

“She Stood in Tears amid the Alien Corn”

Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority

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One of the joys of reading a biblical text from my own social location was learning about the history of my people here in the States. I immersed myself into the vast field of Asian American Studies. Even as it was an immensely satisfying experience, especially as I inserted my family's story into the larger narrative of the Chinese in America, it was also sobering. Our immigration history is one of bitter hardship and oppression.

As I looked for a biblical text to explore through Asian American eyes, I found one that readily lent itself to such a reading. One can safely say that, of the books of the Hebrew Bible, the book of Ruth has captured the attention of many scholars interested in feminist and multicultural interpretations of the text. The book conjoins issues of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, immigration, nationality, assimilation, and class in tantalizing ways that allow different folk to read their own stories into the multivalent narrative of Ruth and Naomi. It is particularly apt for the purposes of this volume that the book of Ruth is the only biblical text bearing the name of a female Gentile,¹ a non-Jew, and a foreigner. The multicultural perspectives on the book of Ruth are a veritable global village: African South African female, South African Indian female, Batswana female, Kenyan female, Mexican American male, Costa Rican female, Cuban American male, Hindu Indo-Guyanese female, Latin American female, Brazilian male, Palestinian female, Hong Kong Chinese male and

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female, Taiwanese female, mainland (PRC) Chinese female, Thai and Philippine females, Myanmar female, New Zealand Pakeha (non-Maori) female, Native American female, African American womanist, European female immigrants, German rural women, Eastern European foreign workers in Israel, and African women suffering from HIV/AIDS.²

In this chapter I enter into this global conversation by reading the book of Ruth as an Asian American biblical scholar of Chinese descent. I argue that the construction of Asian Americans historically as the "perpetual foreigner" and "model minority" can shed light on the various, often conflicting, interpretations and readings about Ruth the Moabite. The portrayal of Ruth as the model émigré is similar to the construction of Asian Americans as the model minority. Their depictions in both cases are used for propagandistic purposes, casting them simultaneously as the perpetual foreigner in the lands in which they live.

The Asian American as the Perpetual Foreigner

Asian American racialization involves two specific and related stereotypical configurations. The first is that of the perpetual foreigner, which lurks behind the seemingly harmless question white people constantly ask Asian Americans: "Where are you from?"³ Notice that this question is usually not asked of African Americans. When I tell whites that I am from Chicago, they are not satisfied. Predictably, they follow up with "Where are you really from?" Sometimes I inform them directly that I am a Chinese American. At other times I cheekily play with and deflect their interrogation: I now live in Boston; I was born in Ohio; and I have lived in Canada and in Minnesota. The dance of the seven veils performed by white America to uncover my ethnicity is symptomatic of their assumption that I do not really belong in this country.

Asian American intellectuals have criticized the U.S. discourse on race as being circumscribed by the conflicts between blacks and whites.⁴ They point out that in the black/white binary, the experiences of Asian Americans (as well as Latino/a and Arab Americans) fall through the cracks, since racial bigotry can vary qualitatively among different racial and ethnic groups. Asian Americans experience the process of racialization differently than African Americans.⁵ Although both groups have suffered horrendously under white racism, the markers for determining the Other rest on different axes. For African Americans the axis is color, white versus black. For Asian (and Latino/a and Arab) Americans it is citizenship, American versus foreigner.⁶

Because of the focus on racial color (being black), as well as a shared history of slavery, African Americans do not identify themselves by their national origins, such as Nigerian American or Ghanaian American, and much less by their African tribal origins, such as Mandingo American or Ashanti American.⁷ In contrast, Asian Americans hail from ethnically and culturally distinct Asian nations and have different immigration histories to and ethnic conflicts with white America. They therefore consistently describe themselves in terms of their national or ethnic origins: Chinese American, Japanese American, Korean American, and so forth. With respect to citizenship in the United States these ethnic demarcations have often been a matter of great importance in the conflicted history of U.S.-Asian relations. During World War II Chinese Americans consciously distinguished themselves from Japanese Americans to prevent being interred with them.

Institutional and cultural racism found in the legal system, government policy, and so forth has traditionally constructed what it means to be American and hold power in terms of white, male, European descent—particularly Anglo-Saxon Protestant descent—to the exclusion of other groups. After long and difficult struggles women and blacks were enfranchised as American citizens with the right to vote. Evincing by the ubiquitous experience of being asked, "Where are you from?" Asian Americans have not been fully assimilated into the collective consciousness of what it means to be American.⁸ Even though many, like my family, have been here for generations, the perception of being aliens in their own land is one that Asian Americans find difficult to shake off. They continue to be seen as more Asian than American.

The notion of Asian Americans as the perpetual foreigner intensified during certain overlapping periods of economic, military, and political conflict in U.S.-Asia relations. The U.S. government and businesses exploited Chinese peasants as cheap labor at various points of American history (for example, for building the transcontinental railroad, to replace blacks on southern plantations after emancipation, and as strikebreakers for New England textile mills).⁹ Incensed by the competition, however, whites violently harassed and oftentimes killed Chinese laborers and their families. They eventually lobbied Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, barring Chinese from entering the United States and becoming citizens. This act was not repealed until December 17, 1943, when the United States wanted the Chinese as allies during World War II against Japanese aggression. Nevertheless, Chinese Americans were still racialized as the foreign Asian enemy. Collapsing diverse Asian groups into the foreign

Other, white Americans did not always distinguish Chinese Americans from the Japanese (during WWII), the Koreans (during the Korean War), and Vietnamese (during the Vietnam War). In 1982 the economic downturn in the Detroit, Michigan, automobile industry fueled the rage of two white men who killed the Chinese American Vincent Chin, scapegoating Chin as one of the Japanese automobile makers who cost them their jobs.¹⁰ During the Cold War the United States recruited Chinese scientists and engineers to strengthen American defense systems, only to nurse suspicions later that some Chinese were passing nuclear secrets to mainland China. The unfounded accusations against the Taiwanese American Wen Ho Lee during the late 1990s continued to demonstrate that simply looking like the enemy means that you are.¹¹ The Chinese American architect Maya Lin, who won the national contest to design the Vietnam Memorial, was condemned as a "gook" (a derogatory term for the Vietnamese) by U.S. veterans. Chinese American identity is thus inescapably linked with other Asian ethnic and national identities for whom it is mistaken.

The perpetual-foreigner syndrome takes on a different permutation nowadays in the politics of U.S. multiculturalism, which "in its reliance on symbolic representations of diversity, only serves to oversimplify and essentialize the diversity of racial/ethnic groups in the United States."¹² Chinese Americans are expected to put their Chinese "culture" on display. This culture becomes objectified and measurable, taking the form, for example, of speaking and writing Chinese, using chopsticks, immersing oneself in *The Analects* by Confucius, celebrating Chinese New Year, enjoying Jackie Chan movies, and, perhaps, even taking kung fu lessons.¹³ Chinese American females might feel compelled to "go native" and slip their heftier American bodies into *cheongsams*, those form-fitting Suzie Wong-type dresses with the slit up the side.

When such traits of Chineseness become essentialized as visible hallmarks of authenticity, Chinese Americans are put in a double bind. As perpetual foreigners, they are tagged as not being American enough. Alternatively, they are expected to exhibit on demand their knowledge and culture of China, about which many, whose families have lived in the United States for generations, know little. The commodification of Chinese identity in U.S. multicultural politics presumes that this identity is out there, just waiting to be discovered. When placed on a continuum of being more or less authentically Chinese, many American-born Chinese sometimes experience an ambivalence in the presence of those who seem to be "more" Chinese (for example, those who have a Chinese accent or have recently come from China).

While on the one hand Chinese Americans, under assimilationist models, should identify with their U.S. roots, the realities of racial politics cause them to remain perpetual foreigners. Chinese Americans have always been told that "home" is in the United States but that their "roots," and therefore a missing piece of their identity, is somewhere in China.¹⁴

Eventually some American-born Chinese, such as myself, might actually visit China to find the missing piece that will ostensibly transform one into an "authentic" Chinese. Actually finding that piece is another matter. Although the stigma of perpetual foreigner assumes that I do not belong in the United States, I discovered that I did not belong in China either, as my recent yearlong experience teaching in Hong Kong starkly revealed.¹⁵ I faced several challenges during my time in Hong Kong that I did not have to face in my twenty years of undergraduate and graduate teaching in the United States. First were the obvious personal and cultural dislocations I experienced as a Chinese American who had never been west of San Francisco, California, going ashore in a Hong Kong Chinese context. (Asian Americans often refer to newly arrived immigrant Asians as FOBs or Fresh off the Boats. In a sense I was the FOB counterpart in Hong Kong, although it would be more accurate to say that I was a FOP, Fresh off the Plane.) Second was a linguistic dislocation since my three weeks of Mandarin study (which was not good to begin with) were completely forgotten in the largely Cantonese-speaking culture. I taught in English, a dislocation for my students. There was also a gender dislocation. The Department of Religion at the Chinese University of Hong Kong was primarily composed of men. Only one other female colleague, untenured, taught in the department, while more than half of the faculty at my home institution, the Episcopal Divinity School, are female, and all are tenured. Finally, there were what I can only describe as ideological dislocations in that I came as a feminist with strong social views on racism, class exploitation, American imperialism and colonialism, and fundamentalistic readings of biblical text. All of these strong positions are formed by and in reaction to my U.S. context. For a third-generation Chinese American who grew up in the urban slums of Chicago's South Side,¹⁶ Asian forms of theologizing, such as Waterbuffalo Theology,¹⁷ seemed to come from another planet and were just as alien. Minimally knowing the language, the history, and the culture in Hong Kong made me like Ruth the Moabite, a woman who "stood in tears amid the alien corn" (John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale"). My experience of being a foreigner both in the United States and in China is typical of many

American-born Chinese who visit China in search of their "roots." Just as Chinese Americans are not American enough for whites in the United States, they are not culturally Chinese enough with respect to China.¹⁸

The Asian American as the Model Minority

Besides being pigeonholed as the perpetual foreigner, Asian Americans simultaneously labor under the model-minority stereotype.¹⁹ After a century of blatant racial discrimination and slander,²⁰ Asian Americans are singled out as a group that has successfully assimilated into American society, becoming financially well off and achieving the American Dream. This stereotype is often part and parcel of those essentialist traits that "real" Chinese individuals are assumed to have. Traditional Chinese values and attributes are said to include respect for elders, strong family ties, intellectual giftedness, hard-work ethic, focus on higher education and a striving to achieve, mathematical and scientific ability, and so forth.

My experiences as a model minority were much more conflicted. For example, when my family moved from the inner city to a white neighborhood, the Catholic grade school I attended had "homogeneous" groupings. In descending order, Group 1 comprised the most intelligent and talented, and Group 4 was regarded as the "dumb-dumb" group. I was put in the latter. Even at the young age of ten, I saw that the individuals in Group 1 were all white and that Group 4 contained the racial and ethnic students and those whites who were regarded as "trash." With respect to the assumption that Asians are good in math, I withdrew from college algebra three times before I flunked the course and had to change my major from psychology to English literature because there was no way I could pass the required statistics course. When I took the GRE I barely made it on the scale for mathematical ability. In the range of 200–800, I received something like 320.

The model-minority stereotype is a gross generalization of disparate Asian immigrant populations that vary in terms of ethnicity, immigration history, linguistic facility, education, and economic class.²¹ Camouflaged by the notion of model minority are the unexpressed questions—"Model of what?" and "Model for whom?"²² On the one hand, the phrase "model minority" could imply that Asian Americans are exemplary, despite the fact that they happen to be "colored" and, as such, still inferior to the dominant white society. This understanding is hardly flattering to Asian Americans. On the other hand, the phrase could mean that Asian Americans are exemplary, and other racial ethnic groups should take after them. The model

minority stereotype, then, becomes more of a critique and a denigration of other racial groups rather than a compliment to Asian Americans.

It is no accident that articles hailing Asian Americans as the "superminority" and the "whiz kids" emerged particularly during the Cold War of the 1950s and the racial conflicts of the 1960s:

The narrative of Asian ethnic assimilation fit the requirements of Cold War containment perfectly. Three specters haunted Cold War America in the 1950s: the red menace of communism, the black menace of race mixing, and the white menace of homosexuality. On the international front, the narrative of ethnic assimilation sent a message to the Third World, especially to Asia, where the United States was engaged in increasingly fierce struggles with nationalist and communist insurgencies, that the United States was a liberal democratic state where people of color could enjoy equal rights and upward mobility. On the home front, it sent a message to "Negroes and other minorities" that accommodation would be rewarded while militancy would be contained or crushed.²³

Asian Americans are held up as living proof that racial minorities can succeed in America, presumably by the sweat of their brow and not by civil rights demonstrations or protests. Using the model-minority stereotype as a weapon, whites tell blacks and Latinos/as that "Asian Americans do not 'whine' about racial discrimination; they only try harder."²⁴ The supposed accomplishments of Asian Americans divert attention away from the fact that racial discrimination is a structural feature of U.S. society, produced by centuries of systematic exclusion, exploitation, and disregard of racially defined minorities.²⁵ Blame for any social disparities falls on the other racial minorities, who "whine" about racial discrimination. White construction of the model-minority stereotype has as its antithesis the construction of other racial groups, such as blacks, as the "deficient" or "depraved" minority.

The model-minority stereotype buttresses the dominant ideology of the United States as a just and fair society, in which all its citizens compete on a level playing field. All foreign immigrants and racial minorities who have worked hard and played by the rules can be readily assimilated and succeed economically. White America judged and rewarded Asian Americans not "by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."²⁶ Significantly, some Asian American students have espoused the stereotype as a means of upward mobility and white approval. These students

are primarily immigrants who have bought into the ideology of white America as the land of opportunity and dismissed any racial episodes as the isolated acts of single individuals. American-born Asians, however, are more likely to be wary of the model-minority stereotype and view any racial incidents as part of a larger social problem.

Following the model-minority stereotype can backfire on Asian Americans.²⁷ The perception of Asian American success in higher education often rebounds in anti-Asian attitudes. White students become threatened by and resent the growing number of Asian students in classrooms. They fear that so-called hordes of Asian students distort the grading curve, and many refuse to register for sections containing a large Asian critical mass. The zero-sum perception that Asian American gains denote white American losses often results in violence, as the Detroit death of Vincent Chin demonstrates. The Michigan congressman John Dingell angrily accused "little yellow men" for the economic hardships of Detroit automakers, rather than placing blame on the fact that domestic cars are not as skillfully made or as fuel efficient as Japanese imports.²⁸

The perpetual-foreigner and the model-minority stereotypes work in tandem to construct contradictory images of Asian Americans in general and Chinese Americans in particular. As perpetual foreigners, they become a secondary caste that can be exploited and used. They are perceived as aliens in their own land, even though their citizenship often goes back several generations. When they ostensibly excel as model minorities through industry and entrepreneurial talents, they become a threat to be contained or destroyed. These two stereotypes make more complex the nature of U.S. race relations, which have usually operated under a black/white binary. Rather than functioning on the color axis, racial discrimination against Asian Americans operates on the axis of citizenship, casting Asian Americans as the perpetual foreigner. Colluding with this stereotype is the pigeonholing of Asian Americans as the model minority, which at times benefits them compared to other ethnic groups while simultaneously obscuring the countless ways in which they are marginalized and victimized by racism. It is through these two lenses that I view the book of Ruth.

The Book of Ruth

The social matrixes in the book of Ruth are rich. They include male/female, husband/wife, mother/son, mother-in-law/daughter-in-law, owner/overseer/laborers, mother's house/father's house, native resident/foreigner, and so forth. These relations are forged through marriage,

friendship, widowhood, sexual attraction, economic and labor arrangements, immigration, and political amity or enmity. As the wealth of global interpretations of Ruth attests, the story is a "mine or mosaic of social relations, where readers can take their pick."²⁹ With the plurality of different readers comes a plurality of differing, often antithetical, interpretations. Juxtaposed to the more positive readings of the book, as an enchanting bucolic story about female empowerment and romantic heterosexual love, are others that see a more ambiguous and unsettling narrative.³⁰ I follow the lead of other people of color and allow the ambiguity of the text to favor a reading against the grain.³¹ The usual optimistic and romantic readings of Ruth obscure issues of ethnicity, economic exploitation, and racist attitudes about the sexuality of foreigners that are evident in the text. Refracting the story of Ruth through the prism of the Asian American experience, I argue that, in its own way, the ideology of the text constructs Ruth the Moabite as a model minority and perpetual foreigner.

Ger and Nokriyah in Ruth

The book of Ruth utilizes two words to describe foreigners: *ger* and *nokriyah*.³² A *ger* is a foreigner who has immigrated into and taken up residence in a society in which she or he has neither familial nor tribal associations. Although granted some protection under the Holiness Code (Lev.) and Deuteronomic Code (Deut.), the *ger* is not a full-fledged member of the Israelite community but someone of different and lower status. Ruth is not called a *ger*. The term is used to describe Elimelech's sojourn in Moab with his family (Ruth 1:1). However, because Ruth takes advantage of the laws about gleanings for the poor, the *ger*, and the widow (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22), the text implies that Ruth is a *ger*.

When Ruth encounters Boaz's kindness for the first time, she falls on her face and exclaims, "Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner [*nokriyah*]?" (Ruth 2:10). The text has Ruth acknowledge in direct speech her status as a foreigner in Judah. The connotation of *nokri* is generally negative, highlighting the person's otherness and separateness from the dominant culture.³³ We will see that the negativity of the *nokri* is particularly underscored by the fact that Ruth was a Moabite, one of Israel's traditional hated enemies. If Ruth was written during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the use of *nokriyah* in the mouth of Ruth is significant. Inter-marriage between the exiles and foreign women (*nashim nokriyot*) (Ezra 10:2, 10; Neh. 13:26) was severely condemned. Note that the nemesis of Lady Wisdom is the Foreign

Woman³⁴ in the book of Proverbs, whose author shares Ezra's and Nehemiah's Persian-period ideologies.³⁵ Some interpret the marriage of Boaz to the *nokriyah* Ruth as a critique of Ezra's and Nehemiah's policies against foreign marriages.³⁶ Others argue for an earlier context for the composition of Ruth, perhaps as an apology for David, to remove the taint of Moabite descent.³⁷ I maintain, however, that, whatever the date, the negative connotations of Ruth's foreignness implied in *nokriyah* are not completely erased in the book.

Ruth as a Model Minority

In the construction of Ruth as the model minority, her Moabite ancestry is of prime importance. Ruth is not simply from any foreign nation but from Moab, whose entanglements with Israel have been antagonistic. According to Gen. 19:37 the Moabites were the spawn of a drunken incestuous encounter between Lot and his eldest daughter. Numbers 25:1–3 blames the idolatry of Israelite men, who “yoked” themselves to the Baal of Peor on the bewitching sexuality of Moabite women. The seer Balaam, hired by the king of Moab to curse the Israelites, ends up blessing them and cursing Moab instead (Num. 22–24). Moab, along with Ammon, refused to offer bread (*lehem*) and water on Israel's journey from Egypt and was thus denied admittance to the assembly of God, even down to the tenth generation (Deut. 23:3–4). The irony is that Elimelech and his family must immigrate from Bethlehem (House of Bread) to Moab because of a famine in Judah.³⁸ But this flight comes at a great cost: the patriarch and his two sons die in Moab, leaving three impoverished widows and a threatened patriline.

The deeper the enmity between Moab and Israel, the greater the valor in Ruth's resolve to embrace the latter and its God. Her rejection of Moab and its negative links with Israel transforms her into the Jewish convert par excellence. In rabbinic interpretation Ruth was the daughter of a Moabite king when she rejected her homeland and its false deities to become a God-fearing Jewess—loyal daughter-in-law, modest bridge, renowned ancestor of Israel's great king David.³⁹ Ruth's *hesed* (generosity, compassion, and love) toward her mother-in-law in accompanying Naomi to a strange land and in supporting her by gleaning is recognized by Ruth's future husband and provider. Boaz exclaims that the Israelite God, under whose wings she has sought refuge, will fully reward Ruth (2:11–12). If the book was written as an apology for the Moabite ancestry in David's line (cf. 1 Sam. 22:3–4), Ruth the faithful convert purges the line of any foreign stain.

Indeed, Ruth is not only the model convert but also an exemplar for the Jewish people. According to André C. LaCocque, “[Ruth's] ‘heroism’ is to become more of a Judean than those who are Judean by birth! Retrospectively, one can say that her fidelity toward the people and their God provides a lesson to those who should have been her teachers.”⁴⁰ LaCocque further adds that the central theological message of the book is the meaning of *hesed*, which Ruth epitomizes for the people: “A non-Judean shows the way to the Judeans, precisely in an era where the respect for the latter had become the very condition of membership in the Second Temple community.”⁴¹

In her article “Ruth, the Model Émigré,” Bonnie Honig criticizes readings that turn the book into “a kind of nationalist narrative that Ruth's story does not only nor unambivalently support.”⁴² She outlines the two problems for the present discussion that inhere in the concept of the model émigré. According to Honig, dominant readings of Ruth fall into two categories that correspond to the two major responses to immigrants. On the one hand, immigrants are welcomed for what they can bring to a nation, whether it is diversity, talents, energy, novel cuisines, or a rekindled sense of national pride that had attracted the immigrants in the first place. On the other hand, immigrants are dreaded because of what they will do to the nation (burden the welfare system, weaken the common heritage, and so forth). Ruth's decision to leave her natal land for Israel reconfirms Israel's identity as the Chosen People, a people worthy of being chosen. Nevertheless, Ruth's relocation does not mean that Israel is now a borderless land, embracing all foreigners, even the hated Moabites. “Israel is open only to the Moabite who is exceptionally virtuous, to Ruth but not Orpah.”⁴³

The construction of Ruth as the model émigré is similar to the model-minority stereotype of Asian Americans. Ruth is held up for propagandistic purposes, either to expunge any contamination of Moabite descent for David or to critique Ezra's and Nehemiah's policies against intermarriage. She thus reveals what a virtuous foreigner can teach the nation. As model minorities, Asian Americans supposedly exemplify traditional values, such as respect for elders, industry and hard work, and family loyalty. Similarly, Ruth incarnates the quality of *hesed* in her overwhelming devotion to her mother-in-law; in her willingness to support her by diligently gleaning in a strange man's field, not resting “even for a moment” (2:7); and in her conversion to another God. As Ruth the Moabite teaches Judeans the meaning of *hesed*, Asian Americans educate others on how to be “good” minorities who know their place in a white society. Nevertheless, just as Asian Americans remain perpetual foreigners in the land of

their birth, Ruth's disappearance in chapter 4 after the birth of her son leads one to question whether Ruth has been successfully assimilated as a foreigner into Judean society or ultimately abandoned once she preserves the male lineage.⁴⁴

Ruth the Perpetual Foreigner

The flipside of the model-minority stereotype for Asian Americans is that of the perpetual foreigner. This Janus-like phenomenon is also apparent in the book of Ruth. Just as Asian Americans are consistently perceived as being more Asian than American by the dominant white society, so is Ruth continually called Ruth the Moabite, rather than Israelite, even after her immigration (1:22; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10). Ruth seems to lose this qualifier after she finally gives birth to a son (4:13), but it comes at the cost of not being recognized as his mother (4:17).⁴⁵ Naomi's ultimate incorporation back into the community is manifested by her displacement of Ruth as Obed's mother. This displacement implies that the revitalization of this community and the continuation of the patriline toward David's monarchy depend not only on Ruth's exemplary character but also on her marginalization as a foreigner.⁴⁶

As Chinese Americans were economically exploited for cheap labor, particularly during the 1800s and early 1900s, so is Ruth's foreign labor exploited by both Naomi and Boaz. Jack M. Sasson and Athalya Brenner argue that 1:16–17, which is usually read as Ruth's tender pledge to Naomi, is actually a verbal contract in which Ruth submits her person to the wishes of her mother-in-law.⁴⁷ The "love" (*hb*) that Ruth has for Naomi (4:15) can connote the relationship between an inferior to her or his superior, such as the one between a vassal and his lord.⁴⁸ This interpretation would explain, for example, why Ruth alone goes out to glean and why she easily acquiesces to Naomi's dangerous proposal to seduce Boaz on the threshing floor. She might have had little choice in the matter.

Issues of class, especially as they intersect with ethnicity and gender in Ruth, are also underscored in a perceptive analysis by Roland Boer.⁴⁹ In Marxist fashion Boer notices who owns the means of production, namely, the land, and who actually works it in the book of Ruth. The economic gulf between Boaz, as owner of the land, and Ruth, as foreign gleaner of the land's leftovers, is wide. Boaz does not work in the fields as do his reapers or his overseer, but rather, he commands them. "In other words, he lives off the surplus labour of those who do work."⁵⁰ His seeming munificence toward Ruth (2:8–9, 14–16) is that of one who has more than

enough already. He can afford to dole out a little something for Ruth. In this regard Boaz's injunction to Ruth not to work in another man's field (2:8) may be motivated more by economic rather than personal interests. Boaz has already been told that Ruth "has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment" (2:7). She continues the grueling work of gleaning until evening, and then she beats out an *ephah* of barley (2:17), which weighs somewhere between thirty and fifty pounds.⁵¹ Boaz knows good foreign help when he sees it, and his so-called generosity can be read as offering inducements to keep Ruth's productivity for his own benefit. Although Boaz does not acquire economic capital from Ruth's labor, he certainly reaps much social capital and prestige in the Israelite community as a benefactor of widows. We will see shortly that Boaz will eventually acquire land as economic capital through Ruth's person. Ruth continues to toil in his field "until the end of the barley and wheat harvests" (2:23). Boer quips, "This is hardly benevolence, but more like pure exploitation."⁵²

Naomi does not work in the fields either. She too lives off the labor of Ruth the foreigner, whose actions she directs: urging Ruth to continue the nonstop work of gleaning, instructing her to make herself attractive to seduce a man in the middle of the night, and ultimately taking Ruth's child as her own. Some justify Naomi's absence in the field to her old age or the fact that she still grieves the loss of her husband and sons. Others think she is hard at work in the invisible domestic sphere while Ruth works outside the home. However, within the economics of the text, Naomi is more aligned with Boaz than with Ruth, especially when kinship intersects with ownership of the means of production. As related kin, Naomi and Boaz are complicit regarding "that piece of land" (4:3) that belonged to Naomi's husband, Elimelech. Another kinsman has a better claim to redeem this land, but Boaz is able to trump this claim by means of Ruth's body. "On the day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead man, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance" (4:5). By her kinship with Boaz and by strategically using Ruth to preserve the lineage of her husband, Naomi ultimately dislocates Ruth as Obed's mother.

Marxist feminists have often noted the deficiency in Marxist theory in not fully incorporating into its theorizing on class women's productive labor and their reproductive (or sexual) labor in the continuation of the species.⁵³ These labors interconnect most clearly in the person of Ruth. Exhausting herself by working the land for Boaz and Naomi, Ruth also becomes the reproductive means by which Boaz and Naomi profit

economically. In Boaz's case, Ruth becomes the stumbling block that prevents the land from falling into the hands of Mr. So-and-So, who cannot marry Ruth and beget a son through her without jeopardizing his own inheritance (4:6). Through Ruth, Boaz is thus able to enlarge his holdings. And Ruth's birth labors in producing a son secure Boaz's patriline and Naomi's economic place in the community.

Other aspects of Ruth's sexual exploitation in the text work hand in hand with Ruth's foreignness. Foreign women in the Hebrew Bible have a long tradition of erotic allure and sexual insatiability. Witness Madame Potiphar, Delilah, the queen of Sheba, Solomon's foreign wives, Jezebel, the whore of Babylon, and the Foreign Woman in Proverbs. These women bring about the downfall of men through their sexuality. Asian American women also suffer under similar exoticization by white American males in the images of Suzie Wong, Madame Butterfly, the submissive lotus blossom, the seductive geisha, the Mongol slave girl, and the treacherous Dragon Lady.⁵⁴ Catering to the sexual fantasies of white men, the flourishing global trafficking of Asian women's bodies is built on such stereotypes.⁵⁵ Male domination and colonial supremacy coalesce here in the sexual depiction and exploitation of the foreign woman.

Lingering over Ruth is the notorious tradition of the Moabites as the perverse progeny of incest, whose women sexually seduced the Israelites away from YHWH (Num. 25:1-3). Ruth is particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence in the fields by the male farmhands, who may regard her as "easy" because she is a Moabite, one of "those" women.⁵⁶ To protect his industrious worker and keep her working in his field, Boaz shields Ruth from these "attentions" by ordering his men to keep their hands to themselves (2:9).

The reputed carnality of foreign women injects greater ambivalence into the narrative of Ruth and Boaz on the threshing floor (Ruth 3). Biblical commentaries are rife with speculation on whether Ruth and Boaz "did it" that night. If intertextual parallels are drawn between Lot's daughters (Gen. 19) and Tamar (Gen. 38), Ruth did indeed "do it" with Boaz.⁵⁷ All three stories involve a threat to the patriline because of the death of a male. The fiancés of Lot's daughters are killed in the destruction of Sodom. God slays Er and Onan, leaving Judah's lineage in jeopardy. Elimlech and his sons die in Moab. In all three stories women take the initiative to restore and continue the lineage. Further, foreignness is attached to all three. Lot's daughters become the progenitors of the Moabites and Ammonites. Tamar is most likely a Canaanite, and Ruth is a Moabite. All three adopt sexually unorthodox means to achieve their purposes. Lot's

daughters collude in an incestuous encounter with their father. Tamar pretends to be a hooker at the side of the road. Ruth marshals her charms to seduce Boaz on the threshing floor. All three take advantage of the men's inebriation from too much wine.⁵⁸ Certainly Lot's daughters and Tamar succeed in having sex with their targeted males, becoming pregnant with sons as a result. If the story of Ruth follows the same literary pattern, Ruth and Boaz consummated their union on the threshing floor, resulting in the birth of David's grandfather.

Whether Ruth and Boaz had sex that fateful night should not distract us from the economic urgency that compelled Ruth the foreigner to go to the threshing floor in the first place. Here I am in complete agreement with Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (who does not think the couple "did it") that

no woman should have to do something so socially unacceptable in Israelite culture as to approach a man in the dark of night, at risk of discovery and public humiliation, and possibly severe legal penalties in order to put food on her family's table for the longer term. This is not a slightly adventurous tryst. It is a desperate act by a desperate person.⁵⁹

While some white feminists may be appalled at the notion that the key to a woman's happiness is the Cinderella story of finding and seducing a rich man who will become her patron, for many destitute women in the third world such a hope is often one of the few options available.⁶⁰ Sakenfeld relates a story about a young impoverished Filipina who was recruited to go to a wealthy foreign country as a "dancer." In response to her pastor's suspicions that she was destined for the Asian sex trade, the girl pointed to the book of Ruth: "Ruth put herself forward attractively to a rich man in hopes that he would marry her and take care of her family. I am doing the same. Hopefully a rich man from that country will choose me to marry and will look after me and my family. God made things turn out right for Ruth and God will take care of me too."⁶¹ The adverse consequences of global capitalism were brought home to me recently in Hong Kong, where it is not uncommon for Filipina domestic help (whose working conditions are often deplorable) to seduce the male head of household and sometimes engineer a divorce in order to better her situation. In these cases, as in the book of Ruth, economic survival often forces impoverished women to acts they would never do otherwise, literally spending their lives "in tears amid the alien corn."

Conclusion

Seen through the eyes of the dual Asian American experiences of being a model minority and perpetual foreigner, the book of Ruth holds in dialectical tension the positive and the more-ambivalent interpretations of the story. On the one hand, the book of Ruth is a (fairy) tale about a devoted widow who rejects her homeland and her idols to accompany her mother-in-law to a new country. In this scenario, Ruth becomes a model émigré (*ger*)—a model convert—who teaches the Chosen People the true meaning of God's covenantal *hesed*. She is an exemplar of female empowerment, initiative, hard work, family loyalty, and upward mobility. And to top things off, she does get the guy in the end.

On the other hand, Ruth is also the perpetual foreigner—a *mokryab*—whose consistent label of Moabite implies that she, not unlike Asian Americans in the United States, is not fully assimilated in the text's consciousness of what it means to be Israelite. Ruth's foreignness is the linchpin in the economics of the text. It sets her apart from those characters who do not work in the book but who appropriate her labor and her body. Chinese American labor contributed to the building of a nation, but their efforts went unacknowledged.⁶² So also does Ruth's labor in the field and especially in giving birth to Obed play a major role in strengthening the Davidic line and the formation of the state, but she too disappears at the end. The insidious economic picture that surfaces in the book of Ruth is that the Israelites—in the persons of Naomi and Boaz—are those who do not work, who exploit and live off the surplus labor of the foreign Other. Naomi assimilates into the world of Israelite men, the landowners who possess the means of production, while the foreign female worker, Ruth, vanishes when her body is exhausted. Ruth's story thus becomes an indictment against those of us who live in the first world and exploit the cheap labor of developing countries and poor immigrants from these countries who come to the first world looking for jobs.

Notes

1. Bearing the title of a male Gentile is the book of Job.
2. For complete bibliographical citations, see Gale A. Yee, "She Stood in Tears amid the Alien Corn": Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority," in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, *Semeia Studies 57* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming).

3. Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 1–35; Angelo N. Ancheta, *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, [1998] 2000), 44; Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: Viking, 2003), xi–xiii; Frank H. Wu, "The Perpetual Foreigner: Yellow Peril in the Pacific Century," in *Yellow: Race in America beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 79–129; Leslie Bow, "Making Sense of Screaming: A Monkey's Companion," in *Screaming Monkeys: Critiques of Asian American Images*, ed. M. Evelyn Galang (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2003), 489. Such encounters are not limited to Asian Americans. For the Chinese Dutch equivalent, see Ien Ang, "On Not Speaking Chinese: Postmodern Ethnicity and the Politics of Diaspora," *New Formations* 24 (1994): 1–18.
4. For example, Wu, "Perpetual Foreigner"; and Ancheta, "Introduction: Neither Black nor White," in *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience*, 1–18. See also Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 67–86.
5. I am using as a springboard here the discussion of racial formation in Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 52–76. For Omi and Winant, racialization is the extension of racial meaning to a relationship, social practice, or group.
6. Ancheta, *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience*, 64; Tuan, *Forever Foreigners*, 8. See also Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785–1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).
7. See Paulla Ebron and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "From Allegories of Identity to Sites of Dialogue," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 131. This article consciously tries to construct tools for dialogue among racial and ethnic minorities; in this case, between African Americans and Chinese Americans. See also Edward M. Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora," *American Anthropologist* 98, no. 2 (1996): 290–304.
8. This was brought home in a public way during two winter Olympics when the Asian American skater Michelle Kwan failed to win gold. The MSNBC headline in 1998 read, "American Beats Kwan" when Kwan finished second to teammate Tara Lipinski. In 2002 the *Seattle Times* described Kwan's loss to teammate Sarah Hughes as "American Outshines Kwan, Slutskaya in Skating Surprise."
9. For a readable account, see Chang, *Chinese in America*. Also see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), and Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1993).
10. For a personal account, see "Detroit Blues: 'Because of You Motherfuckers,'" in Helen Zhu, *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), 55–81.
11. In particular, see Chang, *Chinese in America*, 236–60.
12. Andrea Louie, *Chineseness across Borders: Renegotiating Chinese Identities in China and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 97.
13. Except for reading *The Audelics*, I have dabbled in all of the above.
14. Louie, *Chineseness*, 104.

15. I explored this more fully in Gale A. Yee, "Yin/Yang Is Not Me: An Exploration into an Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Ways of Being, Ways of Knowing: Asian American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Mary F. Foskett and Jeffrey Kah-Jin Kuan (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006), 152–63.
16. See Gale A. Yee, "The Impact of National Histories on the Politics of Identity," *Journal of Asian and Asian American Theology* 2 (1997): 108–12.
17. See Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974); and Kosuke Koyama, "Waterbuffalo Theology—After 25 Years," *PTCA Bulletin* 11, no. 2 (1998): 5–9.
18. See esp. Louie (*Chineseness*), who examines issues of Chinese identity through an in-depth ethnographic study of the In Search of Roots Program, sponsored by the PRC and certain Chinese American organizations. The intentions of the program are to bring young Chinese Americans to the villages of their ancestors to learn about the greatness of Chinese culture. The underlying motive of the PRC is to encourage Chinese American economic investment in China, their "true" homeland. Louie draws conclusions for Chinese identity from the PRC perspective, especially in its agenda for the In Search of Roots Program, and about how this agenda is negotiated and often subverted by the Chinese American students who participate in it. Also see Ang, "Not Speaking Chinese," 12–13.
19. See "The Model Minority: Asian American 'Success' as a Race Relations Failure," in Frank Wu, *Yellow: Race in America beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 39–77; Keith Hiroshi Osajima, "Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960s and 1980s," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 449–58; and Sumi K. Cho, "Converging Stereotypes in Racialized Sexual Harassment: Where the Model Minority Meets Suzie Wong," in *Critical Race Feminism: A Reader*, ed. Adrien Katherine Wing (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 203–20.
20. In the popular media, see the fears about the "yellow peril," Fu Manchū, Dragon Lady, and Ming the Merciless from the planet Mongo, documented in Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 106–44.
21. Lucie Cheng and Philip Q. Yang, "The 'Model Minority' Deconstructed," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 459–82.
22. Wu, *Yellow*, 59.
23. "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth," in Lee, *Orientalism*, 145–79, quotation on 146.
24. Wu, *Yellow*, 44.
25. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 69.
26. Quoted from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have a Dream" speech, August 28, 1963.
27. Wu, in *Yellow*, devotes a section called "Backlash from the Myth" (67–77).
28. Zia, *Asian American Dreams*, 58.
29. Musa W. Dube, "Divining Ruth for International Relations," in *Other Ways of Reading African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 180.
30. Alta C. van Dyk and Peet J. van Dyk, in "HIV/AIDS in Africa: Suffering Women and the Theology of the Book of Ruth," *Old Testament Essays* 15 (2002): 215–24, classify these differing readings under four categories: (1) reading with the grain of the text (positive); (2) a romantic reading (even more positive); (3) a feminist perspective (against the grain); and (4) "a man, trapped by the slyness of two women." See also Madipoane J. Masenya, "NGWETSU (BRIDE): The Naomi-Ruth Story from an African-South African Woman's Perspective," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 14, no. 2 (1998): 82–85.
31. See Robert D. Maldonado, "Reading Malinche Reading Ruth: Toward a Hermeneutics of Betrayal," *Semeia* 72 (1995): 91–109; Laura E. Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth through Native Eyes," in *Ruth and Esther: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner, Second Series ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 131–44; Kwok Pui-lan, "Finding a Home for Ruth: Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Otherness," in *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 108–11; Francisco García-Treto, "Mixed Messages: Encountering *Mestizaje* in the Old Testament," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 22, no. 2 (2001): 159–71; and Wai-Ching Angela Wong, "History, Identity and a Community of *Hesed*: A Biblical Reflection on Ruth 1:1–17," *Asia Journal of Theology* 13 (1999): 3–13. For others who preserve the ambiguity and complexity of the text, see Amy-Jill Levine, "Ruth," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, expanded ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 84–85; Danna Nolan Fewell and David Miller Gunn, *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990); and Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal, *Ruth and Esther*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).
32. For what follows, see Christina van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983); Rolf Rendtorff, "The Ger in the Priestly Laws of the Pentateuch," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 77–88; L. A. Snijders, "The Meaning of *Zar* in the Old Testament," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 10 (1954): 89–110; Harold V. Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal: Deuteronomistic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 38–48; Christopher T. Begg, "Foreigner," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2 (1992): 829–30; and John R. Spencer, "Sojourner," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 (1992): 103–4.
33. Rendtorff, "Ger in the Priestly Laws," 77; Begg, "Foreigner," 829.
34. In Hebrew: *ishshah zarah*, which parallels *nokriyah* in Prov. 2:16; 5:20; and 7:5. *Nokriyah* parallels *eshet ra'*, evil woman, in 6:24, and *zonah*, harlot, in 23:27.
35. For a full discussion, see Gale A. Yee, "The Other Woman in Proverbs: My Man's Not Home—He Took His Moneybag with Him," in my *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 143–65.
36. See André C. LaCocque, *Ruth: A Continental Commentary*, trans. K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 18–27; Victor H. Matthews, *Judges and Ruth*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 208–10; and Frederic W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1996), 30. For an overview of the issues of dating, see Katrina J. A. Larkin, *Ruth and Esther*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 18–25; and Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1999), 1–5.
37. Murray D. Gow, *The Book of Ruth: Its Structure, Theme and Purpose* (Leicester: Apollon, 1992), 132–33, 199–205.
38. Moab had reasonably good agricultural land, which was productive even when other parts of Palestine were hit by famine. According to 2 Kgs. 3:4, King Mesha of Moab bred

sheep and used to deliver one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams to the king of Israel. See Max Miller, "Ancient Moab Still Largely Unknown," *BA* 60, no. 4 (1997): 194–95.

39. Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious Than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 72. According to Zohar, *Balaq* 190a, Ruth was the daughter of Eglon, king of Moab, whom Ehud assassinated (Judg. 3:12–30) (cited in Mishaël Maswari Caspi and Rachel S. Havrelock, *Women on the Biblical Road: Ruth, Naomi, and the Female Journey* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996], 85).

40. LaCocque, *Ruth*, 24–25.

41. *Ibid.*, 28.

42. Bonnie Honig, "Ruth, the Model Émigré: Mourning and the Symbolic Politics of Immigration," in Brenner, ed. *Ruth and Esther: A Feminist Companion*, 51.

43. *Ibid.*, 55–56.

44. See Levine, "Ruth," where she states, "It is the reader's task to determine whether this book affirms Ruth or ultimately erases her; whether she serves as a moral exemplar or as a warning against sexually forward Gentile women" (85).

45. Although space constraints limit my discussion, the issue of surrogate motherhood and its exploitation of poor and ethnic women looms here, as it does in the Sarah and Hagar story of Gen. 16. Also on the horizon is the practice of white Americans adopting female Chinese babies abandoned at birth. It remains to be seen whether these babies will be fully accepted as "Americans" or also tagged as perpetual minorities in spite of having white adoptive parents.

46. Honig, "Ruth, the Model Émigré," 73–74.

47. See Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist Folklorist Interpretation*, The Biblical Seminar, vol. 10, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 124–25; and Athalya Brenner, "Ruth as a Foreign Worker and the Politics of Exogamy," in *Ruth and Esther: A Feminist Companion*, 158–62.

48. See William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *Vetus Testamentum* 27, no. 4 (1977): 475–81; and Susan Ackerman, "The Personal Is Political: Covenantal and Affectionate Love (*ʾAheh*, *ʾAhava*) in the Hebrew Bible," *Vetus Testamentum* 52, no. 4 (2002): 347–58. Dube, in "Divining Ruth," also notes a slave-to-master relationship between Ruth and Naomi rather than an expression of mutual love (192).

49. Roland Boer, "Terry Eagleton: The Class Struggles of Ruth," in his *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2003), 65–86.

50. *Ibid.*, 79–80.

51. Bush, *Ruth, Esther*, 133.

52. Boer, "Terry Eagleton," 83.

53. See Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997), 97–122; and Heidi Hartmann "Some Conceptual Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis," in *Women's Oppression Today*, rev. ed., ed. Michèle Barrett (London: Verso, 1988), 8–41.

54. Aki Uchida, "The Orientalization of Asian Women in America," *Women's Studies International Forum* 21 (1998): 161–74. The Asian Woman fetish of white men has been

explored in the novel by Mako Yoshikawa, *One Hundred and One Ways* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999). "One hundred and one ways" refers to the number of ways a geisha was supposedly able to "unlock (men's) bodies with a groan" (9).

55. Rita Nakashima Brock and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

56. See Michael Carasik, "Ruth 2.7: Why the Overseer Was Embarrassed," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 107 (1995): 493–94; and David Shepherd, "Violence in the Fields? Translating, Reading, and Revising in Ruth 2," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63 (2001): 444–63.

57. For analyses of the similarities among these three narratives, see Harold Fisch, "Ruth and the Structure of Covenant History," *Vetus Testamentum* 32, no. 4 (1982): 425–37; Esther Fuchs, "Structure, Motifs and Ideological Functions of the Biblical Temptation Scene," *Biblicon*, no. 2 (1997): 51–60; and Ellen Van Wolde, "Intertextuality: Ruth in Dialogue with Tamar," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 426–51.

58. Wine is implied in Gen. 28:12–13, since it is the festive time of sheep shearing.

59. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "At the Threshing Floor: Sex, Reader Response, and a Hermeneutic of Survival," *Old Testament Essays* 15 (2002): 174.

60. See, for example, Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, "Biblical Hermeneutics: Ancient Palestine and the Contemporary World," *Review and Expositor* 94 (1997): 373.

61. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "The Story of Ruth: Economic Survival," in *Realia Dei: Essays in Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Edward F. Campbell, Jr.*, At His Retirement, ed. Prescott H. Williams Jr. and Theodore Hiebert (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 221.

62. The famous picture of the white men posing at the completion of the transcontinental railroad has not a Chinese face in sight.