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Review of Christine E. Joynes & Christopher C. Rowland, eds., *From the Margins 2: Women of the New Testament and Their Afterlives*. Sheffield Phoenix Press 2009.

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This volume is a celebration of new understanding, focused mostly on interpreting New Testament women through their afterlives in art, music, and literature from the earliest sources through the sixteenth century. The contributors unite in the common vision of using the memory of women in Christian tradition to extend the imaginative possibilities for exegesis. The interpreter of the New Testament is too often reading through the lens of men - even the writings and fragments of ancient female poets and philosophers are usually embedded within misogynistic rhetoric - and because of this we must use later traditions to reconstruct earlier lives. Because women are hidden behind this veil, it is quite useful for us to observe how the traditions of women (in this case, characters and personae in the New Testament) developed over time and experiment with these models to see how we can extend our interpretative possibilities beyond the limits of current methods.

To this end the book begins with a poem by John F. Deane, which is a meditation on the arrogance of men who think that they know God juxtaposed with the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-12 who actually was blessed by God. This poem is a wonderful place to start in our preparation to imagine the lives, experiences, and contributions of women in ancient life. We must not be hindered by the misogynistic rhetoric that encases the lives of ancient women: their experience may be buried deep within other traditions ('we have known God') but their experience is indeed there ("she is blessed").

Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg's essay, "Just Another Jewish Mother? Mary in the Jewish Imagination", is a very informative guide to Jewish attitudes toward Mary from the Talmud through the 21st century. Several different versions of "Mary" emerge in Jewish thought, from fodder for polemic to religious icon.

John A. Darr contributes "Belittling Mary: Insult, Humiliation, and Early Developments in Mariology", which is a study on ancient "sexual slander" and its relationship to how early readers understood the character of Mary. Insults were (and are) used to identify boundary markers for groups and in this case, insults are an attempt by Christians and Jews to distinguish themselves from one other while defining themselves as acceptable to the Roman way of life. Darr references the common practice by orators and lawyers of attacking the character of women associated with their opponents. Unfortunately, he provides only two examples: one from Demosthenes and one from Cicero. More evidence would have been welcomed as there is no shortage of this kind of polemic in Greek and Latin literature. Darr then argues that non-Christians used similar insults toward Mary to weaken the reputation of Christians, and the authors of Matthew and Luke respond. This would mean that Christians engaged in this specific type of discourse in their earliest traditions. It seems to me that it is more likely to assume that Luke and Matthew safeguard the memory of Mary from insult rather than answer polemic.

Sarah Jane Boss presents to us the essay "'Black but Beautiful': The Black Madonnas of Western Europe and the Biblical Commentaries of St. Bernard of Clairvaux". Boss examines the painting of statues in black when this color may have been associated with *malum*. Previous scholars have suggested that the statues were originally white. The traditions associated with Christian interpretations of Song of Songs 1:4 explain why the statues were originally painted black. With respect to Mary, Alan of Lille interprets this verse to mean, "I am black [pregnant] but beautiful

[virginity is intact]”. Similarly, Boss uses two sermons from St. Bernard (Sermons 25 and 28) as more direct illuminations, asserting that the outward appearances of the saints are lowly and black but their inner life is beautiful. St. Bernard’s sermons are used as primary evidence that statues of Mary after his time were originally painted black.

Ann Loades addresses the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission’s statement concerning Mary in 2005 in her essay “Mary: A Bone of Contention”. Loades points out that feminist theologians are not being considered in the formulations of faith that are used to unify Anglicans and Roman Catholics. This is especially worrisome when Mary is discussed: her courage and hope for justice, as well as the bodily participation of women in redemption needs to be taken into account. It is especially disconcerting that the ARCIC document emphasizes Mary’s subordinate obedience to God rather than her courage in the face of the *Divine Conception*. Loades points out that the statements concerning Mary - her assumption into heaven and her title as “God bearer” - are Christ-centered and not truly interested in Mary as a woman. What is needed is a focus on Mary that does not forsake her role as “God-bearer”, or the giver of Christ’s humanity, but states with clarity that Mary is central to redemption. The incorporation of Mary into ecclesiastical life should not be in the genderization of the church (the peripheral “she”), but as central in the celebration of the Eucharist as the singing of the *Magnificat*.

In her essay, “The Celluloid Brothel: Imag[in]ing Woman in the Last Temptation of Christ”, Melanie J. Wright addresses the representation of Mary Magdalene in the 1988 film *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Wright frames her work by noting that movies are generally a product of a culture that considers maleness to be normative. Because of this, women are sexualized or otherwise presented in a way that pleases a male audience. At the same time, however, there can be a different subtext. In this film, Mary Magdalene is portrayed not only as a prostitute, but also as a woman of means who supports Jesus after he casts the demons out of her. In one scene, Jesus visits Mary in her brothel, where she is associated with the ancient temptress in Genesis 3. Mary is seen having sex with her clients by a group of men (including Jesus). Wright argues that the cinematography dehumanizes Mary into body parts ready for male consumption. After the clients depart, Mary is shown in a position of power, apparently telling Jesus that she cannot forgive him for scorning her bed. After Jesus saves Mary from being stoned, she transforms into a faithful disciple, as indicated by her modest dress, and she participates in the Last Supper. As the film comes to a close, Jesus fantasizes about marrying Mary, having sex with her, and hoping for a child; however, Jesus has to commit himself to dying for humanity. Wright concludes that Mary is thought about only in terms of her sexuality, but there is a subtext that can be understood as a critique of patriarchy: the sexualization of women is against the mission of Christ.

Heidi J. Hornik discusses Tosini’s painting of Mary Magdalene in her contribution, “Recasting Magdalene in Sixteenth-Century Florence: The Painting Workshop of Michele Tosini”. The fifteenth century Perugino’s *Mary* is almost unrecognizable, being identical to a contemporary aristocrat. In the sixteenth century, Titian tended to combine sumptuousness with penitence by portraying Mary as covered only by her hair (or loose clothing) and looking up towards the sky. Tosini develops this theme by combining these elements: his Mary is dressed in aristocratic clothing, has the alabaster jar that identifies her, and she is looking up toward heaven in penitence.

Peter Loewen explores the portrayals of Mary in poetry, music, and drama in his essay, “Mary Magdalene as jocular Domini: Franciscan Music and Vernacular Homiletics in the Shrewsbury *officium Resurrectionis* and Easter Plays from Germany and Bohemia”. This study builds on an earlier work that Loewen and Robin Wauhn co-authored, which demonstrated a relationship between a Shrewsbury fragment of an *officium Resurrectionis* and the role of Mary Magdalene in Easter plays from Füssen, Trier, and Prague. Loewen moves on to examine in great detail the similar developments of Mary Magdalene in England and the Continent at about the same time, and argues that this similarity is due to the influence of Franciscan preaching and music in the vernacular.

Rachel Nicholls contributes “What Kind of Woman is this?”, Reading Luke 7.36-50 in light of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s drawing *Mary Magdalene at the door of Simon the Pharisee* (1853-59). Nicholls focuses on the character of the unknown woman in Luke 7.36-50, keeping in mind the traditional problems associated with the text. Nicholls is primarily concerned with the significance of the act of foot-washing and what it tells us about the relationship between Jesus and the sinful woman. However, the drawing captures the moment of entry into the house rather than the action of foot-washing. Nicholls speculates that this event was left out because of the questions it poses concerning Jesus, who accepts a sensuous act from a sinful woman. Rossetti wrote a poem about this drawing and said that Mary’s love was with her and urged her to attend a party across the street. Nicholls argues that the flowers worn by Mary and her company depict erotic experience and the flowers on Simon’s door represent purity. In the end, Christ wins her attention as a disciple rather than as a lover.

Jennifer Wright Knust questions the motivation behind the exclusions of John 8:1-11 from various manuscripts of the New Testament in her chapter, “Too Hot to Handle?: The Story of the Adulteress and the Gospel of John”. Knust acknowledges that there are a few early writers who disparage the text, but there are far more examples of patristic exegesis that celebrate the repentance of sinful women and prostitutes. Knust then provides an excellent transmission history of the pericope, concluding that it was transmitted because it fully recognizes the humanity of women and was used to stop the circle of violence against women.

In her essay, “Herodias Goes Headhunting”, Caroline Vander Stichele compares the re-readings of the death of John the Baptist by René Girard and Jean Delorme. Girard’s method is centered on the “mimetic” desire of Herod and his brother: they both want the same thing. The desires of Herodias are mimetic as well, and Salome is a victim of her desire. Delorme, on the other hand, approaches the story from Herod’s point of view: he is at first conflicted by his interest in John’s teaching and his lustful desires for Herodias. Then, at his birthday party there is harmony in the pleasure that he receives from John’s teaching and the dancing girl. After exercising his powers as king, Herod is conflicted once again by the grief of losing John the Baptist and fulfilling his word. Stichele describes both interpretations as “gendered”. Girard clearly interprets Herodias as the “ultimate incarnation of mimetic violence” (p. 168). Delorme portrays man as interested in thought, controlling the situation by means of his word, and women are seductive and wordless. Stichele argues that despite their re-readings, Girard and Delorme do not escape traditional interpretations of the text. Both interpreters follow the tradition that Herodias used Herod to murder John the Baptist and her use of her daughter’s seductive power is the driving force behind her success.

Margarita Stoker explores the visual and literary memory of Salome in her work, “Short Story, Maximal Imbroglia: Salome Ancient and Modern”. The memories of Salome are variations on a negative theme: Salome is a temptress who has homicidal tendencies.

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona finds a different Salome in “Imagining Salome, or how *la sauterelle* became *la femme fatale*”. Apostolos-Cappadona argues that portrayals of Salome in France were much less seductive than in other traditions: she is a grasshopper rather than a temptress. Later artists of the High Renaissance and the Baroque periods changed Salome into a provocative dancer. Apostolos-Cappadona reminds us that Salome can be juxtaposed to Miriam, the other dancing woman mentioned in the NT. Photographs of the three earliest depictions of Salome are presented, which depict her as a harmless *sauterelle*. Significantly, she appears as fully dressed and is not in a sexually provocative position. About a hundred years later, a carving that depicts Salome and Herod in a highly sexualized “chin chuck” position appears in the Cathedral of St. Étienne. Apostolos-Cappadona notes that most 13th-14th century depictions feature a fully clothed Salome in impossible acrobatic poses, and the depictions do not indicate any culpability in the death of John the Baptist. However, in the late 19th century, Salome becomes *la femme fatale*, the dancing seductress who plays a key role in the execution of John the Baptist.

Ela Nutu illustrates how Salome is used as an expression of different periods of Caravaggio's life and psychological growth in her contribution, "Reading Salome: Caravaggio and the Gospel Narratives". The historical context that Nutu provides for Caravaggio is impressive and useful, and three paintings that portray Salome are considered. In all of the paintings, Salome is clothed and is non-seductive. There are two paintings (the 1607-1610 London version and the 1609 Madrid version) of Salome that are quite similar but produced at different periods of the artist's life. The London version depicts Salome as innocent - gazing away from the scene - presenting the head of John the Baptist to Herod. Salome's hands are not even touching the platter: she is using a white shawl to cover her hand. The Madrid version also has Salome offering the head of John the Baptist to Herod. However, Salome is looking toward her viewers, wearing a red shawl with her hands touching the platter. In doing so, Salome is more active in the process of killing John the Baptist. Nutu concludes that Caravaggio expresses his own innocence, guilt, and inner tumult from his colorful life in these paintings. This essay is most useful for the history of Caravaggio and what these paintings say about him during the time of their creation.

Christine E. Joynes examines interpretations of Mark 16 in "Wombs and Tombs: The Reception History of Mark 16.1-20". Joynes begins her essay by reviewing the patristic readings of Mary 16.1-20. Peter Chrysologus scorns the women at the tomb, saying that they were going there to anoint the dead rather than celebrate in the resurrection, but elsewhere calls the tomb "the womb of resurrection". Gregory the Great (540-604), in his 21st Homily (Mark 16:1-7) preaches that we should be fearful of coming into the presence of the divine, and the women at the tomb were doing their service out of love, and we should emulate their sacrifice. Pseudo-Jerome (early 7th century) also has a positive view of the women at the tomb. They fulfil prophecy: death was pronounced through a woman (Eve) and life was pronounced through the women who reported Jesus's resurrection. Joynes argues that interpreting Mark 16 through the arts illuminates aspects of the text that the church fathers and later interpreters could not see. It is significant to note that the early depictions of the resurrection do not include Jesus but women at an empty tomb. Following the connection between wombs and tombs, Joynes cites the images of women on exemplary baptismal fonts. Several other depictions are found in a wide variety of media, and the women are almost always three in number and shown holding their spices and in a gesture that portrays fear. Joynes points out that this is a parallel to the story of the three wise men.

In her essay, "Sibling Rivalry: Martha and Mary of Bethany", Ena Giurescu Heller examines the sisters Martha and Mary of Bethany (Luke 10:38-42, John 12:1-8, John 11:1-5, 17-32) through their depictions in art from the 12th to the 17th century. Two prevailing interpretations arise. There is a strong exegetical tradition that portrays Martha as a woman of action and Mary as a woman of contemplation. There are also traditions from the church fathers and later interpreters that conflate Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha. Heller demonstrates that the artwork from various time periods corresponds with the contemporary teachings on Mary and Martha rather than the New Testament.

Louise J. Lawrence critiques modern readings of the Canaanite Woman in her contribution, "'Crumb Trails and Puppy-Dog Tales': Reading Afterlives of a Canaanite Woman (Matt. 15.21-8)". Colorfully playing on the story of the Canaanite woman of Matt. 15:21, Lawrence traces the "breadcrumbs" [readings of the Canaanite woman from the patristic period to today], and offers insights into differing voices that "bark" back. Lawrence begins in the third century with Origen, who views the Canaanite woman as a symbol for all humanity to come to Christ, perhaps bringing demon possessed souls, represented by her daughter. Similarly, Hilary of Poitiers views the Canaanite woman as the mother to all Gentiles who begs for the salvation of her children, "She was appealing on behalf of her daughter, who was a type of all Gentiles" (*On Matthew* 15.3; Lawrence, p. 264). Lawrence finds parallel interpretations in Theodore of Mopsuestia and Epiphanius of Salamis. Another interpretation of the event is presented by Augustine, who used the story as exemplary for

the Christian life. As the Canaanite woman humbled herself by calling herself a dog, so Christians should approach Christ as they submit to God in the incarnation. Similar interpretations are found in Chrysostom, Epiphanius, and Theodore. Lawrence appraises Calvin and Luther, who together view the Canaanite woman as a “paradigm of faith”, and at the same time employ supersessionist anti-Semitism. Lawrence moves on to examine the reworking of the Markan source (Mark 7:24-30) in Matt. 15:21-8. Like other interpreters, Lawrence concludes that the Matthean reworking corrects the racism in Mark. She further suggests that the story introduces a new chapter in salvation history that serves as a rhetorical turning point in the ministry of Jesus in Matthew. After this episode, Jesus expands his mission to include Gentiles. As a whole, Lawrence judges the previous and modern interpretations as a monologic crumb: little else has emerged from this story than the patristic readings. Feminist readings by Elaine Wainwright, disability readings by Donald Senior, and postcolonial readings by Warren Carter and Musa Dube are shown to follow the basic pattern laid out in the historical interpretations of the Canaanite woman. Each one of these methods have value in their respective “barks”, but do not escape the traditional exegetical framework which has been handed down to us by previous readers who do not share modern interests.

Charlotte Methuen reviews the translation of Julia/Julias in the 16th century in her essay, “‘Juniam - Nomen viri est’: On Early Modern Readings of Paul’s Greetings to the Roman Church [Rom. 16:1-16]”. Several ancient witnesses celebrated the interpretation of Julia as a woman: Chrysostom, Origen, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, Theodoret, John of Damascus, Oecumenius, and Theophylact. The Latin fathers follow suit. Two exceptions are presented: one variant translation of Origen by Rufinus is likely a misreading, and Epiphanius is considered unreliable due to his misogyny (he considered Prisca a male). The masculine reading gains favor in the 13th century with Giles of Rome, which may have been followed by later writers. Methuen selects two humanists to review: Lefèvre d’Etaples and Erasmus. Lefèvre interprets Julia as masculine but also emphasizes the importance of women in the New Testament in his 1512 commentary on Romans. Erasmus, on the other hand, is not as clear. Luther translates several woman in the greeting as men, including Junia. The commentaries of Calvin and Peter Martyr Vermigli emphasize the importance of women in the formation of the early church, citing Phoebe as the prime example but may not have considered Junia to be a woman. Both of these men knew Katharina Schütz Zell and perhaps she served as an inspiration to them for their positive outlook on the importance of women in Christian ministry.

Natasha O’Hear contributes “Images of Babylon: A Visual History of the Whore in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art”. O’Hear argues that in early writers the image of the Whore of Babylon is seen as a counterpoint to the Woman Clothed with the Sun, which is interpreted as Mary the mother of Jesus. The depictions of the Whore in the 12th and 13th centuries are “private” and didactic. This is most likely due to patronesses, who were encouraged to follow women of faith and light rather than the metaphorical Whore, who was dressed in contemporary aristocratic clothing. These depictions are shown to correspond with interpretations of the Whore as a device to teach a personal moral lesson. The depictions of the Whore in the 13th century demonstrate a different metaphor: she is more closely associated with a city rather than a persona. The destruction of the city of Babylon is expressed as the demise of the Whore with varying degrees of brutality, and this image embodies a public fear of destruction.

Harriet M. Sonne de Torrens explores images of female sexuality on baptismal fonts in the 12th and 13th century in her contribution, “*Favea peccati et uterus ecclesiae: The Symbiotic Nature of Female Sexuality on Medieval Baptismal Fonts*”. The subject of the essay might be shocking to some readers: “explicit images of fornication, snakes suckling Luxuria’s breasts and women displaying their vulvae next to a masturbating monk on consecrated, liturgical vessels” (p. 334). In fact, Sonne de Torrens claims that the overwhelming majority of baptismal fonts that have survived from this period in England, Scandinavia, and Iberia have some variation of this theme. The focus of this essay is on the two prevalent female personae that dominate the images: Eve and Sheela-na-gigs (who are

often in the squatting position, showing the painful and deadly aspects of birthing a child). Sonne de Torrens begins by illustrating how the church fathers used parts of the female body to describe the church, which eventually led to the baptismal font being viewed as symbolic of the regenerative nature of baptism. From the early traditions, the *vulva matris* (womb of Mary) and *uterus ecclesiae* (womb of the Church) become the most important metaphors in the theology of baptism. The *Annunciation to the Virgin* appears on many fonts, and Pope Leo I said that “the water of baptism is like the Virgin’s womb; for the same spirit fills the font, Who filled the Virgin...” (Leo, *On the Feast of the Nativity*, trans. Knight from [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org)). Several fonts are referenced from a fairly diverse geographical range that depict nude women in sexually provocative positions. In one Lenten program, there is a masturbating tonsured monk along with a naked woman. Both are being tortured by demons: the monk is being bitten on the tender sole of his foot, and a large demonic head hovers above the woman. Prostitutes are also represented on baptismal fonts, which reflects current social concerns. Sheela-na-gigs, which are images of women who are usually naked, ugly, legs splayed, and with vulvae exposed are quite common during this time period. Sometimes they include serpents biting the breasts, which could represent pain and threat of harm during childbirth. The death/rebirth aspect of baptism is vividly captured in this motif.

As a whole, this book is well organized and the contributors maintain a remarkable unity in focus while being interdisciplinary and covering disparate material. All of the essays are useful, enlightening, and relevant. Bibliographies appear at the end of each essay. There is no shortage of illustrations in this volume, but the placement is inconsistent and sometimes confusing. Some illustrations appear in reverse chronological order, as in Christine E. Joynes’s essay. Harriet M. Sonne de Torrens’s essay is suddenly interrupted by a series of illustrations *in the middle of a sentence*, causing the reader to flip through ten pages of pictures before finding the end of the sentence. This must have been a mistake.

The only weakness of this volume in general is that some contributors leave the reader wanting more, particularly when it comes to citations of classical Greek and Latin sources and the Church Fathers. John A. Darr could have provided many more examples of how Greek and Roman writers defended themselves against character attacks on women close to them. Louise J. Lawrence only reviews Calvin and Luther’s interpretation of the Canaanite woman, leaving the reader wondering why all the other Reformers, counter-Reformers, and humanists of the sixteenth century were excluded. When Charlotte Methuen reviews the history of Junia/Junias in the church fathers, she cites only secondary literature (Fitzmyer for the Greek fathers and Belleville for the Latin fathers) rather than giving citations to the original material (p. 283).

Several contributions must be singled out for special praise. Peter Loewen applies the most complicated methods and covers a wide variety of materials. He even includes musical notation for those of us who care to sing along. Ela Nutu probes surprisingly deep into the life of Caravaggio. Louise J. Lawrence’s critique of feminist, disability, postcolonial readings is exceptionally insightful and hopefully will spark further methodological reflection. Harriet M. Sonne de Torrens handles what may be a sensitive topic with special care.