members for generations.[7] At its core, relationality is reconfigured, such that as Kai Erikson states, "'I' continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. 'You' continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But 'we' no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body."[8]

The United States experienced such a reconfiguration of relationality as a direct consequence of slavery and its legacies of racism and discrimination. Such a rupture and reconfiguration of relationality produced a range of responses that were dependent upon the power dynamics, geographical realities, and socioeconomic circumstances influencing society. This has been witnessed through the different representations and rhetoric around race during Reconstruction, the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Lives Matter movement, etc. No matter the representation chosen by a generation, the impacts of the wound(ing) of slavery persist and forever impact race

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[5] Ron Eyerman, "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity,* Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 60.
[6] Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.
[7] Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," 187.
[8] Kai Erikson, *Everything in Its Path* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 154.

relations in U.S. society. Each generation's responses to cultural trauma shapes society and has the ability to promote social change. But as Piotr Sztompka highlights, there is an ambivalence around this social change such that it can serve as a positive "force of *social becoming*" or it can become "a self-amplifying vicious spiral of *cultural destruction*."[9] Communities and generations can vacillate between these two positions as a response to the current sociopolitical climate. Presently, the negotiations and conflicts arising from these two axles of social change are playing out across the nation.

Some ask how such heated negotiations around race can still be playing out in the twenty-first century. But this dynamic negotiation links to the notion of instability found within cultural traumas. For according to collective trauma theory, "[n]o discrete historical event or situation automatically or necessarily qualifies in itself as a cultural trauma." [10] Rather, something is deemed a wound(ing) because the collective identifies and remembers an event or prolonged occurrence as such. Thus, the collective has the power to either identify or erase and ignore wound(ing)s, regardless of whether individuals or sub-groups within the collective experience something as a wound(ing). Though collective U.S. conscience has identified slavery as a wound(ing) within its history, for cultural trauma theory this does not guarantee that the collective will always experience slavery and its legacy as an ongoing collective wound(ing). For the ongoing remembrance and identification of the wound(ing) is essential for it to remain a cultural trauma. Usually this is produced by a strong negative affect such as disgust, shame, or guilt coupled with the sense that something sacred to and necessary for collective identity

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[9] Piotr Sztompka, "The Trauma of Social Change: A Case of Postcommunist Societies," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 193-95.
[10] Neil J. Smelser, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 35-6.

has been damaged or destroyed.[11] Without this sense of collective consciousness of the wound(ing), it can move in and out of the category of cultural trauma. For example, Neil Smelser highlights that the wound(ing) of slavery has a much more secure place in America's wound(ing) conscious than does the partial extermination of Native Americans and seizure of their lands.[12] But still, the ongoing legacy of slavery is at times whitewashed in order to prevent the need to address issues such as reconciliation and reparations.

The fluid nature of cultural trauma does not guarantee a previous generation's representation of the wound(ing) will stick. Instead, it requires every generation to determine how they will define, conceptualize, and relate to the wound(ing). Therefore, a wound(ing) may receive great recognition by one generation and not by future generations. Or a wound(ing) may lay unrecognized for generations and arise into collective conscious due to the current sociopolitical climate or the (re)discovery of the wound(ing). Cultural trauma is experienced "through time-delayed and negotiated recollection."[13] This sort of recollection allows each generation to mold the wound(ing) in ways that honors or erases the past, in a way that serves their present needs.

Throughout this multigenerational processing, representation is key to mediating the ways in which the cultural trauma functions within the collective.[14] For cultural trauma causes shifts and transformations in collective identity depending how a group views their relationship to the wound(ing). These identity shifts are defined and communicated through collective representations, whether visual, textual, oral,

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[11] Ibid., 36
[12] Ibid.
[13] Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma,* 12.
[14] Ibid*,* 1.

performative, or other forms of expression. The household codes fall into the category of representation. For even though they existed prior to American slavery, their use in debates around slavery make them part of the overall representation of how communities understand the legacy of the cultural trauma of slavery. Thus, an effort to reshape contemporary racial ideologies and relationships to wound(ing)s requires the text be interpreted and represented to society in a new way.

Power and access lies at the heart of how wound(ing) and collective identity are represented. Representation is "mediated by the uneven distribution of material resources and the social networks provide differential access to them."[15] Traditionally, academic, religious, and political institutions working through aesthetic, scientific, and media channels control these representations.[16] Today we witness daily this struggle to control representation on news networks and social media, in the public square and the ivory tower, as well as in houses of worship. Intellectuals play a particularly important role in shaping how these debates are shaped, recorded, and interpreted.[17] Thus, I hold that given the power and access to resources that white biblical scholars possess, it is of particular import that we engage the wounding legacy of the household code not only with regards to the abuse of (white) wives, but also from a perspective of systemic and interpersonal racism.

The following will use the insights of cultural trauma theory to highlight how the 1 Peter household code serves as an ongoing textual monument to the cultural

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[15] Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma" in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity,* 21.
[16] Ibid., 15-24.
[17] The entirety of Ron Eyerman's *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* provides an astute and detailed overview of the role of black intellectuals in shaping African American identity from emancipation through the Harlem Renaissance to the Civil Rights Movement and rise of black nationalism.

wound(ing) of slavery. It will suggest how white Christians, particularly through developing new scholarly interpretations, can reengage and represent the text in ways that better align with current movements for social change in the United States. As noted in Chapter 2, a limitation of cultural trauma theory is its systems approach that does not engage individual, lived experiences of wound(ing)s. Thus, while cultural trauma theory helps to examine the collective and intergenerational processing of wound(ing)s, the following engagement with the 1 Peter household code extends beyond cultural trauma theory to factor in the experience of lived realities and discrete events. Similarly, while cultural trauma theory highlights the ways in which systems and power structures shape the narratives around wound(ing)s, it is not necessarily interested in the ethical ramifications of these processes. The following reading seeks to more holistically look at the 1 Peter household code's wounding legacy by placing the insights of cultural trauma theory beside concerns for the individual, ethical, and political aspects of wound(ing).

Contextualizing the 1 Peter Household Code: A Textual Monument to Wound(ing)s

Before examining the 1 Peter household code as a monument to the legacy of modern slavery, it is important to briefly identify the context within which the text emerged.[18] Household codes describe the domestic responsibilities and relational ordering of individuals within the household under the *paterfamilias*.[19] The codes occur

[18] This treatment assumes that 1 Peter is a pseudonymous letter with an unknown author who draws upon broader traditions of household codes for this portion of the letter. For a detailed treatment concerning the question of authorship, see Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 1-43; Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament,* vol. 2, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 292-5; and Travis B. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 22-34.

[19] Greco-Roman household codes addressed the male head of the household concerning proper ordering and actions of household members: see Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive,* 23-62; William Herzog, "The 'Household Duties Passages': Apostolic Traditions and Contemporary Concerns," *Foundations* 24 (1981): 204-15; Jennifer G. Bird, *Abuse, Power and Fearful Obedience: Reconsidering 1 Peter's Commands to*

in three New Testament passages: Colossians 3:18-4:1; Ephesians 5:21-6:9; and 1 Peter 2:18-3:7.[20] The origin of the household code is debated with various scholars linking them to Aristotle[21] or Stoic[22] thought as well as their adaptations within Hellenistic Judaism.[23] The 1 Peter household code was addressed to late first-century[24] Christians in "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1:1). They are steeped in patriarchal, hierarchal, relational (and economically driven) power dynamics that place master over slave and husband over wife. Such power dynamics, whether already inherent in the early church or a disruption to "genuine Christian vision of equality," gradually cemented the "patriarchal-societal ethos of the time into the church."[25] How exactly these codes

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Wives (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 23-24. The proper behavior and functioning of the household was intimately connected to the health of the broader society. As Aristotle explains, "Since every household is part of a state, and these relationships are part of the household, and the excellence of the part must have regard for that of the whole..." (*Politics* I.5.xii). See also Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 76.

[20] Some scholars consider other texts to fall within the *Haustafeln* genre such as 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 5:1-2; 6:1-2; and Titus 2:1-20. David Balch addresses this issue and describes such additional texts as less complete versions. See *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 26 (Chico: CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 1. For further consideration about the ways in which scholars come to define texts as part of the genre, see Bird, *Abuse, Power and Fearful Obedience,* 17-20.

[21] See ibid., 33-49.

[22] For the origins of this hypothesis see, Martin Dibelius, *An Die Kolosser, an die Epheser, an Philemon* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1927).

[23] For initial developments in this line of thinking, see Karl Weidinger, *Die Haustelfeln, ein Stuck urchristlicker Paranaese* (Leipzig: J.C. Heinrich, 1928). Additional origins for the household code genre have been proposed such as J. Albert Harrill's suggestion that Greco-Roman agricultural handbooks provide a structure for the Christian household codes, particularly those found in Colossians and Ephesians (*Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006], 85-118.).

[24] It is difficult to determine the exact date of 1 Peter. Those who attribute authorship to Simon Peter date the letter to the time just prior to or following the Neronian persecutions (John H. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000], 161; David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition* [Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987], 172). However, a post-70 CE date seems more likely, especially given the designation of Rome as "Babylon" in 5:13, as well as external evidence linking conditions within the letter to the reign of Domitian rather than Nero – although the lack of unambiguous reference to 1 Peter in 1 Clement and Ignatius' letters makes it difficult to set a firm *terminus ad quem* for 1 Peter (Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 48-50; John H. Elliott "The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-Child: 1 Peter in Recent Research," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 [1976]: 254).

[25] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), 266. See also her *The Power of the Word,* 162-93.

functioned within the communities and in their relationships with broader society is a matter of debate among scholars, a topic that is examined in the next section.

While there are clear ideological links between ancient and modern slavery, it is necessary to differentiate them as well. As Page DuBois states, Euro-American slavery was "a very different slave system from that of antiquity."[26] A key point of distinction is the conceptualizations of race with regards to ideologies of enslavement. DuBois, drawing on Robin Blackburn, highlights that Euro-American slavery was a particularly racialized form of slavery that uniquely mixed together elements of colonization, capitalism, and rationalization to naturalize a race-based practice.[27] This differed from Roman slavery, which often depended on captives of war, such as the great number of defeated Gauls enslaved by Julius Caesar, to provide slave labor, rather than enslaving persons solely "based on their so-called 'racial' nature, features of the body such as skin colour or hair."[28] Nevertheless, pro-slavery arguments still found resonance with ancient philosophical and religious justifications for slavery, depicting slavery as a divinely approved institution and "a necessary stage in the evolution of inferior races, or an eternal obligation to the inferiors, to guide them in a life in which their own capacities were inadequate for survival and flourishing."[29] Just as "the 'barbarians' were natural slaves and benefited from the mastery of the Greeks" and the pagan, and eventually Christian, household codes and other sacred texts advocated the "natural hierarchy" of master over

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[26] Page DuBois, *Slavery: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33. For overviews of Roman slavery, particularly the violence slaves endured, see Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 25-30 and Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9-29.
[27] Cf. Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997).
[28] DuBois, *Slavery,* 31, 94-97.
[29] Ibid., 70.

slaves, so to was modern slavery a necessary and natural part of societal progress.[30] These sentiments also engrained the fundamental belief in "the difference between white and black, American and African."[31] Because American slavery was built upon this racially-based differentiation, the legacy of slavery continues far past abolition within American ideologies as well as in the wealth of corporations, institutions, and penal systems that benefited from the exploitation of African Americans.[32]

There is a dense history around how the New Testament household codes and the ideologies they put forth have been utilized to divinely justify slavery in the United States and to call for the submission of slaves. Clarice Martin's "The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: 'Free Slaves' and 'Subordinate Women'" provides a concise overview of these eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics that advanced the "biblical mandate" for slaves' submission.[33] Martin quotes the words of Charles Hodge which succinctly capture this sentiment, explaining that such obedience and submission has:

> divine will as its ultimate foundation… In appealing therefore to the Bible in support of the doctrine here advanced, we are not, on the one hand, appealing to an arbitrary standard, a mere statute book…but we are appealing to the infinite intelligence of a personal God, whose will, is necessarily the ultimate ground and rule of all moral obligation.[34]

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[30] Ibid., 75.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 46-49.
[33] Clarice Martin, "The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: 'Free Slaves' and 'Subordinate Women,'" in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation,* ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 213. A survey of biblically-based proslavery rhetoric is found in Wayne A. Meeks, "The 'Haustafeln' and American Slavery: A Hermeneutical Challenge," in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters,* ed. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. and Jerry L. Sumney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 232-41.
[34] Ibid., quoting Charles Hodge, "The Fugitive Slave Law," in *Cotton is King and Pro-slavery Arguments Comprising on This Important Subject* (Augusta: Pritchard, Abbott and Loomis, 1860), 809-40.

Such uses of the text's dominating logic reached far beyond religious discourses and sermons into legal statutes and jury boxes.[35]

These uses of the household codes were generally rejected and negated by African Americans and abolitionist sympathizers, who drew upon biblical texts such as the Exodus tradition and Pauline visions of the collective body of Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal 3:28) to counter pro-slavery readings of the household codes. Rejection of literalist readings, accusations of anachronism, and affirmations of universal human dignity also sought to strip the power away from these texts.[36] While these efforts sought tirelessly to counter the household codes, their destructive power and ideologies remained within the canon and white social conscience. As Emilie M. Townes aptly states:

> We may think of White supremacists as long gone, merely a dark part of the American past, but the fundamental belief of this ideology, that non-Whites are lesser breeds, still exerts a strong influence on how we think of ourselves and each other and the decisions we make as a society.[37]

Re-politicizing and Re-representing the 1 Peter Household Code

With the knowledge of the ongoing influence and wounding legacy of slavery, I turn to re-representing the household codes for today. Rather than simply naming the ways in which the text perpetuates wounding ideologies or rejecting the societal ordering depicted by the text, I desire a constructive interpretation that uses the text as a tool to name and respond to the powers and perceptions that shape contemporary racial

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[35] Martin, "The *Haustafeln*," 214-215.

[36] Ibid., 216-217. Wayne Meeks provides a cursory outline of hermeneutical possibilities and challenges for addressing proslavery positions, ultimately concluding that the first step in addressing Christianity's history with slavery is "to make sure that among the voices interpreting the tradition are those of the ones who have experienced harm from that tradition" ("The 'Haustafeln' and American Slavery, 252-3). While lacking concrete steps for how to ensure such voices are heard, Meeks nevertheless attempts to bring attention to the need for action.

[37] Emilie M. Townes, "From Mammy to Welfare Queen: Images of Black Women in Public-Policy Formation," in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies,* ed. Bernadette J. Brooten with Jacqueline L. Hazelton (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 61.

wound(ing)s. The text is not used prescriptively, nor are the conclusions I reach meant to be universal. Rather I seek a decidedly political and ethical reading that provides a new representation of the 1 Peter household codes. This representation/interpretation lifts four elements of representation from the household codes to assist white Christians with critically engaging legacies of racial wound(ing)s.

"Yet Another Fight for Remembrance"

Fig. 6 Titus Kaphar, *Yet Another Fight for Remembrance*, 2014, oil on canvas, New York, Jack Shainman Gallery.

For the Lord's sake accept the authority
of every human institution,
whether of the emperor as supreme,
or of governors,
as sent by him to punish
those who do wrong
and to praise
those who do right.

1 Peter 2:13-14

Systems wound. Systems, political, religious, social or otherwise, wield the power not only to in/directly wound but also to propagate ideologies that can justify, normalize, and/or invalidate certain wound(ing)s. This is not a new revelation. Yet, as noted in Chapter 2, Euro-American interpretations of wound(ing)s tend to perpetrate practices that

decontextualize, universalize, individualize, and/or over-spiritualize wound(ing)s, obscuring sustained reflection on the ways in which power systems control wound(ing)s simultaneously on collective and individual levels. The verses preceding the 1 Peter household codes in 1 Peter 2:13-17 help to a challenge this trend, explicitly connecting systemic power to interpersonal power dynamics and the potentiality/presence of wound(ing)s within these relationships. Thus, the verses tease out two major insights for addressing contemporary racial wound(ing)s. The first is the general acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of individual instances of racial wound(ing)s with systemic wound(ing) practices. The second insight concerns representation, namely how the relationality between the systemic and the individual and/or individual sub-populations shapes representations of wound(ing)s and wounding/ed populations.

Turning to the first insight, these verses draw attention to the intimate connection of authority, political systems, and God's will in relation to individual and collective wound(ing)s. These verses call for believers to "accept the authority of every human institution" as well as the punishments and praises of its leaders (2:13-14). For such judgments are sent by God and connected to God's will (2:14-15). This is section concludes by exhorting believers to "Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (2:17). Unlike the household codes of Ephesians and Colossians which focus on master/slave, husband/wife, parent/child relationships, 1 Peter's treatment of the *politeia* includes focus on the "duties concerning the state" alongside "those concerning the household, and those concerning marriage."[38] Tellingly, the discussion of these duties attends most fully to the subordinate groups rather that the

[38] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 260.

reciprocal relationship of the pairs. In doing so, the household code highlights the clear hierarchal structure of domination that connects the ordering of the *paterfamilias* to broader societal ordering. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza rightly identifies this as an embodiment of "kyriarchal ideology," in which "the order of subjection/subordination of the empire was mirrored in the order of submission of the kyriarchal household."[39] With these verses preceding the household instructions that have perpetrated the wound(ing) of slavery, the 1 Peter household code asks us to consider more intimately the structural aspects that shape individual and collective racial wound(ing)s. It refuses to separate the particularity of interpersonal dynamics (master/slave, husband/wife) from broader imperialistic dynamics (governing authorities/subjects). As such today, a murder in the Southside of Chicago cannot be separated from broader issues related to the sustained wound(ing)s of continued segregation and unequal distribution of resources in that city.

These verses also point to the varied ways in which individuals and communities navigate relationships to broader power structures. Scholarship on the 1 Peter household codes has demonstrated the ways in which the codes and the verses preceding them indicate a negotiation of the community's relationship to broader society.[40] Most notable

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[39] Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word,* 153. Fiorenza coined the term "kyriarchy" to provide a "different understanding of patriarchy, one which does not limit it to the sex/gender system but conceptualized it in terms of interlocking structures of domination…" (*But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1992], 7-8). It should be noted that Schüssler Fiorenza believes Christianity to have promoted an alternate vision of relationality, a "discipleship of equals" that disrupted the kyriarchal social order – an alternate vision that was unfortunately suppressed (*In Memory of Her,* 140-54).

[40] Though this treatment cannot address the topic, it is noted that the social location of the audience of 1 Peter is important to understanding their relationship to power structures, specifically the identification of the audience as "aliens and exiles" (2:11). John H. Elliott provided critical analysis to move the discussion from viewing Christians as spiritual aliens and exiles on earth to understanding this identification as reflecting their socio-political reality (*A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981], esp. 42-9). Much debate has arisen around Elliott's position that the audience was composed of temporary and permanent aliens in the region: see Steven R. Betcher, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Reinhard Feldmeier, "The 'Nation' of Strangers: Social Contempt and Its Theological

is the work of John Elliott and David Balch.[41] In 1981, both Elliott and Balch produced social-scientific interpretations that focused on the purpose of 1 Peter's household code in relation to broader society. Both see the household code arising in response to societal rather than imperial persecution and clearly link the wellbeing of society to the proper ordering of the household.[42] Elliott views the household codes as a means of establishing "internal solidarity of the sectarian movement" while simultaneously producing a distinct group identity that interacts with the outside world primarily only for the purpose of conversion.[43] Balch, on the other hand, reads the household codes as an accomodationist effort, conforming to Greco-Roman societal norms as a means of protecting the community's survival. Warren Carter further contributes to these perspectives by showing how 1 Peter's assimilationist act of honoring the emperor through cultic practice, while maintaining internal reverence for Christ, "offers not only a means of survival, but also a practice of protest not evident to outsiders that sustains them in a restrictive cultural context until the completion of God's purposes."[44] Carter sees this

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Interpretations in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Ethnicity and the Bible,* ed. M.G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 240-70; and Torrey Seland, *Strangers in the Night: Philonic Perspectives on Christian Identity in 1 Peter* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). For Elliott's later depiction of the audience, see *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary;* Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 84-102. Betsy Bauman-Martin brings an important postcolonial lens to this discussion exploring how the author of 1 Peter appropriates Jewish identity markers and metaphors of chosenness, diaspora, aliens, and homeland for early Christians ("Speaking Jewish: Postcolonial Aliens and Strangers in First Peter," in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter,* ed. Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 161-9. Most recently, Shively Smith provides a multifaceted and nuanced approach to diaspora as a space for community in 1 Peter (*Strangers to Family: Diaspora and 1 Peter's Invention of God's Household* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016]).

[41] Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*; Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*.

[42] Elliott outlines his places of agreement with Balch in "1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: A Discussion with David Balch," in *Perspectives on First Peter*, ed. Charles H. Talbert, Special Studies Series 9 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 62-63.

[43] Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless,* 231.

[44] Warren Carter, "Going All the Way? Honoring the Emperor and Sacrificing Wives and Slaves in 1 Peter 2.13-3.6," in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews,* ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 33.

strategy akin to acts of non-violent resistance or recent efforts by Afghan women to defy Taliban control by educating girls in their homes or through self-expressive dressing practices hidden beneath their burkas.[45] All of these interpretations point to the need to critically examine how the larger power systems shape interpersonal interactions, meaning making, and understandings of the divine. They call attention to the reality that no one stands outside of systemic power and influence, yet every individual and population uniquely engages and is engaged by this system, whether through acts of force, accommodation, resistance, or some combination thereof.

In relation to contemporary wound(ing)s of racism, these verses prefacing the 1 Peter household code draw attention to the need for critical assessment of structural influence concerning wound(ing)s. For too often, the varying relations of community members to the broader system is un- or under-analyzed with regards to wound(ing)s. Titus Kaphar's *Yet Another Fight for Remembrance*, the image at the head of this section, helps us to think into this issue. Kaphar depicts the literal and figurative whitewashing of Ferguson protestors[46] to visually highlight the systems at work in representing responses to racially-based wound(ing)s. Kaphar's work captures "the erasure of the Black male, the silencing of a community and the public at-large, and the specter of the criminal justice system. The image is obscured significantly but also exposed in new ways."[47]

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[45] Ibid., 32-33. David G. Horrell labels this form of resistance as "more subtle and muted...polite resistance" that seeks a more peaceful existence within empire while simultaneously resisting it (*1 Peter* [London: T&T Clark, 2006], 93-5).

[46] The Ferguson protests began in August of 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. They arose in response to the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by white police officer Darren Wilson. The protests served as a catalyst for protests and other organized mass efforts demanding systemic change and accountability across the United States.

[47] Victoria L. Valentine, "Titus Kaphar Paints Ferguson Protesters for Time Magazine," last modified December 10, 2014. http://www.culturetype.com/2014/12/10/titus-kaphar-paints-ferguson-protesters-for-time-magazine/.

What the image makes acutely visible are the systemic hands at work trying to paint over and alter the reality of racially-based wound(ing)s in the United States – a concern that brings us to the second insight of these verses concerning representation.

1 Peter 2:13-17 clearly paints its own representation of the ways in which the community is called to interact within the broader imperial structure and with one another. These relationships are intimately connected to the survival of the community in the face of potential systemic wound(ing)s. But while 1 Peter seemingly gestures towards accommodation as the means to promote survival, accommodation is no longer a viable solution today. Thus, translated for today, these verses call us develop new representations of relationality to dispel practices of accommodation and apathy that presently serve as representations of race relations in the United States. This process begins with the examination of the ways in which racially-based wound(ing)s are currently represented in relation to broader cultural and political systems. It asks not only what these representations of racially-based wound(ing)s depict or conceal, but who controls the production of the representations.

The work of examining wound(ing) representations must begin within trauma theory itself and the ways in which it engages structural issues and systemic powers. For Euro-American trauma theory has had surprising difficultly with acknowledging how cultural and political systems influence conceptualizations of wound(ing), instead opting for universal understandings and representations of trauma. This universalization erases cultural specificity. Laura Brown identifies this as a "disconnection between the fields of trauma studies and cultural competence" and laments that despite the justice focus of many working in the field of trauma studies, localized, systemic issues of "racism,

classism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppressive inequality" never receive due attention.[48] This de-politicizes wound(ing)s by creating the illusion that everyone has equal access to and the same relationship with the ruling authorities and the resources they possess.

Universalizing wound(ing) erases the divergent relationships communities have with ruling systems. The household codes help to tease out these divergent relationships through the varied ways in which they try to bring differing groups into societal order or console them for the punishment they receive for living outside of such order for the good of God. The reality of divergent relationships to power witnessed in the codes challenges universalizing responses to wound(ing)s. Instead, a re-politicized reading requires an acknowledgment of the varied relationships communities have with larger systems in the face of wound(ing)s. It requires acknowledging how systems perpetuate wound(ing)s against certain communities along with how resources are unequally distributed to prevent and/or address the wound(ing)s. As Fanon explains with regards to racism and colonialism, it requires a "sociodiagnostic" approach that recognizes the "social and economic realities" associated with these oppressions.[49]

Recognition of the interplay of divergent relationships to power also highlights the need to examine what perhaps lies at the other end of the spectrum from consolidating and universalizing all wound(ing)s – denying their existence. Michelle Alexander labels this "states of denial."[50] States of denial are ways in which people, often from the

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[48] Laura S. Brown, *Cultural Competence in Trauma Therapy: Beyond the Flashback* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 8.
[49] Franz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks,* trans. by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2014 [1961]), 11.
[50] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 181.

dominant sector of society, "manage to deny, even to themselves, that extraordinary atrocities, racial oppression, and other forms of human suffering have occurred or are occurring."[51] Drawing on Stanley Cohen, Alexander explains that denial is a complicated mix of simultaneously choosing to know and not know how systemic oppression and wound(ing)s occur.[52] Such denial is "facilitated by persistent racial segregation in housing and schools, by political demagoguery, by racialized media imagery, and by the ease of changing one's perception of reality simply by changing television channels."[53]

The source of this denial points to another important aspect of systemic effects on wound(ing)s – the power to control representations of wound(ing)s. This starts at the very base of what is considered a wound(ing). As Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman assert, "trauma – or rather the social process of the recognition of persons as traumatized – effectively chooses its victims."[54] They continue that while many desire to see identifying and representing wound(ing)s as a universal, equalizing process, there are "tragic disparities" in the process. Thus, "[r]epresentation of traumatic experience is ultimately a tool in the hands of those who shape public perceptions and national myth."[55] Only certain individuals or collectives are deemed victims and still fewer, victims worthy of the sympathy of society. Or as Judith Butler puts it, only some lives are "publically grievable."[56] Only "[c]ertain lives will be highly protected… Other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as 'grievable.'"[57] We see this in

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Cf. Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 4-5.
[53] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* 182.
[54] Didie Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry in the Condition of Victimhood,* trans. by Rachel Gomme (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 282.
[55] Tal, *Worlds of Hurt,* 19.
[56] Butler, *Precarious Life,* 31-33.
[57] Ibid., 32.

media when the police shooting of a white man is met with outrage and the call for the firing of the officer, while the shooting of a black child with a bag of Skittles is met with victim blaming, suspicion, and protection of officers.

The framing of these situations and the subsequent battle over representation ultimately comes down to semantics. Thus, there is a need to attend to the ways in which systems merely shift semantics in order to preserve systemic wound(ing)s. Globally, there is presently "the persistence of imperialism under the guise of neo-liberal globalization."[58] In the United States, "[w]hat has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of our society than with the language we use to justify it."[59] Alexander explains that "race" can no longer function as an explicit "justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt," and I would add the broad array of racially-based wound(ing)s. Thus, a new semantic system has been created in which the criminal justice system and criminalization of people of color is utilized to perpetuate racism within the United States by defining blackness in America as criminal.[60]

But representation of wound(ing)s are not only in the hands of the powerful. Victimized communities also choose how to represent their wound(ing)s internally as well as to the broader power structures that shape societal perceptions of wound(ing)s. This creates issues of competing histories, public and private transcripts, accommodation, mimicry, etc. It can involve the struggle to have one's experience of wound(ing)s validated and acknowledged within social history. It is what Phyllis Klotman and Janet

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[58] Stephen Morton, "Poststructuralist Formulations," in *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies,* ed. John McLeod (London: Routledge, 2007), 172, quoted in Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing,* 36.
[59] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* 2.
[60] Ibid., 197-8

Cutler call, the "struggle for representation."[61] Attention to this struggle for representation relates directly to present engagements with the 1 Peter household code. It calls white Christianity to see the ways in which it has perpetuated the false representation of slavery and its wound(ing)s existing in the past or by presenting overly spiritualized conceptualizations of slavery to the point that they whitewash ongoing racially-based wound(ing)s. It also calls white Christians to examine how they create moral judgments through the ways in which they represent the concepts of agency and resistance. Jennifer Glancy highlights that when we admire those slaves of the past "who risked their comfort or safety for their own freedom or the betterment of those they loved," there is an inadvertent possibility of judging those "for whom resistance did not seem to be a choice – or who did not brave that choice."[62]

Today, we employ the same moral judgments around race. We show acceptance for the black woman who fits into the "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps" (white) American myth of success. But we demonize the black single mother on welfare as lazy and sexually immoral without concern for the systemic inequalities she experiences. All the while, those women who protest these systemic injustices that create the prison industrial complex, poverty, etc. are represented as "angry black women." Engaging the household codes today, asks that we pay attention to the racism within these systems and how they represent race in America. We also must attend to the church's collusion with such representations. The prominent connection of the ruling powers to the life of the Christian community in 1 Peter demands critical reflection on the relationship of church

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[61] Phyllis Klotman and Janet Cutler, *Struggles for Representation* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), quoted in Eyerman, "Cultural Trauma," 73.
[62] Jennifer A. Glancy, "Resistance and Humanity in Roman Slavery," *Biblical Interpretation* 21.4-5 (2013): 505.

and state today on the matter of race. 1 Peter 2:13-17 serves like the bold white brushstrokes of Kaphar's painting, bringing systemic powers into the forefront of our collective vision of discussions about race in America and its legacy of woundings. 1 Peter demands that we account for these realities and how they contribute to shaping the struggle for representation and remembrance of non-white experiences of wound(ing)s.

"Space to Forget"

Fig. 7 Titus Kaphar, *Space to Forget,* 2014, oil on canvas, 64 by 64 in, New York, Jack Shainman Gallery.

Wives, in the same way,
accept the authority of your husbands…
1 Peter 3:1

Within the household codes' wounding legacies around submission to empire, master, and husband, there exists a space to forget. This space to forget arises from isolating tendencies within interpretations to either attend to the wound(ing)s of imperialism, sexism, and racism individually, or at best, look at imperialism's intersection with either sexism or racism. Re-politicizing engagement with the household code involves breaking down interpretational barriers that do not approach the text from

an intersectional, kyriarchal-conscious approach, choosing instead to represent the text as either wounding women or African Americans, but not both.[63] It also challenges cultural trauma theory's focus on collective groups without attention to the lived experiences of individuals within these groups. The structure of the household code's connected, yet identity-specific instructions asks that we honor specificity while acknowledging the intersectionality of wound(ing)s. This is particularly true for the wound(ing)s experienced by black women and girls, wound(ing)s that this section will specifically attend to.

For there is a space to forget that the United States was built on the backs and at the breasts of black women. Their experience of the compounding wound(ing)s of racism and sexism often have been and continue to be ignored. They were called to wait to have their own voice, their own vote, until after black men and white women. Present movements like Black Lives Matter, despite being created by women, have required further movements such as #SayHerName to raise awareness that racially-based and police violence does not only happen to black men. The continued erasure of black women's experiences causes anti-racism efforts to focus on men of color and anti-sexism efforts to focus on middle class, white women.

The space signifying their erasure is then further obscured and filled with stereotypes of black women – the Mammy, the Black Matriarch, the Welfare Queen.[64] "White society created these stereotypes," to "let Whites off the hook for the injustices of the dominant group – themselves."[65] Emerging out of a legacy of racism, these

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[63] An intersectional approach necessitates the acknowledgment that slavery persists in multiple forms today through practices such as domestic servitude and human trafficking. Though this treatment does not address these present realities, it recognizes the clear connections with the present discussion as well as the urgent need to address the ongoing wound(ing)s related to contemporary forms of slavery.
[64] Townes, "From Mammy to Welfare Queen," 61.
[65] Ibid., 64

stereotypes mask the wound(ing)s of black women by painting the sexual and socioeconomic violence they experience as of their own making. [66] The stereotypes encourage dominate society to ignore not only the systems and policies that generate these images, but the ways in which the stereotypes justify the perpetual, compounding wound(ing)s of black women and girls. To confront this, a re-politicizing interpretation of the household codes requires challenging such stereotypes through the intersectional treatment of the wound(ing)s experienced by black women and girls.

The 1 Peter household code brings attention to the constricted lives of both wives and slaves. Reading the household code for today asks that we heed Clarice Martin's call to examine how the wound(ing)s of slaves and wives intersect.[67] It insists that we place different oppressive practices and wound(ing)s in conversation, not to equate them but to unearth potential points of connection and/or conversation.[68] For example, both the submission of slaves and wives are sought to protect the overarching sociopolitical system rooted in kyriarchal hierarchies. Thus, it is important to look at how systemic wound(ing)s weave together and collaborate to protect the present status quo. For too often, we compartmentalize wound(ing)s so that you can only examine issues of race or gender, individual or collective wound(ing)s, event-based or insidious wound(ing)s, but

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[66] For another incisive treatment of these stereotypes topic, see Traci C. West's reading of the need for welfare reform alongside Mary's Magnificat in Luke (*Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006], 85-90).

[67] Martin, "The *Haustafeln,"* 225-31.

[68] Patricia Clark's assertion that while ancient writers addressed wives and slaves in distinct ways (e.g., Livy, *History of Rome* 34.7.13-14), there was "enough cross-over in the underlying concepts of subservience and obedience" of wives and slaves within the Greco-Roman household to allow for rhetorical interplay between conceptualizations of slavery and marriage ("Hierarchies of Domestic Violence: The Family of St. Augustine," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture,* ed. Sandra R. Joshel and Shelia Murnaghan [London: Routledge, 1998], 117-8). For further treatment of the distinctions between the conceptualizations of wives and slaves within the household, see Richard P. Saller, "Symbols of Gender and Status Hierarchies in the Roman Household" in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture,* ed. Joshel and Murnaghan, 85-91.

not both. While this allows for specificity and cleaner subjects of analysis, it does not represent the lived reality of many.

An intersectional approach requires critical reflection on who is left out by seemingly comprehensive interpretations and analysis of wound(ing)s.[69] Many feminist interpretations focus solely on the plight of women addressed in 1 Peter 3:1-6, glossing over the women addressed in 1 Peter 2:18-25.[70] Though they have given varying rationales for this approach, only some acknowledge them. For example, Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald justify treating women and slaves in isolation due to the ways in which the social realities of slaves and wives differ.[71] From their perspective, is important to treat each population separately to best address their unique lived realities. Others solely focus on women and the broader community without more than a passing acknowledgment of slaves or the interconnectedness of those who identify as both women and slaves. Jeannine Brown's "Silent Wives, Verbal Believers: Ethical and

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[69] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow provides an example of an intersectional reading that places the Colossian household code in dialogue with Galatians 3:28. In doing so, Kartzow seeks to put issues of ethnicity, class, gender, and age in conversation with issues of social ordering found in the relational pairs of the household code to better explore the lived realities and identities of those addressed by the text. A benefit of Kartzow's reading, though only gestured towards in her concluding thoughts, is her call for greater attention to cultural competency in ancient and contemporary times as a means of better addressing systems of privilege and oppression operating in the present day ("'Asking the Other Question'": An Intersectional Approach to Galatians 3:28 and the Colossian Household Code," *Biblical Interpretation* 18 [2010]: 388-9).

[70] Jennifer Glancy's work on slavery stands as one of the only beacons for promoting an intersectional approach to the issues facing early Christian female slaves. See *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 16-20, 139-51. Glancy also brings her work into dialogue with contemporary engagements with slavery in *Slavery as Moral Problem: In the Early Church and Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

[71] Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, with Janet H. Tulloch, *A Women's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 95-117. Jennifer Bird agrees with this position, seeing the need to keep the two groups separated in order to do justice to the experience of each group (*Abuse, Power and Fearful Obedience,* 26-27 n. 80). Similarly, Caryn Reeder highlights the parallels between the treatment of wives and slaves in the text, but ultimately deems them two different groups to be treated in isolation and chooses to focus on the conflicting calls for submission and equality for the wives of 1 Peter ("1 Peter 3:1-6: Biblical Authority and Battered Wives" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 25:4 [2015]: 523-4). While these perspectives point to a desire to not gloss over particularities of each group's lived experiences, they simultaneously do a disservice to addressing the complexity of these lived realities and identities.

Hermeneutical Considerations of 1 Peter 3:1-6 and Its Context" is an example of this sort of erasure. Brown highlights the similarities of the exhortations addressed to wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6 and to the broader community in 1 Peter 3:14-16.[72] But she incisively challenges interpretations that equate the two groups' experiences or those that try to lift up women as models for the community,[73] instead showing the ways the text silences women of unbelieving husbands. But this exploration of relationality of groups within the community and its ethical ramifications for contemporary Christian communities leaves out acknowledgement of slaves' experiences. While slaves are clearly not a focus for Brown's treatment, omitting any passing acknowledgement of them inadvertently perpetuates erasure of certain populations from consideration when developing communal ethics.

Bringing issues of erasure into contemporary times, examinations of the wound(ing)s of sexual violence perpetuate similar tendencies by ignoring the experiences of black women and girls. For example, sexual assault narratives emerging in the 1970s and 1980s were frequently of white women, silencing the experiences of women of color and contributing to "a 'whitinizing' or deracializing of the 'normative' sexual abuse narrative."[74] This ignores and erases the experiences of whole groups of assault victims. As bell hooks explains narrating female victimization requires that we "be careful not to promote the construction of narratives of female experience that become so normative

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[72] Jeannine K. Brown, "Silent Wives, Verbal Believers: Ethical and Hermeneutical Considerations in 1 Peter 3:1-6 and Its Context," *Word & World* 24.4 (Fall 2004): 395-7.
[73] Joel B. Green provides an example of this line of thinking. Green highlights both slaves and wives as "parade examples of the lives of all Christians in a world of hostility and abuse," viewing subordination as "occupying responsibly one's place in society" to work for the greater good (*1 Peter* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007], 91-94). In doing so, the power dynamics and oppression shaping the lived realities of these groups are downplayed significantly.
[74] Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, 156.

that all experience that does not fit the model is deemed illegitimate or unworthy of investigation."[75] As such, interpretations of the intimate violence seemingly justified by 1 Peter has focused primarily on the experiences of white women.

Re-politicizing interpretations not only involves examining who is left out of interpretations, but also the ways in which communities and their scholars unevenly interpret the text. For communities have a propensity to unevenly apply 1 Peter's calls for submission within contemporary contexts. Clarice Martin's poignant question emphasizes this concern. Martin asks, "Why is the African American interpretative tradition marked by a forceful critique and rejection of a literalist interpretation of the slave regulation in the *Haustafeln,* but not marked by an equally passionate critique and rejection of a literalist interpretation regarding the subordination of women to men in the *Haustafeln*?"[76] Martin exposes the ways in which African American interpretations, in their quest for liberation, continue to oppress certain members of the community through even their exegetical practices. Thus, intersectional engagements with wound(ing)s require that we carefully interpret texts so as not to further oppress or wound segments of the population. Because texts like the 1 Peter household code carries ethical considerations that shape communal relationality, it requires that all segments of a population are considered and given voice in developing these ethical orientations. Thus, the household code provides a call to more intentionally engage the compounding wounds of those in society that are forgotten. It also calls for acknowledgement of the ways in which we negate, distort, and/or fill in the spaces they hold in our sacred texts and contemporary society.

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[75] bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 110.
[76] Martin, "The *Haustafeln,*" 225.

"Drawing the Blinds"

Fig. 8 Titus Kaphar, *Drawing the Blinds,* 2014, oil on canvas, 72 by 71 in, New York, Jack Shainman Gallery.

Masters, treat your slaves justly
and fairly, for you know that you also have
a Master in heaven.

Colossians 4:1

And, masters, do the same to them.
Stop threatening them, for you know
that both of you have the same Master
in heaven, and with him there is
no partiality.

Ephesians 6:9

…

1 Peter 2

We do not like to talk about perpetrators, much less identify with/as them. It is easier to talk about and denounce perpetrators outside our communities or perpetrating systems. The 1 Peter household code opens space to address the denial of the perpetration of racism. It does so through its own silence. For while the 1 Peter household code speaks to three subordinate groups, it addresses only one group from the dominate, perpetrating position – husbands (3:7). There is no exhortation to the master about right behavior in this unequal reciprocal relationship, unlike in the household codes of Colossians and Ephesians. Instead, the text leaves space for glossing over the role of the white Christians in perpetrating racial wound(ing)s by not asking white Christians to examine their own

conduct as perpetrators. There has indeed been a general discomfort with the institution of slavery from the early church through to the present day. But as Jennifer Glancy astutely notes, this discomfort has not led to "self-critical epiphanies on the part of Christians who benefited from slavery. Rather, ecclesial authorities employed the forces at their disposal to restore the operations of the ordinary to keep the routine embodiment of slavery beneath the level of consciousness and outside the purview of moral reflection."[77] Re-politicizing the household code requires that we speak into the silence of the text and examine the relationship of white Christianity to the perpetration of racism.

Titus Kaphar's *Drawing the Blinds* helps us to image how to do just this. His painting exposes the racial and sexual violence undergirding great Americans leaders. It demands the viewer's gaze move beyond surface level appearance of history to acknowledge one aspect of the legacy of racial wound(ing) in the United States. Peering behind the blinds, viewers are confronted by the racism and sexism imbued within the "great" men and women of U.S. history. It is unclear if the blinds are going up or down, mimicking the cyclical exposing and concealing of sexually-exploitative racism within the United States. But unlike the white hands that have historically controlled the blinds, a black woman holds the red cord. While this by no means marks the end of white power's control on history, it does open space to consider who and how we might write and/or represent a different history.

As stated earlier, there is limited work within trauma studies focused on perpetrators. But Bernhard Giesen's cultural trauma assessment of how future generations of perpetrators represent their history provides important insights. Giesen

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[77] Jennifer A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 80.

focuses on generations of post-Holocaust Germans. He highlights how generations following the Holocaust went through varied processes to represent their relationship to the Holocaust. Initial generations embraced an attitude of denial and/or a "coalition of silence."[78] They removed the horrors of Nazi Germany from collective consciousness and "into a realm of unreal nightmares beyond conception and description" that only "occasionally found their way to cultural representations."[79] Others refused to be silent and set out to demonize the Nazi perpetrators. In doing so, they sought to distance themselves from the Nazis and remove any guilt from themselves. Nazis were prosecuted to display there was individual but not collective guilt for the Holocaust. In doing so, they turned from the political to live in the nostalgia of originating German values. But the next generation reversed this position, seeking to publically and ritually confess their collective culpability as perpetrators of the atrocities of the Holocaust and seek ways to publically memorialize the victims. Finally, there was a progression of objectifying the wound(ing) (academically), mythologizing the wound(ing) (through arts and media), and globalizing the wound(ing) (as a universal example).

This means of processing linked to perpetration finds resonance in the relationship of white Americans, specifically white Christians, to the legacy of slavery in the United States. However, it is complicated by the continued wound(ing) of systemic racism perpetuated by white Christians. Now progressive white Christians may use some of the tactics described above to distance themselves from this legacy, claiming culpability for the past, but denying being racist or benefiting from white supremacy in

[78] Bernhard Giesen, "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 116.
[79] Ibid., 119.

the present. This is witnessed in the relationship to the household code, where the focus of most scholarship by white scholars about its relevancy in the present focuses on domestic abuse, rather than racial violence. There are also interpretational practices that refuse acknowledgement that the slavery referenced in the text continues to bear relevance for contemporary realities, instead holding that the vestiges of modern slavery have been removed from society, if not with the ratification of the thirteenth amendment then at least by the Civil Rights movement and affirmative action. This can take many forms from simply not providing interpretation for the slavery verse to providing interpretations that trivialize slavery. For example, Nordling's "A More Positive View of Slavery" states "the relationship between masters and slaves in the NT and between Christians of greater or lesser station…is essentially the same."[80] He continues, explaining that in "many respects, Christians continue to find themselves in quasi-servile relationship yet today," where the terms "master" and "slave" in 1 Peter could easily be replaced with "bosses" and "employees."[81] This line of thinking, while notably focused on issues of vocation, nevertheless masks and trivializes the realities of slavery. In doing so, it colludes with trivializing the ongoing racial wound(ing)s in U.S. society. Another more subtle form of this trivializing practice is witnessed in positivist interpretations that seek to focus on the text's call for mutuality as the main message of the household code for today rather than addressing its wounding legacies.[82]

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[80] John G. Nordling, "A More Positive View of Slavery: Establishing Servile Identity in the Christian Assemblies," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19.1 (2009): 83.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Robert L. Richardson Jr.'s "From 'Subjection to Authority' to 'Mutual Submission': The Ethic of Subordination in 1 Peter" is an example of such a positivist reading of the text (*Faith and Mission* 4 [1987]: 70-80).

Among many white Christians there is a desire to negate one's collusion with systemic racism and stand on the side of African Americans. This is not to say that there are not some white Christians working on racial justice. But it does beg the question of how white Christians are internally addressing their own racist tendencies as well as externally addressing systemic racism. Thus, I propose that white Christians need to utilize the household code as a means to slow down and deeply engage their role as perpetrators of racially-based wound(ing)s. This is a process of not seeking to deny or distance one's self from the label of perpetrator. Instead, it involves critically looking at the role one's self and community have played in past, present, and future wound(ing)s.

But it goes beyond acknowledgment to action, asking what is the present and future role of white Christianity in challenging white supremacy in the present and future. Titus Kaphar's *Drawing the Blinds* asks how to amend history to tell a fuller story of the systemic oppressions and wound(ing)s that have occurred and continue to occur. But it important again to examine how he accomplishes this amendment. The blind is not drawn up by well-meaning white folk seeking to help, for more often than not, this inadvertently leads to some type of unethical spectatorship, viewing the wound(ing)s of black and brown bodies as spectacle. Instead, the blinds are drawn by the hand of a black woman. As noted in the last section, it is often black women who are most frequently erased, coopted, or ignored. Following Kaphar's lead, a step in exposing and breaking the silence of white perpetration is to ensure the cord to the blind is in the hands of those wounded by our perpetration.

"Holy Absence"

Fig. 9 Titus Kaphar, *Holy Absence II,* 2014, oil on canvas, New York, Jack Shainman Gallery.

> When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten;
> but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.
>
> 1 Peter 2:23

Suffering accompanies many wound(ing)s. Meaning making around this suffering remains a contested site on political, social, and theological levels. Suffering is divinely justified and glorified within the 1 Peter household code (2:19-21). This vision of suffering developed within the eschatological expectation of Christ's imminent return (1:4-6, 13, 20; 4:5, 7, 17). Yet it has carried devastating consequences, transformative empowerment, and comforting solace for generations of Christians suffering in countless situations. Theological attention to this glorification of suffering has produced varied results, with interpretations vacillating between two main perspectives.

On one end are those who denounce the suffering suggested by the household code. This perspective has resonated particularly strongly with feminists, though their

primary concern is the suffering of women/wives. As Betsy Bauman-Martin highlights, feminists feel that "the *Haustafel* suffering model offers no example of liberation and ultimately works only for the oppression and silencing of women."[83] Kathleen Corley argues this pointing, saying that the text's "admonition that both slaves and women should endure even unjust or terrifying situations still serves as a scriptural justification for violence against women in the present."[84] This is echoed by Jennifer Bird, who highlights that the affirmation of suffering like Christ in the text is used "to affirm the abject position of the slaves and thus indirectly that of the women." [85] In doing so, it silences their ability to voice any concerns about their suffering, merely sending women back into abusive situations.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who see the household codes giving meaning and/or theological significance to the realities of suffering. James Aageson suggests that the "eschatological urgency" surrounding the text shaped responses to the text's "ethic of deference and subordination," providing a creative rationalization for suffering.[86] In addition, this understanding of suffering gave it meaning by "aligning [the community's] fortunes with those of their mentor or messiah."[87]

Bauman-Martin provides another perspective suggesting that the suffering originates not from "an oppressive patriarchal theology of suffering" or ideas of redemptive suffering, but from "the women's attempts to change their lives and society

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[83] Betsy J. Bauman-Martin, "Feminist Theologies of Suffering and Current Interpretations of 1 Peter 2.18-3.9," in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews,* ed. Levine and Robbins, 68.
[84] Kathleen E. Corley, "1 Peter," in *Searching the Scriptures Volume Two: A Feminist Commentary,* ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza with Ann Brock and Shelly Matthews (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 251.
[85] Bird, *Abuse, Power and Fearful Obedience*, 91.
[86] James W. Aageson, "1 Peter 2.11-3.7: Slaves, Wives and the Complexities of Interpretation," in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews,* ed. Levine and Robbins, 45.
[87] Ibid.

for the better."[88] This opens space for a "first-century suffering theology of resistance," which could empower women when they suffer for "doing good."[89] For Bauman-Martin, this allows for acknowledgement of the realities of ancient and contemporary women's suffering and the strategies they employ to survive. Unfortunately, Bauman-Martin's own desire to expand conceptualizations of suffering, falls into the trap of erasing the suffering of slavery and its legacy. For she holds that "in most of the world, slavery is considered one of the most horrendous evils. While domestic abuse remains a pervasive and insidious problem."[90] What this contrast misses is the extent to which the racism of which American slavery was the consummate expression itself also remains a pervasive and insidious problem.

Other positions try to reorient the suffering of slavery as a space of empowerment and healing. Halvor Moxnes suggests that the slave's experience of brutality mirrors Christ moving slaves into important roles within the community. "The beaten bodies of the slaves were visible illustrations of the sufferings experienced by all believers; and the 'faithful slave' *in Christ* who showed patient endurance in such adversities might become a model for all followers of Christ."[91] This line of interpretation raises several concerns, however, not least the ways in which equating all suffering is reckless and erases power dynamics. But for Moxnes, the text's attention to slaves' suffering creates a paradoxical position for slaves in which the suffering they experience is unjust, yet through it they

[88] Bauman, "Feminist Theologies of Suffering," 73.
[89] Ibid., 74.
[90] Ibid., 75.
[91] Halvor Moxnes, "The Beaten Body of Christ: Reading and Empower Slave Bodies in 1 Peter," *Religion & Theology* 21 (2014): 138.

become models for the community and may find promises of healing in their identification with Christ.[92]

I suggest that we hold the realities of suffering present in both positions. It calls for affirming the intersectionality of suffering and the ways in which access to resources and relation to power shapes experiences of suffering. For suffering is both theological and political. Over-spiritualizing and decontextualizing as well as denying God a place in the midst of suffering are both dangerous practices. Instead, suffering requires contextualization, as well as room to explore relationality to power and to God.

Returning to white Christians, we need space to further broaden perspectives on suffering in relation to the wound(ing)s of slavery. Titus Kaphar's *Holy Absence II* invites us into this perspective. The only face on an otherwise faceless canvas is that of the man staring at us through the cross. He demands of white Christians that we look directly into the eyes of those we have caused suffering, instead of diverting our gaze elsewhere. Neither Jesus nor the women can soften or save us from his gaze. Instead, we are compelled amidst the ambivalent space of the cross to concretely name the ways we have benefited from white privilege and racist ideologies. This denies interpretations that trivialize or erase the suffering of slavery's ongoing societal wound(ing)s.

But beyond claiming accountability for the suffering we have caused, we must also ask what suffering we are willing to endure for "doing good" (3:17). For there is pain and suffering associated with working to dismantle white supremacy and challenge white privilege. It calls for the decentering of the white dominate perspective and white normalcy. It involves not only work on individual levels but also the willingness to

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[92] Ibid., 139.

confront racism within our own communities and on public, systemic levels. What this looks like can take a multitude of forms. They will not be elaborated here as others have expertly done this work.[93]

What is asked here is that as white Christians, we acknowledge the privilege we have to choose to suffer in the name of promoting anti-racism. It asks that we not just gesture to the suffering of others, but enter into this suffering so that further wound(ing)s might be prevented. This call to suffering may not be popular with those who claim none should suffer and many will refuse it outright. But for those who are willing, suffering to dismantle white privilege and systemic racism, a space opens to explore what it means to exist alongside the suffering and wound(ing)s contained within the cutout of the cross instead of viewing it from a safe distance. It invites reflection, dialogue, and action caused by a shift in perspective that seeks a society not framed by crosses, lynchings, and their ongoing wound(ing)s.

Remaining with the Monument of the 1 Peter Household Code

Every day while working on the monument that is the 1 Peter household code I walked to visit another monument of racial wound(ing)s. It was a monument that I had passed countless times during my runs through Central Park, but had never taken the time to investigate. The statue depicts J. Marion Sims, a man who has been hailed a great surgeon and philanthropist as well as the father of modern gynecology. But his successes were built on the bodies of black slave women whom he experimented on without

[93] Jennifer Harvey's work is but one example of such engagements around race; see *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation,* Prophetic Christianity Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014) or her work astutely moving the conversation to also address children (*Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017]).

anesthesia, much less their consent. Because of the numerous demonstrations taking place at the statue, it was perpetually ringed by police barricades.[94] While the statue is slated to be relocated and its history contextualized on plaques, during my writing it was part of my daily landscape.

Fig. 10 Alexis Yeboah-Kodie demands the removal of the J. Marion Sims statue in New York's Central Park in August 2017.

I read and reread the household code clinging to the police barricades surrounding the statue. What started as an intellectual exercise became a ritual of confronting my white privilege. I never ceased being disturbed by the statue of this white perpetrator, much less the fact that it was erected at the doorstep of East Harlem's black and Latino/a communities. I had worked with several communities in the neighborhood helping to navigate issues of domestic violence outside the purview of law enforcement and without governmental resources. In this process, I witnessed the overwhelming suffering of the communities, silenced by gentrification, immigration fears, and structural racism, while acknowledging that as a white outsider, I only knew the smallest fragment of their wound(ing)s. Within this embodied reality, I read the household code. Through that experience, the wound(ing)s of the text gained new dimensions and hinted at layers of wound(ing) I had not even begun to understand.

[94] The image at the right depicts one such demonstration (Howard Simmons, *New York Daily News,* August 20, 2017, http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/manhattan/protesters-slam-nyc-statue-doctor-experimented-slaves-article-1.3426690).

From this partial understanding, the above reading of the household code emerged. For me, the household code is a gaping wound rather than a pesky scar. It required my constant attention and refused in many ways to be tamed into this chapter. Instead, it called me to recognize the need for white Christians to read and re-read the text and its contemporary subtexts. But also, to recognize that this reading cannot stand in isolation, but should engender further dialogue, engagement, and revision around understandings of the household code. It also involves always keeping in our sightline the power that the 1 Peter household code wields to wound today, while acknowledging that it might also serve as a tool to confront and challenge the wound(ing)s inflicted by white supremacist logic.

Ultimately, there are limitations with what can be done with/to 1 Peter as a textual monument. While cities and legislatures can explore multiple options for the future of the Confederate monuments – removal, re-contextualization, re-location, inaction – there are not as many options for 1 Peter. As part of the canon, and thus a sacred, untouchable text for a multitude of Christians, removal of the text is not a viable option. Similarly, ignoring or masking the text's presence in the New Testament, much like Charlottesville draping Lee's statue in black plastic, merely maintains the status quo without requiring white Christians to confront the root issues of white supremacy that the text enables. While contextualization has aided in lessening the blows of the text and its relegation to the outskirts of Christian life has opened space to promote texts that support liberation and equality, the power of the ideologies it promotes remains.

Instead, white Christians must reengage the text and its roles within U.S. history. We must walk directly up to the text and allow ourselves to be disturbed and confronted

by it. Then we can find our own location and voice within the text. With this knowledge, communities can (re)act to and through the text to the present sociopolitical realities. From my perspective, this work begins within white Christian communities. It does not exclude conversation with African American communities. But it requires white Christians to do their own work internally on individual and communal levels, instead of seeking African Americans to do the work with/for us. It asks white Christians to claim and critically reflect on their uncomfortable position as perpetrators of racial oppression through one of the New Testament's most troubling texts. Through this work, new representations of the household code's wounding racial legacy emerge calling for actions that address the many monuments of racial wound(ing) infecting our social landscape.

CHAPTER SIX

Witnessing to Wound(ing)s

This dissertation opened with the assertion that wound(ing)s connect individuals and communities. Throughout I have sought new ways to witness to these connections both within New Testament texts and contemporary societies. I have gestured to the ways in which biblical interpreters and interpreting communities might expand, reorient, and/or shift their understandings of and interpretational practices around wound(ing)s so that the destructive and generative powers of these multifaceted connections might come more fully into focus. In doing so, my aim was to give voice and attention to a wider array of wound(ing)s found within the New Testament and our world.

To summarize my position, I hold that through the acts of de-colonization and re-politicization interpretations can more fully engage and acknowledge the diverse realities of wound(ing)s within and connected to the New Testament. I echo Daniel Smith-Christopher's call to expand the canons of trauma theory utilized and embrace the rich diversity of trauma studies in our interpretational pursuits.[1] I also believe we must work to continually expand the canon of New Testament texts associated with wound(ing)s, particularly to more fully account for issues of insidious traumas as well as legacies of wounding. This project has begun such work through its treatment of multigenerational wound(ing)s (Chapter 4) as well as the wounding legacy of racism (Chapter 5). But this is only the beginning. For example, I believe working at the intersection of queer biblical criticism and trauma studies could open-up further insights around anti-queer "clobber"

[1] Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Trauma and the Old Testament: Some Problems and Prospects," in *Trauma and Traumatization in Individual and Collective Dimensions: Insights from Biblical Studies and Beyond,* ed. Eve-Marie Becker, et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 240-41.

texts (e.g. Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:9-11) by examining the ways in which these texts have justified acts of violence and wounding legacies against LQBTQIA+ persons. Such work also calls for fuller engagement with the sociopolitical contexts from which the texts and legacies of woundings emerge. In addition to the texts themselves, there is also a need to continue to encourage engagement with broader instances and representations of contemporary wound(ing)s. This involves a concerted effort to encourage and support (through research grants, dialogue and publishing opportunities, etc.) two-thirds world interpretations of New Testament wound(ing)s.

In this final chapter I wish to briefly examine one final element related to the process of addressing wound(ing)s - the role of witnessing. I am concerned both with how Christian communities witness to wound(ing)s as well as the ways in which the New Testament is utilized as part of this witness. Building upon the work of the previous chapters, I seek to explore how communities might apply such understandings of wound(ing)s to more fully address contemporary wound(ing)s within their communities and work to prevent future wound(ing)s. To clarify, the witnessing I speak of here is not that of directly witnessing wound(ing)s or providing specialized direct assistance as in the case of trauma professionals. Rather it is the witnessing that occurs when wound(ing)s are engaged in a secondary, indirect manner such as hearing, reading, or experiencing testimonies or other representations of and responses to wound(ing)s.

I intentionally frame this conversation in terms of witnessing rather than other conceptualizations of engagement, particularly that of empathy. For empathy has become a buzzword within the field of trauma studies. Empathy invites affective connections to form between witnesses and victims/perpetrators/bystanders while simultaneously

seeking to maintain ethical barriers. As LaCapra frames it in terms of empathetic unsettlement, witnesses are "responsive to the traumatic experiences of others" through the ways they represent wound(ing)s while not over-appropriating these wound(ing)s.[2] Theorists such as Jill Bennett have worked diligently to create "critical and self-reflexive" understandings of empathy that take seriously the differentiation of self and other on embodied and political levels.[3] Yet postcolonial trauma theorists tend to be more reluctant in engaging this concept of empathy, choosing instead to focus on witnessing as in the case of Stef Craps and Donna McCormack or carefully redefining empathy for the postcolonial context as in the work of Jay Rajiva.[4]

My own reluctance with and critique of empathy begins with its central focus on issues of affect and identification between the witness and a singular representation of a wound(ing). By doing so, empathy continues to emphasize relationality on individual rather than collective or systemic levels. I also am wary of the claim that empathy truly breaks cycles of over-identification. For though on theoretical levels empathy claims to erect ethical barriers that prevent "unchecked identification, vicarious experience, and surrogate victimage," clear strategies for preventing over-identification with and/or co-option of wound(ing)s are not often concretely delineated and enacted in lived encounters.[5] In addition, as Ann Kaplan highlights, "'empty' empathy" occur when instances of wound(ing) and suffering are presented "without any context or background knowledge."[6] According to Kaplan, such empathy leads more to sentimentality and

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[2] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* 41.
[3] Bennett, *Empathic Vision,* 6.
[4] Rajiva expands upon LaCapra's work, characterizing empathy in the postcolonial context in terms of the excessive, tactile nature of the encounter. For Rajiva, this produces a "different and perhaps difficult new form of empathy" than is traditionally encountered in trauma studies (*Postcolonial Parabola,* 24, 34-38).
[5] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* 40.
[6] Kaplan, *Trauma Culture,* 93.

sensationalism than action.[7] Finally, specifically with regards to New Testament wound(ing)s, I find there is some difficulty in generating new politically minded, empathetic visions from persons who are intimately familiar with the texts. Often tradition has had a hand in shaping how individuals and communities respond to a text. This results in preexisting visions of and affective memories surrounding texts. Though I do not fully discount the power of empathy, I do not believe it is the most effective tool for addressing wound(ing)s within the New Testament because it is not disruptive enough to those who are familiar with scripture.

Thus, I prefer the broader concept of witnessing to rather than empathizing with wound(ing)s. According to Kaplan, witnessing inherently "implies a larger ethical framework" that publically responds to wound(ing)s."[8] Witnessing is political and prompts "an ethical response that will perhaps transform the way someone views the world, or thinks about justice."[9] Witnessing, like empathy, requires attention to affect and critical embodied reflection. But as Donna McCormack suggests building on Judith Butler, the aim of witnessing is not one way identification with the victimized Other, but rather exploration of the reciprocal ways in which the multisensory acts of witnessing cause us to be undone by and become responsible to one another and the broader society.[10] Witnessing also draws greater attention not only to the victim's representation of their wounding, but also the realities of perpetrators, perpetrating systems, and bystanders. Thus, witnessing calls for broader ethical and political engagements that

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[7] Ibid., 94.
[8] Ibid., 122.
[9] Ibid., 123.
[10] Donna McCormack, *Queer Postcolonial Narratives and the Ethics of Witnessing* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 33-38.

more holistically examine wounding contexts in their entirety. I believe this can encourage us to, as Judith Butler puts it, "re-create social and political conditions on more sustaining grounds" that stretch us beyond our comfort zones.[11] Witnessing requires that we attend to that which challenges or confounds us, including "being open to narration that decenters our supremacy."[12] Only then can we name and address "the things that restrain us from thinking and acting radically and well about global options."[13]

Witnessing takes many forms. It is highly contextualized both around the nature of the wound(ing)s being witnessed to and the media through which one is witnessing. I will not delineate the multiplicity of ways one might witness, nor will I prescriptively define, and thus confine, the practice on the whole. Instead, I lift up two areas that require the attention of Christians who seek to witness to wound(ing)s – intentionality and embodiment.

Intentionality in witnessing necessitates multiple levels of self and communal awareness. At times, witnessing is well planned, structured, and contained within agreed upon parameters such as in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission discussed in Chapter 3. Yet witnessing also occurs in the organic chaos of everyday life – on the streets, in the middle of protests and art galleries, in the hushed corners of libraries and living rooms. Witnessing does not always allow time for carefully orchestrated engagement, but it does necessitate that intentionality exist within the interaction. Intentionality requires something deeper than being fully present as a witness, though presence is essential. Intentionality entails something more political.

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[11] Butler, *Precarious Life,* 17-18.
[12] Ibid., 18.
[13] Ibid.

Intentionality begins with the acknowledgement of the witness's relationship to the wound(ing). The familiarity or obtuseness of wound(ing)s shape how one approaches them as well as what prior knowledge or experience they employ when engaging wound(ing)s. It also requires exploring who one most closely identifies with, whether victim, perpetrator, bystander, some combination of the three, or none of them. For attractions and/or repulsions shape the reception of the information communicated, as well as its future interpretation, transmission, and engagement. As an illustration, in a sermon on the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, a pastor in a church I worked with asked which character in the story the congregants identified with most. The congregation had to determine whom they most identified with – the man who was robbed and left for dead, the robbers, the priest and the Levite, the Samaritan, or none of them. Through this exercise, the congregation was asked to examine whom they identified with and why. It highlighted the ways in which the perspective of those who identified with the beaten, half dead man on the side of the road differed from the robbers, those bystanders who passed by without acting or those who could not find themselves within the story at all. The purpose was not to immediately assign moral judgement to congregants' identifications but rather to ask them to name their place in and perspective on society. From this place of self-identification and locatedness, they could examine not only the text, but the ways their positionality shaped their (re)actions and access to resources to address current wound(ing)s. It also asked them to identify concretely how they might seek to shift or expand their perspectives in order to more fully attend to violence and wound(ing)s that previously they had ignored, perpetrated, or only partially addressed.

Intentionality also requires that individuals and communities identify and name their agenda(s) for witnessing. If witnesses do not acknowledge and interrogate their underlying agendas or assumptions in this process, there is a good chance that biases will go unacknowledged and unaddressed. As Jill Bennett explains, there can be a certain "*allure* of trauma discourse" in which experiences of wound(ing)s become objects of cultural fascination, even envy, for those witnessing to them.[14] As with identifying one's positionality, acknowledging one's drives and desires is not meant as a moral judgement, but rather as a tool for being more fully intentional and aware of how one perceives and processes wound(ing)s. It also can help to determine whether or not or in what capacity one should be acting as a witness in a particular instance.

Raising awareness of intention expands beyond interrogating personal or communal desires to naming the broader agendas shaping witnessing to wound(ing)s on theoretical and systemic levels. As discussed throughout this project, political, cultural, and religious systems have agendas around wound(ing)s. They use their power to in/validate certain wound(ing)s and frame their public representations. Trauma theory also has agendas imbedded within it. For example, Wendy Brown notes that when it comes to engaging wound(ing)s, there is a propensity to "make a fetish of breaking silence."[15] Euro-American trauma theory perpetuates such a desire through the wound(ing)s it engages. While there are clearly benefits to breaking silence around wound(ing)s, it can also be dangerous. For underlying desires for exposing wounds can lead to requiring or strongly urging disclosure regardless of whether those involved want

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[14] Bennett, *Empathetic Vision,* 5. Bennett highlights John Mowitt's work on the concept of trauma envy ("Trauma Envy," *Cultural Critique* 46 [Fall 2000]: 272-97).
[15] Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 84.

to share or feel safe in sharing their accounts of wound(ing)s. Thus, even when wound(ing)s are approached from a posture of providing assistance, broader systemic agendas and cultural assumptions require examination.

Related to acknowledging and assessing agendas is the need to identify the outcomes that are sought from the experience of witnessing. Is there a desire for transformation for the witness or witnessing community or is the desired outcome merely to become more informed? Does the witness also want some sort of change for the victim, perpetrator, perpetrating system, or bystander? If so, what role does the witness play in enacting change? Because the desired outcomes may be numerous, it is important for witnesses to name their personal goals. For this allows witnesses to gain awareness of how their posture as a witness may be trying to engender certain outcomes regardless of whether they are publically stated and/or shared by all involved, the aim of which is to promote greater self and communal intentionality that also values dialogue among all participants to understand their desires as well and promote more reciprocal forms of witnessing. Through these various elements of intentionality, the traditional image of an objective (male) witness as "an enabler of testimony, full of knowledge, in control and confident in his task" is challenged.[16] Instead, witnessing is understood to be culturally conditioned, personally and politically motivated, and requiring dialogue to address the power dynamics and desires influencing the experience.

The second element of witnessing I wish to examine concerns embodiment. Embodiment serves as a reminder that wound(ing)s and witnessing do not affect only the mind, but the whole being. Embodiment is "simultaneously (and somewhat

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[16] McCormack, *Queer Postcolonial Narratives,* 23. McCormack is critiquing Felman and Laub's understandings of witnessing (*Testimony,* esp. 57-74).

paradoxically) individual and private and collective and social."[17] Seeking an embodied presence in witnessing can help individuals and communities acknowledge the boundaries to witnessing. For example, it challenges the image of wounding as infectious and transferable through the act of witnessing. Witnesses may have bodily responses to witnessing to wound(ing)s – disgust, shame, or anger – that may alter their perceptions of the world or change them in some way. But as Kali Tal posits, even when the witness is affected, "*the myths of the reader are never 'tragically shattered'* by reading. Only trauma can accomplish this kind of destruction."[18] I would extend this to non-literary forms of witnessing as well. Visiting sites of wounding or engaging wound(ing)s through artwork or other representations can carry transformative potential and lead to action, but this should not be equated with the wounding itself.

Embodiment also necessitates the acknowledgment that an individual or community cannot serve as a witness to every wound(ing). In our increasingly connected world, there is ever-expanding ability to witness to wound(ing)s. But we cannot serve as witnesses to every wound(ing). Therefore, listening to one's body helps to identify when there is fatigue in witnessing. Of course, there is privilege associated with having the ability to take a step back from witnessing. But for those who have this privilege, it is important to acknowledge one's limits and boundaries. Doing so helps to prevent dangerous forms of witnessing such as over-identification and blurred boundaries. It also challenges savior complexes. Such acts of withdrawal are not equivalent to apathy towards wound(ing)s. Instead, it is an honoring of what an individual or community can carry. It draws inspiration in part from the womanist tenet of "traditional communalism,"

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[17] Ibid., 36.
[18] Tal, *Worlds of Hurt,* 122, emphasis original.

which is based upon Alice Walker's image of a womanist as a woman "committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female," who is "[n]ot a separatist, except periodically, for health."[19] This image, while particular to womanists, can provide an important lesson to broader society. For it calls for commitment to community, but occasionally for the health of self and community, one must step back. In learning to step back, space opens to generate better networks for attending to wound(ing)s that allow witnesses to provide support or presence in the ways that they are best equipped for. This is particularly important for clergy and those in faith-based leadership roles where witnessing to wound(ing)s is a regular part of pastoral care. What embodiment challenges these witnesses to do is to see their role as one witness among and connected to many others. Through such practices of intentionality and embodiment, I believe Christian communities can continue to discern and develop their roles as witnesses. From this image of witnessing more broadly, I now turn to examine how the New Testament is utilized within the act of witnessing.

Witnessing to Wound(ing)s with the New Testament

In times of wounding, Christians often turn to the Bible. Scripture provides guidance, support, and meaning making in the face of wound(ing)s. As Traci West states, "Christian scripture is, in many ways, the quintessential theory of Christianity and serves as a common base point for Christian theological reflection."[20] Thus, the ways in which scripture is engaged as a tool for witnessing requires critical attention.

All too often use of the New Testament to address wound(ing)s engages in superficial exegetical practices such as cherry picking and proof texting. We seek a verse

[19] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi.
[20] West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics,* 76.

to put as the header of a protest or condolence letter or we finish a rousing speech with a powerful, reassuring biblical quotation. Such actions are often done without attention to the context of the text that has been plucked. This is not to say that we should not use scripture in our work of responding to or addressing wound(ing)s, but rather that it requires greater intention around how texts are chosen and framed. This is particularly important because a practice very similar to the proof texting we use to find verses of comfort is frequently employed to inflict wounds. This practice involves lifting certain verses from a text to validate the oppression and wounding of a certain group. "For as the Bible says…" is a highly effective tactic for divinely justifying wound(ing)s around topics of sexuality, intimate relationships, war, colonization, race relations, gender, etc. Thus, we cannot denounce such practices that justify wound(ing)s while using the same practices to try to offering healing or comfort around wound(ing)s. As Cheryl Kirk-Duggan explains, when we seek to use the Bible to address issues of violence and wound(ing)s we must adopt the following attitude:

> Instead of teaching people selective readings of the text and using the excuse of "it's in the Bible" to press our agenda, we need to invite people to ask questions about what is in the Bible, to learn biblical history, archeology, and anthropology so that we can understand how there are times when twenty-first century questions are not always answered by ancient texts.[21]

In doing so, we can more fully acknowledge both the resources and limitations of texts.

Christians must also examine how the New Testament requires engagement with all parties implicated in wound(ing)s, not just victims. Mirroring trends within trauma theory and broader society, Christian communities tend to focus on issues related to victims of wound(ing)s. Yet they do not critically interrogate issues around perpetrators,

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[21] Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Violence and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 83.

perpetrating systems, and bystanders within their communities. Having worked on issues of intimate violence and sexual assault, I have witnessed the discomfort around or outright refusal to address perpetrators and perpetrating ideologies and theologies within congregations. As Chapter 5 attempted to address issues of racism and white supremacy through the 1 Peter household code, so too must we seek ways to expand uses of the scripture to address all parties involved in instances of wound(ing)s. This can also serve as a catalyst for congregations to seek further education and training to better understand the roles they play in perpetuating wound(ing)s as well as strategies for addressing and effecting societal change around issues of wound(ing).

Witnessing with the New Testament also requires attention of the relationship between spiritual, ethical, and political aspects of wound(ing)s. As is evidenced in the previous three chapters, New Testament texts contain these multiple levels of wound(ing). Yet Christian communities tend to focus more fully on spiritual rather than ethical and political concerns. The multiple layers of wound(ing)s and contexts present within texts call for a more integrated approach that sees that one cannot discuss spiritual issues without attention to political contexts and culturally-rooted ethical concerns. The multifaceted nature of wound(ing)s found within the New Testament also helps faith communities to embody and employ similar integrated approaches in responding to contemporary wound(ing)s. With these considerations of how Christian communities utilize the New Testament in their witnessing, I turn to two concrete resources for witnessing that Christian communities can provide – attention to issues of healing and ritual.

The Potential of Healing

In the face of wound(ing)s, individuals have long turned to their faith communities as sources of comfort and healing. The promise that there is "a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole" has led individuals into the redemptive spaces of prayer circles, services of healing, and pastoral counseling. Christian communities have used the power of the Word coupled with unceasing prayer and intersession, laying on of hands, and anointing with oil to help ease the pain of woundings and restore health. Faith communities provide a space for sustained accompaniment with those seeking healing and wholeness. They walk with individuals and communities to embody the love of God and witness to their wound(ing)s.

There is a long history of testimony to the power of this healing. But there is also history of the ways in which healing practices of faith communities, particularly the institutionalized church, have been death-dealing rather than life-giving. Because biblical texts are often used to shape, support, and/or justify healing practices, it important to name the dangers. For as Wendy Farley remarks, "The church no doubt does many wonderful, healing things. But it also the place where Christian go to flee the great revelation of the gospel."[22] It is a place where healing can become a means to create "tidied-up bodies" that conform to, rather than transform, the image of the church.[23]

Christians must identify the ways in which they overtly have perpetuated further woundings through their conceptualizations of healing and wholeness. Such woundings are often inflicted with a Bible in one hand. For example, there are blatant woundings

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[22] Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 10.
[23] Ibid.

caused by practices that seek to "heal" individuals of their homosexuality. The New Testament's supposed condemnation of homosexuality leads to a perverted biblical justification for ostracizing individuals, praying the evil spirits out of them, or other forms of faith-based conversion therapies. Those traumatized by rape are called to forgive their rapist "seventy times seven" and even carry the child that resulted from the rape to heal them of their own promiscuity. While these examples are extreme, healing can also perpetuate more insidious woundings. Healing can also attend to spiritual issues and matters of the soul without looking at the ways in which they intersect with broader sociopolitical issues. Faith communities may seek healing without naming perpetrating systems and practices or seeking proactive ways to address them.

Thus, I hold that Christians need to critically reflect upon, and at times reorient their conceptualizations of healing. For as Donna McCormack incisively highlights, traditionally "healing requires a reintegration into the very family, community, nation and other social structures that are responsible for the originary violence."[24] For individuals, particularly queer folk who are regularly ostracized and pathologized, this form of healing only opens them up to further violence and wound(ing)s. Thus, McCormack expands the focus of healing from solely the victim to incorporate the community. She asks us to image healing as a process by which the community transforms on collective and systemic levels to aid in preventing further wounding. This redefines healing as a process meant "to imagine and cultivate modes of being with others that are different, less violent and a little queerer."[25] Such images of healing ask communities to lean more fully into the radical love and hospitality found in the New Testament and Hebrew Bible.

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[24] McCormack, *Queer Postcolonial Narratives,* 19.
[25] Ibid.

It asks that healing be imaged as a communal process that not only brings comfort and acceptance to individuals, but that creates new spaces and ways of being that may prevent further violence and wound(ing)s.

The Power of Ritual

Christian communities not only read sacred texts and theologies, they embody them through ritual. Ritual holds a unique place within the Christian community as a place that connects communities and the divine across time and space. Like wound(ing)s, rituals possess the ability to transcend time, bringing past and future into connection with the present. Thus, rituals have the ability to embrace a language and attitude that do not rely on linear temporality and its accompanying rationalities. This is particularly useful when addressing wound(ing)s that manifest in nonlinear ways and can span generations.

Rituals also refuse to allow wound(ing)s to be addressed in isolation. Instead, they allow space to connect with past wound(ing)s of God's people and draw wisdom and strength from the themes stemming from stories of the faith – exodus, survival, resurrection, revelation. Rituals connect past realities of God's presence with God's people with the present. Rituals also have the ability to publically name and hold accountable not only those who have perpetrated wound(ing)s but those who have not confronted wounding actions through sins of omission. In doing so, rituals can inspire and require further action of those present, sending participants out with visions of how the world might be different. But as Traci West cautions, Christian rituals can perpetuate dangerous ideologies that erase cultural particularity, silence certain wound(ing)s, and/or

promote exploitation and misappropriation of different cultures.[26] Thus, rituals require great care in the ways that they are crafted and employed for addressing wound(ing)s.

Scripture is the at the center of many formal rituals and the liturgies they employ. As Marjorie Proctor-Smith points out, the use of scripture in liturgy is "not presented, as it might be in a Bible study group or a class, as a text to be studied, discussed, and evaluated, but as the 'Word of God'" which means that it "is not a matter for debate or dispute."[27] As such, the texts used within rituals require careful attention. It asks that we examine how different individuals – victims, perpetrators, perpetrating victims, bystanders, etc. – might hear a text. In doing so, communities are called to explore the texts used in both common and special rituals to see how and for whom they provide empowerment, comfort, and/or silencing as well as who they confront and convict. It also asks that we explore ways in which we might re-conceptualize liturgies and rituals to offer space for greater dialogue with texts such as offering spaces for unscripted responses whether offered aloud, silently, or through the body. In doing so, rituals can provide unique spaces and sets of resources that contribute to the processing of wound(ing)s. They also invite communities to take active roles in naming and addressing wounding practices both within Christian communities and broader society.

New Visions

Christian witnessing to wound(ing)s does not end with the actions described above. Instead it contains a radical witness that aims not only to attend to the wounded and confront the wounders, but to image new visions that seek a future in which

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[26] West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics,* 123-7.
[27] Marjorie Proctor-Smith, "Reorganizing Victimization: The Intersection between Liturgy and Domestic Violence," in *Violence Against Women and Girls: A Christian Theological Sourcebook,* ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1995), 430.

wound(ing)s cease. These visions do not desire to erase the scars of past wounds or prematurely require healing of all present ones. Instead, they image how to bring about the radical love of God's kin-dom amidst the wound(ing)s of our world by finding ways to witness more fully to the wound(ing)s while striving to prevent future wounds. They seek ways to promote justice and right relations among all of creation. Despite the many ways in which Christians fail to fully enact such visions and even further contribute woundings, a hope exists within these visions that continues to imagine a more just world.

Such visions call Christians to act. They invite Christians collectively to pray and ritualize new ways of being in community. These visions also call each person as they are able to take these new ways of being and embody and enact them in the world. They lead Christians to protest on the steps of immigration detention centers and to open their doors providing sanctuary. These visions call Christians to raise their voices in lament when yet another brutal murder of a transwoman of color is met with silence and to challenge the toxic masculinity that seeks to justify the actions of the murderers. These visions seek alternate ways to provide aid when the daily oppressions of poverty and racism deny communities access to resources needed to properly attend to wounds. These visions lead Christians to sit vigil in the halls of Congress and alongside indigenous persons trying to protect their lands from the desecration of capitalist greed and ecological disaster. Through such visions, Christians not only witness to woundings but seek concrete ways to enact change that will prevent further wounds.

For me, the embodiment of these visions is what it means for Christians to be the body of Christ today, building upon Paul's imaging of it long ago (1 Cor 12:12-31). The

body of Christ is not pure and free of violence, but instead marked by wound(ing)s. Some of its wounds have formed scars while others remain raw. These wounds are both self-inflicted by the body against some of its own members as well as the result of external woundings. They are physical, spiritual, and psychological wounds. The body calls for recognition that even within itself, these wounds are tended to unequally and that there must be constant work to better ensure all "members may have the same care for one another" (12:25).

The collective body carries within it the woundings it has experienced alongside knowledge of the wounds it has inflicted or witnessed. The image of the body of Christ demands that such woundings are not erased, but rather exposed and attended to. It acknowledges that the body carries its own dangerous history of erasing and/or justifying the wounds of certain (inferior) members of the body. But the image also carries an inherent call for collective witness and response to such wound(ing)s. It seeks to provide care for the wounds and to gain wisdom from the scars about how to prevent further wound(ing)s on individual, collective, and systemic levels. The wounded and wounding body of Christ becomes a dynamic image holding the multifaceted realities of wound(ing)s while always seeking new ways of being.

This body of Christ does not exist in isolation, but rather interacts with other wounded/ing bodies. Some, like Cathy Caruth, hold that such interactions carry great potential to bridge cultural, social, and religious divides and that "trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures" in contemporary society. [28] I caution against such an image of bridging cultures through wound(ing)s. For it holds too great a risk of

[28] Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 11.

erasing, universalizing, or oversimplifying wound(ing)s and the power dynamics and politics associated with them. But this does not mean that wound(ing)s cannot hold temporary sites of connectivity between bodies and cultures. They engender interactions that can create accountability for past and present wound(ing)s. They also open space to learn from one another, both about the nature of wound(ing)s and ways that collective and individual bodies might work to break cycles of violence and wounding. Collective bodies connecting around their experiences of wound(ing)s open dialogue about the many ways in which religious, political, and cultural systems contribute to wound(ing)s. Such dialogues can produce new ways of seeing and responding to how systems control the representation of wound(ing)s, distribution of resources, and (re)actions of communities in response to contemporary wound(ing)s. Through such engagement with others, the body of Christ can seek ways to better address and prevent wound(ing)s experienced by the communities within its own body as well as all of the other individual and collective bodies with which it comes in contact.

Through such visions, of which mine is but one, Christians can more fully image and embody what it means to concretely witness, respond to, and prevent wound(ing)s. Today there is an urgent need for an ever-expanding, dynamic set of visions that enact change in response to the diverse wound(ing)s present in our world. The New Testament can serve as a resource to help create and enact such visions. For within its own complicated history of woundedness and wounding, the New Testament continues to engender hope that calls Christians to strive to bring about right relations and justice on earth. This is a hope that, despite an immense and ongoing history of violence and wound(ing)s, nevertheless persists and insists that a new way of being is possible.

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