

1

Introduction

The Genesis of a Thesis

Why Women?

This thesis grew out of an initial observation. Within the first few verses of Matthew's patrilineal genealogy that opens his Gospel, four women are referred to: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and "she of Uriah." Why, I wondered, did Matthew choose to include four Old Testament women in the annotations of his genealogy and why these particular four women? This question is not a new one and in part my work is a response to a long-held, traditional view that has collectively labeled these woman as sinners or sexually scandalous. Other explanations have also sought for one denominator common to all four women to explain their inclusion. Invariably one woman does not "fit" and arguments are marshaled to force the women into one category (chapter 2). Unhappy that the reductionist view does not take seriously each woman's narrated history, I have chosen to employ a narrative methodology to discover whether a thorough narrative reading of each woman's individual Old Testament story might indicate why Matthew chose to include each woman within the opening verses of his Gospel (chapters 3–6). This has led to questions concerning the fifth woman of the genealogy: Mary. She is also the first named woman in the narrative of the prologue. How does she stand in relation to the

MOTHERS ON THE MARGIN?

four Old Testament women? Continuing to use a narrative analysis I have sought to establish how she is presented by the Matthean narrator and in what ways she might relate to the other four (chapter 7). Having considered the women's individual significance in part 1, I have then moved on to consider the collective significance of the women for Matthew's Gospel. Sensitivity both to their narratives and their placement within the genealogy has led to three groupings of the women. It is under these three configurations that I have considered their collective significance for the ongoing gospel narrative in part 2.

- The first three women of the genealogy—Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth
All women were originally outsiders to Israel yet all three exhibit characteristics that are essential to the covenant relationship between YHWH and his people, characteristics that are key virtues of Matthean discipleship (chapter 8).
- Two clusters—
 - Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth
 - “she of Uriah” and Mary

All five women initially occupy places on the margins and consequently represent both those who are outsiders to Israel and those on the margins within Israel. The inclusion of these women serves to signal the importance of those on the margins in the ministry of the Messiah and to anticipate Matthew's rhetoric concerning the broadening of Israel's boundaries to include Gentile outsiders (chapter 9).

- All five women—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, “she of Uriah,” and Mary
As a gender category it will be argued that these five women are significant in establishing Matthew's rhetoric regarding women. Reading Matthew from a gendered point of view I argue that, in contrast to the dominant male focused narrative, there is a counternarrative that focuses on women. Their inclusion is the first indication of a positive gynocentric¹ counternarrative that, it will be demonstrated, runs throughout the Gospel (chapter 10).

1. The adjective gynocentric describes a focus on women.

Hermeneutical Stance and Reading Strategy

Reader response theory has brought to the fore the subjectivity of the individual reader who approaches the text. It is only as readers come to the text that meaning is created. The reading process is complex and multifaceted. Carter provides a helpful summary of what readers do as they formulate meaning from the text:

We notice features of the text. We construe words and fill gaps. We supply content and understandings that the text assumes of us. We attend to actions, conflicts, characters, setting and point/s of view . . . We discern and evaluate different points of view, different behaviours and values. We link scenes, attend to settings, construct sequences, identify causality, determine temporal relation, and create unity.²

No individual is value free; all possess ideologies and adopt particular stances (even if not recognized or acknowledged) as they come to the text. As they read, they create meaning from the text in the light of all that makes them who they are. Consequently, contrary to apparent modernist assumptions, there is no such thing as an interest-free, innocent reading that is completely objective in its interpretation. Individuals make up communities and interpretative communities also determine meaning. Since no reading is innocent, I will start by outlining my position. I come to the biblical text as a reader from within the Christian ecclesial community (I am a Baptist minister) and as a woman. As a woman from within the Christian ecclesial community, I adopt the position of approaching the text not with distrust and suspicion but with an essential trust that desires to be open to the text, alongside an awareness of its patriarchal ideology. I do not accept the position held by many feminist readers, that to engage with the text is to enter a struggle for power between the conflicting ideologies of text and reader, or that one's task is simply to uncover and critique the androcentric³ language and patriarchal ideology of the biblical stories. Rather the text gives us an invitation to an encounter, to "respond to what is there."⁴ I accept Vanhoozer's proposal that we are called to respond to the textual "covenant of discourse" with an ethics that attends "to the text's

2. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 2.

3. The adjective androcentric describes a focus on men. By using the term I do not mean a piece of writing is exclusively male but that its main focus is masculine.

4. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 395.

overture of meaning.”⁵ Vanhoozer argues that “our duty to receive the textual stranger as a welcome guest is an obligation implied in the covenant of discourse.”⁶ As a counter to a hermeneutics of suspicion so often employed by feminist critics,⁷ I will employ what I shall call a “hermeneutics of hospitable awareness,” a hospitality that welcomes not just the friend but the stranger and even the perceived enemy. By this I am referring to the nature of the biblical text, which, for example, at points portrays the woman as evil.⁸ I come to the text firstly with a desire to understand the illocutionary force of the text. I read the text not in an uncritical way that accepts everything at face value but with a desire for an encounter. My hospitality to the text is not naïve (although in Ricoeur’s terms it might be called a second naïveté), but seeks to move beyond a hermeneutics of suspicion, which has a place within the interpretative process but which should not determine the whole.

Beirne expresses this approach well:

In a broadened feminist exegetical approach, it may be best to avoid starting at the signpost “be suspicious,” and adopt instead Ricoeur’s recommendation that the first step ought be “a naïve grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole,” followed by the critical, interpretative stage, and concluding with a return to the text with what is now a “sophisticated, empathic understanding.” Within this process, suspicion may well have a place, especially as a balance to uncritical affirmation of an androcentric text. But, as with all other exegetical tools, it is useful only inasmuch as it contributes to the overall goal of increased understanding.⁹

As a woman, I am aware that the biblical text is both androcentric (the masculine is normative) and patriarchal (the male dominates). Since the ground breaking work of Tribble, one of the first to articulate a feminist literary stance in biblical studies, the problems of reading an ancient text shaped so powerfully by patriarchal cultures have been thoroughly highlighted and uncovered by feminist scholars. Many different methodologies

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 397.

7. Feminists argue that the act of the text being written establishes male dominance and female subjugation and therefore needs to be approached with a hermeneutics of suspicion.

8. See Zech 5:5–8.

9. Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, 16, quoting Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 74, and Lee, “Reclaiming the Sacred Text: Christian Feminism and Spirituality,” in Joy and Magee, *Claiming Our Rites*, 83.

have been employed; basic to all has been the recognition that the biblical texts are products of androcentric, patriarchal cultures and history and that women's stories need to be retrieved and reclaimed. The way a text is constructed is intimately connected with its ideology for all texts have a persuasive and transformative power, inviting the reader into the textual world and in so doing offering a model of perceiving things differently. Each narrative has its own rhetorical stance, a means of persuasion. As speech-act theory reminds us, texts have perlocutionary power; they affect us. For many feminist critics to read with the grain of the text presents insurmountable difficulties, for the biblical text assumes a social, economic, and political world where men dominate and subjugate women. To counter this critics such as Fiorenza locate the locus of interpretative authority not with the reader and the text but with the interpretative community, which, in Fiorenza's case, is the "*ekklēsia* of women."¹⁰ She writes, "The locus or place of divine revelation and grace is therefore not the Bible or the tradition of a patriarchal church but the *ekklēsia* of women."¹¹ Elsewhere, she defines the *ekklēsia* of women more fully as "a rhetorical space from where to assert women's theological authority to determine the interpretation of Christian scripture, tradition, theology, and community."¹² However, I take a more conservative stance, believing the primary locus of interpretative authority lies with the reader and the text. As a reader situated within a Christian reading community that adheres to the boundaries of the canonical text, I believe that since God's revelation is textually mediated through the canonical text, "We are tied to these texts."¹³

Lapsley presents a "crude typology" by dividing feminist interpretation of the Bible into three broad categories.¹⁴

1. Loyalists—Those who acknowledge the biblically legitimated oppression of women but who locate the problem in the *interpretation* of the Bible, not the text itself.
2. Revisionist—Those who acknowledge the patriarchal aspects of the text but who don't view them as definitive. They look for countertraditions within the Bible, voices that offer alternatives to dominant biblical voices and which must be teased out to be heard.
3. Rejectionists—Those who completely reject the Bible as authoritative.

10. Fiorenza, "Will to Choose or to Reject," 126.

11. Ibid., 128.

12. Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 152.

13. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 492.

14. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*, 3.

My stance is that of the conservative feminist critic. Locating myself within the revisionist camp, I adopt a reading strategy that focuses on stories or voices that are often overlooked. I reject the position of radical feminists such as Fuchs, who argues that the Bible comprises literary texts that are “pernicious” in the way they portray women and their power relations with men.¹⁵ She therefore believes that all pictures of biblical women are male constructs that are used to subvert and subdue women. Because of this, Fuchs concludes that a hermeneutics of resistance is the only way forward because “the Bible’s rhetorical art and its patriarchal ideology are inseparable and complementary.”¹⁶ However, I consider that dialogue, characterization, plot, timing, point of view, gaps, repetition, and omission are tools of the literary artist (male or female), not hopelessly flawed constructs of a male ideology.

In this thesis I provide a woman’s narrative interpretation and in doing so I consciously engage with women scholars, who work from a variety of feminist positions. Although I have learnt much from them, many adopt a position in relation to the text that I do not share. From time to time I engage with feminist viewpoints, critiquing some and incorporating the views of others. Underlying my argument is the view expressed by Watson that a critique of patriarchal ideology often overlooks “the possibility of a *self*-critique within the text or its broader context.”¹⁷ That there is an inbuilt critique of patriarchy within the text was first articulated by Tribble in her ground-breaking article “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation.”¹⁸ A number of feminist scholars since Tribble have made the same observation; for example, Pardes notes that “while the dominant thrust of the Bible is clearly patriarchal, patriarchy is continuously challenged by antithetical trends.”¹⁹ In addition Gunn and Fewell note, “The Bible shows us not merely patriarchy, élitism, and nationalism; it shows us the fragility of these ideologies through irony and counter-voices.”²⁰ A dynamic of self critique, not just of patriarchy but of other dominant ideologies such as Israel’s exclusive calling, may be seen to be at work either in the immediate context of a narrative or a broader biblical context. A challenge to patriarchal values comes most fundamentally in the opening

15. Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*, 21.

16. *Ibid.*, 29.

17. Watson, *Text, Church and World*, 178.

18. Tribble, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” 30–48.

19. Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible*, 51.

20. Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, 204.

chapter of the Old Testament, “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:26), and provides an alternative vision of the relation of men and women to each other and God than that pertaining in a typical patriarchal culture. The New Testament too contains egalitarian texts that provide a theological critique of patriarchy. Fiorenza considers such texts to be the “tip of the iceberg indicating a possibly rich heritage now lost to us.”²¹ It is not my purpose to retrieve such a heritage but rather to seek within the text itself countertraditions to dominant themes.

Biblical scholarship of the twentieth century has largely been influenced by the male voice and modernist assumptions. In the search for coherence a premium was placed on discovering the univocal, “true meaning” of the text. Twenty-first-century postmodern approaches have become much more aware of the multi-vocal nature of the biblical texts. It is often the stories of women, those excluded from the public, patriarchal discourse, which challenge the dominant voice of the text. In the past their stories have frequently been overlooked or ignored. Foucault talks of “subjugated knowledges” which he defines as “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges located low down on the hierarchy . . . a particular, local, regional knowledge.”²²

One could argue that often within the biblical text stories of women are “subjugated knowledges” that have been “insufficiently elaborated” within the larger narrative and are therefore missed within the wider framework of theological discourse. Their stories might appear relatively insignificant, “particular” and “local,” confined to the margins, yet by focusing on them one begins to realize their importance within the narrative whole.

My readings within this thesis are not offered as definitive but it is hoped they will shed fresh light on the five women in Matthew’s genealogy and their significance for the gospel narrative.

21. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 56.

22. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 82.

Methodology

Narrative Analysis

The use of a literary approach to reading the Bible that involves a narrative analysis of the text has become popular among scholars of both the Old and New Testament. This method does not seek to establish the sources behind the text, or the way in which it was put together, or the setting in which it was written, questions that engaged traditional historical-critical lines of enquiry. Rather, a literary-critical approach is concerned with the text as it comes to us as a finished product; it acknowledges the integrity of the text in its final form. Berlin, among others, has taught us, “If we know *how* texts mean, we are in a better position to discover *what* a particular text means.”²³ Throughout this thesis I will use a narrative analysis of both Old and New Testament texts to interpret what the text is saying, because as Firth points out, “attention to the narrative skill employed is a vital interpretative element.”²⁴ This involves consideration of different aspects of the narrative, such as the way it is structured and the effect of repetition and chiasm, the setting of the story, the development of the plot, the means of characterization, the textual time given to different parts of the story, and the point of view of the different characters and the narrator. While on the surface the story might be considered to be primarily about one thing, for example the succession of the line of Judah or the conquering of Jericho, the dramatic and unexpected in the story turns the reader’s attention elsewhere. In this context it is important that we “open ourselves to the Bible’s irony.”²⁵ In Hebrew narrative it is often the ironic element in a story that provides a subtext, revealing another “take” on what is going on. I am particularly interested in the way the different Old Testament women under consideration are characterized for “we know them only as they are presented in the narratives, and it is to this alone that we can refer.”²⁶ As we shall see, in terms of their characterization, the Hebrew narrative is fraught with ambiguity, yet, it will be argued that there are clear textual pointers that help the reader in evaluating each woman.

The narrative art of the Greek New Testament writers differs in a number of ways from that of the Hebrew Old Testament writers. In some

23. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 17.

24. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 22.

25. Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, 205.

26. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 47.

senses the Greek text of Matthew is more straightforward, much more compact in its telling, offering less ambiguity with which the reader has to grapple. Yet, there are also similarities, particularly in Matthew's Gospel, where many Hebrew techniques such a repetition, parallelism, and *inclusio* are still in use.²⁷

Both Old and New Testament narrative critics have used the literary theorist Chatman's model as a useful tool to describe the structural form of narrative prose. Chatman distinguishes between the story—*what* is told, and the discourse—*how* it is told.²⁸ The story involves the plot, that is, the actions and happenings, the different characters, and the settings. The discourse describes the way the story is expressed, the rhetoric of the narrative; in other words, how it communicates. Although modern literary terms are used such categories describe the universal features common to stories ancient and modern.

How does the real author, who in this case lived hundreds of years ago, communicate with the real reader who picks up and reads Matthew's Gospel today? Based on Chatman's distinctions, narrative theorists distinguish between the teller of a story (the sending party), the story itself, and its audience (the receiving party). The sending party is not one entity but comprises the real author, the implied author, and the narrator. The receiving party consists of the real reader, the implied reader, and the narratee. The story itself is represented by the narrator and narratee.

THE STORY

real author	<i>implied author</i> (narrator)	(narratee) <i>implied reader</i>	real reader
Sending party		Receiving party ²⁸	

The real author (our unknown person situated in first-century Middle East),³⁰ when writing Matthew's Gospel, made a series of decisions about

27. See Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, for a detailed analysis of Matthew's web of verbal repetitions.

28. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 26.

29. Adapted from Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 151.

30. From the earliest times the Gospel has been attributed to Matthew. In the earliest texts available in Greek or in translation, the Gospel carries the heading "according to Matthew." Around AD 180 Irenaeus is the first to comment that "Matthew also issued a written Gospel." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, (*Haer.* 3.1.1). In consequence, church tradition for the majority of the past two thousand years has ascribed the Gospel to the apostle Matthew named in Matt 9:9. Since the rise of historical criticism

MOTHERS ON THE MARGIN?

the plot, setting, characterization, and rhetorical devices, including the role of the narrator. A sense of the real author's "second self" can be gained in the process of reading and response to the text. This is referred to as the implied author.

The implied author is the closest that real readers can get to the actual author who wrote the text approximately 2,000 years ago, so what can be inferred about the implied author of Matthew's Gospel? There are a number of features in the text that are most easily explained by the supposition that Matthew had strong roots in Judaism. For example, much of the material that is distinctive to Matthew has a strongly Jewish flavor³¹ and there is currently general agreement among the majority of scholars that Matthew's Gospel reflects a close relationship with Judaism.³² The Old Testament scriptures are not only quoted on a number of occasions but the many allusions made to Old Testament stories betray a thorough knowledge of their content.

The implied author of the Gospel incorporates a narrator, who is the story's voice and who guides the reader. Matthew's narrator, the unseen voice who tells the story, is both reliable and ever present. The narrator is closely aligned with the implied authorial point of view that stands behind all that is written. Kingsbury comments, "Matthew as implied author oversees the whole of the story of the life and ministry of Jesus and also involves himself, through his voice as narrator, in every aspect of this story."³³

I will use "Matthew" when referring to the implied author and the term "narrator" to refer to the guiding voice within the narrative. For ease of reference the masculine pronoun will be used when referring to Matthew and the narrator but with the recognition that female voices would have contributed to the traditions used by the real author when constructing the narrative.

Just as the text conveys a sense of the implied author, a corresponding image is created of the implied reader. The implied reader, like the implied author, is not a flesh and blood person but an imaginary person

this has been called into question and ultimately it cannot be demonstrated who wrote Matthew's Gospel.

31. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 29; see their extended discussion, 25–58.

32. Recent scholarly discussion has centered around Matthew's love-hate relationship with Judaism and whether the Gospel reflects a separation from Judaism or remains within the Jewish formative tradition of the first century AD. Differing scholarly conclusions on the issue of Matthew's relationship to Judaism are reflective of the tensions within the text that offer both a pro-Jewish and anti-Jewish stance.

33. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 32.

who is envisaged by the implied author as receiving and responding to the text. The implied author perceives the implied reader to be an idealized recipient, who brings certain skills to the reading of the text. The implied author recognizes that implied readers function at different levels according to their readerly competences. In the case of Matthew's Gospel many of Matthew's original recipients would have heard rather than read the text, therefore aural echoes (for example in the repetition of key words and phrases) are important in the way they contribute to the intertextual web of meaning. The narratee, the third person of the receiving party, is the narrator's counterpart, the one to whom the narrator addresses his remarks within the story. As both Kingsbury and Anderson point out, in Matthew's Gospel there is no clear distinction between the implied reader and the narratee.³⁴ The narratee is addressed by the narrator and, for our purposes, stands in for the implied reader. The final receiving party, the real reader, mirrors the real author as someone who reads and interprets the text, coming from a viewpoint outside the narrative world. Clearly, the intertextual connections that I perceive as a real reader may differ from those that Matthew's implied readers may have understood.

Since we have no access to Matthew or his original readers and since we have only the text itself, my assertions about Matthew's intention in including the five women in his genealogy are intelligible only as statements about the implied author for whom no absolute claims can be made. I consider that the rhetoric of the text betrays the implied author's intent particularly in passages such as the genealogy, where there is direct commentary from the narrator to the narratee. However, I am making no definitive claims about the implied author's understanding of the intertextual connectedness of the text since I acknowledge that texts can be read in many different ways. Also, the claims I am making for the intertextual connectedness of the text may or may not have been perceived by Matthew's implied readers/hearers. Nevertheless, if it can be demonstrated that the claims I am making as a real reader about Matthew's intertextual connectedness cohere with the text's own rhetoric, themes, and literary structure, then it is a good reading in that it makes sense.

A narrative methodology acknowledges that it is important to read Matthew as Matthew in its final form, for Matthew's story is inherently meaningful regardless of its sources and composition history. Thompson refers to this as reading vertically before reading horizontally.³⁵ Neverthe-

34. Ibid., 38. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 37–38.

35. Thompson, "Reflections," 365–66.

less, the four Gospels invite comparison and it is helpful to look sideways, to practice what Fokkelman refers to as lateral reading since the “*dialectics of similarity and difference* find a unique and powerful application in the New Testament.”³⁶ I do not accept the assumption of redaction critics that Matthew edited Mark in fine detail as the basis for his Gospel, since it is now recognized that the two source theory does not allow for the complexity of the sources Matthew used. However, it seems probable that Matthew made considerable use of Mark both in structuring particularly the latter half of his Gospel from chapter 14 and also in the selection and telling of his stories, including stories about women. When considering Matthew’s material, some comparisons will be made with Mark’s material (and occasionally Luke and John) since comparison serves to clarify Matthew’s emphases and rhetoric but no detailed redactional studies will be conducted.

In adopting a narrative reading of both the Old and New Testament texts, I will mainly confine myself to the world of the text rather than seeking meaning outside the stories themselves within the circumstances in which they were written. Nonetheless, I do not consider that the text is a free floating entity but that behind it lies a historical and theological reality. I do not accept the view that historical reference and narrative form are incompatible and, whilst I choose to focus on the narrative, reference to historiographical elements will sometimes be made.³⁷

Intertextuality

Hays et al. note, “Intertextual canonical reading holds great promise as a way for postmodern interpreters to restore lines of conversation with the church’s classic premodern traditions of interpretation.”³⁸ Within a theological framework intertextuality is not just a theoretical concept since for hundreds of years it has been recognized that biblical exegetes are working within a web of meaning and that there has always been an important

36. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 198.

37. Watson comments that Ricoeur’s argument that fiction and history are interlaced shows up “a major weakness in contemporary study of the gospels, which assumes that fiction and history are simple opposites . . . Ricoeur enables us to conceive of a historiography enriched by fiction and not subverted by it.” Watson, *Text and Truth*, 56–57. Solvang also notes that “Reading the biblical text with narrative technique does not eliminate the need for historical understandings.” Solvang, *Woman’s Place*, 9.

38. Hays et al., *Reading the Bible*, xiii.

place in Christian tradition for detecting echoes of other biblical texts in a given text. Hays's book *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* made a significant contribution to the reception of the paradigm of intertextuality into theological exegesis in the 1990s.³⁹ The world of biblical semiotics has appropriated the term "intertextuality" from work originally done by the post-structuralist Kristeva.⁴⁰ She coined the term to indicate that texts are dynamic; they do not stand in autonomous isolation but stand in dialogical relationship with other texts. Intertextual ways of working involve discerning the relationship one text can have with another and how together they can produce new meaning. The nature of the biblical canon itself is intertextual. It is comprised of a collection of many different writings that are placed alongside each other in the canon so that each text is not read in isolation but exists in relationship with other writings. In consequence, the biblical canon places individual texts in new relationships with other texts. The proximity of one text to another alters the meaning potential of both. The intertextual connectedness of the biblical canon makes it hermeneutically justifiable to read one text in the light of another. In other words all biblical texts have what Alkier refers to as an "intertextual disposition."⁴¹ The term indicates that signals of intertextuality exist in a text which prompts the reader to seek its relation to other texts. An intertextual reading is alert to these signals that draw other texts into play. It provides a way to discern the thematic, literary and theological links between two or more biblical texts that exist in different times and cultures. This continues the long held Christian interpretative strategy of finding continuity within many diverse biblical books. Alkier provides a helpful definition of an intertextual investigation.

Intertextual investigation concerns itself with the effects of meaning that emerge from the references of a given text to other texts. One should only speak of intertextuality when one is interested in exploring the effects of meaning that emerge from relating at least two texts together and, indeed, that neither of the texts considered alone can produce. One must also remember that within the paradigm of intertextuality, that intertextual generation of meaning proceeds in both directions:

39. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*.

40. Moi, *Kristeva Reader*. Kristeva eventually abandoned the term as too narrow to describe the intersubjectivity of human discourse.

41. Alkier, "Intertextuality," 11.

MOTHERS ON THE MARGIN?

The meaning potential of both texts is altered through the inter-textual reference itself.⁴²

Such an investigation can be approached from two different perspectives: the production-orientated perspective and the reception-orientated perspective. At the production level it is recognized that the implied author of the text, Matthew, has used other texts in the writing process. In Matthew's case many of these have been taken from the Old Testament and used both explicitly in quotations and implicitly by allusion. The meaning of Matthew's narrative (the hypertext) is shaped by its relationship to the Old Testament (the hypotext). The text of Matthew's Gospel has been causally determined by historically earlier Old Testament texts. Paying attention to these necessary causal relationships is attending to intertextuality at the production level of the text. A reliable reader will know these texts and read Matthew's text in the light of them. Not to attend to these causal relationships would be to ignore the text's own intertextual connectedness. The production-orientated perspective of an intertextual investigation explores the indices of the text, signs that have been directly determined by earlier texts, and have been put there by the writer in order to draw them into a necessary relationship with his/her text. Working from a production-orientated perspective, Hays argues that intertextual signals in a text can exist on three levels: quotation, allusion, and echo, and may be seen as "points along a spectrum of intertextual reference."⁴³ My intertextual investigation is prompted by the citing of the names of women in the genealogy that allude to other texts. In fact, the opening verses of Matthew's Gospel immediately invite the consideration of many other texts. Textual worlds within the Old Testament are intertextually inscribed in the names mentioned in Matthew's genealogy, including those of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and "she of Uriah." By their inclusion the text itself explicitly invites the reader to consider what relationship might exist between the stories of these women and the story of Jesus as told by Matthew. To put it in Anderson's words,

Whatever the actual reader makes of the presence of the women will affect how he or she reads the rest of the narrative, especially chapters 1 and 2. Likewise, his or her reading of the rest of the Gospel will affect in retrospect the interpretation of the women's presence in the genealogy.⁴⁴

42. Ibid., 9.

43. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 23.

44. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 52.

The citing of their names in each case draws not just a specific verse into play as an intertextual reference but complete narrative stories. With the inclusion of the Old Testament women in the genealogy Matthew is implicitly alluding to their stories and thereby inviting the reader to read the texts of Genesis 38, Joshua 2 and 6:15–25, Ruth, and 2 Samuel 11–12, both alongside one another, since by their naming Matthew draws them into specific intertextual relationship, but also in conjunction with Mary, mother of Christ and the final woman of the genealogy, and the ensuing story of Jesus as told by Matthew. I am particularly interested in the semantic, thematic similarities that might be perceived between the stories of the women and themes running throughout Matthew's Gospel. Read in the light of these texts Matthew's Gospel gains new depth and resonance. It further leads to a consideration of how the interaction of the two might create new meaning.

Having been motivated by Matthew's text, I move beyond the production-orientated perspective to a second important perspective of intertextual study; the reception-orientated perspective. The reception-orientated perspective asks about "the sense effect that results for various readers during the synchronous reading of more texts."⁴⁵ The relationship between the two texts is a potential one rather than a necessary one; it is synchronic rather than diachronic, in that the texts can appear to be significantly related but have no discernible causal connections. From this perspective the reader makes the connection between texts; it is an exploration of the similarities between the texts that I discern as a real reader. I am indebted to Wolde for her analysis where she discusses these possible similarities, for ease of reference I list her points as follows:

A. Stylistic and Semantic Similarities

1. Repetition of words or semantic fields. For example, there may be words or themes that appear in two different texts that bring them into relationship.
2. Repetition of larger textual structures. For example, similarities in style or the framework of a narrative, discourses or expressions, and temporal or spatial arrangements.
3. Similarities in genre.

45. Schneider, "How Does God Act," 45.

MOTHERS ON THE MARGIN?

B. Narratological Similarities

1. Analogies in character descriptions or in character types.
2. Similarities in an action or series of actions.
3. Similar narratological representations, i.e., the way the narrator represents the action of a character.⁴⁶

Wolde notes that all these repetitions can be read as iconic pointers to intertextual relationships.⁴⁷ On the basis of perceived repetitions I will investigate the relationships that exist both between the five women themselves in terms of recurring themes and narratological presentation, and then move on to consider whether the recurring themes which I identify are also present in Matthew's Gospel. In relating the texts of the women's stories from the Old Testament to Matthew's own story of Jesus the Messiah, the potential meaning of both is altered. As a reader I perceive suggestive and creative thematic parallels between the two. I do not consider the production-orientated perspective and the reception-orientated perspective to be mutually exclusive for "the paradigm of intertextuality involves both perspectives."⁴⁸

I acknowledge that reception-orientated intertextual reference can motivate a number of different readings. I also acknowledge that the intertextual connections in Matthew's text are more obvious in some places than in others. For example, Mary clearly stands in relation to the other four women of the Old Testament because of her placement at the end of the genealogy. The connection between Rahab and the Canaanite woman of Matthew 15 may seem less obvious. It may be argued that the stronger intertextual connections are clearly established by the text itself while others depend on my perceptions as a reader. I realize that my perceptions will be shared by others in some places but not in others. The key question is: What determines a valid reading? Schneider notes, "The multiple perspectives of intertextual readings lead immediately to questions of ethical interpretation and problems of the theological truth claims of specific statements."⁴⁹ Does the legitimacy of my intertextual reading depend on its correspondence to Matthew's authorial intention? Alternatively does it need to establish a correspondence with how Matthew's implied readers would have understood the text? My answer to both these questions is

46. Wolde, "Intertextuality," 432-33.

47. *Ibid.*, 433.

48. Schneider, "How Does God Act," 45.

49. *Ibid.*, 46.

“No,” since both the author and the original recipients of Matthew’s Gospel are only known to us hypothetically. It is impossible to know for certain the intent of the original author in including five women in his genealogy or how his readers/hearers would have understood the text.

Recognizing the difficulty of judging what are legitimate intertextual readings, Hays has established seven tests to identify what he refers to as the “intertextual echoes” of the text.⁵⁰ The first, fourth and final tests are relevant to my discussion. Although we can only establish indirectly what might have been in the mind of the author and his readers it is not inappropriate to ask the historical question, as Hays does in his first test, concerning availability. Was the source of the intertextual echo available to the author and the original readers? In Matthew’s case it is clear that he was familiar with the Old Testament text (later acknowledged as canonical within Judaism) in both its Greek and Hebrew form and that he expected his implied readers also to be familiar with this text and to acknowledge the text as scripture. Hence we can confidently assume that the Old Testament texts of the women’s stories would have been known by Matthew. Hays’s fourth test raises the issue of thematic coherence. How well does the intertextual reading fit into the line of argument that Matthew is developing? If an intertextual thematic coherence can be demonstrated, then it is a credible (but not definitive) identification of the implied author’s intentionality. It will be argued that the intertextual themes emerging from the stories of the five women are themes that are central to Matthew’s rhetoric in three main areas. These three areas are interlinked because all are concerned with establishing a new identity for the people of God: Gentile inclusion into the people of God, the place and priority of the marginalized in the purposes of God, and the role and place of women in the kingdom of heaven that the Messiah inaugurates. Elsewhere Hays notes that intertextual narration is a culture forming practice. “Communities form and maintain their identities through the stories they tell about their origins, history, and future destiny.”⁵¹ The inclusion of the five women, the telling of the Messiah’s origins and history, anticipates and contributes to Matthew’s rhetoric regarding the identity of the community of disciples the Messiah will gather to himself. The recurrence of key themes point back to the stories of these women, indicating that there is thematic intertextual coherence to Matthew’s rhetoric concerning the new identity of the people of God. This intertextual coherence argues for the validity of the reading I am proposing.

50. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29–32.

51. Hays, “Liberation of Israel,” 102.

Hays's final test is entitled "Satisfaction."⁵² He asks, does the proposed reading illuminate the surrounding discourse, is it a "satisfying account of the intertextual relation?"⁵³ In other words, does the proposed intertextual reading make sense in terms of the whole? I will demonstrate that my intertextual reading is entirely satisfactory and that the recovery of women's stories from the margins, both from the Old Testament and within Matthew, highlights the radical nature of Matthew's rhetoric running throughout his Gospel concerning the people of God.

The first step in any intertextual study is to acknowledge the integrity and narrative artistry of each story in its own right. Alkier comments, "For methodological reasons and reasons pertaining to the ethics of interpretation, one must perform intratextual analyses of the texts to be brought together before any intertextual work commences."⁵⁴ Hence the texts of the five women of the genealogy will be studied in their own right, considered as intratextual structures with their own syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical logic. In part 1 I will investigate the Hebrew stories of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba before moving onto Mary as presented by Matthew. In part 2 I will investigate the intertextual themes I discern between their stories, both individually and collectively, and Matthew's gospel narrative as a whole.

Increasing specialization has led to a virtual divorce in Old Testament and New Testament scholarship. In recognizing the intertextual relationships that are invited by the naming of the Old Testament women in Matthew's genealogy I seek to combine the insights of both Old Testament and New Testament scholars. I have made use of the NRSV as base text but on occasions I have freely departed from it and made my own translations from the Hebrew and Greek texts. However, I do not engage with text critical discussions, nor, in the main, do I make any reference to extra-biblical material, Jewish or Graeco-Roman. Interaction with Matthean scholarship in part 2 is relatively limited due to the fact that the majority of Matthean scholarship has been historical-critical and redaction-critical, not narrative-critical.

52. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 31.

53. Ibid.

54. Alkier, "Intertextuality," 10.