commentary that honours the theological and cultural world of the text from a Christian perspective.

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MELANCHTHON, MONICA JYOTSNA and ROBYN J. WHITAKER eds. *Terror in the Bible: Rhetoric, Gender, and Violence.* IVBS 14. Atlanta: SBL, 2021. Pp. xiv + 246. Paperback. US$35.00.

Readers familiar with the groundbreaking work of Phyllis Trible will undoubtedly approach this book with an inkling of its interpretive loci. Resonating with both the title and the methodology of Trible's iconic volume *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) this edited volume brings together twelve essays at the nexus of feminist theory, interdisciplinary perspectives, intersectional awareness and the realities of gender-based violence in the Australian context and beyond. With a forward from Trible, the essays are varied in methodological and hermeneutical strategies, held together by their ideological underpinnings and the critical engagement with text and contemporary context.

While the origin of many of the essays was a conference around feminist readings that critically engage with *Texts of Terror*, the introductory essay by Monica Melanchthon and Robyn Whitaker, locates the volume against the backdrop the COVID-19 pandemic. Noting that the pandemic of violence against women and children has a long history, they bring to the fore the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and on minoritised and diverse communities, including the increased violence against women and girls that resulted from the intersectional impacts of systemic and structural inequalities. The Bible has been implicated in the marginalisation of different groups of people; women, LGBTQI+ folk, indigenous communities impacted by colonisation, people of colour, those with disabilities, oftentimes used to sanctify violence and support the ideologies underlying the many "*-isms*" that shape the world.

Although the essays in the volume are not about Trible, they are shaped by the critical feminist reading of Trible, and by her notion of *in memoriam* (in memory of), readings of difficult texts through which the "abused, victimized, violated, dehumanized, nameless, and murdered characters," are remembered "in continuum with similar victims today" (p. 4). The essays engage with texts from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and include the voices of Australian European interpreters, alongside scholars from South Africa, Tonga, India, the United States of America and Aotearoa.

The editors note the absence of Aboriginal Australian scholars in the collection, acknowledging the ongoing dispossession and vulnerability of Australia's Aboriginal communities.

Laura Griffith opens the collection with a reading which draws parallels between the treatment of the Midianite women of Numbers 25 and 31 and the (ongoing) treatment of Aboriginal women in the colonisation of Australia. Combining the approach of Trible with Musa Dube's notion of "contact zones," Griffith explores the conflicting engagement between Midianite women/Israelite men and Indigenous women/colonisers which centred around both the threat and the opportunity posed by the reproductive bodies of the "other." Systems of control, prohibition and sexual violence feature in both contexts.

Karen Eller, who also engages with Numbers 25, queers the narrative to suggest that there is sufficient ambiguity within the text for LGBTQI+ to find some affirmation. Eller probes parallels between the treatment of the Midianites, the colonial invasion of Australia, the treatment of LGBTQI+ people, and the intersection of sexualised violence, political power and oppression, including the portrayal of God as condoning the violence.

In a careful reading of 2 Sam 13, Rachelle Gilmour challenges and extends Trible's reading of the figure of Absalom in the narrative of the rape of Tamar. Rather than reading Absalom as Tamar's protector as Trible does, Gilmour argues that Absalom silences Tamar in defence of his own honour. In her exploration of male ambition amid the familial relationships of the house of David, Gilmour demonstrates that there is even more irredeemable terror in 2 Smauel 13 than is argued by Trible, and that Tamar is the victim of the outworking of the punishment against Davd.

Dorothy Lee explores the story of Jesus's encounter with the Syrophoenician woman as told in Mark 7:24–30/31. Lee asks whether the passage can be read as a text of terror, exploring issues of ritual purity, inclusion, social status, gender, and race, alongside a discussion of the genre of the text. Lee offers four readings through missional, pedagogical, paradigmatic, and Christological frames, concluding that the narrative cannot be read as a text of terror, but is rather a narrative of liberating faith and hope.

In her discussion of the marriage metaphor in Deutero-Isaiah, Angela Sawyer brings into conversation concepts of trauma and discourse around domestic violence in Australia. Sawyer explores the ambiguities of the marriage metaphor in Deutero-Isaiah, arguing that it contains diverse representations of Zion which destabilise dominant understandings of the metaphor. Daughter Zion (the wife in the metaphor) represents resistance and resilience, challenging the dominant understanding of the voice of YHWH (as male) takes precedence.

In her contribution to the volume, Whitaker reads Revelation 2:18–29 as a text of terror. Identifying the figure of Jezebel as a female prophetic leader whose teachings ran counter to those of John, Whitaker demonstrates that John's female opponent is threatened with rape and sexualised violence where his male

opponents are not. By referring to the woman as Jezebel, a foreigner who both abuses power and dies a violent death at the hands of men, John positions his opponent as a stereotype whose particularity is hidden. In a strategy that echoes some contemporary treatment of powerful women, John characterises his opponent as a wonton as a means of dismissing her leadership, threatening her with sexualised violence.

Adela Yarbro Collins' essay also considers women in leadership in the early Christian church, delineating the varied roles and functions of women as portrayed especially in the writings of Paul. This includes the role of apostle. Collins suggests that opposing women's leadership today goes against both scripture and tradition.

After outlining Trible's reading strategy in her analysis of Judges 19, David Tombs applies the approach to argue that sexual violence, including rape, can be identified in the treatment of Jesus as portrayed in the crucifixion narratives. Through a close reading of the text, attention to silences, and considering ancient and contemporary narratives of torture, Tombs argues the reports of stripping and exposure in the Matthean crucifixion narrative indicate the likelihood of sexual abuse.

Brent Pelton also engages with Judges 19 in an essay which draws the two women of Proverbs 1–9 and the plight of underpaid seasonal workers in Australia into dialogue. Pelton suggests parallels between the concubine who is exposed to violence, stripped of agency and dignity with the plight of migrant workers who are disempowered by exploitative employees.

Drawing on various womanist/feminist South African scholars, and taking his cue from Philip Davies's volume of imaginative letters to various biblical characters, Gerlad West interrogates David's advisor Ahithopel. In the letters, from women raped in/by the Davidic household, West notes that although political and economic justice is pursued, gender justice is not. Locating David's advisor as one of the people of the land (the *ʿam haʾarets*), West demonstrates Ahithopel's blindness to the fate of the women even where the excesses of the Davidic monarchy are resisted.

Threads from earlier essays re-emerge in the creative and evocative essay by Jione Havea. Reflecting on the five sisters of Numbers 27 and 36, Havea flips Trible's texts of terror to explore the terror of texts—what happens when texts "create and change realities, uphold and hide memories, weave and unravel interests, and nurture and violate dreamings, as well as soothe and terrorize the living and the dead" (202). Havea's reading is constructed through four letters penned to "a dead niece, a dead sister-in-law, a living four-year-old daughter, and an elder from the Kulin nations" (13), bringing themes of story-telling, stories, and land rights together with an exploration of what happened to the five sisters in Numbers.

The final essay is from Melancthon, who brings together the autobiography of Dalit author Sharankumar Limbale and the story Jephthah. Challenging

dominant scholarship, Melanchthon reads with Jephthah, highlighting the discrimination, deprivation, exploitation and marginalisation Jephthah experienced, and that parallels are evident the experiences of the Dalit. She draws out similarities between Limbale, Jephthah and Jephthah's daughter to explore the impact of victimisation and oppression on the psyche of those who experience it.

The final word of the volume is from Havea, the general editor of the IVBS. As he highlights, this collection of essays continues and extends the groundbreaking work of Trible and the identification of texts of terror within the covers of the Bible. The essays engage in varied and insightful conversations with and about gender-based and sexual violence in the Bible and in contemporary contexts. While the context for many of the essays is the Australian context at a particular point in time, the themes and issues have wider and enduring significance. The volume is a valuable offering to both the academy and to the Church in its engagement with the intersectional impacts of violence.

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