

**Review of Gale A. Yee, *Towards an Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics: An Intersectional Anthology*  
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This book is a collection of essays about Asian American biblical hermeneutics written by Yee over the years, with three new chapters (1, 4, and 11). The publication of this anthology is timely, as Yee was elected as the first Asian American president of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2019. I am approaching this review from my social location as an Asian doctoral candidate in a U.S. university trying to navigate academia's predominantly white space. For that reason, I want to highlight three features of this book that are crucial for such a struggle.

First, the book is not a monograph but an anthology. This anthological form is a strength. It challenges the linearity of European enlightenment influence, which demanded a step-by-step methodological order in doing exegesis or biblical hermeneutics. It also highlights that Asian and Asian-American biblical hermeneutics is not a disinterested franchise from which a manual of a linear, progressive, and universalizing method can be extracted, but instead a deeply invested, heavily experiential, and complex enterprise.

Second, I want to highlight the recurring concept of “betwixt and between” and “going beyond binaries.” Yee reflects on the experiences of Asian-Americans that challenge the racial binary of black and white in the United States, among other experiences. Yee successfully rereads the texts in Hebrew Bible through the lenses that highlight the experience of Asian Americans in the U.S. who stood beyond the racial binary of black and white. She aptly points out how the racialization of Asian Americans and African Americans rests on different axes. The latter is on color, while the former, though brown and yellow color discourses also exist, primarily rests on citizenship. This is indeed important to underscore the complexity yet pervasiveness of the dominant racializing oppressive system.

This critical point is reflected nicely in Chapter 11. In this chapter, Yee challenges the binary of *gôlâ* and *'am hâ'āreṣ* to recover the voices of the communities in Samaria and Egypt that present alternate understandings of Jewishness in the book of Ezekiel. Yee aptly combines sensitivity to the voices beyond binary with sociohistorical analysis. As Yee notes in the postscript, the term “Asian-American” does not appear anywhere in this chapter, even though it concludes a book on Asian-American biblical hermeneutics. But this maneuver highlights how Asian-Americanness does not stand in a vacuum. The Asian or Asian American aspect of one's social location intersects with other aspects, among them gender, class, and academic training. To dwell exclusively on just one aspect of identity, to concentrate on the proper method of that one aspect as opposed to engaging in a conversation with other methods, seems to be a demand of a capitalist-influenced specialization of the academy. Along with the notion of private property, a single discipline is demanded to have its own property that does not intersect, or only minimally intersects, with other disciplines—its own subject of study, its own proper method, and so on. Yee's intersectional approaches challenge this capitalistic mindset.

This final chapter also confronts the fear of anachronism prevalent in biblical studies. One of the principles of this fear is that ancient people are in a totally different situation than modern people. As a result, our current modern experiences are claimed not to apply to ancient people. This principle tends to threaten students who are sensitive to their social location as they attempt to detect similar experiences in the ancient world. Yee confronts this fear by successfully recovering the overlooked voices in the book of Ezekiel. She recovers the voices of communities in Samaria and Egypt that don't fit well in the binary of *gôlâ* and *'am hâ'āreš*, through her sensitivity to feel “betwixt and between” and to feel “neither here nor there”—the sensitivity that comes from her daily experiences as a person of Asian descent in the U.S. This chapter confronts the fear of anachronism with a strong note that such fear only applies to and is propagated by those who do not have the experience of being marginalized. Similar to how the dominant voice in the current era today does not have sensitivity toward the currently marginalized, it is difficult for today's dominant voice to be sensitive to the non-dominant in the ancient era. Yee calls biblical scholars to be sensitive to social location in every recreation of meaning from texts and every reconstruction of history to detect similar marginalized experiences in the ancient world.

The third important feature of the book is the personal narratives and experiences both within and beyond academia, present in the autobiographical introduction but also interwoven throughout the chapters. In my view, it serves as concealed mentoring sessions. When students encounter great academic work, they mostly see the final product, not the process, the background story, the struggle in that writing process. The process is sometimes, not always, told by the professor in mentoring sessions or the classroom, which in turn is a privilege because not everyone can be a part of this session or classroom. Through the personal narratives and experiences interwoven in the chapters, readers can feel the experience of being in mentoring sessions with Yee. By showing the process, Yee succeeds in providing something “worthwhile for later generations” (1).

However, as I reflect on this book within my particular social location as an international student from an Asian country being educated in the U.S., I wonder where my place is in the binaries of current Asian-American discourses. The binary between American-born Asian and Asian immigrant, of Asian in the U.S. and Asian in Asia, of the so-called illegal Asian and legal Asian in the U.S. I am currently on a student visa, which is technically a non-immigrant status. I am a legal resident alien with a very limited duration of stay. I almost never get that intimidating question, “Where are you *really* from?” (87) (I would answer, “from Indonesia,” right away). But I do get a lot of this particular question: “After you finish or graduate, do you want to go back, or . . .” With a long pause. For me, this question encourages or insists that I answer yes, I want to go back. I will not stay here. The question seems not to give me the option to stay. But what if one needs to stay because what one calls home, for many reasons, is not safe or conducive anymore? In this condition, I do not know where I belong within the current binaries in Asian American discourses. This could be seen as a weakness of this book. But it could also be seen as another strength, as it calls for both sensitivities to one's social location and also for the sensitivity of going beyond binaries. And it is in answering this call that I reflect on my particular social location beyond the current binaries within the Asian-American discourses.

*Editor's Note: The Bible & Critical Theory endeavors to avoid conflicts of interest in our book reviews section. This review was originally presented at a panel dedicated to Prof. Yee's book at the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. Between the writing and then presentation of the review, in November 2022, and its submission to B&CT, in April 2023, Prof. Yee was added to the author's dissertation committee.*



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