



# COMMON GOODS

Economy, Ecology, and Political Theology

MELANIE JOHNSON-DEBAUFRE, CATHERINE KELLER,  
AND ELIAS ORTEGA-APONTE, EDITORS

❧ A Socioeconomic  
Hermeneutics of *Chayim*:  
The Theo-Ethical Implications  
of Reading (with) Wisdom

A. PAIGE RAWSON

*It is Wisdom crying out, Understanding raising her voice.*

*She takes her stand at the topmost heights, by the wayside, at the crossroads,*

*Near the gates at the city entrance; at the entryways, she shouts.*

*I call to you, wo/men; my cry is to all people.*

—PROVERBS 8:1-4

Although the Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible is relatively ambiguous about socioeconomic wealth—who can access “wealth” and how to do so practically—within these texts there is a shrewd multifaceted agent who rises up to speak out, activating and advocating for the unrestricted access to the resource necessary for the survival of all life: Wisdom. The so-called Wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible, traditionally limited to the books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs, is preoccupied with questions about sociopolitical and economic survival, and in each book Wisdom plays a critical role in gaining access to the resources necessary for the maintenance of life. I understand Wisdom’s presence and performance in Genesis 1-3 to be a key to understanding Wisdom in the larger genre (in the Hebrew text and beyond). Wisdom, in my estimation, constitutes the reconfiguration of wealth *as* wealth, the Tree of Life—which is the well of human experience from which such resources are drawn—and the way, strategically speaking, in which to access the resources of experience in order to survive and thrive through the enactment of justice. In socioeconomic systems structured implicitly to sustain the division of labor through the privileging of certain “legitimately” productive, normative, “successful,” and, therefore, “recognizable” bodies over others, wealth is monopolized by the former at the expense of the latter.<sup>1</sup> In the book of Proverbs, however, through the (re)appropriation (8:18), reconfiguration (8:10-11), and redefinition (8:19) of wealth and creation-production as wo/man, the fe/male personification of Wisdom embodies both feminine and masculine energy.

Betraying and exploiting the constructedness of gender as binary, Wisdom is standing at the crossroads and raising he/r voice at the intersections of life.

Since mine is a queer postcolonial reading of Wisdom from a socioeconomic perspective, I am attempting to disrupt hierarchical binary taxonomies that include the gender binary. This challenges the reader to “think twice,” even three times, about the significance and signification of categorical qualifiers (including pronouns), how wo/men’s bodies were abused vis-à-vis phallogocentrism in and through the text (i.e., *whose* voice is hiding behind wo/men, such as Wisdom personified, in the text?) and how these texts might be read for diverse and multiplying meaning rather than either/or.<sup>2</sup> Wisdom does not limit herself to a chosen, elite few but instead contends in Proverbs 8:17b that s/he is always already accessible to any and *every* body in search of he/r.<sup>3</sup> And so, in honor of the bodies marked by the violence of the collusion of capitalism and colonialism parading as a distinctively Christian democracy and in light of the unfettered availability of the wo/man Wisdom and her both fluid and fractured representation as wealth in Proverbs, in this essay I propose that reading wealth with Wisdom invites its reinterpretation, alongside the very concepts of creation-production, in and through a hermeneutic of life (Heb., *chayim*). Such a reading of Wisdom *with* Wisdom renders Wisdom and her wealth as the very marked and multiple, seditious, and oh-so-queer other(ed) bodies categorically denied access to wealth . . . always already rising up at the crossroads.<sup>4</sup>

Only a week after the Twelfth Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquium commenced, on February 14, 2013, over one billion people around the world rose up and took to the streets. The One Billion Rising movement involved demonstrations by goodly folk around the globe, who danced, marched, and spoke out in cities and at various crossroads where violence against women and children occurs most often. Like the Occupy Movement, One Billion Rising was a people’s movement birthed out of a common struggle for survival with the intention of forging solidarity among the socially and economically oppressed majority who, by protesting the collusion of democracy and capitalism, were seeking a platform to incite the transformation of an insidious socioeconomic system that can only ever benefit a very small minority. Though it was a specific response to the various forms of violence perpetrated against more than one billion women and girls, like Occupy it also forged a global community of people of all genders, races, ethnicities, classes, and abilities, creating and strengthening both social and economic alliances around the world.<sup>5</sup> The synchronicity of these multifarious bodies rising at manifold crossroads only a week after this colloquium on “Common Good(s)” is fortuitous, as a particular materialization of the movement has inspired both my

socioeconomic hermeneutic of Wisdom in Proverbs and my own advocacy for an actualization of justice for every-body in the world.

More than five years ago during a solidarity immersion to the Philippines, I encountered two Filipino/a NGOs whose passion for justice and commitment to the people's movement in the Philippines transformed my politics: Gabriela Philippines and Karapatan ("right/s" in Tagalog).<sup>6</sup> During my time there in 2008 (and again in 2013) our team worked alongside, learned from, and listened to these (primarily) women, who shared their struggle for survival in the face of Western imperialism and globalized capitalism—the imported socioeconomic systems whose enforcement has resulted in the violation of the Filipino people's human rights and has resulted specifically in violence against women and their commodification. The impact Gabriela and Karapatan have had on me is due to myriad ways in which they are the manifold body of Wisdom rising up, "taking a stand at the topmost heights, by the wayside, at the crossroads, crying out" to and for the justice of all people.<sup>7</sup> Through its Filipino and U.S. contingents, Gabriela continues to speak and act out against issues of access, government negligence, and rape.<sup>8</sup>

Wisdom is struggling for survival, and the ways in which s/he is working in and through the political bodies of Gabriela in the Philippines is visceral. S/he speaks for and as "women" but represents the struggle of all nonnormative bodies for survival against systems of domination and dehumanization. I focus on Gabriela's body politic in order to, in the words of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "prevent biblical knowledge from continuing to be produced in the interest of domination and injustice" and to remind us that Wisdom is always already embodied practice.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, it is my contention that Gabriela's strategic affront to the coconstitutive systems of imperialism and capitalism can and should be interpreted as but one modern manifestation of Wisdom and he/r manifesto, which is always already calling us to rise up as Wisdom and cry out at the crossroads for the common good(s) of all.

Like our current global situation for certain communities of "marked" or othered bodies, it has been argued that the Persian Period—the time in which the book of Proverbs and the creation narratives of Genesis were most likely penned—was a time of economic and existential crisis for the postexilic community of Yehud. It was a situation marked by precarity.<sup>10</sup> As such, survival under the Persian Empire would have required shrewdness, sagacity, and creativity—in short, Wisdom.<sup>11</sup> It is for this reason and the numerous intertextual allusions in Proverbs 8–9 to Genesis 1–3 that Wisdom invites us to read these pericopes side by side and face to face. Such a strategy does not merely interpret the textual body responsibly within its so-called original context(s), however; it is also employed out of responsibility to the innumerable othered

bodies in various contexts who have suffered the repercussions of the uncritical appropriation of these and other biblical texts. I, therefore, read Proverbs 8:10–9:6 alongside Genesis 1–3 as midrash through what I understand to be a socioeconomic hermeneutics of *chayim* (the Hebrew word translated “life” or “survival”), foregrounding Wisdom in/and real wo/men’s bodies according to their complex association with life (and, as such, survival tactics) but also with the threat of death.<sup>12</sup>

I also do so queerly. I read Wisdom in the text as *wo/man*, not in order to invert (and thereby reinstate) the hierarchical gender binary, but to disrupt it, since Wisdom herself deconstructs this dichotomy through her fluid gender-play.<sup>13</sup> Before even engaging in exegesis, then, I invite the reader to understand Wisdom queerly as *khoric* womb—both a place and a process of be(com)ing—and as *wo/man* who perpetually troubles the motif of “female” as always already other than, and juxtaposed in diametric opposition to, “male” (as is often the case in biblical narrative).<sup>14</sup> Wisdom is then both a genre—the body-space of its own articulation—and the very embodiment (and process) of Wisdom. In this way, s/he inhabits the various ways in which we each work Wisdom out in our own skin and in our various communities. As *khoric* womb of creation, Wisdom is always already induced to and inducing labor, s/he is inhabited by and within the (re)production of each creation event throughout space-time (Prov. 8:22ff.). Reading with Wisdom can only ever be a destabilizing, radically embodied endeavor, as s/he reflects the ways in which all bodies (textual or otherwise) just don’t “stay put.” The reader initiates and is induced, infringed upon, put off, lured by, and drawn into Wisdom’s textual body as a contextualized body, one whose wily ways obstinately evade, and even break open, the boundaries of the text as well as the boundaries of a deity who presumably owns the wealth of the world.<sup>15</sup>

“Wealth” includes Wisdom as the tree of Genesis 2:17ff. The deity YHWH Elohim allocates wealth to those who most effectively bear *his* image, a far cry from Elohim’s reflections in Genesis 1:27 (what a difference the title “Lord” can make). While these bearers in the Hebrew tradition are often God’s virtuous male subjects, Genesis 1:27 reflects otherwise, and Proverbs 31 is another exception. Wisdom in Proverbs might be read as the feminine other to the divine male regent, as in the good wife of chapter 31. However, I propose that Wisdom cannot be limited by or to this interpretation. S/he is not merely (m)other in opposition to the divine patriarch, nor merely as his multiple, but (like *khora*) as imbalanced, multiplying cosmic event. I read Wisdom, therefore, as an urge or energy, intentionally, even strategically, in excess and beyond the control of the One (masculine) God and his binary gender system.

The influence of poststructuralist feminism on my reading of Wisdom bears remarking. Luce Irigaray, in particular, who writes, “*Never being simply*

one, [woman is] a sort of expanding universe to which no limits could be fixed and which would not be incoherence nonetheless. . . . Woman always remains several, but she is kept from dispersion because the other is already within her and is autoerotically familiar to her."<sup>16</sup> Because Wisdom is always already a (con)textualized body, then, s/he must be read with or through the Wisdom of "real live" bodies. Therefore, my exegesis is not merely supplemented by but saturated with Wisdom's ways made manifest in both human and nonhuman othered bodies. The purpose of my hermeneutical endeavor is ethical, following my commitment to justice as the negotiation and fleshing out (quite literally) of the "common good(s)" among us all, locally and globally.

Although Wisdom disturbs in and through "real live" bodies, her disruptive presence emerges even before bodies do at creation. Present "in the beginning" of Genesis 1 (Prov. 8:22–30), Wisdom's wealth does not materialize explicitly until Genesis 2:9 with the introduction of the tree of life. Wisdom's association with the tree of life would have most likely been implicit in her ancient interpretive community; however, modern (i.e., foreign) readers must rely on Wisdom's self-disclosure as tree of life in Proverbs 3:18. In fact, when one considers Wisdom's explicit identification with the tree of life in light of her reconstitution of wealth *as* wealth (in Prov. 8:18–19, 21), it seems almost superfluous to argue that reading with Wisdom necessitates a socioeconomic critique of any text where Wisdom is implicated. Therefore, we cannot avoid acknowledging Wisdom's reconfiguration of wealth in our interpretation of Genesis 2:9–3:24 (or any text). Even as Genesis 2:9–3:24—positioned as it is "in the beginning" of the Torah—functions as a root myth for the so-called Abrahamic faith traditions, I understand it to be the primary narrative of socioeconomic conflict in the Hebrew Bible. This origin story is as much about the denial of access to resources necessary for survival as it is about the beginning or formation of a people and a communal identity.<sup>17</sup> For the tree of life (*etz chayim*), "which is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:9), is denied to the farming and/or working class (signified by Adam and Eve) by the landholding political elite, represented by the king, YHWH Elohim.<sup>18</sup> It follows, then, that each of the narratives of the Hebrew Bible that appear after the event in the Garden reflect the complex relationships of wealth, power, and poverty to labor, loss, and accretion found in the Garden, relations that betray a web of economic interactions that necessarily involve the acquisition, embodiment, or disruption of Wisdom and the people's struggle for survival *qua* Wisdom.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, reading with Wisdom's rhizomatic root system becomes integral if one is to interpret the bodies in the Bible and the ways in which the Bible is in and influencing the interpretation of bodies.

The representations of Wisdom, its interpretation, and its implications for women have understandably held great significance for feminist biblical schol-

ars in light of the struggle for rights, representation, and humanization—especially for Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Claudia V. Camp.<sup>20</sup> Both scholars have written volumes on Wisdom as the feminine aspect of the divine. In *Wisdom Ways*, Schüssler Fiorenza argues for a “feminist biblical Wisdom interpretation” as spiritual practice and the emancipatory hermeneutical remedy for the transformation of an otherwise kyriarchal field.<sup>21</sup> According to Schüssler Fiorenza, it is not enough “just to understand and appropriate biblical texts and traditions. Rather, feminist biblical hermeneutics has the task of changing biblical interpretation and its Western idealist hermeneutical frameworks, individualist practices, and socio-political relations of domination.”<sup>22</sup> That is, the goal is not merely the centering of wo/men as subjects within the biblical text but also the privileging of wo/men’s subjectivity in the process of translation. In order to instantiate change, we must begin not with the biblical text but with the lived realities of wo/men within diverse experiences and contexts.<sup>23</sup> In this way, Wisdom becomes a way of reading and upending patriarchy and its modes of making meaning and marking bodies. However, in distinction from Schüssler Fiorenza’s interpretation, I read (with) Wisdom as more than anti-imperial feminist hermeneutic, which interprets in order to “abolish relations of domination” and “struggle for autonomy.”<sup>24</sup> Though s/he should be interpreted through the experiences of wo/men, Wisdom is only ever a woman. Wisdom for Schüssler Fiorenza, then, is a unidirectional practice and hermeneutic, not a rhizomatic body. In my view, it is not autonomy for which Wisdom struggles, but interdependence: Wisdom’s way is not to invert but to undermine and ruin hierarchal binaries.

Although Schüssler Fiorenza reflects on the ways in which we might read Wisdom in contemporary women’s movements, she and other feminist scholars have taken great care to reconstruct the “original” context of the text, attempting to reimagine the world in which the woman Wisdom was written.<sup>25</sup> For her part, Claudia Camp has written extensively on what Wisdom’s representation reveals about the context in which it was penned. In her book *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Camp asserts, “Wisdom personified as a woman appears to have had the potential for profound symbolic impact in the post-exilic period.”<sup>26</sup> She proceeds to highlight the multiple female figures in Proverbs, including the “household manager” of chapter 31, and concludes that although there is no explicit correlation drawn between Wisdom and these women, there are “many points of contact.”<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, for Camp, the “interweaving of the various female images” in Proverbs reflects the importance of both women and wisdom in the building of house, family, and, therefore, society and communal identity in a kingless postexilic era.<sup>28</sup>

Camp later ventures beyond Proverbs (yet still within the feminine) in *Wise, Strange, and Holy*, as she builds on her previous exploration of female repre-

sensation in the Hebrew Bible. The primary focus of Camp's research is the construction (or coconstitution) of the Strange Woman and the formation of identity within the priestly rhetoric of purity as she sought to expose "an ideological cover for persistent tensions [of identity, theodicy, politics, authority, and purity]" within the postexilic community of Yehud.<sup>29</sup> Camp interrogates the rhetorical function of gendered strangeness in the priestly class's preservation of purity (particularity and priority) through the annihilation of the Other.<sup>30</sup>

The slippages that emerge in any gendered "process of stranger-making" are for Camp particularly acute in the hyperbolic, imposed opposition of the Strange Woman (*ishah zarah*) of Proverbs 7 and the woman Wisdom (*chokmah*) of chapters 8 and 9.<sup>31</sup> Performing a "deconstructive reading of the text," Camp reads their relationship through the trickster motif, "undercutting its most obvious message of absolute opposition between good and evil . . . and highlighting their paradoxical but experientially validated unity."<sup>32</sup> Although the biblical scholar is not working out of an explicitly poststructuralist theoretical frame, the intersections with queer and postcolonial critiques of identity and gender are undeniable: exposing the very apparatus by which the notion of the other/difference is constructed and calcified in opposition and subordination to the One/Same.<sup>33</sup> Camp, however, takes this disruption no further in either her reflections on the context in which this bifurcation was constructed or its implications for the Yehudim or contemporary wo/men. Camp's critique of one-dimensional feminist readings is incisive but does not attend to the ways Wisdom as the Strange Woman troubles the gender norms out of which s/he was constructed.

Drawing from both Camp and Homi Bhabha, Mayra Rivera moves in this very direction in "God at the Crossroads," her postcolonial, feminist Sophia-logical intervention. Rivera reads Sophia as a disruptive force whose "undecidable ontological position . . . will not be resolved. Her identity remains indefinable and, for that matter, open."<sup>34</sup> Bhabha's hybridity is integral to Rivera's identification of Sophia at the crossroads—a textual allusion to her liminality.<sup>35</sup> The text's unambiguous emphasis on ascension in Proverbs 8:1–2a, where Wisdom is "raising" her voice, "crying out," and taking her stand at the highest place in the city, are for Rivera depictions of "divine transcendence," functioning as acts of Sophia's resistance to the economy of the Same.<sup>36</sup> I consider such a reading of *Chokmah* through Rivera's lens of relational transcendence to be a necessary liberative intervention—particularly for persons repeatedly oppressed by the economic expansionist projects of neocolonial capitalism (i.e., globalization)—and integral to my own, yet I cannot help but read *Chokmah's* positionality even more queerly.

As much as it resists bifurcation, a postcolonial rendering of the feminine hybrid Sophia such as Rivera's, still comes uncomfortably close to simply in-



verting hierarchical dualisms, thereby reinstating the very binaries it seeks to disrupt.<sup>37</sup> While attending to the cultural complexities Wisdom's representation reflects, other than a reference to the fluidity of Sophia's identity for ancient readers of Logos—who "did not construe the gender difference between Sophia and Logos as an insurmountable boundary"—Rivera does not consider how Wisdom's transcendence troubles the binary gender system.<sup>38</sup> In fact, even as Rivera elucidates the ontological indeterminacy of Wisdom and God in their gender performance, she unintentionally reinforces the notion of desire as heteronormative: the provocation of a hybrid Sophia, both wise and strange, is that she "could excite not only Israel's men but Israel's God!"<sup>39</sup> Rivera articulates Sophia's hybridity in terms of her gender (re)presentation, for she identifies Sophia's self-description as explicitly destabilizing the dualism of the "male God's presence" and "female 'form.'"<sup>40</sup> However, in Rivera's prioritizing of the "fluid communion—rather than absolute opposition" of God and creation, she also neglects to interrogate the binary between the ontological categories "male" and "female" and between God (as He) and Wisdom (as She).<sup>41</sup> As a postcolonial interpretation of Wisdom, Rivera's work attends to the appropriation of feminine Sophia by masculine Logos, but she does not identify Wisdom's own strategic (re)appropriations as a part of her critical resistance to domination.<sup>42</sup>

The resistance Rivera detects is in Sophia's transcendence. It is Wisdom's transpositions—at the uppermost heights, on the byways, and at the city gates—which are for Rivera, as for me, reflective of her transcendence as well as her audacious occupation of civic spaces. Wisdom occupies the places where text and tradition locate honorable men and "loose women" (7:12) and in so doing s/he both resists any tidy opposition to the Strange Woman (whom I understand to represent Folly) and refuses conformity to normative gender roles. What Rivera (as Silvia Schroer before her) deems Sophia's transcendence of categorical classification, I consider *Chokmah's* strategic undermining; further, Rivera's Sophiological hybridity I interpret as multiplicity.<sup>43</sup> For that which Kathryn Tanner has asserted of transcendence—that it is "the model for resistance to the Same"—may be true of Wisdom in he/r transcendence as well as her descents.<sup>44</sup> Wisdom rises *up*-on the wayside, representing the depths of human experience because her home is the earth (Prov. 9:1) *and* the way to *sheol* (7:27).

The wealth of Wisdom may very well transcend understanding, but it is her understanding in the struggles at the crossroads that releases the well of Wisdom running deep, indiscriminately desiring bodies, and incessantly erupting from below. Wisdom dissents in her indecent, transcending descent.<sup>45</sup> Wisdom is not one (nor in one place), however, and could never be only two—as

the notion of hybridity implies.<sup>46</sup> Wisdom, like female sexuality for Luce Irigaray, is

always at least double, goes even further: it is plural. She finds pleasure almost anywhere . . . the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined—in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness. “She” is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious.<sup>47</sup>

Irigaray continues making an assertion that has been spoken of Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible: that he/r words are contradictory and “her language, in which ‘she’ sets off in all directions [leaves] ‘him’ unable to discern the coherence of any meaning.”<sup>48</sup> What Irigaray once posited of the economy of female sexuality and pleasure is also true of the social and sexual economy of Wisdom as wo/man: S/he transcends not only the binary gender system but also her own bifurcation.

One moment Wisdom, the next Folly (as the Strange Woman), the diverse voices and descriptions of Wisdom within Proverbs testify to Wisdom’s incoherence and elusivity. Wise and strange, top and bottom, left and right, inside and out collide with every body in between and beyond the bifurcated boundaries of intelligibility and normativity, continually emerging and diverging. Disrupting already all-too-fragile body borders from the first acts at creation—when the s/word of Elohim cut (*bara*) the heavens and the earth and separated dark from light—to this day, Wisdom exists to trouble not only this dichotomy but any and every hierarchical dualism (i.e., male/female, owner/object, proprietor/property, master/slave).<sup>49</sup> Wisdom is not simply in the transcending, the rising up, and the descending or undermining: Indeed, Wisdom is in the occupying of bodies with/in the boundaries and beyond borders.

Always already occupying the places and processes of the struggle for survival, Wisdom is embodied in the experiences of those reading with he/r as they seek understanding at the illimitable crossroads of life. The Hebrew Bible itself bears witness to the wounds of he/r textual ab/uses by the s/word of a phallogocratic economy that casts woman and Wisdom as commodity, goods exchanged for capital. Wisdom becomes Folly (and Folly, Wisdom) as s/he persistently foils the tireless attempts to bifurcate, cut up, and contain he/r in the text and its interpretation in various capitalistic and gender “normative” contexts. Wisdom responds, as/in queer bodies, in the deconstruction of binaries and through reappropriation.<sup>50</sup> Chokmah/Sophia not only disturbs the boundary between Wisdom and Folly, instead of resisting her commodi-

fication, s/he claims or owns it.<sup>51</sup> Having been affiliated with king YHWH Elohim, yet subjected to the king's commodification of Wisdom as woman, s/he has acquired wealth through its very reconfiguration. In Proverbs 8:10–11, Wisdom argues her case and attempts to persuade her audience by comparing herself to, and even exceeding the value of, silver, gold, rubies: "goods." Slowly shifting, Wisdom then claims ownership: "Riches and honor belong to me, enduring wealth and success" (8:18). And by verse 19 s/he has fully transitioned, stating that the fruit s/he produces (as wo/man, womb, and tree of life) is even better than fine gold or choice silver.<sup>52</sup>

Wisdom has built a house, yet s/he refuses to remain behind closed doors; s/he prefers a more public persona than the privacy of her own home allows.<sup>53</sup> Standing in *Sheol*, rising up on the heights, crying out at the crossroads, Wisdom is anything but a lady and not intelligible as (gentle)man. YHWH's fellow craftsman and confidant (*amon*) at creation (Prov. 8:30), in Proverbs 3:18–19, Wisdom is revealed to be the Tree of Life (*etz chayim*), the one resource in the garden YHWH Elohim withholds and to which He [*sic*] attempts to prevent access. In the TNKH verse 18 reads, "She is a tree of life to those who grasp her, and whoever holds on to her is happy." The word translated "happy" here could also be translated "fortunate," "striding" or "led," implying that one guided by Wisdom likewise leads a fruitful, productive, and even—I contend—provocative, defiant, deviant life.<sup>54</sup>

Wisdom's backlash in response to her confinement by the deity is her transcendence of (con)textual boundaries, her (re)appropriation of wealth, and her resistance to bifurcation, even as s/he reveals her own activity to be commensurate with that of the masculine deity. Wisdom speaks strangely, foolishly, and quite queerly, from a space of slashed subjectivity, which s/he transforms through the back(s)lash of he/r own creative subjectivity—*extremis malis extrema remedia* ("desperate times call for desperate measures").<sup>55</sup> Wisdom is queer because s/he is one that is never only *one* as always already manifest in the experiences of the many othered bodies struggling to be seen. Wisdom speaks from he/r lived experience, and this is precisely why Wisdom's hermeneutic—the very way s/he understands and is understood—is a hermeneutic of life.

And Wisdom, bearing the scars of sedition, offers he/r wealth indiscriminately, even indecently, to any body who wants it: "Those who love me I love, and those who seek me will find me" (Prov. 8:17, TNKH). As the Tree of Life, Wisdom extends her branches and calls out, "Come . . . Swing . . . Eat . . . Play."<sup>56</sup> As the Strange Wo/man, Folly, Wisdom is persuasive, seductive, loose, and loud.<sup>57</sup> Yet as the very vehicle of sagacity he/rself, *Chokmah* will not force he/rself on those who do not yearn for he/r (see Prov. 7:5, 21; 9:13). Though Wisdom extends herself to all, she knows her own worth as wealth. To the

ones who reject he/r urgency and advising, who in their preference for simplicity refuse to see the fecundity of Wisdom's complex multiplicity, Wisdom merely mocks, mimics, and keeps moving (Prov. 1:22–32).

A veritable assemblage of contradictions that cradles and contends the unity of opposites s/he represents and explodes, Wisdom is a queer body of queer bodies refusing to remain in one place, both but never either and perpetually transgressing binary divisions. Cut by the divine s/word into infinite bodies at creation, like the wandering womb of Plato's cosmology *Timaeus*, Wisdom is khora, the Sophia-Logos, who hurls he/rself into the cosmos in and through any body embracing and embodying he/r through innumerable creative events. Wisdom, then, is multiple and multiplying, s/he is in all ways always already in all and all in, except when s/he isn't. *Zarah* and *Chokmah*, Strange and Wise—so very Wise because so Strange—Wisdom is found in the manifold materializations of bodies marked as illegitimate and unintelligible by Western capitalism's colonizing codification. It is, then, precisely their appropriation of the strange and wily ways of Wisdom as wo/man, wealth, and a tree of life that the body politic of Gabriela unintentionally embodies Wisdom's ways.

"Mine are counsel and resourcefulness; I am understanding; courage is mine" (Prov. 8:14, TNKH). Wisdom possesses the very skills and courage for survival in the face of injustices that legitimate tyranny, trafficking, and the commodification of certain bodies by others. Desperate times call for desperate, and disparate, measures; and this is Wisdom's call in and through the work of Gabriela.<sup>58</sup> I know no more apposite exemplar of Wisdom than Gabriela—a modern-day movement and manifestation of Wisdom's *under*-standing, her undermining back(s)lash, and the embodiment of a *he/r*meneutics of *chayim*. My biblical interpretation accompanies activism—the appropriation of and aspiration toward the "common good(s)"—in glocal contexts that, like the Philippines, have been hacked by the nationalism of a U.S. militarism compelling the colonial capitalistic conquest onward as "Christian soldiers."<sup>59</sup>

Having spent time in the Philippines with Gabriela and serving for many years on the United Methodist Church's Task Force to the Philippines, I have become quite familiar with the ways in which these wo/men strategically deploy their bodies as Wisdom to subvert governmental tactics (U.S. and Filipino) that deny access, devastate communities, and destroy life.<sup>60</sup> Gabriela fights in order to procure justice and secure resources, and s/he does so by unconventional, "strange," even foolish, means, which command the attention of government officials and demand a response. Always already in he/r ascending—her rising up and uprising—from the "grassroots," s/he is in-de(s)cent, diving deeper into the struggle that is the human experience. S/he rises up and cries out from the *bukid* (farm) and the *lungsod* (city), from the *palasyo* and the *baran-*

gay (barrio), from *lapag* (below) or *sheol* of the *inang-bayan* (motherland). In the rice fields, amid the wilderness, from the plantation to the village, on the underground level and in the “high” courts, at various commercial intersections, on the battlefield and in the picket line s/he understands in a space where heaven is indistinguishable from hell. Embracing the dead in he/r arms, haunted by the disappeared, and having been subjected to extreme forms of violence, s/he holds he/r place in the uppermost heights of the government assembly, he/r anger erupting and disrupting bourgeois complacency. Experience makes Gabriela wise as s/he occupies the crossroads. There is no distinction, yet he/r difference abounds; and in this is Wisdom. S/he is the body of Wisdom universal in the particularity of every body. S/he is the be(com)ing of Wisdom’s conduct unbecoming in our world today, and her *hermeneutic* of *chayim* extends to us an embodied model of the affective awareness of the ecstatic interdependence of all life—but only if and when we take hold of Wisdom.

Wisdom is not merely understanding: S/he is queerly *under*-standing at the crossroads. Standing under structures of dehumanization as s/he does, not to support but to subvert the hegemonic order of empiricism (that is, empire-racism); heteronormativity, and homonationalism, oligarchic opiates that lull bodies to sleep and keep them comatose and docile (Foucault), unknowingly acquiescing to the commodification of culture (hooks), and complicit in the deaths of tens of thousands of unnamed others living worlds away, who are in fact none other than ourselves.<sup>61</sup> Wisdom’s belligerent back(s)lash, then, is he/r commitment to undermining theophalocracies, systems that permit limited access—if any at all—to not only resources but also recognizability.<sup>62</sup> Wisdom rises up and transcends even as she undermines through her seditious occupation of the very apparatus upon which such systems are founded.<sup>63</sup> Wisdom’s back(s)lash has, in fact, been discernible from “the beginning” (Gen. 1.1; Prov. 8.22–31) as the *he/r*meneutic of *chayim*: Wisdom’s effervescent urge to arm us with he/rself as a tool for survival, life in the midst of death in the midst of life. S/he is the ecstatic interdependence that honors the sanctity and creative subjectivity of *all* life.

To read with Wisdom and to *under*-stand Wisdom queerly is to engage the semiotic slippages and the liminal spaces produced and inhabited by wo/men’s bodies both inside and outside the text in an effort to honor all life as prec(ar)ious.<sup>64</sup> The by-product, then, of this way of reading is the radical theological and therefore political effects and affects of a hermeneutics of *chayim* within contemporary contexts—as the relationship of the political and hermeneutical is always already reciprocal. Simultaneously host and guest, Wisdom enters even as s/he receives and thereby disturbs the very conventions by which Proverbs is interpreted and distributed.<sup>65</sup> Disrupting hierarchy and the difference between text/context, transmission/reception, female/male, wealth/

wisdom, transcendence/descent, guest/host, the way of Wisdom blurs not only the boundaries between Wisdom and God and Wisdom and Folly, but between Wisdom's Folly/Chaos and YHWH/Elohim's order(ing).<sup>66</sup> For when the wealth of Wisdom in he/r undermining transcendent multiplicity and precariously excessive fecundity emerges as the/a locus for life (as text), s/he becomes the wandering womb always already creating infinite possibilities for boundless incarnations of a be(com)ing Wisdom accessible to *all* life.<sup>67</sup>

## NOTES

I acknowledge the influence of my adviser-mentors, Kenneth Ngwa and Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, whose Wisdom work, in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament respectively, has inspired my own theopoetic pursuits.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

1. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009), 50–52. See also Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004). Here Butler and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza intersect. The biblical scholar contends, “The fundamental need to be recognized as human is constitutive of what it means to be human.” Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001), 88.
2. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 57–58.
3. I employ “marked” to signify all “nonnormative” bodies, arguably always already gendered (i.e., feminine) bodies.
4. The use of gender-inclusive pronouns is one effort to foreground Wisdom's queerness and gender fluidity. Noting its various manifestations (knowledge, shrewdness, cunning, trickery, beguilement, etc.), I honor wisdom's demystification—resisting the bifurcation of *Wisdom* and *wisdom*. As “that mediating female personification/hypostasy found in Proverbs and elsewhere,” Wisdom is a “proper” noun *and* a “common” noun because potentially present in any-body. Carole Fontaine, *Smooth Words: Women, Proverbs, and Performance in Biblical Wisdom* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 2.
5. See “One Billion Rising Live” (2014), <http://www.onebillionrising.org>.
6. A delegate of the Cal-Nev UMC Philippines Solidarity Task Force, I traveled with the team to Manila (2009) to escort Melissa Roxas to her trial and learn from and stand with/in support of the people's struggle—encounters made possible by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Pastors Ruth Cortez, Jeanelle Ablola, and Michael Yoshii.
7. Derived from the stem of the preposition *al* is the verb *alah*: “to rise up,” the preposition often translated “by the wayside,” *ale-derek*, may also mean “up-on the way.” L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT), trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 824–27.
8. Gabriela's response to the Aquino administration's ineffective response to the devastation left in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) is but one example. See “On

- Rape Incidents in Areas Ravaged by Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan)," (November 14, 2013), <http://www.gabrielaph.com/2013/11/14/on-rape-incidents-in-areas-ravaged-by-typhoon-yolanda-haiyan/>.
9. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 77, 89.
  10. See Herbert R. Marbury, "The Strange Woman in Persian Yehud: A Reading of Proverbs 7," in *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period* ed. Jon L. Berquist (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). According to Butler, "Precariousness and precarity are intersecting concepts. Lives are by definition precarious: they can be expunged at will or by accident; their persistence is in no sense guaranteed. . . . Precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (*Frames of War*), 25–26. Although precarity characterized life for "Israel" long before Persian Imperial rule, the emergence of Wisdom literature as a genre bespeaks an important development—particularly concerning (what can be inferred about) Yehud's precarity—not unrelated to the biblical treatment of the mother goddess qua *asherah*, *chavah*, *ishah zarah*, and *chokmah*.
  11. Steven Weitzman's analysis of Jews in the Second Temple period, particularly his observations about the "early Jewish struggle for cultural survival," is apt. Of Jews' "survival tactics" Weitzman writes, "They used the imagination's powers to expand the parameters of reality, to overcome the limits of space, time, even death" (*Surviving Sacrilege: Cultural Persistence in Jewish Antiquity* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005], 160). The "art of cultural persistence" enabled them to "maneuver between the real and the imagined, to respond to and operate within the constraints of reality but also to transcend them" (160–61). Wisdom is not only transcendence but also strategic (subterranean) subversion.
  12. See Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 875–93.
  13. My use of "fe/male" is a queer thing, political not essentialist. (And I read the feminine beyond the binary.) I employ "fe/male" and "wo/man" here (1) consciously queering (blurring) conceptualizations of female as feminine *in opposition to* the masculine male—applying the term to those marginal characters, who are not overtly "male," and (2) like Schüssler Fiorenza, to "lift into consciousness the linguistic violence of so-called generic male-centered language." Utilizing such terms demands that the reader consider who/what is included in its referent. I conjure both models for their (overstated?) tension(s) (i.e., Schüssler Fiorenza and the "French poststructuralist feminists" [particularly Irigaray]). In *différance*, there is no difference between language's theoretical and political employment (especially *in the feminine*). See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 6n21. For an exposition on Hebrew masculinity, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).
  14. Wisdom is, for me, *khora* and an affective bloomspace (Seigworth and Gregg). Plato introduces his third *genos*—the errant cause and wandering womb of the

cosmos—in *Timaeus*, where *χώρα* functions as the singular space that is no-place at all whereby and wherein the philosopher is able to conceptualize and conceive the cosmos. Disappointed in the *Timaeus*'s first attempt at a cosmology, Socrates queries his representation of form's materialization. And so he begins again, only now *χώρα*, the recondite place (beyond *νοῦς*), becomes the *third space* wherein and whereby the sensible and intelligible touch (of necessity)—an encounter resulting in the conception of all material be(com)ings. In and through her perpetual becoming(s), *χώρα* becomes the very vehicle that enables Plato to articulate the enigma of genesis—the cosmic space in which form materializes. Without the liminal space *χώρα* inhabits and expresses, Plato would have been inhibited by Reason in his first account to an illegitimate (because illogical) cosmological event. See John Sallis's incisive exposition in *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); also see Patricia Cox Miller's choric reading of Origen's abodes (*De Principiis*) as place and process, which has inspired mine of Wisdom. Cox Miller, *The Poetry of Thought in Late Antiquity: Essays in Imagination and Religion* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), 181–82.

15. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 31. Two points of interest: (1) Irigaray appears to be inadvertently gesturing *khora* in her depiction of the feminine (as self-structuring, sustaining); (2) Irigaray's early work, like that of Kristeva and Cixous, has been misinterpreted and inaccurately labeled "essentialist" for her political appropriation of "female" and "feminine" in an effort to disrupt the gender binary and the phallogocentric discourse through which it is constructed and maintained.
16. *Ibid.*
17. The questions driving my work differ from those of Michael S. Moore and James Kennedy. However, like Moore I employ a lens of socioeconomic conflict—in addition to postcolonial and queer theory. And with Kennedy, I interpret Genesis 2–3 not 4 (as Moore contends) to be the primary socioeconomic conflict. I imagine it as a root system from which the narrative and prose of Genesis (and the Proverbs) developed, framing the interpretation of the entire Bible. See Michael S. Moore, *Wealthwatch: A Study of Socioeconomic Conflict in the Bible* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011); James Kennedy, "Peasants in Revolt: Political Allegory in Genesis 2–3," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 15, no. 47 (1990): 3–14.
18. Within my larger project, the tree of life is the central imagery of wisdom/knowledge in Genesis 1–3, also serving an integral function in the personification of Wisdom beyond Genesis. I understand the *etz da'at tov varah* as merismus and its *vav* as pleonastic or explicative, indicating that it is, in fact, the *etz chayim*. In other words, the "tree of the knowledge of all things" (good *and* bad or [from] good *to* evil) is the "tree of life." Although this association is instrumental to my reading of the *ishah/hava* (the woman Eve), it also indicates the *coincidencia oppositorum* that characterizes Wisdom (in Genesis, Proverbs, and throughout Wisdom literature).
19. I read knowledge (*da'at*) and wisdom (*chokmah*) together (Prov. 2:10). Though they signify differently, their slippages interest me. Knowledge, like discernment (*th'vunah*), is arguably an aspect (metonym, synecdoche) of wisdom (Prov. 2:1).



20. Influential upon my own work is that of Carole Fontaine and Linda Day, feminist biblical scholars who have contributed richly to Wisdom studies. See Fontaine, *Smooth Words*; Linda Day, "Wisdom and the Feminine in the Hebrew Bible," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*, ed. Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 114–27.
21. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 77, 186–87. Kyriarchy is one of the many neologisms for which Schüssler Fiorenza has become known: it is "a socio-political system of domination in which elite educated propertied men hold power over wo/men and other men." Laura Beth Bugg, "Explanation of Terms (Glossary)," in Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 211.
22. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 89.
23. *Ibid.*, 89–91.
24. *Ibid.*, 88.
25. The editors of and contributors to *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom* appeal to Schüssler Fiorenza's emancipatory criterion in *Rhetoric and Ethic*, rethinking biblical (con)texts to center women. My project resonates more with her exhortation in *Wisdom Ways*: to foreground contemporary women's experience in biblical studies toward increased public awareness and research "in the interest of wo/men." The task of feminist interpreters, then, is not merely translating the Bible for wo/men but learning from/with wo/men "struggling for survival and change in order to be able to 'translate' wo/men's quest for self-esteem and justice into the language of the academy." Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 89. See also Shelly Matthews, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, eds., *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity, 2003); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).
26. Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine* (Sheffield: Almond, 1985), 291.
27. *Ibid.*, 285–86.
28. *Ibid.*, 290.
29. Claudia V. Camp, *Wise, Strange, Holy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 70–71.
30. *Ibid.*, 343. Camp is motioning toward something quite similar to what Sara Ahmed deems "stranger danger," in which the notion of a pure, unified, and whole communal "I" is constituted with and through the representation and intensification of the dangerous impurity of the other. Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 26–35.
31. Camp, *Wise, Strange, Holy*, 70–71.
32. *Ibid.*, 88. Though Camp never explicitly articulates this subversion as a "unity of opposites," the implications are readily apparent.
33. Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, Butler, and Bhabha are the primary specters haunting my hermeneutics.
34. Mayra Rivera, "God at the Crossroads," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 248.
35. Of the stairwell (an adaptation of the African American artist Renée Green's exhibit *Sites of Genealogy*) Bhabha writes, "The stairwell as liminal space, in-between

- the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower . . . [preventing] identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities." Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.
36. Rivera, "God at the Crossroads," 238, 246–47, 249.
  37. Stephen D. Moore addresses this very conundrum when he writes, "To deconstruct a hierarchical opposition is not simply to argue that the term ordinarily repressed is in reality the superior term. Rather than stand the opposition on its head in front of a mirror, thereby inverting it but leaving it intact nonetheless, deconstruction attempts to show how each term in the opposition is joined to its companion by an intricate network of arteries. In consequence, the line ordinarily drawn between the two terms is shown to be a political and not a natural reality." Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 30.
  38. Rivera, "God at the Crossroads," 199.
  39. *Ibid.*, 196. While God and Sophia potentially desire to be gendered *as* other, Rivera's depiction of this desire is *for* the other as ontologically gendered male and female respectively. See Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 25.
  40. *Ibid.*, 195, 200.
  41. *Ibid.*, 195–97, 200.
  42. *Ibid.*: 198–99.
  43. Rivera, "God at the Crossroads," 241, 243, 249; Silvia Schroer, "Wise and Counselling Woman in Ancient Israel: Literary and Historical Ideals of the Personified *hokmâ*," in *A Feminist Companion to Wisdom Literature*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 67–84. Rivera, like Schroer, has a feminist theological investment in reading Wisdom as transcendent. Schroer writes, "Transcendence and heaven are combined with the feminine. Biblical Sophia meets the requirement of feminist theology to integrate human experience instead of separating or demonizing parts of it, to search for correspondence and interconnections instead of settling for separation and differentiation. She offers help because she is interactive and open: she contains without imposing limits" (83).
  44. Quoting Tanner in her appeal to a transcendence "constantly calling into question the certainty of the system" that "becomes a model" for resistance (249). Kathryn Tanner, "Creation as Mixed Metaphor," presented at Drew University's First Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquium (September 30–October 1, 2001).
  45. Wisdom's conduct is "unladylike," akin to the panty-less lemon vendors of Marcella Althaus-Reid's Buenos Aires barrio in her queer reimagination of liberation theology. See Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), especially 1–46.
  46. Ironically, even the notion of hybridity (so integral to Bhabha's work and postcolonial studies at large) insinuates a dyad.
  47. Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 28–29.
  48. *Ibid.*, 29.

49. The axial blur I perceive is not just between *zarah* and *chokmah* or Wisdom and God, but Wisdom and Folly and even God and Folly. For more on the woman of “folly” see Kenneth Ngwa, “Did Job Suffer for Nothing? The Ethics of Piety, Presumption, and the Reception of Disaster in the Prologue of Job,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 no. 3 (2009): 359–80; Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim, 1986).
50. The threat of Wisdom/Stranger’s textual bodily excess and diluvian sexual appetites has contributed to woman’s regulation via relegation to the home, and as long as s/he is governed—subjugated and exploited for (re)production—within this economy to ensure its stability, its structures remain intact (see Prov. 31). However, as *ishah* (*chava*/Eve) took hold of the fruit necessary for the Wisdom of discernment (Gen. 2–3) and as *chokmah* obtained knowledge (Prov. 8.12), various (feminist) interpretations reveal that Wisdom in (the hands of) wo/men is *armed and dangerous*—refusing to be refuse, quelled, or quietly resigned to bifurcation. As male and female, good and bad, wise and strange, s/he is always already both/and, *occupying the crack* and the spectrum.
51. The Wise and Strange are indistinguishable in Rivera and Camp’s readings of Wisdom *and* in a hermeneutics of *chayim*; Wisdom demands the strange, foolish, and queer to survive—the ‘wisdom way’ of categorization and observation is inadequate (Fontaine, *Smooth Words*, 4).
52. Noteworthy is Wisdom’s utterance of these words soon after a detailed description of the Strange Woman’s sexual appetites and (commercial?) activities.
53. The verb for “build” here, *banah*, is used to refer to both the material construction of homes and the building of a family.
54. See also HALOT, 97, for the semantic range of *ashar*. I am providing my own interpretation of the root meaning, which is “to stride” or “to lead.”
55. Reading Wisdom transcending hegemonic control and claiming power through identification with the transcendent may be an integral liberative political tactic in the struggle against oppressive structures of power/knowledge. Understanding her *otherwise*, however, I read her as simultaneously frustrating *from below*: rising up to incite others to join, occupy, and be occupied by her but never entirely vacating *sheol*.
56. Like Silverstein’s *Giving Tree*, Wisdom is excessively generous. However, unlike the maternal motif, as the Tree of Life Wisdom knows when/how to say “no.” Shel Silverstein, *The Giving Tree* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964)
57. As Fontaine asserts, “fools [are] notorious for their inability to do anything properly” (Fontaine, *Smooth Words*, 166–67). The irony of Wisdom *as* Folly is her enactment and embodiment of Folly—often for the sake of survival—offering and requiring much more from the audience than platitudes and passive reception (266).
58. Anthony Appiah writes, “It takes a sense of honor to feel implicated by the acts of others. And it takes a sense of your own dignity to insist, against the odds, upon your right to justice in a society that rarely offers it to women like you; and a sense of the dignity of all women to respond to your own brutal rape not just with indignation and a desire for revenge but with the determination to remake your country,

- so that its women are treated with the respect you know they deserve. To make such choices is to live a life of difficulty, even, sometimes, of danger. It is also, and not incidentally, to live a life of honor." Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 204.
59. (Often into otherwise amicable, thriving two-third's world countries.) For a more incisive exploration see William E. Connolly, "The Evangelical-Capitalist Resonance Machine," *Political Theory* 33, no. 6 (2005): 869–86.
60. Gabriela is named after the Ilocano freedom fighter Maria Josefa Gabriela Silang, whose name is an acronym for the group's political commitments: General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action. (I use singular and plural pronouns to refer to Gabriela, since they are many fighting as one.) These wo/men repeatedly place themselves in life-threatening situations—no strangers to precarity—preferring to struggle for survival rather than surrender in silence to unjust political machinations.
61. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1977, repr. 1995); Bell Hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 21–39. Of course, Foucault, Butler, and Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), among others, have claimed similar things much more incisively. I proffer a way to read the Bible with critical sociopolitical theory so that neither is deprived of a mutually beneficial dialogue and in an effort to promote global awareness and/of human rights (violations). Moved by hooks's warning (not unlike Spivak's critique of poststructuralist discourse) about the "commodification of Otherness" and "eating the other," I engage the Filipina NGO Gabriela acknowledging the potential for cultural appropriation and in hopes that I will honor and not erase these wo/men's voices.
62. Butler, *Frames of War*, 51–55.
63. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). Foucault also used the term *dispositif* to signify the discursive mechanisms (of power) that produce and regulate knowledge and bodies within society vis-à-vis political, religious, and educational institutions.
64. A queer reading of Wisdom such as this is indebted to deconstruction and queer theory—neither do I presume that this hermeneutic reflects the text's interpretation in its "original" context nor is it entirely out of the realm of possibility.
65. Wisdom blurs the host/guest binary: "The stranger, here the awaited guest, is not only someone to whom you say 'come,' but 'enter,' enter without waiting, make a pause in our home without waiting, hurry up and come in, 'come inside,' 'come within me,' not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me, which means, by the same token, also take my place, don't content yourself with coming to meet me or 'into my home.' . . . It is *as if* the stranger or foreigner held the keys." Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 123.

66. Chaos à la Derrida might also signify anarchy—a fear of which (as nature), Sara Ahmed asserts, is “an imperative for the formation of government.” See Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 71. Although Catherine Keller does not read chaos into the God of creation in Genesis, her neologism for Elohim, “manyone,” holds such potentiality. Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
67. *The/a* serves multiple functions here, namely, to emphasize Wisdom as simultaneously particular (definite) and indefinite (common) as well as Wisdom’s profane masculine/feminine-divinity.