Exploring Weaving Stories: A Narrative Way of Theological Reflection in Field Education

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For me, teaching is about weaving a web of connectedness between myself, my students, the subject I'm teaching, and the larger world.
—Parker J. Palmer[1]

For a long while, there has been a rumor, if not an indictment, that something is wrong with our theological education. Professors lament that many prospective students are poorly prepared or even unprepared for graduate theological studies; students complain that the theological studies they take are largely disconnected from one another; graduates confide that they don't know how to bring into alignment what they have learned from their theological studies and what they are called to do in the church and in the world. The heart of the matter is that our theological education, like its secular or nontheological counterpart, is so fragmented and disintegrated in its clerical or professionalist paradigm that there is a loss of what Edward Farley called *theologia*. *Theologia* refers to the *theological understanding or wisdom* that would help students to connect the dots between their studies, their ministries, and their callings and find the big picture in their quest to understand God, themselves, others, and the world. What is most needed in our theological education, argues Farley, is to "find a way to recover *theologia*," which "can occur when faith opens itself to reflection and inquiry."[2] One way for that recovery is to do, as Jesus did, the "integrating work" that links knowing and doing, makes theological education and ministerial practice whole, brings the question of "What makes this *theological*?" to the fore of theological education, and encourages theological educators (and students) to "*theologize* in whatever mode."[3] No doubt, in the center of this integrating work lies theological reflection. Theology is all about reflecting critically and constructively on our faith in action (practices). Therefore, those of us who are engaged in theological education should teach our students ways that they can *learn to be theological* and *reflect theologically* in their daily lives as they struggle to discern their identity and vocation and to live faithfully and missionally in the world.[4]

For the past several decades, the focus of attention in practical (or pastoral) theology has shifted from "applied theology" to a "theology of practice." While the former concerns the task of educating the clergy in a seminary (or school of theology) setting, the latter focuses on educating the laity as well as the clergy in the community of faith. While the former is product-oriented, the latter process-oriented. While the

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former aims at the acquisition of professional knowledge and effectiveness, the latter aims at the formation of practicing theologians or reflective practitioners whose main interest lies in obtaining what the Greek called *phronesis* (a kind of practical wisdom relevant to action), which, according to Elaine Graham and colleagues, "means having the wisdom to live well, reflecting on practice and learning from it." Notably, in this transition, theological reflection takes the center stage and becomes the goal of theological education, with the assumption that "learning [comes] *from the learner*" and with the intention of "relating the resources of faith to the issues of life." The fundamental aspect of this shift is a movement "from what Edward Farley termed the 'clerical paradigm'—a curriculum dominated by the activities of ordained ministry—towards patterns of learning and teaching that aimed to foster the discipleship of the whole people of God, lay and ordained."[5]

Theology or doing theology can be taught and learned best in the community of faith that understands theological education to be a life-long process of cultivating theological reflection. Our Christian faith is a communal faith, and everything we do as the church is a curriculum for faith formation.[6] In his overview of the history of theological education, Justo González shows us that the proper place of theological education is not the seminary but the local congregation, drawing our attention to the fact that "seminaries are a relatively recent invention" and that "theological education cannot end with a certificate, diploma, or degree."[7] In the ancient church, a life of theological study, reflection, and formation was a matter not for professionals but for all Christians. And yet we have forgotten this and, consequently, there is now a wide divide between the seminary (or academia) and the church, between theological education and Christian education. These two should be integrated for our theological reflection to flourish. In this regard, González notes "a great advance in theological education" and acknowledges that "one of the main contributions of the second half of the twentieth century was the development of the entire field of supervised ministry (field education)" where "theory and practice, action and reflection, have a constant and reciprocal relation."[8]

Having said this, I would like to raise an honest question of self-reflection: "Are those of us who are engaged in field education doing a good job of integrating the work of theological reflection?" If not, what is a proper and efficient method of theological reflection for this integrating work in field education? I suggest that in order to be a good teacher each of us should take seriously the integrating work as "weaving a web of connectedness" that Parker J. Palmer aptly describes in the words quoted above in the epigraph. For Palmer, weaving a web of connectedness means building a community and bringing people into communion with one another. For me, weaving a web of connectedness means weaving a web of storied identities or, to put it simply, weaving stories. Human beings are hardwired for stories, and stories help human beings form relational selves within the framework of connectional living. Accordingly,

theological teachers and students should learn to weave stories from the Bible, from our own experiences, from the congregation or organization that we are involved in, and from the world that we are called to serve for the purpose of creating a theological web of connectedness.

WEAVING STORIES: THE MEANING AND METHOD OF NARRATIVE IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

We human beings make sense of our lives (our experiences) by *making stories*. As humans, to make meaning is to make stories. We describe what we have gone through and prescribe where we are going by *telling the stories we make*. We use narratives to construe and construct, or interpret and shape, our own reality.[9] "We assume that our circumstances shape our stories," but it is rather "the way we narrate our lives [that] shapes what they become," says therapist Lori Gottlieb.[10] If we want to change our lives, then we should change our stories. And we can also use stories for the transformation of the congregation, the wider community, and the world.

Where does the transforming power of story come from? It comes from our brain's power to subjectivize reality and, consequently, to subvert reality. As John Truby, a master storyteller, points out, "Stories don't show the audience (or the reader) the 'real world'; they show the story world. The story world isn't a copy of life as it is. It's life as human beings imagine it *could* be."[11] In a sense, the story world is the only real and meaningful world for us, for we are, knowingly or unknowingly, living in the story world(s) that we are making. In essence, *making and telling stories* is the way to be human. As narrative theorist Mark Currie puts it, "[I]t does not seem at all exaggerated to view [us] humans as narrative animals, as *homo fabulans*—the tellers and interpreters of narrative."[12] The corollary of our being story-makers is that stories are everywhere in our lives, even in the tapestries spanning the backs of choir stalls in a church. And yet, stories in our lives are out there not so much to be found as to be fashioned; they are waiting not so much to be picked up as to be brought into being. For, according to art historian Laura Weigert, "[N]arrative is constituted by the viewer [or reader or listener], who, *by establishing the connections between events*, creates a story."[13] Any story is not done with the telling by the storyteller. It should be told again or, better, told anew by the story-listener. This is also true for telling the stories of the Bible.

The Bible is not only a story book[14] but also "a *talking book*, engendering conversation and creating a polyphonic theological discourse," as Kwok Pui-lan argues.[15] What is required of us in our *theological conversation with the Bible* (biblical interpretation in a broader sense) is creativity and imagination as we engage ourselves *contextually and critically* in dialogue with the story worlds of the Bible that should be (re)discovered and re-created by us. And our creativity and imagination come from where we stand, for we all read the Bible "from this place," i.e., from our own social location(s).[16] Every reading of the Bible is a particular and contextual reading; there can

be no universal and objective reading. Furthermore, the Bible as a *talking book* is not only "the book that reads me" but also "the book that I read." The Bible should be not only listened to but also talked to; just as the Bible questions the reader, so the reader can and should question the Bible. The Bible and the reader are conversation partners on an equal footing. We all would read the Bible differently if each of our standpoints were honored and respected. And yet, a particular reading, say, a White male colonial reading, has long dominated our theological conversation with the Bible. We should move beyond the monophonic discourse of colonialism. If we really want to discover "the strange new world(s) within the Bible" (à la Karl Barth), we must give our ears to those who read the Bible differently from us, particularly to those who have been silenced in our theological conversation with the Bible. More importantly, as we engage ourselves in reading the Bible from our own places, all of us are involved in *the same task of weaving together both stories of the Bible and stories of our lives*. Without this weaving, our talk with the Bible becomes empty.

At this juncture, I would like to take issue with the fact that, traditionally, the loom of narrative theological reflection is set up in such a way that the woof of our stories is always woven into the warp of biblical stories. In this text-bound way of weaving, the transformative power of the stories of the Bible is recognized and valued.[17] And yet it is not the proper *interweaving* of both the divine stories and the human stories, for the Bible as a metanarrative, as it is viewed by many modern biblical interpreters, tends to silence other "insignificant" narratives of our own. The interpretative equity that is championed by postmodern biblical interpreters is not present in our narrative theological reflection, when certain voices are estranged, marginalized, and silenced by those who have the power to define what is "significant." Accordingly, to reset the loom of narrative theological reflection in a way that the woof of biblical stories is also woven into the warp of our stories is necessary and desirable.

While I claim that the pendulum of narrative theological reflection swings from the Story to stories in our time, I do not intend to prioritize the reader over the Bible at all. For, methodologically speaking, what is required of us is not to make an either/or choice between the Story and stories; it is rather to take a both/and approach to the Story and stories. What is really at stake, as Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley argue, is "the divine-human encounter [which is characterized] as a meeting of stories" or "the integration between the divine and human narratives." The bottom line for our theological conversation with the Bible is that "interpretation [through weaving together the divine and human narratives] is at the service of integration."[18] Just as happened in Jesus Christ the God-Human, the integration as well as the intersection between the divine and the human must happen when we weave together the stories of the Bible and the stories of our life. The motive or impulse of our weaving together the divine and human narratives is our desire to find our place in the divine narrative as well as our hope to discover God's presence and action in the human narrative. It is

when we find our place in God's stories and discover God's presence and action in our stories that the integration of the divine and human narratives is accomplished. What then is most needed for this narrative integration?

To find an answer to this question, I would like to turn to a curriculum theorist for help. William F. Pinar understands curriculum theory as "the interdisciplinary study of educational experience" and curriculum as an "ongoing, if complicated, conversation."[19] Understanding the educational process to be *dynamic*, Pinar devises and promotes what he calls a method of "*currere*" (literally, "the running of the course" or "to run the course"). In essence, this method is autobiographical and concerns the integration of what we study and how we live for the purpose of knowing who we are and how we can change the world in which we live. Pinar says that in the *running* of the *currere* (curriculum) there are two basic "moments" (or, better put, movements): regressive and progressive. In the *regressive* phase of curriculum, we move toward the past in the present and uncover or discover what could and should have happened or not happened. And in the *progressive* phase of curriculum, we move toward the future in the present and imagine and fantasize what could and should happen or not happen. Out of these movements emerge the *analytic* (or reflective) and *synthetic* (or active) movements in which, returning to the present both from the past and from the future, we come to *understand* how we have gotten here and *mobilize* ourselves for the engagement with the wider world for its transformation. Notably, at the heart of this method lies the *weaving together* of the personal and the social, the private and the public, the subjective and the academic, and the past and the future, emphasizing the significance of *giving voice to* the estranged, marginalized, and silenced so that they can tell their own *autobiographical stories* for the complicated and even contested conversation about public education in the United States. I think we could and should apply this autobiographical and interdisciplinary *currere* method to our theological education as we cultivate theological reflection by weaving together biblical, personal, congregational/organizational, and cultural stories.

While I am promoting the notion of "lift every voice and sing" (à la James Weldon Johnson) in our narrative theological reflection, my main concern is not so much with the telling of those whose stories have for long been silenced as with the listening to their stories by those who are engaged in weaving stories. When we weave stories, we are not weaving any stories, no matter how interesting they would be. Weaving stories means sharing the "stories of the heart," "root stories" or "critical incidents" or "soul stories," both biblical and contemporary. We can tell our "real stories" when we are allowed to do so, but this telling experience does not necessarily make us feel that we are seen, heard, and felt by others when they are not really listening to us. In this case, we decide to not speak. Our silence is no longer forced; it is chosen.[20] As Mark Yaconelli insightfully puts it, "[T]he power of storytelling [is] not in the telling—it [is] in the listening. The transformation occurs in the space between one

heart and another."[21] Without "real stories" moving between the listening and the telling, from one telling heart to another listening heart, there is no use in weaving stories. Giving our listening ears, we should regard any stories of the heart as "reflections of concrete reality" and recognize their relating, engaging, and connecting power that enables us to "see more concretely and more vividly [others and ourselves and God] in *a story-filled world*."[22]

WEAVING STORIES: TWO EXAMPLES[23]

I do not have a magic formula for how to weave stories. Like storytelling and story-writing, story weaving is an art that you can and should learn and master while you are doing it over time. In this sense, "Practice makes perfect." Of course, *you* become perfect, not the activity that you are engaged in. I think some theological teachers are doing better at weaving stories than others.[24] Here, I would like to give brief attention to two Asian women theological teachers, Kwok Pui-lan and Gale A. Yee, for I think Kwok's use of *critical incidents* and her *parallel processing* strategy[25] and Yee's use of *autobiography* and her *reading into* strategy offer us good examples of weaving stories from the perspective of narrative integration.

In her Bible study offered at the 1989 Asian Mission Conference in Indonesia organized by the Christian Conference of Asia,[26] Kwok Pui-lan chose the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident as her *critical incident* and read it in parallel with the story of the passion of Jesus in the Bible. In this dramatized Bible study, she began by laying out her reading standpoints in relation to the Bible—as a woman, as a diasporic Chinese, and as a contextual Christian theologian. The first action of her story weaving is a reading of part of a heartrending poem anonymously published by a Beijing citizen on June 5, 1989, the day after the tragic massacre. The title of the poem is not given. It might be called "The Tiananmen Beatitude":

> Blessed are the blind,
> for they do not have to see.
> Blessed are the deaf,
> for they do not have to hear.
> Blessed are the numb,
> for they do not have to feel.
> But they cannot stop their hearts
> from pulsating with the hearts of children at Tiananmen.
> But they cannot stop their hearts
> from pulsating with the hearts of children at Tiananmen
> except those who are dead.[27]

Then she poses questions about the significance of the gospel to such a historical crisis, the meaning of Jesus for Asian people who suffer and struggle, and Jesus' own

understanding of his Jewishness and patriotism. Using a feminist hermeneutic, she tries to find answers to these questions by investigating women's roles in the ministry of Jesus. Starting with the Song of Mary the Mother of Jesus (the Magnificat of Luke 1:46–55), who "had a tremendous sense of the historical destiny of her people," Kwok relates how Jesus interacted with both named and unnamed women in the Bible, focusing on his "iconoclastic understanding of the Temple, the Law, and God's salvation."[28] What is notable in her Bible reading on "Jesus and his Jewish identity" is that Jesus is described as "repeatedly challenged by the women he met during his ministry."[29]

Having identified women's influences in Jesus' identity formation, Kwok moves to a retelling (weaving) of the story of Jesus' Passion in parallel with the story of the Beijing students' passion. Even though Kwok does not explicitly articulate a set of questions in the Bible study, her weaving together of the two passion stories suggests the unvoiced questions that I raise here in italics. Let us see how Kwok weaves these two stories.

Those women in the Bible story, who were, like all mothers at home in Beijing, busy preparing the last supper meal for Jesus, might have asked, *Why would Jesus risk his life?* Kwok finds a probable answer to this question in the "Declaration on Hunger Strike" written by the Beijing students on May 13, 1989: "We do not want to die; we want to live, because we are in the golden period of our youth. . . . But if the death of one person, or a group of persons, can make the lives of people better and the motherland more prosperous, we do not have the right to live." Jesus and the students risked their lives for mother and motherland! *What, then, would these students have done on the night before the People's Army moved to fire at them, June 4, 1989?* To answer this question, Kwok's imagination moves to the scene of Jesus praying alone to God in Gethsemane: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want" (Matthew 26:39 NRSV). Three weeks would not have passed for the students without some reconsideration of their resolution. Just as the young students in Beijing must have been revisiting again and again their own resolution, Jesus was facing the upcoming doom in Jerusalem. *What, then, would Jesus' mother, Mary, have said to her beloved son as he struggled to "stand up to the test" for "the cause of the people"?* Here, Kwok refers to what the mothers of the Beijing students said with heartrending cries: "Children, we wish to keep you at home. Do not go to Tiananmen Square. Yet we understand that you must go." *What then would have been Jesus' response to his mother?* Kwok imagines that, to comfort his mother, Jesus might have sung a battle song that was popular among the Beijing students on hunger strike. The song, "Blood-Tainted Countenance," includes the following phrases: "The flag of the Republic / will have our blood-tainted countenance" (verse 1) and "The soil of the Republic / will have my sacrificial love" (verse 2). Reminding us that "only the women whom Jesus loved gathered together to prepare the tortured body for a proper burial," Kwok concludes her Bible study by asking her audience to "join [her] to observe a moment of silence for

the students in China, Korea, and other Asian countries who have given up their lives for their country, and for all others who have died for freedom and democracy."[30]
Gale A. Yee is a third-generation Chinese American woman. The oldest daughter of twelve children in a patriarchal family, she grew up in the slums of Chicago. The first college graduate and person to obtain a doctorate in her family, she did not consider herself a feminist owing to her thorough academic training by males in the historical-critical method. When she got her first teaching job in 1984 as the only woman on an all-male theology faculty at a traditional Roman Catholic college, she began to explore feminist perspectives. She publicly came out "as a feminist" at the 1986 Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting. And it was at the meeting of feminists in 1989 that she faced squarely the "black/white binary" among feminists with regard to race matters and found out that she did not belong to either group. "This experience of being a racial outsider," she recalls later, "left an indelible mark on me and became significant for my understanding of Asian American hermeneutics later on." She finally came out "as an Asian American woman" at the Women and Religion Section of the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in 1994 when Kwok Pui-lan asked her to present a paper on the politics of identity, which Yee titled "The Impact of National Histories on the Politics of Identity."[31] She feels that she is different both from other Asians and other Americans. But the reality is that the prevalent Asia–America binary does not allow her to form, not to mention express, her own identity as an Asian American woman. Yee writes elsewhere, "In a very real way, then, the holy Trinity of gender, race, and class—my Chinese ethnicity, my lower-class status, and my female gender—impinged upon my Asian American identity to put me outside of the mainstream of American society."[32]

As an Asian American woman, she brings the stories of her heart into her reading of the story of Ruth the Moabite, "the only biblical text bearing the name of a female Gentile." She begins her article on Ruth with following words: "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."[33] Then she moves to the analysis of two prevalent ideological constructs or stereotypes of Asian Americans in the history of immigration in the United States: perpetual foreigner and model minority. Using these two ideological constructs as "the prism of the Asian American experience," Yee reads or, as she puts it, "refracts" the story of Ruth and contends that, "in its own way, the ideology of the text constructs Ruth the Moabite as a model minority and perpetual foreigner."[34]

Highlighting Ruth's difference and otherness in the Jewish culture, the text constructs Ruth as a perpetual foreigner (*nokriyah*, Ruth 2:10)—and a foreigner from Moab, the enemy nation of Judah, at that. However, Ruth's rejection of her own country and its religion in order to worship the God of the Jews and her love toward Naomi, her mother-in-law, as she accompanied her to a foreign country and supported her with the hard work of gleaning, make her "not only the model convert but also an exemplar for

the Jewish people." As the model émigré (*ger*), she is lifted up "for propagandistic purposes" and discloses "what a virtuous foreigner can teach the nation."[35] And yet, she remains a foreigner in the text, "continually called Ruth the Moabite, rather than Israelite, even after her immigration (1:22; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10)." She disappears after giving birth to her son Obed (4:13), and Naomi displaces her as Obed's mother (4:17). As Yee sees it, Naomi's displacement of Ruth implies that the story of Naomi and the genealogy of the Davidic monarchs were passed on to the next generation not only because of Ruth's exemplary character but also because of her marginalization as a foreigner. "By her kinship with Boaz and by strategically using Ruth to preserve the lineage of her husband," Yee quips, "Naomi dislocates Ruth as Obed's mother."[36]

No doubt, Yee here reads her own story into Ruth's story. Her rationale, as I see it, is that the story of Ruth echoes and invites her story. Quite contrary to the *eisegesis* criticism that traditional biblical scholars would make concerning her "reading into" strategy, Yee is not so much interjecting something extrinsic to the biblical story as weaving into the biblical story something intrinsic to it. Reading from her own place, she refuses to accept "the notion of a single unitary meaning in the text, the ostensible goal of 'traditional' scholarship." She believes that different perspectives help her "uncover multiple and even contradictory meanings in the text" and "recognize the ideologies of those who produced them and who continue to interpret them."[37]

Both Kwok and Yee open the horizon of biblical interpretation as well as of theological education by bringing into our Bible reading the stories of their hearts, personal critical incidents, and autobiographical stories. They make the Bible talk about not only the biblical story world but also our story world. They resist their academic guilds' disciplinary compartmentalization and promote interdisciplinary learning. And they show us that our culture-specific stories are also cross-cultural thanks to the power of story to relate, connect, and weave. As we probe a narrative way to engage the integrating work in field education, let us find our own way of story weaving so that we can build a narrative home for our students where their sense of belonging is recovered and their capability to tell their stories is regained without their being stereotyped and stigmatized. For our students to tell their stories of the heart, we should be willing to listen to their stories and improvise the dance of our narrative theological reflection by following their lead.

[1]NOTES

Ron Jackson, "The Teacher's Journey: An Interview with Parker J. Palmer," Youthworker, https://www.youthworker.com/the-teacheraes-journey-an-interview-with-parker-j-palmer/.

[2] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 156.

[3] Edward Foley, "The Integrating Task: A Theological Reflection," in *Integrating Work in Theological Education*, ed. Kathleen A. Cahalan, Edward Foley, and Gordon S. Mikoski (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 220, 232, emphasis added. According to Foley, who presents Jesus as a master pedagogue who inventively and constructively challenged his students to imagine new ways of learning, the integrating work comes "out of a willingness to improvise" and is "a long-term process that is the proper work of entire institutions—and not just students." Edward Foley, "Harvesting Insights (on Schools)," in Cahalan et al., *Integrating Work in Theological Education*, 69, 71.

[4] According to Jack L. Seymour, Jesus the rabbi (teacher) taught this way. See his book *Teaching the Way of Jesus: Educating Christians for Faithful Living* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014).

[5] For the transition of the focus in practical theology, see Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward with Katja Stuerzenhofecker, *Theological Reflection: Methods*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2019), 1–21 (the quotes are on pp. 2, 9, 6, 4). The first edition was published in 2005. This turn to a reflective process in pursuit of practical wisdom or spiritual maturity is also called "the *movement toward insight*." See Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994). "The world needs adult [read: mature] Christians who engage in theological reflection" and "who are willing to take their experience and their tradition seriously" (pp. 144, 145).

[6] See Boyung Lee, *Transforming Congregations through Community: Faith Formation from the Seminary to the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013).

[7] Justo L. González, *The History of Theological Education* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017), 117, 122.

[8] González, *The History of Theological Education*, 126.

[9]See Jerome Bruner, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002). In Bruner's narrative construction of reality, even the use of fictional stories is included. For *the narrative quality of human experience*, see Terrence W. Tilley, *Story Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 23–26. Here, Tilley introduces Stephen Crites's claim that "human experience is inherently narrative and needs stories to form and report it" (p. 26). Will Storr, a writer, who argues that our brain is not so much a data processor as *a story processor*, says, "The world we experience as 'out there' is actually a *reconstruction* of reality that is built *inside* our heads. It's an act of creation by the storytelling brain." Will Storr, *The Science of Storytelling: Why Stories Make Us Human and How to Tell Them Better* (New York: Abrams, 2021), 21.

[10] Lori Gottlieb, "How Changing Your Story Can Change Your Life," TED talk, November 22, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_MQr4lHm0c.

[11] John Truby, *The Anatomy of Story: 22 Steps to Becoming a Master Storyteller* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2007), 9.

[12] Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), 2. The term *homo fabulans* literally means a story-maker. Some people use the term *homo narrans* (a story-narrator) instead of *homo fabulans*.
[13] Laura Weigert, *Weaving Sacred Stories: French Choir Tapestries and the Performance of Clerical Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 13, emphasis added.
[14] The Bible can be called a story book for most of the Bible is written in a story format. Some say that 75 percent of the Bible is written in a story format. See John Walsh, *The Art of Story Telling: Easy Steps to Presenting an Unforgettable Story* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 12, 126. Walsh's book was originally published in 2003.
[15] Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 32. Kwok's book was originally published by Orbis Books in 1995. Here, Kwok borrows the metaphor of the Bible as a "talking book" from African American literary critic Henry Louis Gates Jr. in order to refer to "the subversive reading and imaginative use of the Bible by people who are subjugated and colonized" (p. 42). See Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 127–69.
[16] See *Reading from This Place*, Vol. 1: *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* and Vol: 2: *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). There are various social locations, such as ethnicity, class, and gender, cultural and religious standpoints. Just as stories are told from a particular perspective, so stories of the Bible are read from a particular standpoint.
[17] Peter M. Morgan, *Story Weaving: Using Stories to Transform Your Congregation* (St. Louis: CBP Press, 1986), 11, 13. Morgan defines story weaving as "the interweaving of the biblical story with our own stories in such a way that life is transformed" (p. 51).
[18] Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories and Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019), 42. Originally published in 1998 by John Wiley & Sons, this book aims to integrate worship and pastoral care.
[19] William F. Pinar, *What Is Curriculum Theory?* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 2, 188. Echoing Pinar, I would like to suggest that we understand theological education as the interdisciplinary study of theological experience and narrative theological reflection as an ongoing, if complicated, conversation about the integration between the divine and human narratives.
[20] According to an astute literary critic, silence in the sense of choosing not to speak is "a specifically feminist method" that Asian American women writers have used in their writings "as [a] means of unsaying." Patti Duncan, *Tell This Silence: Asian American Women Writers and the Politics of Speech* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 220, 217.
[21] Mark Yaconelli, *Between the Listening and the Telling: How Stories Can Save Us* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2022), 44.
[22] Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 149. In this book, Moore attempts to overcome the artificial separation of theology and education through an interdisciplinary perspective that debunks and correlates educators' theological assumptions and theologians' educational assumptions.
[23] For more detailed study of this section, see chapter 5 of my unpublished dissertation, *In Search of a Story-Weaving Curriculum Theory: Six Principles for a Narrative Curriculum Theory for*

Christian Education for Asian American Women, with Special Attention to Kwok Pui-lan's Postcolonial Diasporic Feminist Theology (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2008), 134–64. This section is a shortened version of the chapter.

[24] The "story-linking process" of Anne Streaty Wimberly can serve as a guide for the practice of weaving stories. In her ground-breaking book on narrative Christian education, Wimberly proposes a sophisticated yet practical four-phase engagement in everyday stories, the Christian faith story in the Bible, Christian faith stories from the African American heritage, and Christian ethical decision making. See Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994). Wimberly gives a pivotal role to biblical stories as the "mirrors" of our theological reflection and puts emphasis on the question of how to choose Scripture in the story-linking process. In her revised edition published in 2005, she aims at focusing on liberating wisdom and hope-building vocation and uses family-focused case studies instead of individual stories. But the text-boundness of her story-linking process is sustained.

[25] "[T]aking the cue from computers which are linked up to process vast amounts of data," Kwok's parallel processing reading strategy requires the reader to read the Bible from multiple perspectives rather than from a single perspective. Kwok regards this reading strategy as "one of the most effective ways to debunk the authority of the [colonial] 'master's' framework" in biblical interpretation. Its purpose is to "challenge the arbitrariness of assigning one interpretation as the normative one" or to show that "alternative readings are indeed possible." Kwok Pui-lan, "Jesus/the Native: Biblical Studies from a Postcolonial Perspective," in *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 80–81.

[26] See Kwok, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, ix–xvi. A revised form of this Bible study is published as "Women and the Ministry of Jesus: Luke 1:46–55; John 8:11; Matthew 15:21–28," in *Women of Courage: Asian Women Reading the Bible*, ed. Lee Oo Chung and others (Seoul: Asian Women's Resource Center for Culture and Theology, 1992), 205–16. In the revised version, Kwok adds a sentence to show where she stands in terms of theological method: "I am committed to doing theology with our rich Asian resources" (p. 206).

[27] Kwok, *Discovering the Bible*, ix–x.

[28] Kwok, *Discovering the Bible*, xi, xiv.

[29] Kwok, *Discovering the Bible*, xii. Here Kwok gives three examples of women challenging Jesus. First, she interprets Jesus' dialogue about worship with a Samaritan woman in John 4 as a lens through which Chinese Christians can take a theological look at "the sacrifice of the students in Beijing" and learn from it that "God is active in the world." Second, she decodes Jesus' confrontation with the scribes and the Pharisees in the Temple with regard to a woman caught in adultery in John 8 and uncovers "a powerful symbol of injustice in society" that calls into question male-dominant traditions and law, namely, "the sexually abused body of the woman" in the biblical world and "the suffering of prostitutes in large Asian cities" in the contemporary world. She then associates the abused bodies of prostitutes with the dead bodies of the Beijing students and argues, "Like Jesus, they questioned the legitimacy of a law and a social order that ignored human suffering and disregarded people's dignity." Third, she elucidates Jesus'

encounter with a Canaanite woman who had a demon-possessed daughter (Matthew 15 and Mark 7) in the light of the mother's persistent faith in God's all-embracing salvation and a

solidarity model for "a church of the people." As she sees it, the martyred Beijing students, like the Canaanite mother in the story, spoke for "the quest for freedom and human dignity" and "the common aspiration of all oppressed people, regardless of race, color, or nationality." She urges, "We have to identify with people's pleas *and try to be 'midwives,'* bringing the suffering people to partake in God's salvation" (see pp. xiii–xiv). Kwok added the italicized words in the previous sentence in her entry in *Women of Courage: Asian Women Reading the Bible*.

[30] For the quotes from this paragraph, see Kwok, *Discovering the Bible*, xiv–xvi, 101n5.

[31] Gale A. Yee, "An Autobiographical Approach to Feminist Biblical Scholarship," *Encounter* 67, no. 4 (2006): 378–84.

[32] Gale A. Yee, "Special Edition: The 3rd Story," *Journal of Asian and Asian American Theology* 2, no. 1 (1997): 109. The original title of this paper was "Inculturation and Diversity in the Politics of National Identity."

[33] Gale A. Yee, "'She Stood in Tears amid the Alien Corn': Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority," in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion & Theology*, ed. Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 45.

[34] Yee, "'She Stood in Tears,'" 53.

[35] Yee, "'She Stood in Tears,'" 54–55.

[36] Yee, "'She Stood in Tears,'" 56–57. Yee further analyzes in detail Ruth's economic and sexual exploitation by Naomi and Boaz (pp. 56–59).

[37] Yee, "An Autobiographical Approach," 378.