

CHANGING WOMAN: TOWARD A POSTCOLONIAL POSTFEMINIST INTERPRETATION OF ACTS 16.6–40*

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Reading Acts 16 in a Postcolonial, Postfeminist World¹

Most contemporary interpreters of Acts 16.6–40 describe Paul's journey into Macedonia as a 'missionary journey to Europe'. This essay challenges that designation, arguing that is a colonialist geographic designation with no actual textual basis, and one that has helped foster the ideology of modern colonialist missionary movements. Yet there is solid textual evidence for arguing Acts 16.6–40 marks a change in Paul's missionary activity, one that comes more and more into contact with Roman colonial power. Building upon Musa Dube Shomanah's brilliant exploration of biblical 'border women',² I believe that Lydia and the pythonic slave girl of Acts 16 function as 'border women'—women whose presence evokes a colonialist 'land possession type-scene' similar to those related with Rahab (Josh. 2), the Syrophoenician woman (Mk 7), and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4). Using autobiographical reflections and two books that deal with the territory of my childhood (*Laughing Boy*, by Oliver La Farge, and *Ceremony*, by Leslie Marmon Silko),³ I will show how three Native American border women either replicate the biblical colonialist land possession typescene or challenge it, thereby offering helpful postcolonial, postfeminist appropriations of border women. Perhaps, in the end, the Native American figure of Changing Woman can revitalize biblical border women and deconstruct the colonialist ideology permeating their bodies.

Plotting the Geography of Acts

There is little disagreement among Lukan commentators on the general plot divisions of the book of Acts. The story charts the geographic and cultural movement of early Christianity (Acts 1.8), and it can be plotted along these lines: activity in Jerusalem (Acts 1–7), in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12), and in areas northwest of

* An earlier version of this essay appeared as 'Changing Woman: Postcolonial Reflections on Acts 16.6–40', in *JSNT* 73 (1999), pp. 113–35.

1 I am particularly attracted to the feminism of Linda Hutcheon (*The Politics of Postmodernism* [New York: Routledge, 1989]). Although she does not use the word 'postfeminism' in her writing, I am adding a 'post' to feminism here in order to connect it with what she (and I) strongly believe feminism brought to the 'post' conversations of the 1980s: a distrust of and challenge to metanarratives, and a pervasive critique of the power relations in human discourses. Thus the 'post' in my 'postfeminism' should be read in conjunction with the 'post' of postcolonialism and postmodernism—not as a rejection of or a turning away from the self-critical cultural critique of earlier feminisms.

2 *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000).

3 Published respectively by New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957; and New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

Judea (Acts 13–28). Furthermore, it is obvious even to an uncritical reader that Paul's proclamation to Gentiles in Acts 13–14 is a new development in the plot. Except for the apostles' debate in Acts 15, Paul is clearly the central character for the rest of the book. Thus, the major plot question scholars must decide is whether Paul's 'first missionary journey' in Acts 13–14 is a challenge to and an aberration from the apostles' central mission—a mission that begins in Acts 1 and leads to the authoritative pronouncements of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. If Paul's 'first missionary journey' is an aberration, then Acts 15 is the major turning point of the plot. But if, on the other hand, the Jerusalem Council is an aberration—an aberration and a challenge to *Paul's* missionary activity—then Acts 13 must be the turning point of the plot.

Over the years, commentators have put forward a variety of arguments for these two possible turning points of the book.⁴ But it is not my purpose to settle for one of these options over the other. Rather, I am interested in the fact that commentators can develop lengthy arguments for preferring one central turning point over the other, and then turn around and write in such a way that Paul's 'second missionary journey' (Acts 16.6ff) seems somehow to chart a dramatic new course for the spread of Christianity in ways that his 'first missionary journey' did not.

Many commentators have made this latter point by describing Paul's 'second missionary journey' as 'Christianity entering Europe'.⁵ And while it is well known that the ancient Greeks divided the world into three parts (Libya, Asia, and Europe),⁶

4 See, for example, H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (ed. E.J. Ep and C.R. Matthews; trans. J. Limburg, A.T. Krael, and D.H. Juel; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. xlii; M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (trans. J. Bowden); Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 101; R.I. Pervo, *Luke's Story of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 53.

5 For instance, James Dunn argues that 'This section is primarily intended to demonstrate how it was that Paul first brought the gospel to Europe, or at least into the Aegean Basin' (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996], p. 215; cf. p. 218; see also L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992], pp. 281, 290, 297; H.C. Kee, *To Every Nation under Heaven: The Acts of the Apostles* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997], pp. 188–89, 191; C.H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* [New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997], pp. 147–48); Pervo, *Luke's Story of Paul*, p. 55; G. Krodel, *Acts: Proclamation Commentaries* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p. 59. Interestingly, R.B. Rackham is one of the few commentators in the last century who questioned the identification of Macedonia with 'Europe'. Writing in 1906, he stated: 'Here we have to be on our guard against the influence of modern ideas of geography. The crisis of the work was not, as is popularly supposed, the crossing over from Asia to Europe. The Macedonian did not say "Come over into Europe", but "into Macedonia"' (*The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (London: Methuen & Company, 1906), p. 272.

6 Herodotus states: 'I cannot guess for what reason the earth, which is one, has three names, all women's, and why the boundary lines set for it are the Egyptian Nile river and the Colchian Phasis river (though some say that the Maeetian Tanaïs river and the Cimmerian Ferries are boundaries); and I cannot learn the names of those who divided the world, or where they got the names which they used. For Libya is said by most Greeks to be named after a native woman of that name, and Asia after the wife of Prometheus; yet the Lydians claim a share in the latter name, saying that Asia was not named after Prometheus' wife Asia, but after Asies, the son of Cotys, who was the son of Manes, and that from him the Asiad clan at Sardis also takes its name. But as for Europe, no men have any knowledge whether it is bounded by seas or not, or where it got its name, nor is it clear who gave the name, unless we say that the land took its name from the Tyrian Europa, having been

Acts offers no explicit evidence to suggest that its author had these geographic divisions in mind when writing his narrative. Recently, however, James Scott has taken a different tack and argued that, similarly to the threefold Greek division of the world, Acts could have been structured around the geographical areas assigned to the three sons of Noah as found in ancient Judaism's 'Table of Nations' (Gen. 10).⁷ Thus, for Scott, Acts 2.1–8.25 represents the mission to Shem (Asia), Acts 8.26–40 represents the mission to Ham (Libya), and Acts 9.1–28.31 represents the mission to Japheth (Europe).⁸ Although I remain unconvinced by Scott's argument regarding the overall structure of the book of Acts, his collection of data does suggest that first-century readers of the book could have understood Paul's journey to Macedonia as part of an important new territorial expansion of the apostolic witness.

But irrespective of Scott's proposal or any hypothetical reconstruction of how first readers may have understood Paul's Macedonian mission, Acts 16.9 has in fact played an important role in the colonizing rhetoric of European empires from the sixteenth century to the present day. By describing Paul's entrance into Macedonia as 'Christianity entering Europe', Western empire-building nations of the last five centuries have found an apostolic, divinely ordained model ready at hand to justify colonizing and 'winning for the Saviour' hitherto 'unknown' and 'unexplored' continents.⁹ Thus, explicitly designating Macedonia as the European continent legitimizes the missionizing agendas of modern colonial empires as much as it clarifies any particular geographic notion, plot structure, or hypothetical reader in the mind of Luke-Acts' author. But I do not want to ignore the plot structure of Acts in order to talk about the ideological foundations of modern Christian missions. For in the end I believe that commentators' designation of Acts 16.6 as 'Christianity's entrance into Europe' is, in fact, based upon certain narrative elements that mark out the second journey by Paul as functionally different from his earlier journey in Acts 13.

*A Colonialist Meta-autobiography*¹⁰

It is a hot July afternoon on the Navajo Reservation in northern Arizona, the kind of day that flakes off your skin like a fine alkaline dust. My three brothers and two

(it would seem) before then nameless like the rest. But it is plain that this woman was of Asiatic birth, and never came to this land which the Greeks now call Europe, but only from Phoenicia to Crete and from Crete to Lycia' (*Histories* 4.45.1–5; cf. 2.33; 3.115.1; cf. P.S. Alexander, 'Notes on the "Imago Mundi" of the Book of Jubilees', *JJS* 33 [1982], pp. 197–99).

7 J.M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995), pp. 168–76.

8 Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, pp. 179–80; cf. pp. 48–51.

9 J. Townsend, 'Missionary Journeys in Acts and European Missionary Societies', *SBLSP* 24 (1985), pp. 433–37. It is not insignificant that Paul crosses an expanse of water in order to reach 'Europe' (Acts 16.9–11), for the new continents colonized by fifteenth- through nineteenth-century Europeans will also lie across the oceans.

10 Robert Maldonado recently coined the term 'meta-autobiographical' to describe 'the available and recognizable autobiographical plots [his emphasis] that the culture of the teller determines' ('Reading Malinche Reading Ruth: Toward a Hermeneutics of Betrayal', *Semeia* 72 [1995], pp. 91–109 [91]). The plot of my meta-autobiographical vignette is determined by what Musa Dube Shomanah calls a 'land possession type-scene', an idea she develops from Robert Alter's analysis

sisters along with our father and his wife have met at Immanuel Mission for a family reunion.¹¹ It is the first time all of us have been together since our mother's death in 1984. Now it is eleven years later. I have not been to this growing-up place of mine since my son was two years old. And now he is ten and asking questions about everything. 'Is this the house where you lived? Did you ever climb that mesa? Do you know that Indian woman?' My son is finally old enough to store this red sandstone valley in his own memory, apart from any stories I might tell of my childhood spent here. So I am careful about what I show him and where I go.

But at this precise moment my son is not with me. I have sent him off to explore the mission compound with his cousins. At this moment I am standing beside my oldest brother, Rob, at the grave of Sarah Tsosie, a Navajo girl with whom we grew up. Thirty years ago we were both in love with Sarah. At the age of fourteen, Rob's had been an open, reciprocated affection. I ought to know. I used to follow Rob and Sarah around after dark to watch them kiss behind the cinder-block dormitory. My love, on the other hand, was that sweet, secret, unrequited type commonly found in the hearts of jealous, pesky little twelve-year-old brothers.

The intervening thirty years have taken us both far away from Sarah and the reservation where we spent our childhood. We have been away longer and driven farther to get here than anyone else in our family—Rob from Alberta; I, from Oregon. But

of betrothal scenes in ancient Hebrew narrative (*The Art of Biblical Narrative* [New York: Basic Books, 1981], pp. 51–52). Dube Shomanah argues that in order to 'validate and to veil the violence of imperialism, gender representations [become] a method of presenting victims of imperialism as those who love, need, or desire to be possessed by imperialist traveling heroes and their nations . . . Here land is not just a slab of a physical body, but a web of intrinsically woven tales of power and disempowerment . . . written on the bodies of people' (*Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 118–19).

¹¹ I fret about the stories I tell from my past, especially those that deal with my years on the Navajo Reservation. In my writing I try to portray the multi-positionality of my interpretive choices (see, for example, J.C. Anderson and J.L. Staley, 'Taking It Personally: Introduction', *Semeia* 72 [1995], pp. 7–18; cf. M.A. Tolbert, 'The Politics and Poetics of Location', in F.F. Segovia and M.A. Tolbert [eds.], *Reading from this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], I, pp. 305–17), but sometimes I feel as though I am just another Rahila Khan, that 'feminist from the Indian subcontinent whose work purported to describe the life and experiences of young Asian women in Margaret Thatcher's Britain' who turned out to be a 'male, middle-class, white vicar from Brighton named Toby Forward (D. Callaghan, 'The Vicar and Virago: Feminism and the Problem of Identity', in J. Roof and R. Wiegman [eds.], *Who Can Speak? Authority and Critical Identity* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995], pp. 195–207 [195–96]). I know that 'native stuff' is 'in', both in popular culture and in the academic world, and that every white, scholarly kind of guy wishes he could invent a fascinating ethnic heritage for himself. We white guys want to write personally, sympathetically about our radical feminism or about some close friend's ethnicity to show that we are 'au courant' and 'sensitive to issues of gender and race'. And so I worry that my Navajo 'other [may be] adopted merely to provide an opportunity for [me] to masquerade as [a] savior of marginality' (S. Sawhney, 'The Joke and the Hoax: Speaking as the Other', in J. Roof and R. Wiegman [eds.], *Who Can Speak? Authority and Critical Identity*, pp. 208–20 [216]; see also Greg Salyer's critical remarks in his 'Review of *Reading with a Passion: Rhetoric, Autobiography, and the American West in the Gospel of John*, by Jeffrey L. Staley. (New York: Continuum, 1995)', *Literature and Theology* 11 (1997), pp. 320–23, esp. 322–23. Or perhaps I keep 'telling stories with the hope that ultimately [I'll] be able to live [my] way into them [or out of them]' (B.C. Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1998], p. 144).

now we are side by side at Sarah's hard-packed adobe grave, trying to say goodbye to someone something that was once simple, passionate, and young; full of grace and beauty.

Rob and I are here, in the mission cemetery, just a stone's throw from the three-room mission school where our father taught for thirty years. We are standing here without speaking. We are standing here because of one of those generic conversations you start with siblings whom you haven't seen in eight years. It was a conversation I initiated a few hours ago.

I had just sat down at the lunch table next to Greg, my other older brother. 'So,' I began, 'do you ever see any of the Navajo kids we used to go to school with?' I try to make conversation with the most laconic of my brothers, who, after thirty years on the Navajo Reservation, acts more Navajo than half of the Indians in the area.

'Do you ever see William Scott? Or Sam Benally? What about Anna Horse or Bessie Begay? Then there was Sarah Tsosie. No other girl came close to her. I haven't seen her since college when I would occasionally come home from Wheaton. Remember how Mother used to say that Sarah had a "cute figure"? It took me twenty years to figure out that was her Christian way of saying "Sarah is really sexy".'

Greg pauses in the midst of eating a tuna sandwich and smoothes his mustache with his thumb and forefinger. 'Yeah, we were probably all in love with Sarah at one time or another. I used to see her quite a bit. You know, her kids were in school here for a while. She was living over near Red Mesa Trading Post when we got word that she had died. She had had a drinking problem for a number of years. No one knows whether she drank herself to death or committed suicide. Maybe there isn't a lot of difference between the two. I know she died alone. Her body wasn't found for a few days. We buried her up there at the mission cemetery, just east of mother's grave.'

Towering white cumulus clouds rise over the purple Lukachukai Mountains to the south, shrouding Sheepskin Mesa in greys and blues. A breeze suddenly stirs the afternoon air, raising northern Arizona's version of Middle Eastern whirling dervishes. The dust-colored pythonic spirits gather up the remnants of faded flowers and spin them across the cluttered mounds in the mission cemetery. Rob and I stand, silent, both caught up in the twists and turns of our own private memories.

I never kissed her. I never held her close and smelled the scent of mountain cedar in her jet-black hair. I never felt her blue jeans pressed hard against my body. To her I was just a pal; a silly, laughing boy who kept her mind off of Rob while he was far away at a boarding school in New York. After all, I was just twelve, and Sarah was nearly fourteen. So I spent afternoons playing Ping-Pong and badminton with her, teasing her incessantly. Then at night I would dream about her. I would sing every song on the radio for her, and drift off to sleep by counting how many times that day her laughing eyes had fixed on mine. I would hold on to that delicious yearning with a tortured, pubescent heart, and wake in the morning with my pillow stained with tears.

Sarah was baptized at our mission when she was thirteen. Then she beat out my brother Greg by a tenth of a point for the highest honors in her eighth-grade class at the little mission school. But we all lost track of Sarah after graduation. We found out later that she stayed on the reservation, living at home near Mexican Water and taking the bus forty miles to high school in Kayenta. By that time my two brothers

and I were attending high school in California, boarding with an uncle and his family. But in the fall of 1966 Sarah Tsosie showed up as a junior at Shiprock High School, where my brothers and I had just transferred. Rob confided in me a few weeks later that he was beginning to get interested in her again. And I felt a strange stirring in my chest, a twinge of jealousy that I thought had died long before. But then we began to hear rumors. Sarah was 'easy'. 'Better drunk than sober.' Crude etchings on bathroom walls outlined her physical attributes and advertised her phone number. We began to watch her guardedly, from a distance. She was different; not the same Sarah we had known in grade school. She didn't study anymore. She skipped classes. She had a look about her that said 'I know things that you haven't even dreamed of yet'. And it was not a happy look.

Rob never did date Sarah. He said he couldn't stomach the kind of girl she had become. And I barely spoke to her those last two years of high school. She was a senior, and I was a junior. She was Navajo. I was white. Things were different in Shiprock, a reservation border town of 1,500 people. Sarah was pregnant before she finished school and married a few months later. It was the first of four or five marriages, some more cruel than others.

Recently I have begun to think of Sarah Tsosie as Slim Girl, a central character in Oliver La Farge's classic novel about Navajo Indians. My brother Rob had a copy of La Farge's book, *Laughing Boy*, in his bedroom when he was in high school, and I know he had read it, because he told me that he liked it a lot. I suspect that Slim Girl reminded him of Sarah Tsosie, too. I wish I had read the book back then, but I didn't. I didn't know then that Oliver Hazard Perry La Farge became a well-respected anthropologist and spokesperson for Native Americans,¹² or that he had won the 1930 Pulitzer Prize in literature for *Laughing Boy* (Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* was a distant runner-up that year).¹³

For years after Rob left home the book collected powdery red dust on a shelf in his old bedroom in our home on the Navajo Reservation. I shook the dust off of it a few times over the years and thought about reading it. But I never did. Then when I married, I came into possession of a copy, a required text for a course in Native American Studies that my wife had taken at the University of California at Berkeley. Eventually, without her knowledge, I traded it, along with a number of other books

12 Oliver La Farge became one of the strongest opponents of Dillon S. Myer, the controversial commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) from 1950 to 1953. Myer was best known for his role as the director of the War Relocation Authority (WRA) which was responsible for incarcerating thousands of Japanese-Americans during World War II (R. Drinnon, *Keeper of the Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987], pp. xxiii–xxciv, 39, 226–27). Dillon Myer saw a natural connection in the US domestic policy of Japanese-American 'relocation' and Native American 'relocations' and hoped to exploit this close association in the postwar years by dissolving all American Indian reservations. Interestingly, Leslie Marmon Silko alludes to the similarity between US/Japanese-American policy and US/Native American policy in her novel *Ceremony* (pp. 6, 17–18, 124, 246), but lays it open to a postcolonial critique (cf. J. Brice, 'Earth as Mother, Earth as Other in Novels by Silko and Hogan', *Critique* 39 [1998], pp. 132–33; and T.E. Benediktsson, 'The Reawakening of the Gods: Realism and the Supernatural in Silko and Hulme', *Critique* 33 [1992], pp. 121–31).

13 D'Arcy McNickle, *Indian Man: A Life of Oliver La Farge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 58.

I had never read, for a stack of books on literary theory at Powell's Bookstore in Portland, Oregon.

Not long ago, on a rainy Thanksgiving weekend in Washington's San Juan Islands, I found myself in a used bookstore, having forgotten to bring along something to read during the long Northwest evenings. I saw a copy of *Laughing Boy* on a shelf and checked the inside cover, half expecting to find my wife's name written there. Instead I found the word 'Erbstoeszser' scrawled across the yellowed page, below a penciled \$1.50. I bought the book, despite my wife's insisting that she had a copy around the house somewhere, and read it over the weekend.

If La Farge has shown me that Sarah is a contemporary version of Slim Girl, my reading in postcolonial and feminist criticism has convinced me that Sarah is also much more than that. She is also a variation of Native American border women like Pocahontas and Doña Marina (Malinche).¹⁴ And as I shall argue below, she shares an identity with Lydia and the pythonic slave girl of Acts 16. To my way of thinking, Sarah is all these women spun into one.

As a person related to the borderland characters Lydia and the pythonic slave girl, Sarah Tsosie's death causes me to reevaluate these two biblical women from postcolonial and postfeminist perspectives. I am hoping that I might find in these perspectives a way to critique the colonialist ideology that created both them and Sarah. But to do this I will have to go back and take a closer look at the way in which the author of Luke-Acts constructs Macedonian otherness and territory. Only then can I begin to move on to a creative, self-critical reappropriation of the biblical text and my own colonialist past.

Evidence of Colonialist Borders in Macedonia

For well over a hundred years now, biblical commentators have been content to call Acts 15.36–18.22 Paul's 'second missionary journey'.¹⁵ But unlike any of Paul's preceding or subsequent journeys, this one begins with a vision.¹⁶ Some commentators have read the vision as a mirror of the book's author—Luke, himself, the Macedonian—calling to Paul for help.¹⁷ But few commentators today would be convinced by so naive a view of authorial allusion.¹⁸ And not just today: Origen argued centuries ago for a much different and more ideologically plausible identification. It is an identification that Walter Wink elaborates in his trilogy of books on the language of power in the New Testament. For Origen, and for Wink following in his interpretive footsteps, the Macedonian man in the vision represents the 'angel' of

14 C.S. Kidwell, 'Indian Women as Cultural Mediators', *Ethnohistory* 39 (1992), pp. 97–107.

15 Townsend, 'Missionary Journeys in Acts and European Missionary Societies', pp. 433–37; cf. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 271.

16 Other programmatic visionary experiences in Luke-Acts are found in Lk. 1.11–22; 24.4–11, 23; and Acts 9.10–16; 10.3–20; 22.17–21; 26.19; 27.23–25.

17 This is an attempt to connect the subsequent 'we' text (Acts 16.11–13) with Paul's Macedonian mission (E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971], p. 489).

18 See, for example, Susan Praeder's essay, 'Luke-Acts and the Ancient Novel', SBLSP 20 (1981), pp. 269–92.

the region,¹⁹ whose power could be challenged or assuaged by Jesus' ambassadors. For them, this angel of Macedonia is comparable to the 'prince of the kingdom of Persia' with whom an unnamed angel and Michael had fought centuries earlier (Dan. 10.5–6, 10–14, 20–21; cf. Rev. 2.1–3, 22).

In his commentary on this section of Acts, Charles Talbert collects a number of historical references to the dreams of Roman conquering heroes which provide an ideological context for Wink's and Origen's thesis. For example, Talbert notes how Suetonius (*Julius Caesar* 32) had 'a dream before leaving Spain for Rome that he [would] have sovereignty over the whole world' and that 'Drusus, the father of Claudius, [saw] an apparition of a barbarian woman, speaking in Latin, forbidding him to pursue the defeated Germanic tribes further' (Suetonius, *Claudius* 1).²⁰ Although Paul is no military leader, his vision in Acts appears to be programmatic like those quoted above, and is consistent with the imperial ideology that underlies those visions.²¹ That is to say, the visions provide the divine authorization for a transfer of power. Furthermore, if Origen's and Wink's angelic identification is appropriate, then it makes perfect sense that one of Paul's first acts in the new territory is to perform an exorcism (Acts 16.16–18). As John Dominic Crossan, following the lead of cultural anthropologists, has argued, the physical body is a microcosm of the macrocosmic political system.²² In the symbolic universe of the Greco-Roman world, exorcisms in 'foreign' territory become explicit political acts connecting political oppression with demonic possession (cf. Mk 5.1–17; 7.24–31). Surely, then, Luke Johnson has sensed the importance of the Acts scene when he says 'we find . . . [Paul] doing battle with demonic forces and besting them, *establishing in still another turf-war a further territorial gain* for the "kingdom of God"' (my emphasis).²³

Perhaps even the often-discussed 'we sections' which begin in Acts 16.11 could be understood at least in part as a rhetorical evocation of Macedonia as new and foreign territory. While the issue is too complex to do justice to here, from a text pragmatics standpoint one must account for why the 'we sections' begin at this particular point in the narrative. On a pragmatic level, the juxtapositioning of first-person pronouns and verbal forms with third-person pronouns and verbal forms (16.10–17) constructs a grammatical, linguistic distinction between Paul and the Macedonians, a distinction that is paralleled by the ethnic differences and the attending plot developments.

19 Origen, *Homily on Luke* 12, quoted approvingly in W. Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 32.

20 Talbert, *Reading Acts*, p. 149; cf. Pervo, *Luke's Story of Paul*, p. 55.

21 Interestingly, Rackham rejects the word 'journey' when describing Paul's activity in Macedonia, preferring the more militaristic term 'campaign' (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 271 n. 2).

22 J.D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), pp. 76–77, 88–91; quoting Mary Douglas and other cultural anthropologists. Robert Tannehill notes the literary connections between Acts 16.16–18 and the story of the Gerasene demoniac (Lk. 8.26–39; cf. Acts 19.12–15), but without mentioning the political implications of the stories (*The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*. II. *The Acts of the Apostles* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990], p. 197).

23 Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 297.

Finally, the designation of the demon-possessed girl as ‘pythonic’ (16.16) evokes the Greek hieropolis of Delphi (still to the west), the omphalos (navel) of the ancient Greek world.²⁴ This pythonic spirit of Delphi stands in marked contrast to Jerusalem (to the east), the omphalos of the Jewish and early Christian world,²⁵ and the center of the book of Acts up to this point in the narrative: a place where God’s holy spirit had earlier filled an entire house with amazing displays of power (Acts 2.1–13).

But not only is Macedonia marked out as *foreign* territory: it is also the *most explicitly Roman* territory that Paul has yet entered. The narrator in this section of Acts uses numerous terms for Roman power (κολωνία [16.11], στρατηγοί [16.20, 22, 35, 36, 38], ῥαβδοῦχος [Latin, *lictor*; 16.35, 38], Ῥωμαῖος ὑπάρχοντας [16.37, 38]),²⁶ along with the less explicit listing of such cities as Neapolis (‘New City’) and Philippi (‘the leading city of Macedonia’),²⁷ which were important Roman settlements in the area. As Talbert notes, there are also three ‘charges leveled against the missionaries’, which help to reinforce in political language the foreign character of Paul and his entourage: first, they are called Ἰουδαῖοι (16.20), which evokes their ethnic identity;²⁸ second, ‘they are charged with disturbing the peace [which] is an appeal to the Roman obsession with public order’ (16.20a); and third, they are ‘charged with advocating customs that are not lawful for Romans to adopt or practice’ (16.20b).²⁹ Significantly, this is the first time in Paul’s journeys that Gentiles rather than Jews have been the instigators of opposition to his missionary activity.³⁰

24 Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, p. 20; cf. Alexander, ‘Notes on the “Imago Mundi”’, p. 198.

25 Alexander, ‘Notes on the “Imago Mundi”’, p. 204.

26 Kee, *To Every Nation*, pp. 197–200; F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 335–36; J.H. Neyrey, ‘Luke’s Social Location of Paul: Cultural Anthropology and the Status of Paul in Acts’, in B. Witherington III (ed.), *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 251–79, esp. 263–64.

27 Richard Ascough has recently argued that πρώτης τῆς Μακεδονίας πόλις should be the preferred reading of the textual variant in Acts 16.12, based upon a cultural assessment of civic pride in ancient Philippi rather than upon the city’s actual political significance (‘Civic Pride at Philippi: The Text-Critical Problem of Acts 16.12’, *NTS* 44 [1998], pp. 93–103; cf. J.H. Neyrey, ‘Luke’s Social Location of Paul’, pp. 268–70).

28 Talbert calls this ‘an appeal to nationalism and racial prejudice’ (*Reading Acts*, p. 152), but is using the terms ‘nationalism’ and ‘racial prejudice’ in anachronistic ways (cf. Neyrey, ‘Luke’s Social Location of Paul’, pp. 255–260, 276–79).

29 Talbert, *Reading Acts*, p. 152. Talbert goes on to argue that on another level ‘there are [five] . . . points this section makes regarding the relation of believers to the state . . . [I]t shows the legitimacy of disciples’ appealing to their legal rights as protection against unjust treatment by nonbelievers . . . it says believers must be prepared to suffer unjustly because Roman officials are sometimes swayed by mob hysteria . . . it claims that the state is usually reasonable and will correct mistakes when these are made clear . . . it makes very clear that the disciples are not the trouble-makers but are the victims of those with questionable motives . . . [and] such unjust suffering at the hands of the state lends credence to one’s claims’ (pp. 153–54; cf. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 133; R.J. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* [New York: Orbis Press, 1987], pp. 87–89, 150–53, 162).

30 Cf. Acts 13.6–8, 48–51; 14.1–7, 19–20. See also Acts 17.4–5, 12–13; 18.12–13. The only other case of Gentile-instigated opposition occurs much later in Ephesus, when Demetrius the silver-smith starts a riot (18.23–28).

These six elements—Paul’s vision, the exorcism, the political and legal language of Roman hegemony, the we/them language, the lack of Jewish opposition, and the evocation of the omphalic Delphic oracle—all mark Macedonia as important, new, and foreign territory for Paul’s missionary activity. But it is primarily Paul’s encounter with the two women that marks the territory as a major bordercrossing in the book of Acts. And it is the author’s juxtapositioning of Lydia the ‘good’ woman with the pythonic ‘bad’ girl that offers the contemporary reader the most fruitful grounds for a postcolonial, postfeminist critique of that particular border.

In her important book entitled *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Musa Dube Shomanah focuses her attention on those texts in the biblical tradition where there seems to be a connection between ‘bad’ women and new (soon to be conquered) territory.³¹ And although her primary attention centers on the story of Rahab (Josh. 1) as the model for what she calls an ancient Hebrew ‘land possession typescene’, she also discusses the Canaanite or Syrophoenician woman (Mt. 15; par. Mk 7) and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4) as figures who fit into the same stereotypical pattern.³² The elements that Dube Shomanah isolates in the typescene are: (1) a traveling hero journeys to a foreign land, (2) meets a woman, (3) and bonds with her.³³ Although Dube Shomanah does not mention Lydia and the ‘spirit-possessed’ girl in Acts 16 in her assemblage of biblical examples, I believe that these two women function in the same way as do the other three women—as a means to legitimize the ideological and territorial conquests of a nascent Christianity. But what is unique about the Acts text is the fact that it is the only biblical account where the reader finds *two* women on the border—one who is clearly a more positive character than the other.³⁴

Halvor Moxnes’s study of patron–client relations in Luke–Acts quite nicely describes the first woman, Lydia, as a representative of feminine propriety.³⁵ She is

31 *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 57–80.

32 Musa Dube Shomanah borrows the term ‘typescene’ (*Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 118–21) from Robert Alter’s analysis of betrothal scenes in ancient Hebrew narrative (*The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 51–52). However, Dube Shomanah’s appropriation of the term is somewhat problematical, since in Alter’s view biblical typescenes isolate ‘a series of recurrent narrative episodes attached to the careers of biblical heroes . . . [which] catch [the] protagonists only at the crucial junctures in [their] lives’ (Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 51; my emphasis). Thus, by attending to the author’s manipulation of the typescene’s motifs the interpreter gains insight into the art of biblical characterization (Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 52). But Dube Shomanah’s analysis does not focus on hero or heroine figures of the stature of Jacob, Moses, or Saul, as much as on the secondary characters in the scenes. Nor does she attempt to show how the *manipulation* of the motifs subtly affects a particular author’s ideological strategy. Nevertheless, I do believe that Dube Shomanah has clearly identified an important colonization *motif* in biblical narrative, one which she goes on to deconstruct in an important, decolonizing manner (*Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 157–95).

33 Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 120.

34 The exorcism of a demon from the Syrophoenician woman’s daughter (Mk 7.24–30) is another ‘land possession typescene’ which mentions two women, but the daughter in the story does not function as a character. However, it is perhaps significant that this Markan story is missing from Luke. Could it be that Acts 16.11–21 is the author’s oblique response to Mk 7.24–30?

35 H. Moxnes, ‘Patron-Client Relations and the New Community’, in J.H. Neyrey (ed.), *The Social World of Luke–Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 262–63; see also J.H. Neyrey, ‘Luke’s Social Location of Paul’, pp. 264–65, 275. Cf. M.R. D’Angelo, ‘Women in Luke–Acts: A Redactional View’, *JBL* 109 (1990), pp. 441–61 (453, 455, 458–59).

'a patron who considers her benefactions as an act of reciprocity for the far greater spiritual benefits that she has received. Moreover, her patronage is offered very humbly; if her gift is accepted, she in fact receives the larger gift of recognition of her faith.'³⁶ On the other hand, the second female character, the prophetic 'bad girl', is typically described by commentators as one who has 'prostituted her divinatory capacity for the benefit of her owners'.³⁷ Yet the 'bad girl's' annoying proclamation, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God' (Acts 16.17), probably reflects a localized rumor, the colonized people's 'manic vehicle of fear' and 'an uncontrolled, yet strategic affect of political revolt',³⁸ as much as it reflects any (misguided) theological revelation.

In his recent study of the widow traditions in Luke–Acts, Robert Price argues on historical-critical grounds that Lydia and the pythonic slave girl were originally one person: Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth, a woman with a significant prophetic gift.³⁹ From Price's perspective, the author has cloned the 'positive' figure Lydia into 'the Pythoness, her own "evil twin"'.⁴⁰ Although I am not particularly convinced by Price's imaginative historical reconstruction or by his hypothetical redaction history of the Philippian women traditions, I do think that his desire to yoke the two women of Acts 16 reflects a genuine insight into the colonialist underpinnings of the Lukan bordercrossing story. But at this point the perspective of recent postcolonial theory addresses the text's problematics more sharply than any dubious historical or redactional reconstruction could.

36 Moxnes, 'Patron–Client Relations and the New Community', p. 262; cf. F.M. Gillman, 'Early Christian Women at Philippi', *Journal of Gender in World Religions* 1 (1990), pp. 59–79.

37 Kee, *To Every Nation*, p. 197. Cf. Dunn's aside to the effect that 'one can well imagine, for example, a dim-witted slave girl, who had picked up phrases used offhand by missionaries, following them around and calling them out in the way Luke records' (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 221). Johnson calls the slave girl and her masters 'the equivalent of an urban dog and pony show', *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 298). But surely in that patriarchal world it is her masters (κύριοι, Acts 16.16, 19) who are the manipulators of her mantic gift. Nevertheless, the fact that Paul exorcises the spirit from the girl is evidence that the author views it as an oppositional and deceptive power (see, for example, P.R. Trebilco, 'Paul and Silas—"Servants of the Most High God" (Acts 16.16–18)', *JSNT* 36 [1989], pp. 51–73). For a different point of view, see R.M. Price who argues that the prophetic voice being stifled in Acts 16 is that of the authentic Christian prophetess (*The Widow Traditions in Luke–Acts: A Feminist-Critical Scrutiny* [SBLDS, 155; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997], pp. 225–34; esp. 228–29).

38 H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 199, as quoted in J. Perkinson, 'A Canaanite Word in the Logos of Christ; or The Difference the Syro-Phoenician Woman Makes to Jesus', *Semeia* 75 (1996), pp. 61–85 (70); cf. p. 66; see also R. Boer, 'Green Ants and Gibeonites: B. Wongar, Joshua 9, and Some Problems of Postcolonialism', *Semeia* 75 (1996), pp. 129–53 (144).

39 Price, *The Widow Traditions in Luke–Acts*, pp. 225–34; esp. 228–29. Price cites as supporting evidence his interpretation of the Joanna vignette (Lk. 8.2–3; pp. 127–51, esp. 129–30, 138–40). More recently, Kathy Williams has argued for connecting the slave girl and Lydia due to their common comic effect ('At the Expense of Women: Humor (?) in Acts 16:14–40', in Athalya Brenner [ed.], *Are We Amused? Humour about Women in the Biblical Worlds* [BTC, 2; New York: Continuum, 2003]), pp. 79–89, esp. 87–89.

40 Price, *The Widow Traditions in Luke–Acts*, p. 229. Price goes on to argue—following the suggestion of William M. Ramsay—that the epithet 'Jezebel' in Rev. 3.20 might also refer to the demonizing of the prophetess Lydia in much the same manner as the Acts 16 text does (*The Widow Traditions in Luke–Acts*, pp. 233–34).

Toward a Postcolonial, Postfeminist Reappropriation of Acts 16.6–40

Lydia is from Thyatira, a city in the Roman province of Asia long noted for its purple dye industry.⁴¹ Similarly, the three border women who precede her in the Christian canon are associated with blue-red colours: Rahab the Canaanite places a crimson thread in her window (τό σπαρτίον το κόκκινον, Josh. 2.18, 21); the Canaanite, or Syrophenician woman lives in a land called reddish-purple (the proper noun ‘Phoenicia’ is derived from φοινίκιος, Mk 7.26); and the Samaritan woman, whose witness is associated with a harvest of white-headed grain (λευκαί, Jn 4.35–36), prefigures the harvest among non-Jews (Jn 12.20–23)—a harvest that comes only through the death of the scarlet-hued seed (κόκκος, Jn 12.24; cf. 19.2, 5).

Spider Woman, a feminine deity in Pueblo mythology, plays a central role in Leslie Marmon Silko’s novel *Ceremony* and is likewise a character full of color. In Navajo mythology she is called Changing Woman, and like Spider Woman she is known by the colors she wears: black, white, red, and blue. These four colors in her rainbow are captured in the mother-earth substances of jet, shell, abalone, and turquoise. Together they blend into a rich, dark purple—Lydia’s hue. The same mix of colors Slim Girl wears when Laughing Boy first sees her.⁴² The color purple thus binds together these six border women—the four ancient eastern Mediterranean women, and two Western twentieth-century Native American women—in a postmodern, postcolonial, postfeminist weave of intertextual allusions.

Oliver La Farge’s novel, *Laughing Boy*, takes place on the Navajo Indian Reservation in 1915, seven years prior to the founding of the mission where I spent my childhood. At least once the author mentions Sweetwater, the old trading post four miles north-west of where I grew up.⁴³ La Farge recalls in the foreword to the 1962 edition of his book that he chose the year 1915 because ‘romanticism made him feel that he should cast back in time to a less corrupted, purer era’.⁴⁴ ‘In the space of thirty years, however, the wholeness has gone ...’⁴⁵ That loss of wholeness is represented in the book by the character Slim Girl, who marries Laughing Boy, the story’s protagonist.

Slim Girl is a border woman who participates in the same colonialist ideology that gives life to Lydia and the pythonic slave girl of Acts 16. Like my childhood friend Sarah Tsosie, and like Lydia and the pythonic slave girl, Slim Girl is a person who *embodies* the ambiguous relationship of the colonized to the colonizer. Like Malinche in the conquistadores’ legends of Central America and like Pocahontas in the story of the founding of the British colonies in America, Slim Girl is a complex character.⁴⁶ But there is a twist in La Farge’s appropriation of the ideology of the

41 Hans Conzelmann notes that a damaged inscription found at Philippi has the word ‘PVRVPARI, “purple” still visible’ (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 130).

42 La Farge, *Laughing Boy*, pp. 15–16; cf. 35, 50, 177.

43 T’o Tlikahn’ is La Farge’s spelling of the Navajo word for ‘Sweetwater’. It was the closest trading post to our mission, and my brothers and I would go there every couple of weeks to spend our hard-earned allowances (*Laughing Boy*, p. 13).

44 La Farge, *Laughing Boy*, p. 5.

45 La Farge, *Laughing Boy*, p. 6.

46 For an analysis of Native American border women in colonial literature, see V. Stolcke, ‘Invaded Women: Gender, Race, and Class, in the Formation of Colonial Society’, in M. Hendricks and P. Parker (eds.), *Women, ‘Race’ and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (London: Routledge,

colonized border woman. For in his novel, told from the perspective of Laughing Boy, a traditional Navajo, the secondary character Slim Girl is the reader's main contact with the white world. As the story develops, the reader learns that Slim Girl has been educated in a boarding school where she was converted to Christianity. After her schooling she lived in a reservation border town where she worked as a prostitute. When she meets Laughing Boy, several years later, she is living on the edge of the border town in a house built by a Mexican man. From there she regularly travels to the town to meet with a white rancher who pays her for her sexual services. When Laughing Boy inquires about her activities in the town and the source of her money, she lies to him and tells him that she does housecleaning for a missionary family. Laughing Boy and Slim Girl soon marry, on the edge of the border town, far away from their own clans. With no family members present, Slim Girl procures a drunken medicine man to perform a traditional Navajo wedding ceremony.

Slim Girl, the border woman, is like the pythonic slave girl of Acts 16. Slim Girl represents all things new and evil, and although she is not the subject of an exorcism, the tension in the novel revolves around the issue of what holds more power—traditional Navajo ways (embodied by Laughing Boy) or American colonialist ways (embodied by Slim Girl). Slim Girl represents change. The colors of her jewelry and clothing also show that she represents the rainbow-hued Changing Woman of Navajo mythology. And if the reader somehow should miss this symbolic connection, La Farge has her say to Laughing Boy as she lies dying, '... you have changed because of me; in you I shall live'.⁴⁷ But for La Farge, Slim Girl's (or Changing Woman's) adaptation to American culture can only be seen as negative; a part of imperial American colonialism that will ultimately destroy even those who, like her, think they are powerful enough to twist American culture to their own ends.

By way of contrast, the male character Laughing Boy represents what is traditional, good, and pure in Navajo ways. Still, he desires the border woman and marries her against the advice of his relatives. But Slim Girl grows to love Laughing Boy and does not merely use him for her own ends. Like Lydia, she is wealthy, and with her money she procures the necessities with which to begin 'traditional' life as a Navajo. She also willingly learns from her husband about the Navajo ways she had lost when she attended the Christian boarding school.⁴⁸ But in the end Slim Girl, or Changing Woman, becomes one more victim sacrificed to American colonialism. Ultimately she embodies the colonial ideology that underlies most of the novel. For Oliver La Farge's colonialist ideology effectively disempowers any native voice that would attempt to deconstruct that colonial power by requiring Slim Girl to die at the end of the book. Thus the female, bordercrossing character gives up her life to 'save' Slim Boy from the white man's ways. Fittingly for the era in which the book was written, she is murdered by a traditional Navajo man. Like the Lydia/slave girl

1994), pp. 272–89; and K. Robertson, 'Pocahontas at the Masque', *Signs* 21 (1996), pp. 551–83. Border women of the Bible are discussed by Maldonado, 'Reading Malinche Reading Ruth', pp. 97–100; I.R. Kitzberger, 'Border Crossing and Meeting Jesus at the Well: An Autobiographical Re-reading of the Samaritan Woman's Story in John 4:1-44', in *idem* (ed.), *The Personal Voice in Biblical Scholarship* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 111–27; and by Dube Shomanah (*Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*).

⁴⁷ La Farge, *Laughing Boy*, p. 177.

⁴⁸ La Farge, *Laughing Boy*, pp. 45–47.

double, Slim Girl/Changing Woman is the symbolic sacrificial victim that unwittingly allows American imperial power to continue to exert its control over the colonized Navajo.

For all the good the author of *Laughing Boy* hoped to accomplish in his novel (or that the author of Luke–Acts hoped to accomplish in narrating Paul’s journey into Macedonia), La Farge was unable to break free from the colonialist ideology that created the reservation borders in the first place. That task is left to the blue-bodied characters in Leslie Marmon Silko’s novel *Ceremony*, who find ways to appropriate their colonial, borderland past and transform it into a viable, postcolonial, postfeminist life-way.

Ceremony reflects an important postcolonial shift in the metaphorical status of the border woman. Like Acts 16 and the novel *Laughing Boy*, *Ceremony* is set near a border town: Gallup, New Mexico, a few years after the end of World War II. Tayo, the main character, is half-white, half-Laguna; a veteran who suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome and returns to the reservation after he supposedly has been cured by white doctors. It is obvious to his family and friends that he is not well, and so his grandmother obtains the names of two native medicine men who might be able to help him. But it is not Ku’oosh, a medicine man from his own Laguna tribe, who cures him.⁴⁹ Instead an old Navajo medicine man named Betonie sets Tayo on the path toward healing and wholeness. Because Betonie lives on the outskirts of Gallup, a reservation border town, he is able to find traces of truth in the cultures of both the colonizer and the colonized. So he performs for the half-breed Tayo a healing ceremony that incorporates Tayo’s two divergent worlds. It is a mixed-up, topsyturvy ritual that sets Tayo on the road to wholeness.⁵⁰ And throughout Tayo’s journey toward wholeness, the colour blue dominates.⁵¹

The novel’s female characters, although many, are symbolized as one person: the ever-mutating Spider Woman of Laguna mythology (known as Changing Woman in Navajo mythology). Spider Woman, or Changing Woman, is in the turquoise blue of the satin dress of Black Swan, a Mexican prostitute;⁵² Spider Woman/Changing Woman is in the blue of Mount Taylor;⁵³ the blue swimsuit of the model in a Coca-Cola calendar;⁵⁴ the blue of old Betonie’s shirt;⁵⁵ and in the blue of the Ute woman’s tight Western pants.⁵⁶ Spider Woman/Changing Woman’s color is found in the most incongruous places. It functions as a kind of cultural hypertext, linking the reader to new postcolonial, postfeminist perspectives and possibilities. In all these contexts the color blue reflects Silko’s critical appropriation of the woman of the ‘borderland typescene’,⁵⁷ a personage whom we first saw in the biblical tradition. But unlike La

49 Silko, *Ceremony*, pp. 33–39.

50 Silko, *Ceremony*, pp. 116–45.

51 Kathleen Manley makes the argument that ‘[t]he color blue provides ... links among the ceremonies with Night Swan, Betonie, and Ts’eh’ (‘Leslie Marmon Silko’s Use of Color in *Ceremony*’, *Southern Folklore* 46 [1989], p. 138, cf. 137, 139).

52 Silko, *Ceremony*, pp. 84, 98.

53 Silko, *Ceremony*, p. 100.

54 Silko, *Ceremony*, p. 153.

55 Silko, *Ceremony*, p. 119.

56 Silko, *Ceremony*, p. 155.

57 Significantly, Tayo recalls a previous meeting with a mysterious woman (Spider Woman) precisely at the moment he is cutting through the barbed-wire fence that separates the reservation from a white man’s ranch (*Ceremony*, p. 194; cf. 176–77, 183).

Farge or the author of *Luke–Acts*, Silko seems to be arguing that the colonizer’s own stories can be used to benefit and heal the colonized if those stories’ power can be critically appropriated into the tradition of the colonized.⁵⁸ Thus, in Silko’s reading of the border woman, the colonized are empowered—even called—to engage their wits and creatively reappropriate the new and old in ways that the colonial power cannot imagine. Here, finally, the voice of the colonized is engaged: it talks back, it argues, it challenges. That voice is critically involved in active dialogue with the colonizer’s ideology. *Ceremony* offers a lively, postcolonial, postfeminist, post-canonical voice to colonialist-engendered border women like Sarah Tsosie, Slim Girl, and Lydia and the pythonic slave girl who otherwise remain co-opted, disempowered, or dead.

Conclusion

A postcolonial, postfeminist reading of Acts 16.6–40 allows one to understand Lydia and the pythonic slave girl in a new way. Where other commentators and missionizing folk write about the women separately, with Lydia being the positive role model and the slave girl being the negative role model for ‘native’ responses to the gospel, a postcolonial, postfeminist reading resists viewing them independently. Instead, the focus of postcolonialist, postfeminist attention is on their paired geographical status as border women.

At this point, my particular reading of Acts 16, conceived and nurtured in memories of a colonialist childhood on the Navajo Reservation and confirmed by my recent reading of *Laughing Boy*, gains insight from Dube Shomanah’s creative work. For as her analysis makes evident, there is a series of biblical stories where border women embody the doubled identity of helper and betrayer. Since Lydia and the pythonic slave girl are the first people Paul meets in explicitly defined Roman territory, they also reflect the conflicted status of colonized peoples. But the author of Acts carefully disguises the gospel’s colonialist effects. For in describing Paul’s encounter with *two* border women, the author effectively deflects the reader’s attention from Paul’s role as ideological colonizer and instead tries to force the reader to choose between the two opposing responses to Paul’s message. There is, therefore, no middle ground in this text: Lydia, the good woman, welcomes Paul the conqueror, and the evil slave girl who challenges Paul is for ever silenced. There is no place in this author’s narrative repertoire for more complex border women like Rahab, the Canaanite/Syrophenician woman, or the Samaritan woman. And certainly there is no place in Acts for a borderland character like Silko’s half-breed Tayo, who struggles for survival on the edges of two different worlds.

In conclusion, I do not think that we have to find a decolonizing strategy in Acts to save the biblical text from imperialist, patriarchal ideologies. If we are honest

58 This perspective is seen most clearly in characters like Tayo’s grandmother who is able to mingle ‘all of creation [with] two names: an Indian name and a white name’ and still see the underlying unity (*Ceremony*, pp. 68–69; cf. 259–60); and in Betonie, the Navajo medicine man who can say ‘You see, in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing’ (Silko, *Ceremony*, p. 126; cf. 132, 150, 153–54; cf. B.A. St. Andrews, ‘Healing the Witchery: Medicine in Silko’s *Ceremony*’, *Arizona Quarterly* 14 [1988], pp. 86–94; and N.R. Rand, ‘Surviving What Haunts You: The Art of Invisibility in *Ceremony*, *The Ghost Writer*, and *Beloved*’, *MELUS* 20 [1995], pp. 21–32).



about our ideological and ethical commitments from the outset, then perhaps Leslie Marmon Silko's contrapuntal voice in *Ceremony* will be enough to challenge our colonialist readings of Acts 16. Perhaps Spider Woman/Changing Woman can function as an important intertextual supplement to Acts 16, a supplement that creates space for an invigorating postcolonial, postfeminist conversation with traditional biblical texts. In this new environment, experiments in postcolonial, postfeminist, post-canonical exegesis will empower colonized minds, hearts, and voices to speak and act in fresh, enlivening ways.

