

**Matthew's Decolonial Desire (Matt. 12:42; 27:19):  
A Postcolonial Feminist Reading of the Two Royal Women\***

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**Abstract**

With a postcolonial postulation that Matthew might be a border-work written in a (de)colonizing context, this essay argues that Matthew employs the Queen of the South and Pilate's wife, the female colonizer, as a decolonizing strategy to cope with the identity crisis that his community was undergoing in transitioning from deviant Jews to true heirs of Israel in the context of the Roman empire. In the border-land of the colonial contact zone, Matthew, as a border-writer, constructs the subjectivities of Jesus in a hybrid space, and tries to subvert Roman as well as Jewish authority through his re-conceptualization and mimicry of either side of his opposition. Since the presence of these two powerful women disrupts the established male power through their disapproval of male governance, Matthew utilizes them not only in order to affirm Jesus' authority but also as a sign of Roman decline.

**Keywords**

The Queen of the South, Pilate's wife, empire, decolonialism, postcolonial feminism, border-work,

## Introduction

Matthew twice mentions foreign but powerful women: in Matt. 12:42, where the Queen of Sheba is referred to as the Queen of the South (cf. 1 Kings 10; 2 Chronicles 9; Luke 11:31); and in Matt. 27:19, where Pilate's wife interrupts Pilate's trial of Jesus with the report of her nightmare about Jesus. Even though these two Gentile women have not received much scholarly attention, they are generally regarded as prototypes of Gentile submission to Christ. In his Gospel, Matthew often shows his pro-Gentile attitude, which stands in stark contrast to his harsh judgments of the Jews. Do these pro-Gentile texts mean that Matthew tried to define his community as "radically different from all other 'Jews' within formative Judaism" to the extent that it is impossible not to read Matthew as an anti-Jewish Gospel?<sup>1</sup> Then what are we to make of Matthew's anti-Gentile statements (Matt. 5:46-47; 6:5-8, 31-32; 10:5-6; 15:24)? Matthew surely does not always depict the Gentiles favorably. Why then these two faces of Matthew? The polemical nature of Matthew's Gospel seems beyond doubt. Yet most recent Matthean scholarship has focused on the Christian-Jewish conflict, concluding that Matthew's anti-Jewish attitude is counterbalanced by his favorable attitudes towards the Gentiles. Regarding Matthew's ambiguity, David C. Sim insists that the common understanding of Matthew in relation to the Gentiles should be re-examined, since it is based upon a very selective reading which overlooks Matthew's anti-Gentile statements. Sim goes on to say that Matthew and his community were not necessarily Jewish or Gentile, but that this ambiguity could rather be explained by a socio-political context in which the effect of the Jewish War on Matthew's community was critical to the extent that Matthew's community was being persecuted by the Gentiles. Since Matthew's community was composed mainly of Jews with a few Gentile converts, Sim suggests that Matthew's anti-Gentile sentiments are not directed at these Gentile converts but at those who remained in the foreign realm of the Gentiles, just as his anti-Jewish statements are aimed at those who reside in the world of formative Judaism.<sup>2</sup> Although Sim has been criticized

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<sup>1</sup> Fred W. Burnett, "Exposing the Anti-Jewish Ideology of Matthew's Implied Author: The Characterization of God As Father," *Semeia* 59 (1992), pp. 155-91.

<sup>2</sup> David C. Sim, "The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles," *JSNT* 57 (1995), p. 44.

because of his radical view that Matthew is not concerned with Gentile mission, he opens the possible understanding that Matthew does not have a single, uniform, category called “Gentile” into which he places all non-Jews, but rather, that the boundaries of Matthew’s community are more fluid and open.<sup>3</sup> Recent scholarly debate about Matthew and the Jews or Matthew and the Gentiles has been framed inadequately. By intensively focusing on Matthew’s Jewish context or his Gentile mission from a religio-ethnic perspective which is familiar to our contemporary western scholarship, recent scholarship has overlooked the socio-political framing of Matthew’s engagement of the Roman imperial world.<sup>4</sup> In light of the socio-political atmosphere, our present understanding of Matthew must be approached somewhat differently.

Richard T. Martin calls us to pay attention “to the specific role that the function of writing itself plays in the political fashioning of a dissecting group carving out its niche in society against the authoritative discourse from which it perceives itself as distinct but legitimate,” since Matthew’s attitude toward Jews and Gentiles might be due to Matthew’s attempts to legitimize his community, not necessarily in response to Jewish hostility toward his community.<sup>5</sup> In this essay, therefore, I would like to go a step further by approaching Matthew from a postcolonial perspective, since the use of postcolonial concepts can help us to reassess our frames in a way that redirects our tendency towards a

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<sup>3</sup> Anthony J. Saldarini suggests that Matthew’s hostile attitude towards the Jews should be limited to his rivalry relationship with the Jewish leaders who not only reject Jesus but also mislead the people away from Jesus, since he sought to delegitimize rival Jewish leaders and legitimize his community as the successors of the real Israel. See Anthony J. Saldarini, “Boundaries and Polemics in the Gospel of Matthew,” *BI* 3 (1995), pp. 239-65; idem, “Delegitimation of Leaders in Matthew 23,” *CBQ* 54 (1992), pp. 659-80. Through his social-scientific analysis of Matthew, Dennis C. Duling states that Matthew’s community, as “leaderless group,” shows signs of factional conflict and an emergent leadership. For more details, see Dennis C. Duling, “Egalitarian’ Ideology, Leadership, and Factional Conflict within the Matthean group,” *BTB* 27 (1997), pp. 124-37. See also, idem, “Matthew 18:15-17: Conflict, Confrontation, and Conflict Resolution in a ‘Fictive Kin’ Association,” *BTB* 29 (1999), pp. 4-22; idem, “Matthew and Marginality,” *SBL Seminar Papers, 1993* (SBLSP 32; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 642-71. See also J. Julius Scott, JR., “Gentiles and the Minsitry of Jesus: Further Observations on Matt 10:5-6; 15:21-28,” *JETS* 33 (1990), pp. 161-69.

<sup>4</sup> Warren Carter also accepts that Matthean scholarship has ignored how Roman imperial power made an impact on Matthew’s readers. See Warren Carter, “Contested Claims: Roman Imperial Theology and Matthew’s Gospel,” *BTB* 29 (1999), pp. 56-67; idem, ‘Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and/or Systemic Transformation?’ *JSNT* 26 (2004), pp. 259-82. See also, Robert L. Mowery, “Son of God in Roman Imperial Titles and Matthew,” *Biblica* 83 (2002), pp. 100-10.

<sup>5</sup> His thesis is based on lack of historical evidence that shows that formative Judaism persecuted Christians. Richard T. Martin, “Ideology, Deviance, and Authority in the Gospel of Matthew: The Political Functioning of Performative Writing,” *Literature & Theology* 10 (1996), p. 21. See also, Rene Girard, “Is There Anti-Semitism in the Gospels?” *BI* 1 (1993), p. 367.

religio-ethnic reading. Furthermore, since I am convinced that the Roman imperial context in which Matthew and his community lived can be understood as analogous to what is currently described as a postcolonial situation, I will argue that Matthew employs the two royal women as a survival strategy to cope with the identity crisis that his community was facing in the context of the Roman Empire. As a border-writer living in the borderland of the colonial contact zone, Matthew constructs the subjectivity of his community in a hybrid space, and tries to subvert Roman as well as Jewish authority through his re-conceptualization and mimicry of either side of his opposition: two powerful females are embedded in narratives about the public struggle for power between Jesus and the Pharisees (a rival faction within Judaism), and between Jesus and Pilate.<sup>6</sup> In the following sections, I will first suggest that Matthew was a border-writer struggling to awaken his readers to a liberatory potential by shifting their previous perspectives. Second, I will show that Matthew employs the Queen of the South in order to present Jesus as the legitimate leader of Israel who is superior to Solomon, the great king of the Jews, as an argument against the Pharisees who were rising as the leaders of Israel. Third, I will show that Matthew envisions the end of Roman imperial domination through his decolonial desire which appropriates colonial power, and that he conducts this appropriation through the characterization of Pilate's wife, who interrupts her husband's trial by announcing Jesus' righteousness. I will conclude by saying that even though Matthew's writing, as a border-writing, has a liberatory potential, it is also problematic,

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<sup>6</sup> This essay does not intend to bring a definite answer to Matthew's relationship with both the Jews and the Gentiles. Since there is a dialectical and ideological interaction between text and writer's (also reader's) social context, this essay will focus on socio-political aspect of Matthew by postulating that Matthew utilizes his writing as the tool for wresting power from the constructed "Other." Matthew is engaged in a serious controversy with the Pharisees, the dominant leadership group in his Jewish community and the leadership is strongly influenced by a rival reform movement which was on its way to becoming rabbinic Judaism. The Pharisees were so popular among the ordinary Jewish people that they could get support from the Jews whatever came to matters of public opinion: their *halakhic* decisions were accepted by most people within Israel so Hyrcanus earned the hatred of the multitude by abolishing the *halakhah* that the Pharisees had established for them. The Pharisees thus gradually became the authoritative leader of Israel as legitimate interpreters of the Torah, and they dominated Judaism during this period (Jos. *Ant.* 13.298, 400-401; 18.15, 17). In this essay, I use the term "the Pharisees" as representative leaders of Jewish society which has a conflict with Matthew's community. See Saldarini, "Delegitimation of Leaders in Matthew 23," p.665-68; Martin, "Ideology, Deviance, and Authority in the Gospel of Matthew," p. 22; Noel S. Rabbinowitz, "Matthew 23:2-4: Does Jesus Recognize the Authority of the Pharisees and Does He Endorse Their *Halakah*," *JETS* 46 (2003), pp. 423-47.

since it is accomplished at the expense of female sexuality, which is regarded only from the male's perspective.

### **Matthew as a Border-Writer living “In-between”**

Through his analysis of “marginality theory,” Dennis C. Duling suggests three kinds of concepts of marginality – the “marginal man, involuntary marginality, voluntary marginality” – as a background for an understanding of Matthew's marginality.<sup>7</sup> After identifying Matthew as a scribe who tries to bring a new interpretation of the Torah to bear against his opponents, Duling concludes that Matthew is better described as a “marginal man” who wrote his gospel to give hope to his readers – “involuntary marginals” – in the real world.<sup>8</sup> Even though Duling's analysis is mainly conducted from a religio-ethnic perspective and does not focus on political aspects, he rightly points out that Matthew, whether he was a Jewish Christian or a Christian Jew,<sup>9</sup> stood between two cultures. Yet it might be better to go a step further by positing Matthew as an “in-between” border writer, rather than simply regarding him as a “marginal man.” A boundary is not necessarily a place where something stops but rather a place where something begins its presence by forming a “Third Space,” an “in-between” where new signs of identity are initiated through innovative collaboration as well as contestation.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, marginality should be differentiated from borderhood because the former rests upon a binary opposition between center and periphery, whereas the latter forms an “in-between” space that blurs binarisms.<sup>11</sup> For a better understanding of the idea of

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<sup>7</sup> Duling, “Matthew and Marginality,” p. 648. For the resources that Duling depends on see Robert E. Park, “Human Migration and the Marginal Man,” *American Journal of Sociology* 33 (1928), pp. 881-93; idem, “Personality and Cultural Conflict,” *Publication of the American Sociological Society* 25 (1931), pp. 95-110; E. V. Stonequist, *The Marginal Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937); Gino Germani, *Marginality* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1969); idem, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> Duling, “Matthew and Marginality,” pp. 662-63.

<sup>9</sup> Elian Cuvillier insists that it is anachronistic to call Matthew a Christian since what he teaches is a radical form of Jewish Messianism which was later called a Christology. Elian Cuvillier, “Torah Observance and Radicalization in the First Gospel. Matthew and First-Century Judaism: A Contribution to the Debate,” *NTS* (2009), p. 159.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (trans. Michael Heim; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 208; Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> Ambreen Hai, “Border Work, Border Trouble: Postcolonial Feminism and the Ayah in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 46 (2000), p. 382.

border, we need to examine the theoretical works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who have made a significant contribution to border studies. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, they define “the three characteristics of a minor literature as 1) the deterritorialization of language; 2) the connection of the individual to political immediacy; and 3) the collective assemblage of enunciation.”<sup>12</sup> Since Deleuze and Guattari consider Kafka, the Czech Jewish writer who wrote in German, to be a border writer, Emily Hicks expands their concepts of minor literature into her border wiring theory. When one leaves one’s place of origin, deterritorialization begins, and the place of origin becomes a mental representation in memory by which the process of reterritorialization can begin. Hicks defines borders as cultural, not just as physical borders; border writers are those who not only destabilize the distinction between original and alien culture but also enable their reader to see not just from one side of the border, but from the other side as well, and border writings are those which depict a kind of realism that approaches the experience of in-betweeners living in a bicultural or biconceptual reality.<sup>13</sup> Borderland is marked by contradictions such as the pain and strength of living in the borderlands. Border writings, which are connected with these contradicting experiences, reflect the aspect of the deterritorialization and ex-centrism processes. Since to be an in-betweener means to wholly belong neither on one side nor the other, in order to survive borderland, one needs to question and then to push both oppositions beyond their limits.<sup>14</sup> Writing from the border, therefore, means becoming empowered, and a border work can have the political effect of ultimately undermining the distinction between old and new by speaking in many voices to its readers. Arising from the heterogeneity of multiple socio-political as well as religio-cultural effects, a border work can be conceived as a mode of operation whose function is to promote a healing among its readers dwelling in borderhood rather than providing a fixed definition.<sup>15</sup> Just as there is no unitary border or one official border, there is no singular vision of border

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<sup>12</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (trans. by Dona Polan; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). Quoted in Charles Tatum, “On the Border,” *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 4 (2000), p. 94.

<sup>13</sup> Emily Hicks, *Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. xxxi.

<sup>14</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), pp. 195, 208.

<sup>15</sup> Hicks, *Border Writing*, pp. xxiii-xxxi.

theory.<sup>16</sup> Yet it cannot be denied that border theories and border practice have marked a new stage in the debates over cultural studies, a stage which considers border as power.

Indeed, it is not difficult to observe all of these characteristics of a border work in Matthew's Gospel. Matthean scholarship has made an effort to prove that Matthew tried to supersede Jewish law with his new teaching, which eventually brought about the hostile conflict between the Jews and his group.<sup>17</sup> Matthew, however, does not seem to aspire to change the law; rather, he interprets it as he claims it was interpreted by Jesus.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, he supports the law very aggressively by frequently using the "fulfillment" citation.<sup>19</sup> This form of interpretation is politically aggressive and can also be polemic in nature, which might have precipitated the conflict with the Jewish religious leaders, especially with the Pharisees (5:31-37; 12:1-14; 15:1-20; 19:3-9; 23:16-24).<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Matthew is not completely comfortable with Gentile custom (5:46-47; 6:7-8, 31-32; 18:15-17; 20:25) even though he might have been aware of the necessity of embracing more Gentiles into his community (2:1-12; 8:5-34; 15:21-28; 21:28-22:14). Sim argues that Matthew discourages his community from having contact with the Gentiles and that Matthew regards the world of the Gentiles as a foreign place to be avoided.<sup>21</sup> Considering, however, Matthew's socio-political situation, where Jews in the Roman Empire might have formed a complex web of relationships with Gentiles for their survival,<sup>22</sup> it is hard to accept Sim's view that Matthew is totally unconcerned with the

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of border theory see Scott Michaelsen and David E. Johnson eds., *Border Theory. The Limit of Cultural Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); John C. Welchman ed., *Rethinking Borders* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. J. R. C. Cousland, "The Feeding of the Four Thousand Gentiles in Matthew?: Matthew 15:29-39 as a Test Case," *NovT* 16 (1999), pp. 1-23.

<sup>18</sup> Cuvillier, "Torah Observance and Radicalization in the First Gospel," pp. 149, 154-58.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9.

<sup>20</sup> The fact that Jesus participated in the life of the synagogue might mean that he had a positive relationship to traditional *halakhah* (Matt 4:23; 13:54). Jesus instructs his listeners to do what the Pharisees say. Yet the fact that Jesus instructs his listeners not to do what the Pharisees do (Matt. 23:3) might mean that Jesus illegitimizes the authority of the Pharisees as the Jewish leaders. Rabinowitz, "Does Jesus Recognized the Authority of the Pharisees?" pp. 435-38; Saldarini, "Boundaries and Polemics in the Gospel of Matthew," p. 251; Martin, "Matthew's Ideology," p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Sim, "The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentile," pp. 19-48.

<sup>22</sup> Saldarini, "Boundaries and Polemics in the Gospel of Matthew," p. 248. Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Tessa Rajak, "The Jewish Community and Its Boundaries," in Judith Lieu et al. (eds.), *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 9-28; Donald Senior, "Between Two Worlds: Gentile and Jewish Christians in Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 61 (1999), pp. 1-23.

Gentiles because of Gentile persecution of the Jews in the aftermath of the Jewish War.<sup>23</sup> It might be fair to say that Matthew does not have a favorable attitude towards either the Jews or the Gentiles, as his teaching about prayer shows. It is interesting to notice how Matthew arranges his material concerning prayer (6:5-14). Only after he not only criticizes hypocritical Jewish prayer (6:5-6) but also expresses his bias against the Gentiles (6:7) does he provide his readers with Jesus' Lord's Prayer (6:9-13). The fact that Matthew alternates anti-Jewish and anti-Gentile statements suggests that his Gospel might be a border work undertaken by a border-writer who both belongs and unbelongs, who can shift crucial perspectives, and whose work might have liberating potential, because it can undo binaristic categories of opposition by offering useful critique and reconceptualization of either side of opposition.<sup>24</sup> For Matthew, both crossing and inhabiting borders is indeed a form of transgression, resistance, and subject-formation. Matthew's voluntary act of breaking away from the Jewish tradition perceived as central to the Pharisaic Jews can be understood as his ex-centricity of speaking from the margin, the place other than a center, and his narrative, as border writing, seeks to insecure his readers' position as subject position in his society. The sense of margin as well as of double-belonging is embedded in his narrative. Matthew might thus be described as just such a border writer who can be further explained in Trinh Minh-ha's words, "Inappropriate Other/Self":

The moment the insider steps out from the insider, *he* is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). *He* necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside .... *he* also resorts to non-explicative, non-totalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure. ... Whether *he* turns the inside out or the outside in *he* is like the two sides of a coin, the same impure, both-in-one insider/outsider.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sim, "The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles," pp. 28-30; Carter, "Matthew and the Gentiles," p. 260; cf. Douglas R. A. Hare, "How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?" *CBQ* 62 (2000), pp. 264-77.

<sup>24</sup> Hai, "Border Work, Border Trouble," p. 381.

<sup>25</sup> Trinh Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 74-75.



The conceptualization of border crossing, however, can also be problematic in that it is performed in a (de)colonial context from only a male-oriented perspective. Matthew's subversive decolonial desire is not the same for men and for women. As a border writer, Matthew is fettered by his own inability to cross the boundaries of class and ethnicity in relation to gender. In the following two sections, I will show that the two powerful foreign women, the Queen of the South and Pilate's wife, are presented only in order to contribute to portraying Jesus as the real leader of Matthew's community.

**“I was a Wall, and My Breasts were like Towers”<sup>26</sup>**

Matthew introduces the Queen of the South very briefly, but at a critical moment when the public struggle for power between Jesus and the Pharisees has become heated. It is well known that Matthew was a trained scribe, and well-versed in Scripture.<sup>27</sup> Since communication between author and reader can happen when they share certain cultural conventions, Matthew might have tried to show his community the formal continuity between his Gospel and Israel's history through his intentional biblical allusions whose discovery is enabled by the biblical characters of the text.<sup>28</sup> In order to understand the role of the Queen in the Gospel, we, therefore, should look at both Matthew's intertexts (where the Queen of the South is known as the Queen of Sheba) and at the literary context of Matt. 12:42 from a socio-political perspective.

The Queen of Sheba appears in 1 Kgs. 10:1-13 and 2 Chron. 9:1-12, where she comes to Solomon in order to test his wisdom; she confirms that he is even wiser than she had heard, and eventually praises YHWH. In the Hebrew Bible, foreign women are often portrayed as unfavorable strangers who can be threats to the Israelite community by leading the Israelites astray or seducing them to turn away from YHWH to their pagan gods (1 Kgs. 16:31-19:3; 1 Kgs. 21; 2 Kgs. 9:4-37). The danger that these foreign women cause to the integrity of the people of Israel has been established in the Deuteronomic history in the beginning of Solomon's time, and some are convinced that the offended and jealous YHWH tears away Solomon's kingdom from his successor (1

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<sup>26</sup> Song of Songs 8:10

<sup>27</sup> Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestine Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988); David E. Orton, *The Understanding of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 87-121; Duling, “Matthew and Marginality,” p. 662.

<sup>28</sup> Ulich Luz, “Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew,” *HTR* 97 (2004), p. 134.

Kgs. 11:31) because Solomon's foreign wives "turn away his heart" from YHWH to their foreign gods (1 Kgs. 11:3-8).<sup>29</sup> Yet, the Deuteronomic historical view on Solomon's intermarriage is not consistent, but rather it shows an ambivalence which might be the product of a long and complex evolution.<sup>30</sup> According to Shaye J. D. Cohen, Solomon's intermarriages to foreign royal women were not condemned from the early stage but rather were hailed as great achievements of Solomon's reign.<sup>31</sup> Claudia V. Camp also argues that "Israel emerged from [its Canaanite background] ... and as a mixture," so whether the issue of intermarriage is problematic or not was a question of a later day and depended on who controlled social policy at any particular time.<sup>32</sup>

Then, was the Queen of Sheba really dangerous to Israel to the extent to which later traditions have demonized her?<sup>33</sup> Although introduced as a sexually independent woman, she resembles the female protagonist of the Song (8:10): "She was wall, .... . she requires neither reinforcement to protect her from suitors nor ornamentation to attract one. She possesses her own enhancement, an erotic one, her breasts. .... . The woman is (like) a wall, her breasts are (like) towers, and she is like one who brings, or finds,

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<sup>29</sup> Wayne A. Brindle, "The Causes of the Division of Israel's Kingdom," *Bibliotheca sacra* 141(1984), pp. 223-33; The role of the exotic Queen as a seducing woman has been also unexceptionally accepted in various legends among Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Ethiopian, and Afro-American traditions despite the fact that the historicity of the encounter between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba is not ensured. Alice Ogden Bellis, "The Queen of Sheba: A Gender-Sensitive Reading," *Journal of Religious Thought* 51 (1994-95), pp. 17-28; James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Solomon and Sheba* (London: Phaedon Press, 1974).

<sup>30</sup> Shaye J. D. Cohen states that the tradition about the foreign wives has gradually evolved through five stages: (1) Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter and the building of her palaces are reckoned among the glorious achievement of Solomon's reign (1 Kgs. 3:1; 7:8; 9:16, 24); (2) Solomon's opulent reign is further described through his marriage to "seven hundred royal wives and three hundred concubines" (1 Kgs. 11:3a); (3) Solomon's polygamy is condemned because it turned him away from YHWH (1 Kgs. 11:3b; Deut. 17:17); (4) Solomon's intermarriage is condemned because it turned him from YHWH (1 Kgs. 11:1-2); and (5) Pharaoh's daughter is added to the foreign wives who lead Solomon astray (1 Kgs. 11.1). Even though these five stages may not be historically accurate, Cohen affirms that they accurately reflect the varied and contradictory elements even within the narrative of 1 Kgs. 11:1-10. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Solomon and the Daughter of Pharaoh: Intermarriage, Conversion, and the Impurity of Women," *Janes* 16-17 (1984-85), pp. 23-39.

<sup>31</sup> The assessment began to change gradually: the rebellion of the northern tribes was interpreted as punishment for Solomon's idolatry; sin was attributed to the baneful influence of his foreign wives; and Solomon's intermarriage eventually became the cause of his downfall. Cohen, "Solomon and the Daughter of Pharaoh," p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> Claudia V. Camp, *Wise, Strange, and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* (JSOTSup 320; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 13-35(22).

<sup>33</sup> Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

peace [as her answer to the military allusion].”<sup>34</sup> In that regard, the subtext of this story might allude to the erotic image of the strange woman.<sup>35</sup> On the surface of the story, however, the dangerous image of the foreign woman is not explored, but rather, the Queen of Sheba is introduced as a foreign ruler who visits Solomon not only to hear his wisdom but also to test it. In that sense, she is both like and unlike the typical foreign women. However, the fact that she is contrasted with Solomon’s other foreign women who are accused of leading him astray from the Israelite God (1 Kgs. 11:1-2) as well as the fact that the author of Chronicles does not condemn Solomon’s intermarriage nor even mention the other foreign wives (2 Chr. 8:11) suggests that she might not have been used to enforce the danger of the strange woman.<sup>36</sup>

The transition from the reign of David to that of Solomon was not smooth or peaceful but rather showed an ugly side of kinship. After ascending the throne of David with the aid of his mother’s intrigues, Solomon eliminates his chief rivals, including the heir, Adonijah, in order to secure his position (1 Kings 1-2; also 2 Samuel 11-20).<sup>37</sup> Once he takes over his kingship, Solomon’s reign starts with bloodshed. Bathsheba, who was once a sexual object of David, secures her son’s throne, but now as an asexual embodiment of wisdom (1 Kings 1-2; cf. 2 Sam. 23:34),<sup>38</sup> and Solomon’s wisdom is successfully tested (1 Kgs. 3:16-28). Then the narrative begins to elaborate what Solomon has achieved: he strengthens his reign by making an alliance with other groups through intermarriages as well as by building the temple, palaces, fortress cities, and so

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<sup>34</sup> J. Cheryl Exum, “The Little Sister and Solomon’s Vineyard: Song of Songs 8:8-12 as a Lover’s Dialogue,” in Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebel and Dennis R. Magary (eds.), *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients* (Wiona Lake: Eisenbraun, 2005), p. 271.

<sup>35</sup> Gail Corrington Streete, *The Stranger Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), pp. 104-5; Camp, *Wise, Strange, and Holy*, pp. 173-80.

<sup>36</sup> 2 Chr. 8:11 does not condemn Solomon’s foreign wife nor mention the wives and their altars; also Deut. 23 does not mention that Solomon worshiped foreign gods of allowed his wives to so. Cohen, “Solomon and the Daughter of Pharaoh,” p. 27; Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, “‘She Came to Test Him with Hard Question’: Foreign Women and Their View on Israel,” *BI* 15 (2007), p. 138.

<sup>37</sup> It is well accepted that there is a literary connection between 1 Kings 1-2 and David’s reign in 2 Samuel.

<sup>38</sup> Bathsheba is a Gentile woman, but she is the daughter of Eliam who is the son of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 23:34; Josh. 15:51), the advisor whose counsel is likened to “the word of God” (2 Sam 15:12; 16:23). These intertexts lead us to the conclusion that Bathsheba is wisdom’s own granddaughter. Carole R. Fontain, “The Bearing Wisdom on the Shape of 2 Samuel 11-12 and 1 Kings 3,” *JSOT* 34 (1986), p. 63; Mark R. J. Bredin, “Gentiles and the Davidic Tradition in Matthew,” in Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 96-97.

on (1 Kings 5-9; 10:26-28; 11:1-4; cf. Deut. 17:16-7).<sup>39</sup> Although Solomon admits that YHWH made him king (1 Kgs. 3:7), there is an implication that Solomon blesses himself for establishing David's throne (1 Kgs. 2:45), and Sheba resolves this tension by praising YHWH for making Solomon king (1 Kgs. 10:9). Her image as a mighty monarch with military power and wealth proves that Sheba is an eligible person who can apply a standard of judgment and judge the wisdom of another king with her own authoritative voice.<sup>40</sup> The story of the Queen of Sheba seems to serve as the concluding part of a celebration of Solomon's wisdom: after Solomon's prayer for wisdom, this wisdom is actualized at his judgment of two foreign prostitutes; the major issue of this story (1 Kgs. 3:16-28) continues in the story of Sheba through the catch words – "to do justice" and "wisdom"; in so doing, Sheba serves not only to re-embodiment the wisdom that has been absent since 1 Kings 3 but also to confirm that Solomon is among the greatest of kings. From this intertextual point of view, we might assume that Solomon's wisdom is used to counterbalance the violence that he commits to secure his reign and that the Queen of Sheba serves as a "traffic in women" whose function is to justify Solomon's kingship.<sup>41</sup>

Foreign female sexuality is generally deployed by the biblical narrator, especially when it can make an impact on the struggles between men for power and honor.<sup>42</sup> Yet, in 1 Kings 10, the sexuality of the Queen of Sheba remains covert but rather her status as a powerful woman is better combined with an Israelite point of view supporting Israelite interests. The Israelites' employment of foreign women is not monolithic, but varies according to Israelites' interests, for, as Camp states, "the strange woman figure is too multidimensional to be univocally linked to one historical moment," and "the rhetoric of foreignness was used by Israelite against other Israelite."<sup>43</sup> And this tendency continues

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<sup>39</sup> Solomon needs more and more revenue in order to maintain his huge kingdom and the luxury of his own court (1 Kgs. 10:21, 27; cf. 17:17), which might have created resentment among the ten northern tribes (1 Kgs. 11:21-27) that divides the kingdom after his death. Streete, *The Stranger Woman*, p. 62.

<sup>40</sup> Gillmayr-Bucher, "'She Came to Test Him with Hard Question,'" p. 137.

<sup>41</sup> Gayle Rubin coins the phrase "traffic in women," through which she convincingly explains how men establish and secure their relations with other groups: in a network of social alliances, woman, as an object of exchange, serves as the "conduit of [male] relationship." Rubin's claim is very applicable to Solomon's Story. Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex," in R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review, 1975), p. 174; Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy*, pp. 154, 177; Gillmayr-Bucher, "'She Came to Test Him with Hard Question,'" p. 148.

<sup>42</sup> Ken Stone, "Sexual Practice and the Structure of Prestige: The Case of the Disputed Concubines," *SBL Seminar Papers, 1993* (SBLSP 32; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press), p. 568.

<sup>43</sup> Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy*, pp. 32, 184.

in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew briefly introduces the Queen of the South in the middle of a heated conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus. Against the Pharisees criticizing Jesus' disciples' unlawful behavior (12:1), Jesus justifies their behavior by alluding to the fact that David and his companions also ate the bread in the house of God and escalates his argument by proclaiming that he is greater than the temple and furthermore, that he is the Son of Man and the Lord of the Sabbath (12:3-8). Jesus then continues to heal the man with a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath, which leads the Pharisees to conspire to destroy him (12:9-15). The Pharisees, however, do not stop following Jesus even after he has become aware of their conspiracy and departed from them. Rather, they continue to argue with Jesus and raise debatable questions. The contest over the legitimacy of Jesus' authority versus that of the Pharisees is conducted over the issue of their ancestors. After Jesus cures a demoniac, all the crowd is amazed and questions: "Can this be the Son of David?" (12:23). In response, the Pharisees immediately rebuke the crowds' curiosity by insisting that Jesus is the ruler of the demons (12:24), upon which Jesus calls them a "brood of vipers" (12:34).<sup>44</sup> The vicious epithet "brood of vipers" that Matthew applies to the Pharisees appears three times in his Gospel (3:7; 12:34; 23:33). All of these cases are involved with the issue of ancestry. While the second use of "brood of vipers" appears in a context where Jesus' identity as the Son of David is debated, the others appear in contexts where the Pharisees [and scribes] claim that they are children of Abraham (3:9) and heirs of the prophets (23:33). In these quarrels, Jesus not only denies that the Pharisees are the descendants or the heirs of Abraham and of prophets but goes so far as to attack them as children of those who killed the prophets, whereupon they accuse Jesus of being the ruler of the demons. Matthew seems to use the image of viper to present the Pharisees as those who fail to follow in their ancestors' steps. Craig S. Keener asserts that according to an ancient Mediterranean cultural convention, vipers were notoriously known as parent-murderers, since vipers were believed to kill their mother during birth.<sup>45</sup> If Keener's suggestion is

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<sup>44</sup> Matthew frequently and negatively focuses on the Pharisees: Matthew mentions the Pharisees 29 times, the scribes 22 times; Luke mentions the Pharisees 26 times; and Mark mentions Pharisees 11 times and the scribes 21 times.

<sup>45</sup> Craig S. Keener, "'Brood of Vipers' (Matthew 3.7; 12.34; 23.33)," *JSNT* 28 (2005), pp. 3-11. Also, Rabinowitz suggests that we should take into account the fact that "Matthew wishes to legitimate his

correct, Jesus' calling the Pharisees "brood of vipers" might have to do with the intra-Jewish polemic over the issue of who could claim to be the true heir of Israel.<sup>46</sup>

The Pharisees were well known as "a body of Jews with the reputation of excelling the rest of their nation in their observance of religion, and as exact exponents of the laws" (Jos. *War* 1.110), and also as those "who have reputation of being unrivalled experts in their country's law" (Jos. *Life* 38-39, 191-93). The Pharisees actively engaged in politics during the Maccabean state, but toward the end of the Maccabean period, they had to abandon politics for piety in order to survive (Jos. *War* 1.110-12; 1.571; *Ant.* 17.41-44).<sup>47</sup> The Pharisees, however, were aware of the importance of politics, since they could generally promote and render effective their religious authority by accessing political power. The necessity of recovering access to the instruments of power might have driven the Pharisees to approach the Roman imperial power. On the other hand, from a colonial perspective, one of the most efficient political strategies is "decentralized despotism." As a practice of fragmenting and isolating the political activity of the colonized within the confines of local administrative subdivision and thereby inhibiting the spread of opposition and resistance to the colonizing power, this decentralizing strategy is based upon the patron and client system.<sup>48</sup> The Romans allowed the Jews to have religious autonomy and recognized that Torah, as the binding Law of Jewish life, would offer less hindrance to their domination over the Jews. The Pharisees' active engagement in their candidacy for Roman support, as well as their acquisition of sufficient support among the populace, attracted the attention of the Romans, who were faced with the question of which potential client Jews could command sufficient popular support to maintain peace.<sup>49</sup> This might be the very reason why there was so much party strife and so many great disputes between the Pharisees and Jesus' group.

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form of Judaism in contradistinction to all other forms of Judaism" ("Does Jesus Recognize the Authority of the Pharisees," p. 445).

<sup>46</sup> Keener, "Brood of Vipers," pp. 9-10.

<sup>47</sup> Elias Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees: Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962).

<sup>48</sup> Bruce J. Berman, "Ethnicity, Patronage and African State: The Politics of Uncivil Nationalism," *African Affairs* 97 (1998), pp. 305-41.

<sup>49</sup> Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1979), pp. 146-54. For more discussion of the issue of the Pharisees' candidacy for Roman client, see Jean K. Kim, *Woman and Nation: An Intercontextual Reading of the Gospel of John from a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 124-34.

Such a socio-political context – one in which the Pharisees were seeking the leadership of Israel – provides us with a clue to understand the role of the Queen of the South in the Gospel. The struggle among competing groups for power is developed through their appeal to their tradition.<sup>50</sup> Despite Jesus’ offensive epithet “brood of vipers,” some of the Pharisees and scribes continue to follow Jesus by calling Jesus “teacher” and ask him to show a sign (12:38). As a response, Jesus claims that he is greater than Jonah, and greater even than Solomon by quoting the Queen of South (12:6, 41-42). There is no doubt that Solomon’s kingdom was known to them as the Golden Age of Israel: among many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved of God, and God made him king over all Israel (Neh. 13:26). The Queen of Sheba, as a foreign ruler, applies a standard of judgment and confirms Solomon’s extraordinary wisdom and international reputation (1Kgs 5:10-14). Matthew thus swings between nostalgia for the past and the progressive departure from the past through his deployment of the Queen of the South, who embodies an ancestral body of Jewish tradition. Just as the foreign female power is deployed to justify Solomon’s kingship, the Queen of the South also serves to pronounce that Jesus is even greater than Solomon, and thereby Matthew scatters the ambition of the Pharisees who had appointed themselves not only as heirs of Abraham but also as rising leaders of Roman-dominated Israel.

Gender assumes a normative masculinity poised against femininity, which is considered to be lack or deviation, and this normative masculinity asserts itself in a male discourse, which represents a masculine Self dominating a feminized Other. In a (de)colonial context, however, a colonized man occupies both masculine and feminine subject positions (the male position having been decisively occupied by the colonial power), and the powerful foreign woman figures ambivalently as both masculine and feminine. In the context of 1 Kings, which received its final form during Babylonian exile, the Queen of Sheba, no matter how powerful a rank she has, is no more than an aberration in a male discourse: she exists only to mark the benevolent incorporation of a

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<sup>50</sup> Owing to the Pharisees’ unique approach to Jewish law, that is, their oral tradition that grew from the Pharisaic tradition of their fathers, they established their popularity by providing the Jews with the ability to adapt to new and various situations. Yet the Qumran community rejected the Pharisaic practice of expanding the biblical commandments by accusing the Pharisees of being “seekers of smooth things” (4Q 169; 266). Lawrence H. Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple & Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1991), p. 107.

faltering regional patriarchy into the universal patriarchal order represented by the King Solomon.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Matthew employs the rhetoric of the masculine power of a foreign female, the Queen of the South, against other Israelites, that is, the Pharisees, in order to secure Jesus' leadership. Following this deployment of one ambivalently powerful foreign woman, Matthew continues to send his Jesus into contact zone where he can meet an even more powerful foreign woman, the Roman imperial woman, Pilate's wife.

**“When my restless hands caress those white breasts ...”<sup>52</sup>**

The second powerful foreign female, Pilate's wife, appears in Jesus' trial scene. After Matthew affirms Jesus' superiority to the Pharisees, the Jewish colonial collaborators, by utilizing the powerful Queen of the South, he takes a further step towards the Roman imperial zone. Matthew expresses his decolonial desire in the trial scene, which depicts the life-and-death tension between colonizer and colonized, by revealing internal fissures within the colonizer's establishment through the deployment of Pilate's wife. In this trial scene, which is located between the foretelling of Jesus' return (24:27-31) and Jesus' resurrection, Matthew presents the Roman governor as asking Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” (27:11).<sup>53</sup> After Matthew identifies the governor as Pilate, he brings Pilate's wife into the trial scene. Without being physically present, she sends a message to her husband as he prepares to proceed with Jesus' trial. The content of her dream is not fully unfolded, but she conveys the message that Jesus is the just man. Because of this, Pilate's wife has been praised as an extraordinary woman who takes the courageous step of interrupting her husband in the course of his official duty as

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<sup>51</sup> The foreign Queen's testing the wisdom of Solomon, God's chosen king, is almost implausible for a Jewish monarch. The Queen of Sheba presents us with a memory of women who managed to carve out high-ranking positions for themselves in worlds dominated by men. Jamal J. Elias, “Prophecy, Power and Propriety: The Encounter of Solomon and the Queen of Sheva,” *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 11(2009), pp. 65, 70.

<sup>52</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (trans. Charles Lam Markmann; London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 63.

<sup>53</sup> In Matt. 24:27-31 which describes Jesus' *Parousia* by echoing Roman imperial rule, Matthew alludes to the doomed destiny of the Roman empire, and pronounces the final salvation of “his people from their sins” at the end of his Gospel through the resurrected Jesus who is endowed with God's authority over heaven and earth (28:18). And Pilate's wife's dream is located somewhere between foretelling of Jesus' return and Jesus' resurrection. For more discussion of Matthew' Eschatology and Rome, see Warren Carter, “Are there Imperial Texts in the Class? Intertextual Eagles and Matthean Eschatology as ‘Lights Out’ Time for Imperial Rome (Matthew 24.27-31),” *JBL* 122 (2003), pp. 467-87; David C. Sim, “Rome in Matthew's Eschatology,” in John Riches & David C. Sim (eds.), *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context* (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), pp. 91-106.



Roman governor.<sup>54</sup> The Roman governor of a province brought with him a small circle of officials, some of whom were legal advisors, and it was not uncommon for a wife to submit petitions to her husband about public matters or to interfere with him on behalf of individuals (Tac. *Ann.* 2.43; 2.71-72).<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, separation between the private and the public has been central to feminist readings of the text because political issues, especially in relation to empire and nation, do not fit the agenda of gender history intent on recovering women's history. Until postcolonial feminists challenged the assumption of two separate realms (public and private) and showed that family, sexuality, gender, nation, and imperialism are inseparably intertwined, the place of colonial women in empire was widely neglected. Working from diaries, memoirs, and other writings by scores of wives of colonial officials in India, Mary A. Procida has argued that compared with British women at home (England), the role of memsahib was more important and less constrained by the separation between male public domain and female private domain.<sup>56</sup> During the British Empire, the presence of memsahib completed the imperial triangle by introducing a middle term in the opposition between colonized and colonizer. The memsahib's position in the imperial triangle makes her a rival to the other masculine figures through her accession to masculine forms of privilege. The memsahib often enters this rivalry in the name of the domestic, but it is a domesticity that has undergone significant reorganization, and one in which active feminine desire plays a subversive role.<sup>57</sup>

We can posit a similar situation through the works of Roman historians as they observe a new type of Roman woman who tried to exercise her power in the public

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<sup>54</sup> Dorothy Jean Weaver, "Thus You Will Know them by their Fruit," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, pp. 119-21.

<sup>55</sup> Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: William E. Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 32-34; Susan E. Wood, *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images, 40 BC – AD 68* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), p. 2; Richard A. Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 138-45.

<sup>56</sup> Mary A. Procida, *Married to the Empire: Gender, Politics and Imperialism in India, 1883-1947* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 6, 140-41. See also Mary Ann Lind, *The Compassionate Memsahibs: Welfare Activities of British Women in India, 1900-1947* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988).

<sup>57</sup> Jennifer L. Otuski, "The Memsahib and the Ends of Empire: Feminine Desire in Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters*," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 24 (1996), pp. 1-29.

area.<sup>58</sup> Tacitus shows his dissatisfaction with Agrippina I's presence in the military area by putting his criticism in the mouth of Tiberius, who said that her actions commented less on her own bravery and more on the unmanliness of his generals, if a mere woman could prove more effective than they at controlling a mutiny (*Ann.* 1.69). Tacitus thus contrasts the masculine virtue of open aggression on the battlefield with the feminine scheming behind the scenes that he regards as embodying the worst aspects of dynasty rule (*Ann.* 2.71-72; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.617). Later in the *Annals*, Tacitus warns his readers against the danger of this new type of Roman woman by reporting that women feminize and weaken the courage of the men, and goes on to express horror that a woman could even preside at a military exercise:

Caecina Severus moved that no magistrate who had been allotted a province should be accompanied by his wife. He explained beforehand at some length that "he had a consort after his own heart, who had borne him six children: yet he had conformed in private to the rule he was proposing for the public; [...], she had always been kept within the boundaries of Italy. There was a point in the old regulation which prohibited the dragging of women to the provinces or foreign countries. ... Weakness and a lack of endurance were not the only failings of the sex: give them scope, and they turned hard, intriguing, ambitious. [...] There were two potentates to salute in the streets: two government-houses; and the more headstrong and autocratic orders came from the women, who, once held in curb by the Oppian and other laws, had now cast their chains and ruled supreme in the home, the courts, and by now the army itself" (*Ann.* 3.33).

Tacitus' concern about the danger of subversive women is also relevant within the context of the British Empire. Richard Dyer's analysis of the fictions about the British

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<sup>58</sup> Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand rapids: William E. Eerdmans, 2003); Richard A. Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 1992); Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome: Mothers and wives of the Caesars* (London: Routledge, 2007); Susan E. Wood, *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images, 40 BC – AD 68* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999).

*Raj* (e.g., *A Passage to India*, *The Jewel in the Crown*) shows that British Imperial women have sexually as well as politically compromised the empire:

[T]he coming of the white women to the empire was often seen as the beginning of the end of British domination, [...] they sapped their own men's energies or [...] were liable to wind up betraying them. [...] The coming of the white women disturbed a comfortable pattern of homosociality and native prostitution; they introduced expectation of affect, obligation and mutuality in heterosexual arrangements while also tending to curtail white men's usage of native women.<sup>59</sup>

Dyer also points out that colonial females are often figures of cause and conscience, by which they subvert the empire in their critique of the way in which it is being governed. By operating as the conscience of empire, colonial females could be seen as a cause of its decline.<sup>60</sup> By the same token, in a decolonizing context, the decolonial desire of colonized males often takes the form of “a fantasy of territorial displacement” as they seek to occupy the master's place, which can be called “a politics of substitution.” When the colonial power is too strong to be disturbed, however, this fantasy of displacement becomes “a politics of appropriation,”<sup>61</sup> which is made possible through the access to colonial females. In this situation, colonial females, by their very presence, encourage a conflation of territorial and sexual desire within colonized males, and in so doing they disturb the colonial world order (the sexuality of the colonial world).<sup>62</sup> The conflict between private/domestic life and public/military duty has thus been an ongoing dilemma of empire.

If Pilate's wife can be re-imagined as a first-century Memsahib, as I suggest, how does she figure into Matthew?<sup>63</sup> It is not coincidental that Pilate's wife sends her

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<sup>59</sup> Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 186.

<sup>60</sup> Dyer, *White*, p. 186.

<sup>61</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 362.

<sup>62</sup> Dyer, *White*, p. 186.

<sup>63</sup> Unlike the three Gentile women who subjected themselves to Jewish custom by using their sexual reproducibility, Pilate's wife stands in a category by herself in that she is not simply a Gentile

message to Pilate at the very moment he is sitting on the judgment seat. Just like Joseph, who is informed through his dreams that Jesus will save his people/Israel from sin (Matt. 1:21; 2:6),<sup>64</sup> Pilate's wife also comes to know who Jesus is through a dream. Then she takes action. It is an action of disturbance and of disapproval. In order to resist the Roman imperial power, Matthew deploys Pilate's wife, the imperial female, to shame Pilate, who was once humiliated by Tiberius because of his mishandling of Jewish customs (*Ant.* 18.55-62; *War* 2.169-77). In this regard, Pilate's wife's role may not be limited to declaring Jesus' righteousness. Rather, Pilate's wife's action can be better understood as Matthew's act of appropriation. Franz Fanon's description of the fantasy of the colonized male helps us to understand Matthew's decolonial desire: "When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine."<sup>65</sup> Decolonial desire is thus articulated in relation to the place of Self through a hybrid space where both mimicry and resistance take place. From this postcolonial intertextual point of view, it is likely that Matthew (the colonized male) employs Pilate's wife (the imperial female) in order to appropriate her for his side.<sup>66</sup>

In Matthew, this politics of appropriation at the expense of Pilate's wife finally develops into a politics of substitution as the Roman soldiers' arrogance and mockery after the trial (27:27-31) are transformed at the crucifixion into terror and confession of the highest order, which implies that the Romans should replace their emperor with Jesus as holder of imperial title "Son of God" (27:54; cf. Mark 15:39).<sup>67</sup> According to

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woman, but also the wife of Roman governor, and therefore requires that much more attention should be paid to her imperial class than to her gender or ethnicity.

<sup>64</sup> A great pagan king becomes the protector of the Jews by means of a divinely inspired dream, and the honor of the Jews is greatly increased as a result. In this sense, Pilate's wife's dream, like the dreams of Alexander (*Ant.* 11.325-39) and of Nebuchadnezzar (*Dan* 4:4-27), functions as a propaganda dream for Jesus. For an analysis of Alexander's dream, see Tae Hyun Kim, "The Dream of Alexander in Josephus *Ant.* 11.325-39," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 34 (2003), pp. 423-42. Intertextual reading of Joseph's dreams with Hebrew Bible (*Ps.* 130; *Sir* 46.1; *Isa.* 7-9) shows that Jesus' saving from sin concerns not only moral sin but also religio-political sin due to the oppressive imperial structure in Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), pp. 75-90; Matthew's infancy narrative is thoroughly political in the expectations it raises concerning the liberation/salvation pretended by the Christ [Richard A. Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 39-60].

<sup>65</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 63.

<sup>66</sup> This is similar to Dr. Aziz's desire to appropriate Mrs. Moore in E. M. Foster's *A Passage to India*.

<sup>67</sup> R. L. Mowery, "Son of God in Roman Imperial Titles and Matthew," *Biblica* 83 (2002), pp. 100-10.

Matthew, Jesus is the only legitimate king of the Jews and the real ruler.<sup>68</sup> Not only by substituting Jesus for the Herod and the Roman governor but also by expanding the nationalistic titles Son of David (15:22) and King of the Jews (27:11, 29, 42) into the cosmopolitan title Son of God (27:54) does Matthew envision the beginning of the end of Roman imperial dominion and finally expresses his ultimate decolonial desire when Jesus is endowed with all authority in heaven and earth (28:18).<sup>69</sup>

## Conclusion

“In a (de)colonizing context, the invention of hybrid traditions and ethnic identities appears inescapable because of the construction of the specific cultural content of ethnic communities and identities can be crucially influenced by the blurred culture of colonialism.”<sup>70</sup> Homi Bhabha states, “[These] in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood –singular or communal– that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.”<sup>71</sup> In order to give hope to a community surrounded by hostile Jews and Gentiles, Matthew posits himself as an *in-between*er who can release a liberatory potential by undoing binary opposition. Then he expresses his decolonial desire that Jesus will save his people by appropriating the two royal women, who are involved in two calamitous moments in Jesus’ career: when Jesus confronts the colonial collaborators (the Pharisees) as well as when he confronts the colonial power itself (Pilate). For Matthew, both crossing and inhabiting borders is indeed a form of transgression, resistance, and subject-formation. Yet the conceptualization of border crossing can also be problematic in that border crossing does not preclude “the concomitant enactment of other forms of violation and victimization,” which remains invisible under “the rubric of a more generalized celebration of borderhood,” especially when it is performed in a (de)colonial context from a male-oriented perspective.<sup>72</sup> Matthew’s subversive decolonial desire is not the same for men and for women. As a

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<sup>68</sup> C. L. Blomberg, “The Liberation of Illegitimacy: Women and Rulers in Matthew 1-2,” *BTB* 22 (1992), p. 145.

<sup>69</sup> D. Michael Cox, “The Gospel of Matthew and Resisting Imperial Theology,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 36 (2009), 31-39.

<sup>70</sup> Kim, *Woman and Nation*, p. 131.

<sup>71</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>72</sup> Hai, “Border Work, Border Trouble,” pp. 382-83.

border writer, Matthew is nevertheless fettered by his own inability to cross the boundaries of class and ethnicity in relation to gender. The two foreign women only contribute to presenting Jesus as the real leader to Matthew's community by entering into their contradictory relations with Israel. In the process of Matthew's seeking to define his community over against its competing rivals and the Roman imperial power, can the Queen of the South and Pilate's wife also be viewed as subjects in process? Does Matthew give them any degree of subjectivity? Like other female characters in the Bible, these two women, despite their powerful status, stay as minor characters who do not earn their own subject positions in their stories. Once Matthew achieves his decolonial goal, these two women disappear from Matthew, and in allowing them to disappear, Matthew's border crossing fails to go beyond the patriarchal terrain wherein female sexuality plays a role in the struggle for power between males. Whether these two women were real or not, however, Matthew's readers' attitudes towards these women are emphatically not ahistorical attitudes, since the two women have been perpetuated as an ideological construction. It is, therefore, problematic that Matthew's decolonial desire is "typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 14.