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### *Feminist Pastoral Theological Anthropology*

More can always be said in any account we give of the self-in-relation. We know by way of experience that any telling of our lives is always incomplete, whether we are reflecting on specific cases of identity that call for recognition as a pastoral intervention for doing just care, or extrapolating from specific cases to larger theological claims about subjectivity. While many accounts in theology remain to be told, feminist pastoral theologians have historically created and held open space for complex accounts of subjectivity. They have actively reflected on the formation of the subject through feminist and womanist lenses. Some, like Joretta Marshall and Carroll Watkins Ali, have offered implicit theories of subjectivity by attending to the complexity of identity, suffering, and injustices. Others, like Pamela Cooper-White, have articulated theological anthropological visions of the person. Each of these authors progressively refines our understandings of subjectivity and barriers to flourishing, beginning with heterosexism (Marshall), racism (Ali), and sexism (Graham), moving to social constructivism (Graham, McClure, and White), and extending to multiplicity in theological anthropology (White).

My intention in this chapter is to provide an appreciative inquiry into the state of subjectivity in feminist pastoral theology by engaging these five authors on their own terms. Furthermore, I engage them in order to systematize feminist theological anthropologies attentive to care and lived experience. To accomplish this, I show how they construct their

theologies of lived subjectivity and reflect on the tasks of pastoral theology in light of those constructions. I contend that each author offers significant contributions to thinking about subjectivity, but they have not attended to the dynamics of recognition explicitly. Without attention to these dynamics, care for the living human web is distanced from critical analysis about the formation of persons through identity and the machinery of oppressive systems that judge and condemn based on one's identity and performance thereof. Hence, claims for just care may be misrecognized or not recognized at all if identity as the framework *par excellence* is not carefully considered in light of what it hides and shows. In order to make way to cultivate a critical consciousness attentive to recognition, we turn to distinct voices who theologize about women's experience and human experience from feminist commitments.

## Subjectivity and Sexuality

Tending to diversity and difference is one route of reflection on subjectivity and is widely accepted in feminist pastoral theology. However, it is important to remember that this paradigm that encourages reflection on diversity was not always so. Courage was, and continues to be, required in the face of internalized and socially constructed institutions, practices, and thought patterns of oppression, marginalization, and exclusion. For this reason, the publication of *Counseling Lesbian Partners* by Joretta L. Marshall was and remains an important contribution to pastoral theological reflection on subjectivity and sexuality.<sup>1</sup>

At the most fundamental level, Joretta Marshall argues that lesbian individuals are complex subjects who, first, are not deviants from a God-given heteronormative sexuality, and second, are deserving of supportive pastoral counseling because God affirms human sexuality that is covenantal. She writes, "Women in lesbian covenantal partnerships reflect the church's normative understanding of relatedness and are to be affirmed and blessed by God and the church."<sup>2</sup> Further, Marshall explains that

1. See reviews by Nancy J. Ramsay in *Journal of Pastoral Theology* (7:1) and James I. Higginbotham in *Encounter* (60:1) for examples of how *Counseling Lesbian Partners* was praised for its substantive and courageous contribution.

2. Marshall, *Counseling Lesbian Partners*, 14.

God desires that the covenant between oneself and God-self be enriched through relationships of love, justice, and mutuality.<sup>3</sup>

Marshall offers us a thick theological anthropology of human development and partnership. She does not shy away from human brokenness in individual development or in the context of relationships. As a result, Marshall offers us a rich theology of subjectivity by issuing a vision of life together as women-loving-women, but not one which is idyllic or which might ever be free of the pains of patriarchy, sexism, or heterosexism. Thus, she holds in tension the call to support partnerships of love, justice, and mutuality as the telos of human sexuality, while describing how challenges to a woman's understanding of herself as a lesbian arise from internal and external sources.

First, Marshall argues that the claiming of a lesbian identity is a challenge, though one that leads to liberation, spiritual depth, and possibilities for deeper relationships of mutuality and care. She draws on clinical psychologist Vivienne Cass to provide a six-step developmental frame for identity emergence: identity confusion to identity comparison to identity tolerance to identity acceptance to identity pride to identity synthesis. While Cass asserts that these stages are linear, Marshall disagrees, writing, "I would suggest that they be seen as fluid and dynamic interpretations women bring to their self-understandings at different points in their journeys. Often a movement from one perspective to another is met by resistance, fear, or lack of support, making it difficult to fully embrace what Cass describes as the qualities of a given stage."<sup>4</sup> "Fluctuation and shifts" and identities that "may be experienced as long-lasting but are not necessarily fixed and permanent" are part of the formation of a sexual orientation, and a key component of a lesbian's sense of self. Thus, part of Marshall's theology of subjectivity includes a sexual and embodied self who is in-process. Marshall's use of language of self-identifying, while also being identified by others, or "naming and being named,"<sup>5</sup> also implies the relational nature of her theological anthropology. As well, it implies a sense of coming to know who one is and having that identity positively reflected by another individual.

Second, Marshall presents specific challenges to covenantal lesbian partnerships in the forms of addiction, lesbian battering, sexual abuse

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 35.

5. Ibid., 38.

survival, and fusion in relationships. She notes that these challenges are not unique, “but they can be the most common and overlooked struggles in these relationships.”<sup>6</sup> While she focuses on the intrapersonal dynamics between the challenged partners, Marshall demonstrates how to carefully excavate and examine personal histories and social norms that weaken partnerships of love, justice, and mutuality. Additionally, she shows us how to use all the data available to make wise assessments and do goal-setting in counseling relationships. For example, she gives the case of lesbian battering in the couple Jane and Phyllis. They have engaged in verbal and physical combat with each other, with Jane as the perpetrator of domestic violence and Phyllis as the victim. Marshall’s description of the situation fits the typical understanding of domestic violence, with the important exception that it is woman to woman. She writes, “The most common misconception in working with lesbian partnerships is that women do not hit other women and that battering is not present in the lesbian community . . . Physical violence between women does exist and reckoning with this reality is imperative so as not to minimize abuse when it does occur.”<sup>7</sup> By making a claim like this, Marshall also shows us that her theological anthropology does not assume essentialist feminine qualities of caring and tenderness as constitutive of gender identity. Instead, a woman can be violent and aggressive, emotional states which may be due to internalized images of “women as victims or as unhealthy persons.”<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, Marshall’s emphasis on assessment, goal-setting, and proactive pastoral care reveals a theological anthropology where relational injustices are reflective of social injustices and thus must be encountered within oneself and within larger social structures. She presents the case of Sara who is an executive director of a new pastoral counseling center. Sara and the board grapple with whether they ought to reach out by placing an advertisement in the lesbian and gay newspaper in order to grow the center. They worry what the reaction from the denominations that support the center might be. Marshall uses this case to state explicitly that the theological call to build community necessitates inclusion of marginalized voices.<sup>9</sup> To refuse to do so is to collude with silencing and to believe

6. *Ibid.*, 70.

7. *Ibid.*, 78.

8. *Ibid.*, 79.

9. *Ibid.*, 128.

that the church has nothing to do with injustices that arise from lack of access to resources of care. However, to break silence also requires that pastoral care specialists do inner work to identify their own homophobia.

To sum up, by attending to lesbian partnerships in all their strengths and weaknesses, and as part of the divine gift of human sexuality, Marshall offers pastoral theologians and care specialists a rich theological anthropology that, though focused on lesbian identities, has a wider reach. First, she reminds us that developing a sexual orientation is always a process, and one negotiated at an interpsychic and intrapsychic level. Second, she shows that a woman-loving-woman can embody hyper-masculinized qualities of control, physical aggression, and rage. Third, while sexism, homophobia, and patriarchy are forces that impinge on the psychic and spiritual health of individuals and couples, Marshall shows us that persons have the ability to resist and to create loving, just, and mutual relationships, sometimes calling upon assistance from pastoral care specialists to help in resistance to oppressive forces.

Marshall's work is pivotal to developing and sustaining a line of questioning that challenges heteronormativity in Christian religious traditions and practices. Marshall reminds us that coming out may be a liberative and challenging process "that upsets the status quo and moves the world off-center."<sup>10</sup> Her work offers a pastoral apologetic for caring about women in homosexual relationships. In light of the conservative streak of the recent U.S. religious landscape, which responded with a "love the sinner, hate the sin" thematic approach, or demonizing desire and naming the homosexual as patient in need of *cure* from wrong desire, e.g. reparative therapy, Marshall puts into literary flesh a liberal pastoral theology that dialogues with emergent psychological scholarship on supporting lesbians while deploying Christian theological concepts to bolster her claims. Yet, more is needed in thinking pastorally about how a subject is formed in relationship to her sexuality. For example, how might our descriptions of subjectivity and pastoral care be amplified by taking account of an intersectional analysis of lesbian sexuality and race?<sup>11</sup> As

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10. Ibid., 104.

11. Douglas, "The Black Church and the Politics of Sexuality," 349. Douglas writes, "While the Black Church community is arguably no more homophobic than the wider Church community or heterosexist society of which it is a part, causal observations do suggest that it is perhaps more unyielding and impassioned than other communities when expressing its anti-gay and anti-lesbian sentiments."

we advance a field that cares about justice, we will continue to need to expand our approaches to sexuality as a critical site of identity formation.

## Subjectivity and Racialized Injustices

Womanist pastoral theologian Carroll A. Watkins Ali brings complex questions of racial injustice to pastoral theology. Like Marshall, she describes the pastoral theological subject with implications for care. Questions of subjectivity arise as she describes the limit situations that affect psychological and social health for African-Americans. As a womanist pastoral theologian speaking on subjectivity, as well as a womanist offering a contextual pastoral theology, she offers a unique view that accounts for subject formation by multiple identity markers and a collective history that makes visible racially insensitive pastoral care and theology. Further, she remains hopeful that pastoral interventions may restore a subject's own sense of self.

Ali writes out of her own cognitive dissonance as a student of pastoral theology and a black woman. She asks how pastoral theology might build "a conceptual framework . . . in the African American context that is adequate to the struggle of many African Americans to stay alive and be free of the oppression of racial injustice."<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, she leads us into the depths of human experience through the accounts of Lemonine, Pauletta, and Doris. She notes that these stories are to illuminate and speak to the collective whole about survival and liberation.

Ali's significant contribution to a pastoral theological anthropology is an account of the difficulties of surviving systematic racial injustice coupled with crippling social and psychological suffering. She briefly highlights the legacy of cultural loss through the transatlantic slave trade, the blindness of history that overlooks black women's resistance, classism and racism vis a vis unequal pay and work opportunities, the systematic racism that supports hard-to-break cycles of crime and violence in impoverished black communities, the workings of the prison-industrial complex, and the familial stressors of alcohol and drug abuse that maintain "genocidal poverty."<sup>13</sup> The stories of Lemonine, Pauletta, and Doris tell us about the process of becoming a subject in the face of survival

12. Ali, *Survival and Liberation*, 1.

13. *Ibid.*, 25.

against genocidal poverty. I recount Ali's vignettes next as they are demonstrative examples of pastoral theological subject construction.

In her first biographical sketch, Ali tells us the story of Lemonine. Lemonine was a black woman who passed as middle class, but struggled to support her two children and her one grandchild as a single mother. She experienced racism at her workplace, worried about paying for medical care, worried that her car would be stolen by gang members or would need major repairs, worried about paying rent. Her multiple and intersecting jeopardies of class, race, and gender shaped her to strive toward being a strong matriarch for the family, striving which landed her in the hospital for debilitating exhaustion. "Truly," Ali writes, "*life* was Lemonine's presenting problem. There are no other diagnoses in the traditional sense."<sup>14</sup> She "was basically suffering from being overcome by her own personal life, while trying to cope with all the external social realities that affected each age group of her family members."<sup>15</sup> She was the strong black woman who suffered by trying to hold together that which social structures of oppression would tear asunder.

But Lemonine was also a savvy woman, and though she could not afford therapy she found in Ali someone who would work with her despite her inability to pay the full fee. Meeting with her for three years, Ali primarily offered Lemonine supportive therapy. Ali writes, "Each weekly session during our relationship served mainly to build Lemonine up enough so that she could go back out to face a hostile world for another week."<sup>16</sup> But this was not enough to reverse the cumulative life trauma and its psychological toll on Lemonine. Ali reports that Lemonine became more and more hopeless: "I witnessed Lemonine lose hope and give up on life altogether."<sup>17</sup> Six months after therapy was mutually terminated, Lemonine died of a brain tumor.

In her second biographical sketch Ali describes her caring efforts with Pauletta. Pauletta was a single black mother and poor. She came to Ali to mourn the death of her first-born teenage son, a victim of gang violence. He was shot for wearing "the wrong colored hat," a wrong doing which had occurred seven years previous to Pauletta's therapeutic

14. Ibid., 5.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

encounter with Ali.<sup>18</sup> Session after session Pauletta grieved the loss of her first-born, and “the dynamics of her own personal life.”<sup>19</sup> Loss of support engulfed Pauletta. Her younger son joined the army and church folk from whom she had drawn strength in the midst of her crisis seven years ago were tired of hearing about the tragic loss of her first-born son.

Ali offered her supportive therapy and the space to grieve and cry out her anguish. “The purging went on session after session, but it was what she needed. That was not what was needed to solve her problems, but there was an enormous amount of grieving that Pauletta had to come to terms with before she could move on with her life.”<sup>20</sup> After all, “Life as a Black female had by no means been easy,” Ali writes.<sup>21</sup> By grappling with feelings of loss, abandonment, and isolation, Pauletta made positive strides in her life. Ali concludes by sharing that Pauletta had found work as a community activist and was doing “fairly well.”<sup>22</sup>

Lastly Ali shares Doris’ story with her readers. Doris was a black woman who grew up in a home filled with physical and emotional abuse. Her mother justified the abuse by reasoning, “I would rather beat my own kids to make them act right, than for them to get beat out in the street by White police.”<sup>23</sup> Doris internalized this fear of violent external patriarchal and sexist systems as self-hatred and abused drugs and alcohol. Her health was poor, Ali reports. Further, all the kinds of jobs that her education and training qualified her to do—minimum wage and physically taxing work—were not manageable given her poor health. Doris also had two children who were both deaf. Seeking public aid for her family, she came under the watchful eye of the social work system. The “System,” as Doris called it, was an aggressor that fed off her fear with threats to prove her inadequacies as a mother, even though her skill as a translator between the children and the case workers, ironically, demonstrated her commitment to caring for them.

Doris was referred to Ali when her court-ordered therapy group terminated. Ali makes the point that Doris was resistant to seeing anyone besides a black woman. When donated funds ran out to pay her fee,

18. *Ibid.*, 131.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, 132.

21. *Ibid.*, 131.

22. *Ibid.*, 132.

23. *Ibid.*

Ali continued therapy with Doris because “the issues were too serious to drop.”<sup>24</sup> She reports,

In reality, Doris spent most of her time at home child-rearing, in the silence of two deaf children, trying to negotiate the “System” and struggling with poor health, while people (even church people) and family distanced themselves from her and her children. I could see that Doris, despite all that she had been through, was still trying to overcome the odds without any real support. Doris was virtually alone.<sup>25</sup>

In these three vignettes Ali compassionately shows how systematic injustices contribute to the material and psychological conditions of genocidal poverty. Genocidal poverty limits Lemonine, Pauletta, and Doris in monumental ways. They are unable to move with freedom in their social and psychological worlds. In sharing their stories, Ali reveals her implicit theory of subjectivity. She accounts for some agency of the subject, but this agentic power also meets with extreme resistance in multiple forms: from friends, family, and church who ought to care, but can no longer do so; from social systems that ought to help, but are unable to effectively do so; and from intrapsychic forces where unfulfilled desires for hope and belonging morph into despair, isolation, and grief.

To Ali, the dire conditions of African-Americans are a critique of the pastoral shepherding model proposed by pastoral theologian Seward Hiltner. In *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (1958), Hiltner argues that the discipline of pastoral theology reflects on the ministerial activities of healing, sustaining, and guiding within his proposed shepherding perspective. Ali critiques Seward Hiltner’s shepherding perspective in three ways. First, she argues that his shepherding model is paternalistic and overvalues the pastor’s perspectives. Second, his individualistic approach is representative of white European American cultural thought, and presumably a male rationality. Last, the pastoral operations he proposes—healing, sustaining, and guiding—are culturally insufficient for the current situations of African-Americans. Ali offers additions to the pastoral functions in nurturing, empowering, and liberating.<sup>26</sup> She writes,

In general, guidelines for the pastoral care of African Americans from a womanist perspective call for the expansion in character

24. *Ibid.*, 133.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 121.

and content of the ministry described by Hiltner's shepherding perspective. In terms of the character of ministry, the womanist perspective offers two guidelines in addition to Hiltner's call for an "attitude of tender and solicitous concern." The first order of business . . . is . . . urgency . . . Second, the attitude of pastoral care should also be one of advocacy that is embodied in action.<sup>27</sup>

The realities of the African-American experience necessitate urgency and action on the part of pastoral caregivers. A shepherding perspective is too passive in the face of cultural genocide. Action is required.

Ali's expansion of the pastoral functions and her critique of Hiltner gives us insight on how ministry can lead to critical accounts of subject formation. She argues that the Black church must engage in the practices of ministry—preaching, pastoral counseling, Christian education, youth ministry, and community outreach—to give hope while in the midst of struggle.<sup>28</sup> Because Ali is not explicit, we must draw some conclusions on our own. Namely, the tasks of Christian ministry in form and in content are practices of resistance to a dominant cultural formation that leads to nihilism and genocidal poverty for African-Americans. In this sense, Ali holds open a space for a changing self-perception of self and others in community, and is adamant that liberation cannot come at the expense of denial of one's culture.

It is outside the scope of her book to explicitly describe a theology of the person and her formation, yet I believe that Ali has done so, attentive to subject formation through the evils of racism, classism, and sexism. Resisting either/or thinking, she maintains hope that practices of pastoral ministry might intervene in that same subject formation. Still, what might it mean to deepen our understanding of subject formation in light of her insights? As I recounted above, the case studies of Lemonine, Pauletta, and Doris are representative figures of the suffering that black women undergo. In order to care more justly we must also examine how descriptions intended to liberate may unintentionally reinscribe harmful stereotypes of black women.<sup>29</sup> What might it mean to read the story of Lemonine, the female head of household who died from exhaustion, through an analytic lens that accounts for the harms of the matriarch

27. *Ibid.*, 136.

28. *Ibid.*, 154–61.

29. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 76–93. Collins identifies the controlling images of the jezebel, welfare queen, mammy and matriarch and describes their historical development and current forms.

image and tries to trace these harms concretely as they become visible in Lemonine's family life and her interpretation of faith claims?

As a controlling image, the matriarch is the strong black woman given to bouts of anger. She drives men away through her unchecked aggression and her unfeminine personality emasculates her male lovers and husbands. Her children are without fathers because she will not conform to the appropriate and ideal gender behavior. Thus, she must become the breadwinner, as well. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins writes, "In this context, the image of the Black matriarch serves as a powerful symbol for both Black and White women of what can go wrong if White patriarchal power is challenged. Aggressive, assertive women are penalized—they are abandoned by their men, end up impoverished, and are stigmatized as being unfeminine."<sup>30</sup>

Womanist pastoral theologian Teresa Snorton identifies two relational locations where the matriarch stereotype thrives and describes the harm that the image causes. First, the controlling image is reproduced intergenerationally. Mothers covertly teach their daughters the skills of survival, namely strength and independence, so that they too are able to be care leaders for their own households.<sup>31</sup> Snorton explains, "Often the lessons are so covert that one might miss them, except for their telling impact on how one is expected to respond to life's difficulties."<sup>32</sup> Second, an insidious incarnation resides in the pastoral exultation of that image. In the wake of deep suffering, the matriarch is a woman of strong faith, one who cries out to God for healing and prays for the Holy Spirit to revive her soul. Snorton writes, "She has many problems; however, traditions of faith and culture have taught her that her only recourse in this life is to look Godward."<sup>33</sup> In the middle of crisis, she testifies to the saving power of God while others look to her for words of comfort.

I raise the question of the shape of Ali's case studies in order to advocate for fuller accounts of subject formation. Accounts of cultural histories are critical to advance liberative paradigms of pastoral theology. Her accounts of material poverty and the psychological state of her clients are descriptive, giving voice to women like Pauletta, Doris, and Lemonine. However, descriptions are not analysis. Analysis must

30. *Ibid.*, 85.

31. Snorton, "The Legacy of the African-American Matriarch," 55.

32. *Ibid.*, 55.

33. *Ibid.*, 54.

challenge oppressive systems, including pastoral systems, that cultivate nihilism and genocidal poverty in black women's lives. Analysis may also reveal the shape of agency available to subjects. Without analysis within the context of these case studies, stereotypes may be reproduced unintentionally. As a result, an account of racial subjectivity may become distorted and border on misrecognition of black women.

## Subjectivity and the Post/Human

Elaine Graham, Samuel Ferguson Professor of Social and Pastoral Theology at the University of Manchester, explores the post/human condition in the monograph *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (2002). The term post/human connotes a trajectory of thought resulting from a genealogical method. She examines the discourse of Western technoscience and popular culture for representations of human identity. She writes about a large range of scientific and cultural material and thinkers, from the Human Genome Project and Star Trek to Donna Haraway and Luce Irigaray, working each thoroughly to show the face of humanity that is refracted through the mirror of narrative. She explains,

In analyzing the representations of selected post/human figures—liminal characters, inhabiting the boundary between the human and the almost-human—I have resisted essentialist models of 'human nature', preferring instead to emphasize the way in which definitive versions of what it means to be human emerge from encounters with the refracted 'Other' in the form of the monster, the android, the *Doppelgänger*, or the alien.<sup>34</sup>

Using a genealogical approach, Graham shows us that current pre-occupations with what becomes of the human subject in light of multiplying cybernetic, biomedical, and digital technologies is a question that is part of the mythos of the "purity and fixity"<sup>35</sup> of human nature, or what Graham terms "ontological hygiene."<sup>36</sup> The result of her study is a deconstructive theory of the person that builds on "representation, monstrosity

34. Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 221.

35. *Ibid.*, 36.

36. *Ibid.*, 11, 33–35.

and alterity, contingency of human identity, and the resurgence of the sacred.”<sup>37</sup>

It is important to situate her most current study within the trajectory of thought exemplified by her previous scholarship on gender and practice in postmodernity. In *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood, and Theology* (1996), Graham embarks on a multi-disciplinary study of gender to develop a theology of gender. She engages anthropology, biology and psychoanalysis to teach her reader about normative theories of gender. Once she has accomplished this task, she interrogates theories of gender through detailed accounts of how bodies are disciplined to social norms, not exemplars of a free form anthropology of gender; how what is “natural” is challenged in the bodies of intersex or transsexual persons and thus reveals the social construction of the “natural;” and how essentialist understandings of gender expel difference in order to stabilize themselves. Her contribution in this book is not only a thorough account of gender theory and its debates, but also a movement toward a theology of gender that “must engage with the pluralism and complexity of interdisciplinary theories of gender at a profound level.”<sup>38</sup> Further, her scholarship locates her reflections squarely within pastoral theological reflection on subjectivity.

In her book *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (1996), Graham develops an account of pastoral theology as a “critical theology of Christian practice” that addresses the postmodern challenges to identity, power, and knowledge.<sup>39</sup> She argues that understanding pastoral theology as “critical phenomenology of pastoral practice” lays the groundwork for a postmodern pastoral theology.<sup>40</sup> In this form of pastoral theology, the grand narratives and “eternal” moral norms of faith communities that shape practice are not absolutized and ahistoricized, but evaluated and investigated in light of “the complexity of human experience and their viability as public and communitarian forms of practical wisdom.”<sup>41</sup> She grounds her conclusion by way of observation of transformative feminist praxis that issue from the sources and norms of women’s experience, faith traditions, and the community of

37. *Ibid.*, 225.

38. Graham, *Making the Difference*, 222.

39. Graham, *Transforming Practice*, 3.

40. *Ibid.*, 209.

41. *Ibid.*

faith. She offers feminist preaching, feminist spiritual direction, and liturgy as women-church as concrete examples. Again, her contribution in this demanding text is a depiction of the implications of postmodernity for ecclesial communities. In light of her future work in post/humanity, *Transforming Practice* is a critical study that attends to how ecclesial practices might be understood as sites for engaging difference and alterity.

In *Representations of the Post/Human*, Graham extends her scholastic reflections on personhood, alterity, and the postmodern turn by engaging cultural studies as a locus of theological reflection. Her concerns are framed better as a reflection on subjectivity when we ask her text what we ought to be wary of when constructing a theory of subjectivity. She answers that we should be aware of four factors in constructing theories of the person: representation, monstrosity and alterity, contingency, and resurgence of the sacred.

First, we ought to be wary of representation as a stand-in which displaces the original with a simulacrum. Graham gives the example of the human genome project which becomes the “code of codes”—that which distills the wild diversity of humanity by discovering the exact sequencing of four proteins: cytosine, guanine, adenine, and thymine. Decoding of the human person problematically effaces the actual person, but at the same time leads to questions of power and authority. If the code is only partially representative of human diversity, as scientists are increasingly coming to believe, then who has the power to speak for whom? Further, “representations that are ideological or reductionist—humans as genes, machines, nature as feminized other—serve to enshrine and reify certain assumptions about normative and exemplary humanity, but at the expense of excluding others from the discourse altogether.”<sup>42</sup> At stake in representation is the question of who has the authority to determine what and who is legitimately human, and the potential to repress or oppress that which is deemed alien or monster.

Second, we ought to be aware of the ways in which human creatureliness is reconstructed as alien or monster. Graham examines monstrosity, or teratology, as a discursive site on boundaries and identity. Examining *Star Trek* as cultural artifact, Graham shows that the fear and anxiety over technology’s encroachment on the male rational subject works against an ethos of equity, diversity, and tolerance. For example, in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the android Lieutenant-Commander Data desires to act

42. Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human*, 226.

as and be understood as a human subject. In one episode his legal status as a free subject with rights is called into question when Commander Bruce Maddox wishes to experiment on him. He wins the trial and his capacity for self-determination by articulating the fact that his life is at stake.<sup>43</sup> In other episodes, Data longs for human emotion, but does not get it quite right, failing at poetry, stand-up comedy, and romantic relationships.<sup>44</sup> At the prospect of being dismantled, Data worries whether his digitized memories will contain the “essence” of the memory.<sup>45</sup> True humanity is marked out by what Data struggles to secure for himself, namely, liberty, emotive capabilities, and subjective experiences. Graham concludes that though *Star Trek* gives the appearance of attention to post/human difference, it defines authentic humanity as freedom and individuality by misrepresenting Data as an observer of human culture, always at the margins of full participation. As an ethos for constructing subjectivity, Graham observes, “This should encourage interpreters of representations of the post/human to be mindful of the invisibility or objectification—the misrepresentation—of those whose existence guarantees coherent categories, but whose non-participation or exclusion underpins the prosperity and security of others.”<sup>46</sup> Following Derrida’s observation that every seed of knowledge contains its own possible destruction, her analysis shows that attempts to describe an ontologically pure human nature subvert their own stable and fixed discourse by evoking alterity.

Third, we ought to consider an ethic of relationships in a theory of subjectivity. In particular, Graham argues that attending to “the digital, cybernetic and biotechnological” is cause to reflect on the porous peripheries between human and non-human. She uses the example of Donna Haraway’s cyborg to show the contingency and hybridity of human nature. Human nature cannot be said to exist as it cannot be isolated from technology. With this in mind, a post/human ethic advocates attention to difference without dominion. Graham writes, “Ethically and experientially, the cyborg is a heuristic figure that suggests the rejection of solutions of either denial or mastery in favour of a post/human ethic grounded in complicity with, not mastery over, non-human nature, animals, and

43. Ibid., 138.

44. Ibid., 140.

45. Ibid., 139.

46. Ibid., 227.

machines.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the hybridity of human and technology leads to a co-evolution that is thoroughly material.

Lastly, when theorizing or analyzing subjectivity, we ought to reflect on deep motivations, especially fears and hopes. Graham does this well, observing that representations of the post/human contain a Gnosticism in their discourses of transcendence. The body and incorporeality are denigrated while technology draws us toward the transcendent and spiritual. However, the idealism and dualism of the transcendence is “not so much about love of life, as paradoxically, a pathological fear of death, vulnerability, and finitude.”<sup>48</sup> It is not the technophobic who is afraid of death, Graham argues, but the technophilic. From these insights, Graham concludes that the ideology of transcendence diminishes the sacramental nature of transcendence as embodied in person and technology. She observes, “This would acknowledge the fabricated, technologized world of human labour and artifice as equally capable of revealing the sacred as the innocence of ‘nature.’”<sup>49</sup>

Graham offers astute analysis of culture and the idea of the person. As one reviewer noted, this book reads like “an extended anthropological prolegomenon to a contemporary theology.”<sup>50</sup> As a theory of subjectivity, she refrains from normative and teleological statements. Instead she unravels what informs our imagination to advocate for an enlarged ethic that refrains from turning the Other into a monster or alien. Her unique contribution is a turn to cultural studies and her analysis of the theological in everyday discourse. She does not write an explicit theological anthropology informed by feminist pastoral-practical theology,<sup>51</sup> but, as I’ve shown, she does share rich insights that show how Others are made in discourse. How might her rich theological anthropology inform a praxis of just care that takes seriously identity?

47. *Ibid.*, 229.

48. *Ibid.*, 230.

49. *Ibid.*, 233.

50. Elaine L. Graham, “Review of *Representations of the Post/Human*,” 124.

51. I say pastoral-practical here because of Graham’s context as a theologian in the United Kingdom. In the U.K. pastoral has tended to have a more expansive definition than in the U.S. Protestant contexts where pastoral often refers to the narrowed activities and research around care and counseling, while practical is the broader framework. See helpful definition entries on pastoral and practical theology in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (1990).