In 1991 Elaine Wainwright, biblical scholar at the Catholic Theological College in Banyo, Brisbane, published her first major study on the Matthean gospel (Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel according to Matthew. BZNW 60. Berlin: De Gruyter). The present work, the product of a period of sabbatical leave at Harvard Divinity School in 1993-94, builds on her initial findings, as well as on a wealth of feminist biblical studies.

One need not be specifically interested in feminist readings of Scripture to gain from Wainwright's work. She is familiar with the standard synchronic and diachronic approaches to New Testament texts and the methodologies involved--whether they be literary, rhetorical, or cultural/sociological. Her familiarity with recent literature and current theories on Matthew is reflected within the argument, in ample footnotes, and in the bibliography. While her interest is in feminine subjectivities involved in reading Matthew, her method is not simply an uncontrolled reader-response approach. It remains textual.

It is specifically as a 'feminist rereading' of the Matthean portrait of Jesus that Wainwright's study commands attention. The 'Another' of the title is a Jesus that does not enforce oppressive patriarchal dominance, but liberates women for new self-understanding and participation in the basileia movement initiated by Jesus. The first two parts of the book set out to 'create a map for a feminist reading of the Jesus of the gospels' (p. ix), while the third major section offers examples of how a rereading of the Matthean text can take place. There is no claim to provide the map, or to assert the feminist interpretation of Matthew.

Wainwright sees the Matthean community, located in various house churches, as active in both forming and in visioning the tradition. Also women participated in the process of both 'traditioning' the oral stories and of visioning the final narrative for themselves. Gospel research has often stressed the role of the redactor, and feminist biblical scholarship has tended to focus on female characters in the narrative (thus Luke's interest in women has been an obvious starting point). Wainwright, by contrast, is interested in 'reconstructing or reimagining women in the world in which the texts were constructed' (p. 3). In particular she wants to trace the plurality of voices ('hereroglossal' readings) which are hinted at 'behind' the text. These are suggested by tensions, ruptures, and 'transgressions' within the text. What evolves is an historical reconstruction of disparate voices, of polyvalence in understanding the meaning of Jesus. It is the task of the feminist interpreter to bring to the fore the voice of women that has been obscured or suppressed in the text itself, and in the traditional androcentric reading of the text.
The aim is to locate the *poiesis* (creative meaning-making of Jesus and the reign of God movement) of early Christian women in order to allow contemporary women to engage in their own ongoing poiesis. By remembering Jesus anew and retelling the story, women can regain its liberating power for themselves. Rightly presupposed is that meaning is gained in the engagement of reader with the text, that texts are not value-neutral in terms of social class, ethnicity, and gender, and that 'the world in front of the text' is as important in meaning-making as 'the world behind the text'. In Part I ('Preparing to Read') Wainwright carefully points out that a feminist 'hermeneutic of creative imagination' (p. 20) does not deny the biological maleness of Jesus as historical fact. It rather protests when 'Jesus' maleness is given universal significance while other particularities of his life are ignored' (p. 11). In particular there is the challenge to construct a symbolic universe by means of metaphors for Jesus that do not suggest or canonise patriarchy. The importance of genre, characterisation and metaphor are outlined as the author discusses the 'poetics of engendered reading' (pp. 21-28). In dealing with the 'rhetorics of engendered reading' (pp. 28-30) Wainwright shows how the literary approach of intertextuality can be profitably used to disclose the power of the reader to 'create meaning through association'. Finally, deconstructing patriarchal readings of the text involves the 'politics of engendered reading' (pp. 30-32). How we read our world influences our reconstruction of the past; likewise, our reconstructions of the past shape the world in which we live.

Part II ('Identifying the Voices') seeks to reconstruct the social situation of the community in which the Matthean gospel was formed and received. The basic thesis is that the community comprised diverse households in which multiple interpretations of Jesus, even dissenting voices, might be heard. While the textual world of the Matthean writer is male and elite, the text allows a reconstruction of house-churches in which 'women's storytelling and prophetic voices were not confined only to traditions in which women figured prominently' (p. 45). Rather, there are indicators of alternate readings of the Jesus story, of resistance to the dominant, male-oriented, scribal reading of the story.

All historical reconstructions are open to question. Granted that 'scholarly readings of the text and its context are prone towards coherence rather than tension and difference' (p. 36), it is reasonable to question whether the Matthean community was as diverse in terms of class, ethnicity, and gender as Wainwright suggests. Must scribal, wisdom and prophetic voices that stand side by side in the final telling of the gospel story be seen as antithetical in the pre-literate stage? The answers to such questions, and whether the suppressed voice of women resisting the dominant androcentric and patriarchal reading of the Jesus story can be convincingly traced in the Matthean text, will depend on whether the historical reconstruction is verified by the four sample readings of Matthean texts (Part III: 'Attending to the Soundings')). Here we can only briefly summarise the readings.

In examining the infancy stories of Matthew 1-2, Wainwright suggests that the insertion of five women into the lineage of Jesus opens 'a small fissure in the symbolic universe that the patrilineage constructs' (p. 56). Further, the threatened child Jesus always remains Miriam's child. He is visited by wise ones, figures of resistance that challenge political
hegemony. ‘Metaphorically, he is linked to Israel as community, imaged as ‘son² and as community of gender reversal in which female ‘surrounds male’ (p. 66). The Matthean portrait of the infant Jesus, of Rachel's line, as endangered child and liberated liberator, opens possibilities for contemporary rereadings of the tradition.

The narrative tension in 11:1-30, in the reading of Jesus as the Christos of prophecy and as Wisdom, creates fissures in the text that provide further evidence of ‘creative ongoing interpretation rather than closed cohesive meaning that is established once and for all’ (p. 83).

Likewise, the stories of the Canaanite women (15:21-28) and Peter’s confession (16:13-20) stand in contrast. The first story 'transgresses ethnic, geographic, and gender boundaries', while the second also contains its own ambiguities in terms of location (Caesarea) and the person of Peter, apostle of faith yet ambiguous character.

Finally, a sampling of the passion and Easter narrative in 27:32 - 28:30 shows the contribution of women's poiesis. Intra- and intertextual data suggests, inter alia, that the failure of the disciples in the hour of crisis leaves room for the role of women in the story. The commissioning of the women at the open tomb (28:1-10) points to the 'open road' of new possibilities, while the commissioning of the disciples on the mountaintop (vv. 16-20) retains the tradition for scribal authority in the hands of males.

To question the feminist interpretative enterprise would be as insulting as to question whether women have the right to feel oppressed by male hegemony. One cannot read Elaine Wainwright's work without being impressed by its scholarship, as well as the legitimacy of her efforts, and those of other feminist interpreters, to ensure that women are liberated and empowered by the gospel. Men need to be sensitised to the way in which the male Jesus as Christos, 'Son of God', 'son of man', King and Lord can be perceived as oppressive, while the same Jesus as Sophia and as liberator holds forth the promise of liberating possibilities.

That said, some basic questions remain. Do the metaphors for Christ complement each other or stand in tension to each other? Are the tensions, ambiguities and rifts found by the modern interpreter real or perceived? Were they apparent to ancient readers/hearers? To what extent are they indicative of dissenting groups in the Matthean community behind the text? With some imaginative intertextual reading, symbolic connotations can be attached to the text by the modern reader. But would ancient hearers/readers, for example, have seen in the rock of Jesus' tomb (27:60) a polyvalent symbol? Did it suggest such a range of meanings as fixity and solidity–thus closing off the story of Jesus—or offense, the church built on the rock, or even the splitting of rocks at the resurrection, denoting new beginnings (see p. 109)? Would they have seen the open road and the mountain of Matthew 28 as antithetical symbols? Must the mountain even denote authority (despite v. 18), or is it not a symbol of theophany and revelation?

Phrases used frequently in both the historical reconstructions of the Matthean community and in the readings are 'may have', 'might have', or 'could have' (see, eg pp 40, 48, 55, 60-
63, 70-71, 104-107). Of course, reconstructing contexts and reading intertextually often involves possibilities and probabilities. But final conclusions need to be built on an accumulation of probabilities at the very least. In Elaine Wainwright's defence, she has produced enough probabilities to show the legitimacy of her search for dissenting voices, and the reasonableness of many conclusions. And after all, she does not promise any more than 'a rereading'.