

# Mapping Eve: A new materialist approach to concept maps as “working objects” in the humanities classroom

Arts and Humanities in Higher Education

2023, Vol. 22(4) 424–443

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DOI: 10.1177/14740222231165906

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## Abstract

This article presents a SoTL study of students’ use of concept maps in my undergraduate class “Women in Christian History,” in a mid-semester module called “the Eve project.” I present three students’ maps to show the different kinds of understandings that students developed in this literacy encounter. I am especially interested in how I can read these learning artifacts as a humanities scholar, and I use humanities theory—in this case, new materialism—to understand aspects of my students’ map-making, with a focus on the keyword “work.” I argue that the maps in my study, read through a new materialist lens, functioned as working objects in a manner that encouraged “differentiation” (inviting students to move toward multiple undefined learning outcomes), and that this is quite different from the work of “differentiation” (ranking students according to predefined learning outcomes) that concept maps traditionally perform in science classes.

## Keywords

New materialism, posthumanism, concept maps, reading, learning outcomes, humanities faculty development

## Introduction: The place of humanities theory in humanities SoTL

Sometimes humanities researchers who take up the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) may wish to learn a new language, figuratively speaking, such as the language of

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social science research design or psychological theories of learning. Or perhaps they wish to learn the language of SoTL that allows us to ask different types of questions, such as “what works” or “what is” (Hutchings, 2000: 4). But in this article I am orienting myself toward the apparent opposite: those times when humanities scholars may wish to use their own language of humanities theory in their SoTL work.

The question of the place of theory in humanities SoTL has been raised before, in a special issue edited by Pat Hutchings and Mary Taylor Huber in *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* in 2008. They compare how SoTL researchers from different disciplines might approach the use of theory. The “place” of theory in their title turns out to be more of a criss-crossing movement, as they observe that theory in SoTL does not have a single provenance and does not travel “in a straight line” (2008: 232). They argue that “theoretical pluralism” will make for the most thought-provoking exchanges in the SoTL community (2008: 233). One of the articles in their special issue, “On the evidence of theory” by Randy Bass and Sherry Lee Linkon (2008), is especially relevant to my concerns. Based on a review of articles in the journal *Pedagogy*, Bass and Linkon discuss how instructors of English literature are able to use theory that is familiar to them to conduct “close readings” of their own pedagogical practice as text. In fact, they suggest that theory is what makes “possible” an interpretation of this practice (2008: 257). However, Bass and Linkon argue that the articles they reviewed do not, on the whole, do enough to include theoretically-informed close readings of student texts. They suggest that if theory could be integrated in this work to the same extent that it is integrated in literary scholarship more broadly, it would help to develop a common (and contestable) vocabulary for thinking about teaching and learning, in the same way that literary scholars have a common vocabulary—constantly contested—for speaking about literature (including arguing about what “literature” is).

In the decade and a half since Hutchings and Huber’s special issue was published there has been an ongoing, lively conversation among humanities SoTL scholars on many other issues that crop up at the interface of SoTL and the humanities. Articles and special issues have addressed topics such as methods, questions, research materials, research process, writing formats, ways of describing, and ways of knowing (e.g. Bloch-Schulman and Linkon, 2016; Chick, 2013; Little et al., 2021; Potter and Wuetherick, 2015). However, humanities SoTL scholars have rarely returned to the question of the place of theory, and so, inspired by the intervention from 2008, I want to pick up this question again and ask: Can humanities theory be given the type of place in my SoTL work that makes that very work “possible”?

This concern emerged for me out of a previous SoTL study. In the Fall semester of 2019 I conducted a SoTL study in my class “Women in Christian History” in which I cycled through different pre-class reading exercises and asked the students which ones they thought helped them (Hovland, 2021). Most students said they found the “map” exercise most helpful, an exercise with the simplest of prompts: “Make a map of the reading.” The format of these maps was up to them, and students chose to use a wide variety, from classic nodes-and-spokes through tables and diagrams to flow charts and word clouds. Then, as I was revising the study for publication, a question from a thoughtful peer commenting on my paper caused me to pause: “Did the maps work?” The

query was friendly and constructive, reminding me that I needed to add some discussion in my conclusion about whether the map exercise would be useful for other instructors. But something about this seemingly quick question invited me to engage with it long after I had completed the revisions and sent off the article. I pondered what it meant to say that the maps “worked,” or did not, and how I would go about addressing such a question in a way that was meaningful to me as a humanities scholar. What would I look for? What would be the purpose? And how would I stitch together an answer for myself that had some depth and nuance to it?

This article presents my process of working with this curious, generative question over the past couple of years: “Did the maps work?” My answer began with an attempt at making some initial connections among different strands that have initially appeared quite disconnected in my research. I am a cultural and historical anthropologist with a particular interest in women and religion, and over the past couple of years I have been working with a set of archival materials from and about a first-wave Christian feminist in Norway, Henny Dons. Among other things, she read and re-read the creation account of Adam and Eve in the biblical book of Genesis and changed her interpretation of this account over the course of her life. I found it helpful to use new materialist theory to understand how this feminist reader acted as a circuit that encompassed not just the words she was reading but also her body and to consider how the words impacted that body and what it could do (for example, in her case, such practical considerations as whether Eve would hinder her from voting) (Hovland, forthcoming).

At the same time, I conducted another SoTL study in my class “Women in Christian History” in Fall 2021—the study I present here. One of the themes of the class was the account of Eve and its impacts on Christian (and non-Christian) women throughout the past two thousand years. In the middle of the semester, we worked our way through a 2-week “Eve project.” I collected two maps of Genesis 1–3 from each student—one made at the beginning of the module and one at the end. I also asked students to write a brief explanation of their second map. As I looked at the maps I wondered if I could connect the theory that I use for my archival research with my SoTL work, and whether this would help me draw together a meaningful approach to the question at hand: Did the maps work?

In this article, therefore, I wish to consider the question about the maps’ working through the lens of new materialist theory. While new materialism has not yet been taken up widely in humanities SoTL, I was helped by posthumanist work in educational research (such as the edited volume by Lenters and McDermott, 2020, discussed below). I will use the term “new materialism” in a broad sense, as an umbrella term that can encompass a variety of recent conceptual approaches that have been taken up widely in the humanities, including actor-network theory (ANT) and post-ANT, affect theory, object-oriented ontology, and posthumanism. These approaches move beyond the discursive frame of a certain text-centered poststructuralist approach and instead center the material in different ways. They often focus on assemblages or networks, so that a study of a university classroom, for example, might include not just the words in the space but everything that comes with them—the size of the space itself, the silences, the chairs and desks and their arrangement, the viruses in the air, the bodies and their appearances, the history of events in the group, the papers and pens, or the affects that may be

intercorporeally communicated as students are asked to turn to their neighbor. As the terms “posthumanist” or “actor-network” indicate, the central actor is no longer the bounded human subject but rather this material assemblage that has the effect of continuously acting or “working,” that is, producing effects on the teacher and students and everything else that enters the assemblage.

New materialist theory allows me to build the argument in the sections below that the maps in my study worked on and with the students’ bodyminds and their learning/life in a variety of ways in my class. Adapting Bronwyn Davies’ (2009) use of the new materialist term “differentiation,” I argue that the maps’ work of “differentiation” in my class (inviting students to move toward multiple undefined learning outcomes) was quite different from the work of “differentiation” (ranking students according to predefined learning outcomes) that concept maps traditionally perform in science classes.

While the main purpose of this article is to present the above argument about maps, there is a secondary purpose: I think the article can also be read as a story of faculty development. In a broad sense, the sections below detail how I, as humanities faculty, am trying to re-learn my own humanities language to be able to use it in teaching-and-learning settings. Much of the SoTL literature, as well as the literature on pedagogy and learning more broadly, does not use theoretical approaches that are familiar in the humanities. One of the effects of this is that many of the tools that are commonly presented at faculty teaching workshops, such as “SMART”—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound—learning outcomes, do not mesh well with humanities approaches to learning (or to associated values such as inclusion, equity, transparency, transformation, and creativity; e.g. Heiland and Rosenthal, 2011). This is not to say that this wide-ranging literature and tool set cannot be picked up and used by humanities faculty in many interesting and eclectic ways.<sup>1</sup> However, it is to say that some humanities faculty may wish for there to also be the option of pursuing teacher development that is more closely aligned with their humanities scholarship.

Therefore, the problem of theory’s place in humanities SoTL is also the problem of whether and how SoTL can be used to encourage different options for teacher development among humanities faculty. In this vein, the article presents my own experiment of refiguring the term “work” to see if I can make it more intelligible to myself as a humanities SoTL scholar and a humanities teacher. I seek to move beyond the connotations that the term “work” usually has in the broader SoTL conversation, where “what works?” is associated with studies that evaluate learning in relation to predefined learning outcomes. This is usually contrasted with studies that explore “what is.” In what follows, I intend to set “work” within a different frame so that I can gain a better understanding of learning in my humanities classroom.

In the first sections below I outline my SoTL study centered on “the Eve project,” and I discuss concept maps in the humanities. I then give examples of three students’ maps, along with my own “quick readings” of each, embedded in a larger theoretical conversation using a new materialist lens. I argue that maps can be a powerful tool for engaging some of the larger humanities learning goals that are, to use humanities language, messy and non-measurable, including the core goal of “reading” and, by extension, “understanding” the reading. In the conclusion, I return to the question of whether the

maps “worked” and how I might answer this question as a humanities SoTL scholar and a humanities teacher.

## **The Eve project**

My SoTL study focused on a 2-week module, “the Eve project,” in the middle of my class “Women in Christian History” in Fall 2021 at the University of Georgia in the United States.<sup>2</sup> The class is an upper-level elective, which means that although it counts toward the Religion and Women’s Studies majors, most of the students in the class were majoring in other disciplines, often outside the humanities. There were 31 students in the class, the majority of whom were women, and the vast majority of whom were in the traditional student age range (18–23 years old).

Most university students in the American South are familiar with the story of Adam and Eve as told in the first three chapters of the biblical book of Genesis. In the presentation of this account in Genesis 1, God’s creation of the world is organized into a series of 7 days, with the creation of land, the sun and moon, the plants and the animals leading up to the climax, namely the creation of humans, male and female. The human is created in the “image” of God and is given the task of ruling over the earth and multiplying. In Genesis 2–3 a different narrative account takes over, in which a man, Adam, is created from the ground and put in the Garden of Eden. God cautions him not to eat the fruit of a particular tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God then creates animals in the search for a helper for Adam, but no suitable helper is found. God therefore takes Adam’s rib and creates a woman. A snake now enters the story, tempting this woman to eat of the forbidden fruit. The woman sees that the fruit will make her wise, and she eats of it and also gives some to Adam. God confronts them and pronounces three punishments: the snake is cursed, the woman will have pain in childbirth and will desire her husband, and Adam will have to work with cursed ground before returning to the ground in death. After these pronouncements, Adam names the woman Eve, for she is mother of all living, and they are both driven out of Eden.

In the class “Women in Christian History,” we focused on historical periods in roughly chronological order, so we encountered interpretations of Eve from the beginning of the semester. When we studied early Christianity we read, among other things, the verses in the New Testament in which Eve is presented as the reason for why women must be silent in church and not have authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12–14), and we also considered writings by the Church Fathers, such as Tertullian’s famous line to women that each of them is “an Eve” and “the devil’s gateway.” During our studies of the medieval period, we examined Thomas Aquinas’s comment on the statement in Genesis that God created woman as a “helper” to man; Aquinas observed that the purpose of the woman’s helper role was solely to help the man produce offspring, for in everything else man can be more efficiently helped by other men. When we came to early modernity, we read one of the justifications for the church’s witch hunts, which argued that women were morally deformed because Eve was created out of Adam’s crooked rib. We discussed Martin Luther’s argument that wives should be subordinate to their husbands to follow the

example set by Eve. Then, before we tackled late modernity, we spent about 2 weeks on the Eve project.

During the Eve project we met five times in class. For the first class period I asked students to read Genesis 1–3 in Richard Elliott Friedman’s evocative translation (2003: 33–38) and draw a map of the text. Students drew their maps on a piece of paper, brought it to class, and shared it with their small group. By this point, making maps was a familiar practice in the class, and students chose the format they wished to use for their own maps.

Over the next three class meetings we then read and discussed three different interpretations of Eve that exemplified three more recent historical moments. We first read Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s critical comments on Genesis 1–3 as an example of first-wave feminism (and for this class period I also provided some of the archival materials I had worked with for my own research). Second, we read an article exemplifying the revolutionary spirit of post-1968 second-wave feminism which argues that Eve is the more intelligent partner in Eden who seeks knowledge and acts decisively to acquire it. Finally, we read a late-twentieth century response to these interpretations, which argues that the Genesis text remains androcentric despite contemporary feminist desires. I sought to emphasize during our discussions the many different viewpoints expressed by the authors we read as well as by students in the class. I also talked about how humanities research is characterized by asking open-ended, analytical questions for which there is no single answer that everyone would agree on; rather, humanities scholars will necessarily disagree about texts and will engage with questions about texts as a conversation.

For the final class meeting of the module, I asked students to re-read Genesis 1–3, but this time in the translation of the King James Version (KJV)—the most commonly used English translation in the United States today—and to make a second map of the text. I also asked them to write a brief explanation of how their second map compared to their first. We then spent a class period listening to everyone’s reflections and creating a large concept map on the board that depicted the various thoughts of the class.

Both the maps and the brief explanation were low-stakes, informal, and relatively quick assignments. They were simply graded for completion. In other words, the maps I collected for this study are snapshots of a process that was underway before the module and that kept moving after it. The maps provide a glimpse into reading in the middle of the semester as the class was happening, rather than in the form of final papers or concluding reflections.

## Concept maps in the humanities

One of the few studies of concept maps in a higher education humanities classroom is by [Camille Kandiko, David Hay and Saranne Weller \(2012\)](#). They argue that, despite the lack of a pedagogical conversation on maps in the humanities, concept maps are in fact especially well suited to a core concern in humanities subjects: how to gain insight into and enter into dialogue with students’ personal understandings.

To set the stage for their study, [Kandiko et al. \(2012: 73–74\)](#) provide an overview of how concept maps have been used in science education ([Novak 1990](#); [Kinchin et al., 2000](#)). The early pedagogical discussion on concept maps came out of subjects such as

school biology, and perhaps there was, at first glance, a more immediate affinity between concept maps and scientific research methods and evaluation. Diagrams are already widely used in science research and thus present themselves as a familiar tool to teachers in these areas. Joseph Novak's (1990) conceptualization of concept maps has often been followed, in which the maps are thought of as hierarchical presentations of concepts (nodes) with links (spokes) depicting successive sets of relations between the hierarchical levels. If students organize their concept maps in this way, their learning can be assessed by paying attention, for example, to the number of levels or the density of relations depicted. The instructor can evaluate the maps either quantitatively or qualitatively by comparing them to an expert map, and in so doing would also be modeling for the students some of the important disciplinary habits of the sciences, such as valuing clarity, agreement among experts, and a certain level of thoroughness.

Kandiko, Hay and Weller turn to the question of how maps might be used to meet the goals of humanities subjects instead, and they concentrate especially on the core goal of "understanding." In humanities college classes, "understanding" is usually a central concern, but it is difficult to define precisely and cannot be measured in a straightforward way. Nevertheless, meaningful learning will not happen in these classes unless students' understanding grows. As the authors put it, "Learning is about change in personal understanding but the ways in which students' understandings change are difficult to visualize and assess" (Kandiko et al., 2012: 71). They suggest that concept maps are particularly useful in this regard and quote a common descriptor of concept maps as "a window into students' minds" (Shavelson et al., 2005: 416).

In their study, they collected three maps from students in a first-year undergraduate Classics class. The students were asked to draw maps at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester that represented their understanding of the topic of the class, namely the impact of Greek literature and culture on the Roman world. The authors present the series of maps made by one student as an example of the development of understanding seen in the class. Overall, they found that the students' first maps were general and descriptive, repeated public knowledge, and were organized hierarchically in ways that accorded closely with a Novakian scientific template.

However, the students' second maps, drawn at the mid-point of the semester, presented a much more "messy" and rich organization. These maps presented several central concepts linked in numerous, cyclical ways, as the students sought to capture the process of developing "discursive, higher-level conceptualization" and "richness of meaning." Here they were beginning to show "individual, personal perspective and voice," and by this point a hierarchical, Novakian assessment of the maps did not prove "meaningful" (Kandiko et al., 2012: 73, 76, 82).

The final maps at the end of the semester retained a flexible organization but moved toward more developed discursive arguments and were made to be read as a whole. The authors note that this likely reflected the fact that the students drew this last map after writing a final essay for the class. In fact, while the final maps at the end of the semester in some ways presented a more finished product, the course instructor, when interviewed, observed that some of the mid-point maps were "richer." The authors add that the maps in



the middle of the semester may show how students were “linking the course content” as this process of linking was happening (Kandiko et al., 2012: 78).

The authors conclude that the maps show that the students did not gradually add on knowledge during the semester, but rather encountered and integrated a new way of approaching the material during the first half of the semester, causing a discontinuous jump between their first and second maps. This approach was then rehearsed and refined over the second half of the semester, making the third maps more continuous in organization with the second but more coherent and streamlined. The authors argue that the students’ maps are best analyzed using a dialogical theory of language, and they discuss how the maps were used in a process of “externalizing personal understanding” in the ongoing dialogue between the teacher, the “public texts” of Classics, and the “personal understanding” of the students (Kandiko et al., 2012: 71).

I have been inspired by Kandiko, Hay and Weller’s attention to how maps function differently in a humanities classroom than in the sciences. I have especially appreciated their willingness to consider how maps can help illuminate the learning outcome of “understanding,” and how their presentation of this understanding diverges significantly from the Novakian template. At the same time, I would like to add another layer to Kandiko, Hay and Weller’s dialogical conceptualization of maps. The layer I will discuss is based on a new materialist approach, and can help us see maps not just as “windows,” as they propose, but also as “working objects” in the classroom.

## **A new materialist lens on maps: Working objects**

What might a new materialist approach to concept maps look like? The discussion I have found most relevant for my purposes is an anthropological conversation on new approaches to diagrams. A recent special issue of *Social Analysis*, edited by Lukas Engelmänn, Caroline Humphrey and Christos Lynteris (2019), brings together some of the concerns of this conversation within what might be called a post-ANT (post actor-network theory) frame. For example, the editors of the special issue push toward a focus on diagrams as, for example, “paper technologies” that not only, or even necessarily, “bring things together” in networks but rather “draw theories apart” because they can be used in multiple ways (Engelmänn et al., 2019: 7). In this vein the editors are interested in how diagrams exhibit a “curious combination of simplification and multiplication” (Engelmänn et al., 2019: 7).

“Work” is a key term in this conversation. The editors titled the special issue “Working with diagrams,” and they approach diagrams “as objects with which work is done and as objects that do work” or that simply “work” (Engelmänn et al., 2019: 1, 7). The diagram, in this frame, is not an illustration that straightforwardly represents thought, but rather an object that itself constitutes and shapes the process of thinking. Caroline Humphrey (2019: 110) uses the term “working object” to get to grips with this phenomenon. Some of the “work” that diagrams do may be to produce a sense of assumed clarity through their tidily connected concepts and their coherently labeled boxes. In my own words, this means that a material diagram—lines on paper—may hide and obscure as much as it makes visible. In other words, extending the discussion of Kandiko, Hay and Weller, from

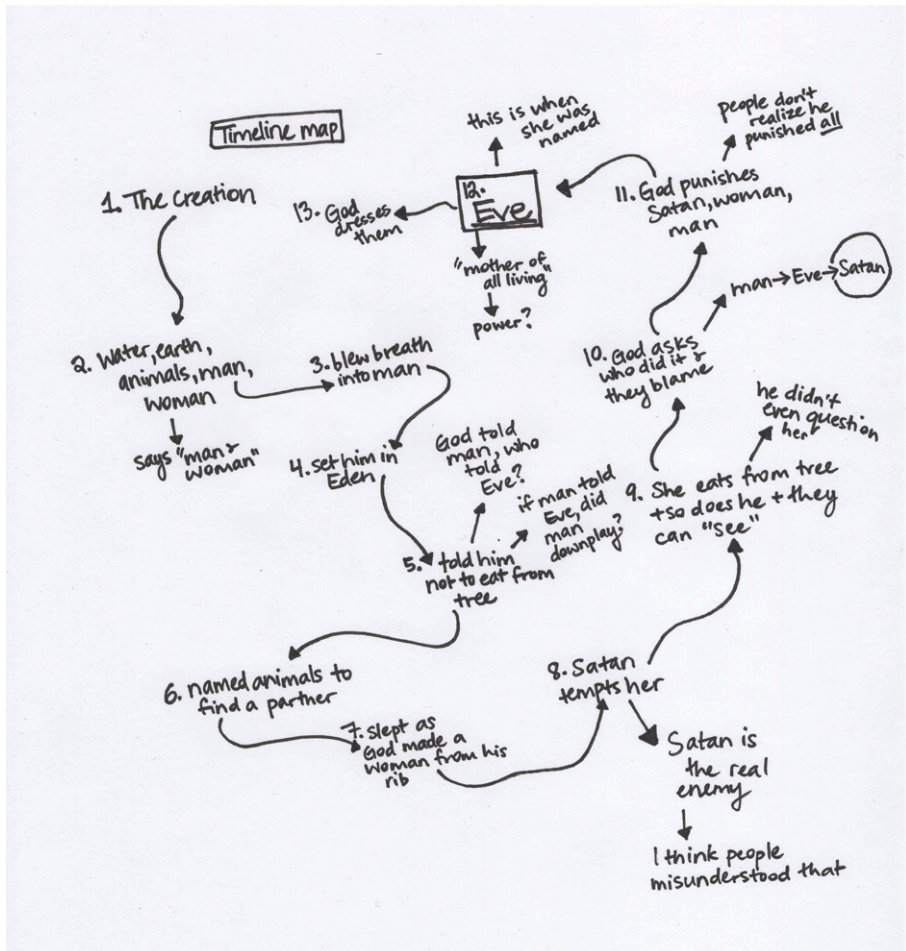


a new materialist perspective a map is perhaps less like a “window” into students’ minds and more like an object that works as an interface, potentially obscuring some aspects of students’ thoughts and providing insight into others, making invisible and visible at the same time. Another aspect of the “work” of diagrams is that they may “embody relatedness” in different ways—both relations between parts within the diagram as well as relations with the viewer (Engelmann et al., 2019: 15). Some diagrams may seek to instruct an imagined viewer, while others may embody an openness that can trigger “imaginative ‘work’” for the viewer (or, I may add, even for the diagram-maker when they return to their own diagram) (Humphrey, 2019: 112). Translating this observation into a classroom context, we might say that this process of work is what constitutes “learning” in this view. This work of learning, however, is not just done by the student, but rather is done, in this case, by the relatedness of diagram, creator, and viewer.

What do I see when I use a new materialist lens on students’ concept maps? Let me use one of my students’ maps as an example and pay attention to the keywords: work, simplification and multiplication, making invisible and visible, and relatedness.

Both of Sarah’s<sup>3</sup> maps presented a timeline. The first map (Figure 1<sup>4</sup>) is titled “Timeline Map” and moves through steps in a flowchart, numbered 1–13, that sum up key events in Genesis 1–3. She has included a few queries along the way, which in her explanation she calls “little side notes.” For example, the first step is “1. The creation” and the second is “2. Water, earth, animals, man, human.” However, a side query then adds: “says ‘man + woman’” before the flow continues to “3. Blew breath into man.” Thus while her timeline presents itself as representing the text—one event after the other as it is written—it also conscientiously along the side alerts the viewer to the fact that some queries potentially remain unresolved in this representation, such as: when exactly was woman created?

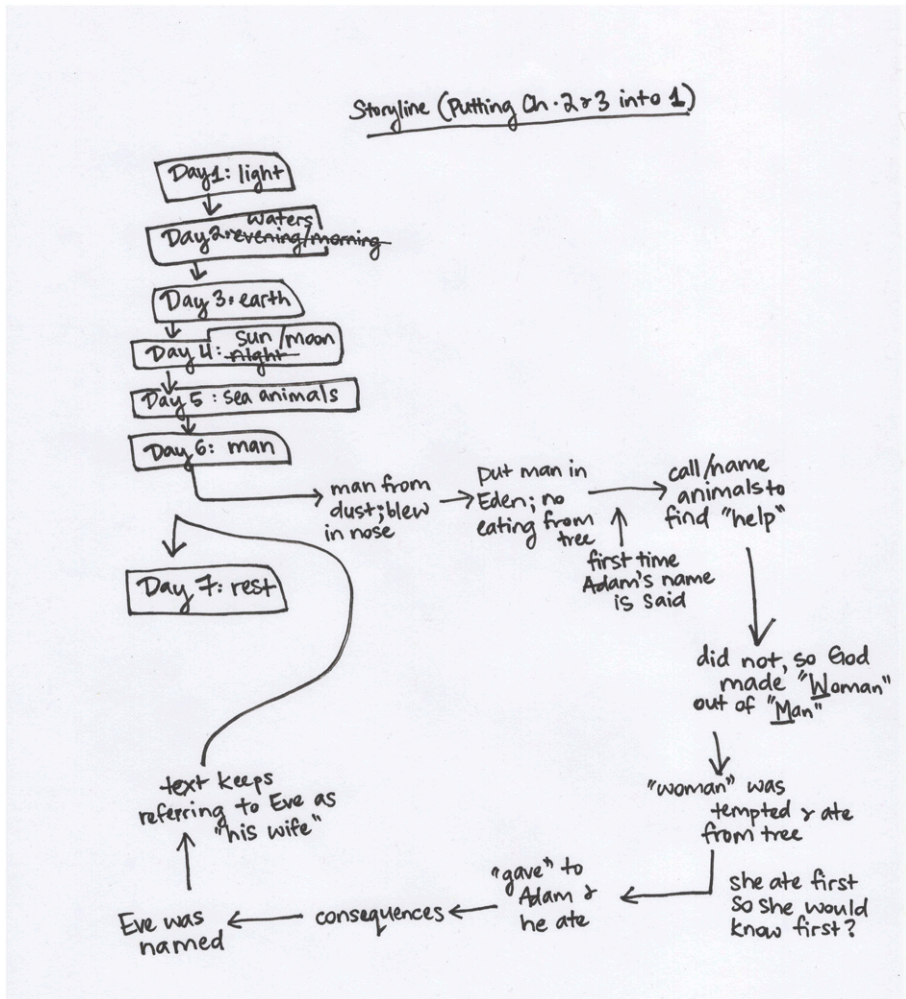
Her second map (Figure 2), drawn around 2 weeks later, self-consciously presents itself to the viewer as an attempt at re-organization. Along the left side she has drawn a series of seven boxes, labeled Day 1–7, to represent the sequence of Genesis 1. However, after “Day 6: man” she has inserted the start of a circular flowchart that provides the events of Genesis 2–3, starting with “man from dust” through the creation of woman to their eating of the fruit and “consequences” before circling back to the days, leading into “Day 7: rest.” The title of her map clarifies: “Storyline (Putting Ch. 2 + 3 into 1).” In contrast to the stream of side notes in her first map, her second map includes no side queries except for one quick question about Eve eating the fruit first (“so she would know first?”). In her explanation of the second map, however, Sarah writes that “there were a lot more questions,” and she spells out some of these in a long paragraph that is made up of question after question. To give a sense of the detailed nature of these many questions, they include for example why Adam is not named in the text until he needs a helper, and why the translators of the KJV chose to capitalize Woman and Man. I think we see here some of that combination of simplification and multiplication that a diagram can embody. Precisely in the act of simplifying the “storyline” of Genesis 1–3, Sarah has taken the step of considering that she as a reader is the one who has to put together that storyline, thus introducing a host of questions that, this time, is not presented as part of the text itself. She herself describes her two maps in different words, saying: “I thought in two different



**Figure 1.** Sarah's first map.

ways," and comments that she was toggling between thinking about "how it happened" versus "the way it was written."

This work of understanding textual construction was confirmed by the fact that Sarah asked for individual feedback on the assignment. Aiming to keep my feedback relatively brief and focused on her strengths as a reader, I pointed out her strong ability to read closely, to notice details and their implications. Building on this strength, I wondered whether her combination of Genesis 1 and 2–3 would be complicated if she considered the creation of the man and plants in Genesis 2:5–9 and the creation of animals and birds in Genesis 2:19, since they apparently duplicate events already mentioned in Genesis 1. In



**Figure 2.** Sarah's second map.

her response she considered this, and then added a further thought, namely that it looked to her like the sequence in Genesis 1 leads up to a climax, which she glossed succinctly as man ruling over all before God, and added that “maybe the way it was written was to lead up to that?” Considering this, she continued, “then in the next chapter [Genesis 2] it just does not correlate. That is really interesting.” In our class we moved on to new readings and topics, and I was left to wonder what Sarah’s third map would have looked like, as she continued to build her understanding of how and why historical texts do not simply provide transparent windows on “what happened,” and to what extent readers construct

the storyline that they believe they find in a text. Her maps seemed to present an example of how a student can work with maps while those same maps work with the student.

This brief glimpse into one student's maps also shows that a new materialist approach to maps leads quickly on to the broader question of what a new materialist approach to reading texts looks like.

## **A new materialist lens on reading: Literacy encounters**

Several reading goals and how to teach them have been thoughtfully discussed in the humanities SoTL literature. Since reading is such a core part of humanities research, it comes as no surprise that the goals instructors have for reading often mirror goals that might be attached to humanities disciplines in general, such as the ability to think complexly and to tolerate ambiguity (Chick et al., 2009), the ability to name moments that are difficult to understand and to engage with these (Salvatori and Donahue, 2005), the ability to use one's own reading as part of a process of communication with other readers (Manarin, 2016), or the ability to consider a text's perspective and to reach one's own nuanced political judgment (Staudinger, 2017).<sup>5</sup>

What can a new materialist lens add? While new materialist theory has not yet been taken up in humanities SoTL, it has taken hold in literacy studies (encompassing literacy education from early years to adult), where several scholars engage with the strand of new materialism commonly called posthumanism. One inroad into this conversation is the edited volume by Kim Lenters and Mairi McDermott, *Affect, Embodiment, and Place in Critical Literacy* (2020). While they leave space for taking seriously the cognitive operations of reading that have been studied in humanities SoTL—thinking complexly, identifying difficulties, problematizing—they also broaden the scope of the inquiry to include the role of materialities, such as those indicated in their title. Reading, in this view, is constituted in significant ways by, for example, clashing affects or the regulation of bodies in educational and other spaces. Again, as with a new materialist approach to diagrams, the idea of “work” crops up as the body and mind are “always working together” in a posthumanist view of the “bodymind” (Lenters and McDermott, 2020: 6; Semetsky, 2013). A literacy encounter—that is, a reader's cognitive, material, and social encounter with a text—may produce linguistic responses, such as written assignments, but it will also produce affective, bodily responses that are “of equal value” for learning (Lenters and McDermott, 2020: 10). This post-pedagogy orientation moves toward “an understanding of learning as being/doing/knowing” (Lenters and McDermott, 2020: 7). As this broad conception indicates, life and learning begin to blend into each other, to the extent that I think we can speak here of learning/life.

Given this full understanding of learning, students in a class will necessarily reach different learning outcomes. They will experience change in their being/doing/knowing at different moments and in different ways. Bronwyn Davies (2009) has referred to this phenomenon using the Deleuzian term “differentiation” (e.g. Deleuze, 1994; see also Lenters and McDermott, 2020: 22). It is distinguished from “differentiation,” the pedagogical approach that encourages teachers to provide students with individuated assignments depending on the teacher's assessment of the students' ability. Differentiation,

instead, is the pedagogical stance of paying attention to processes of becoming different. In practical terms, it might mean formulating learning outcomes that are sufficiently capacious to allow students in a class to engage in problems and processes that have different effects on their own circuit of being/doing/knowing. While the specific learning/life that will result from reading cannot be defined in advance, it is still possible for the teacher (as well as students and other things that impact the literacy encounter—recall the role of affects, objects, spaces, and so on) to engage in these different literacy encounters as they develop in the classroom and to contribute to them.

What do I see when I look at my students' maps using a new materialist lens on reading? Let me give "quick readings" of two students' maps, paying attention to these keywords: the literacy encounter, affect, embodiment, and learning/life.

I will compare the maps of Rachel and Sofie who both approach a central theme, "woman," but in quite different ways. Let me begin with Rachel, who organized both her first and second maps around a box in the middle, "Genesis 1–3," that branched off into Chapter 1, 2, and 3. In her first map (not pictured) she annotated each chapter with key events, distinguishing between the sequence in Genesis 1 and that of 2–3. As she puts it in her explanation, she "mapped the narrative of the main story [...] I focused more on the clear plot, flow of the story and [...] presentations of the order [of] creation." In her explanation she then notes that after reading the feminist approaches to Eve during the module, it "made certain elements in the KJV stand out" when she read it at the end of the module. She lays out many of these elements in her second map (Figure 3), and the effect is a scattering across the page of verses and phrases she has selected and written out in both Friedman's and the KJV's translations next to each other. In certain places she has added her own commentary, but the main effect is a page filled up with an arrangement of terms and sentences that differ yet are placed immediately next to each other.

One term that weaves through several of her observations is "man." For example, for Chapter 1 she adds a bubble that says: "first introduction of human (*ādām*) translated as man." As she notes elsewhere on the map, this relates to the slippage in both English and Hebrew in the word "man," so that "man" in English and *ādām* in Hebrew might refer to either man or human—and in the creation account may also morph into a proper name, Adam: "overall use of word *ādām* as a name/man vs *ādām* translated as human." She demonstrates the implication through quickly arranging some verses, including:

Friedman

v26 "make human in our image" [...]

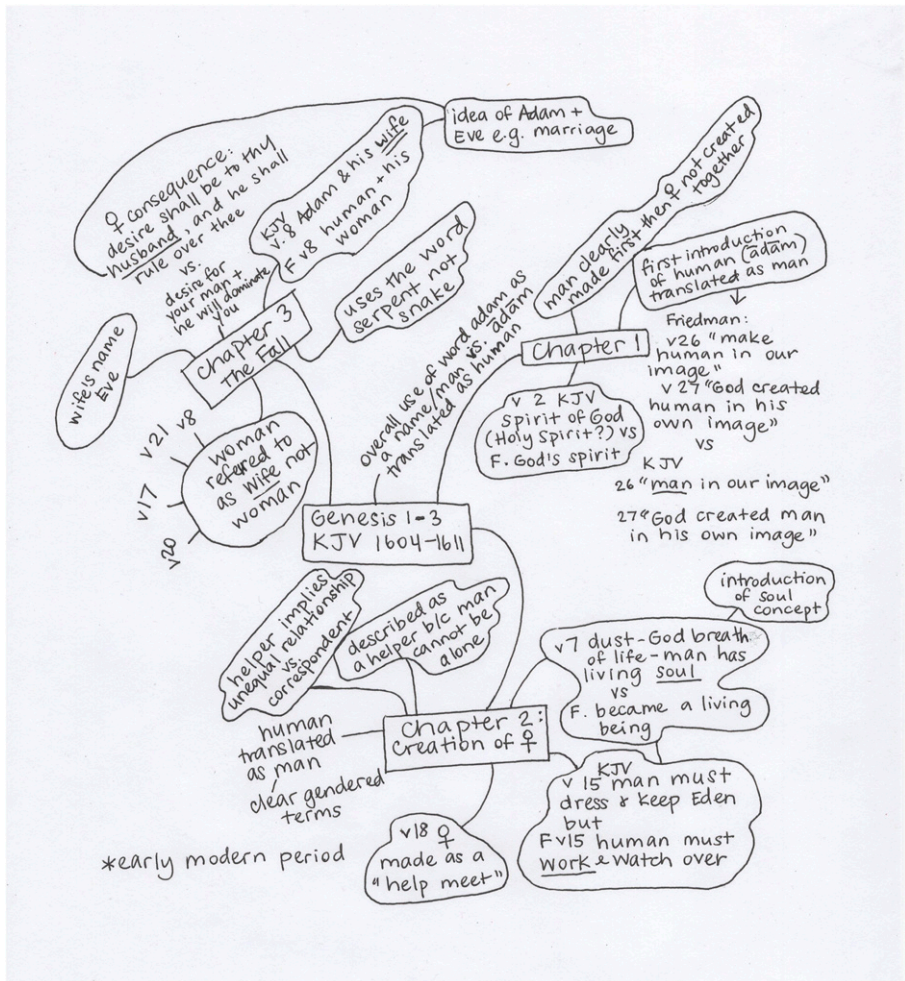
vs

KJV

26 "*man* in our image"

Rachel suggests that these translational differences can have potentially large consequences. For example, as we discussed in class, this slippage was what allowed the Apostle Paul to refer back to the creation account and conclude that "man," not woman,





**Figure 3.** Rachel's second map.

was the image of God (1 Corinthians 11:7–8). Rachel then moves on to Genesis 2 and briefly inserts her own commentary as she labels the box: “Chapter 2: Creation of woman.” In her explanation she expresses it even more strongly, saying that after the focus on the “man” term in chapter 1, the creation of “woman” in chapter 2 marks “the climax of the story.” Moving to Genesis 3, Rachel then pays attention to the term “wife.” She notes the many verses in which the term appears in the KJV, observing that Friedman translates “woman” instead. She also adds: “wife’s name Eve,” in reference to one of the last acts in the Garden of Eden, namely Adam’s naming of the woman as Eve because she

was “mother of all living.” Rachel adds, in her explanation, that in her view this act of the wife being named by Adam further supports the argument that “women are only defined in relation to men” in this account.

Rachel does not reach a conclusive reading, but rather ends her explanation simply by observing that her second map shows a different “thought process” from the first and that “it was harder to understand” the account when she re-read it in the KJV translation. She does not resolve the potential tension, or potential synergy, between her suggestion on the one hand that the creation of woman is the “climax” of the Genesis story, and on the other hand that the woman is only defined in relation to the man. While Rachel’s first map followed “the main story [...] the clear plot,” as she put it, by her second map this clear plot is gone and instead it is as if she has taken apart the plot to examine it and has laid out her selected verses and words across the page, as if on her workbench. She leaves them all scattered there for now.

While Rachel’s literacy encounter seems to have produced a taking-apart at this moment in the semester, I want to compare this with Sofie’s literacy encounter, which seems to have produced more of a coming-together. Sofie’s first map (not pictured) showed a set of connections between Eve, goodness, and the lack of it. From her central bubble, “Genesis 1–3,” she branched off to other bubbles. One of the largest of these simply said “Eve tempted Adam,” and then connected to further bubbles that said: “But the *snake tempted Eve*” and “Adam *chose* to eat” (orig. emph.). Two other large bubbles mentioned goodness: “God called creation good, including woman” and “God still showed Adam + Eve goodness after sin,” the latter connected to a bubble that stood out because it had been given three free-floating arrows pointing toward it: “Why won’t we show Eve goodness?” In her explanation, Sofie gives some context for these affective comments, starting out with the statement: “Discussing Eve is a very loaded topic.” She then describes her memory of how Eve was presented to her when she was growing up as “a master seductress and mother of all the sin in the world [...] She was thought of as an evil woman.” Some of these terms, she comments, “followed me into the classroom,” which provides a vivid image of how religious, affective ideas might attach themselves to students’ bodies even as they move into new, apparently secular classroom spaces.

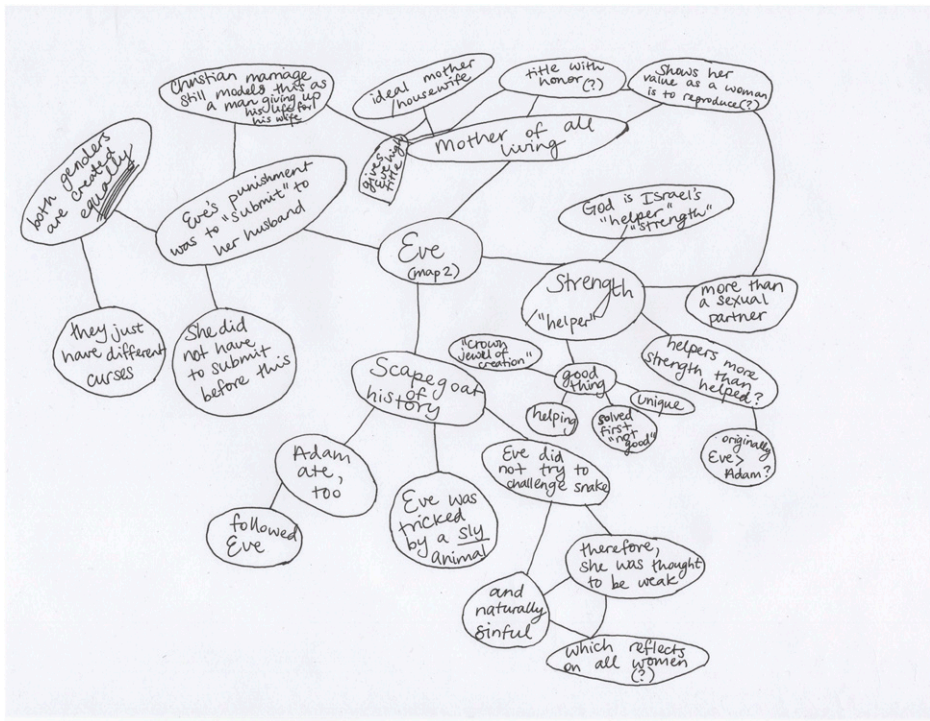
Turning to her second map (Figure 4), Sofie notes that since she has read the story of Adam and Eve “many times,” she did not expect much to change in her reading. Her second map, however, takes quite a different tack. Here she places “Eve” in the center, and immediately above this connects Eve to a bubble that says “mother of all living.” In her explanation she writes that this is significant because it is the “title” given to Eve by Adam even after God had pronounced the curses. This shows, in her view, that Adam thought quite differently about Eve than the low view Sofie had previously assumed. She still seems to have some questions about this, because on the map next to “mother of all living” she adds “title with honor (?)” and “shows her value as a woman is to reproduce (?)” with bracketed question marks. In the explanation, however, she observes that “this title is arguably higher than her previous name of woman/being ‘from man’.” These kinds of details, she continues, “tend to be glossed over when there is an underlying agenda,” perhaps alluding to how Eve had previously been presented to her. In her map she also characterizes Eve as “strength,” using Friedman’s translation of this term rather than the KJV’s translation of the term,



“helper,” and she explicates: “good thing.” Sofie includes some further nuancing elements in her map, such as describing Eve this time as a “scapegoat of history,” and noting that “Eve’s punishment was to ‘submit’ to her husband.”

The portrait of Eve that has come together in Sofie's second map is one that, albeit with some questions and nuancing, overall communicates value. In her explanation Sofie suggests that "the perspectives of women are essential in the examination of Genesis 1-3" because it is "a story that revolves around women." No doubt Sofie will continue to work with these issues, including those leading to her bracketed question marks, but for a moment in the middle of the semester she seems to have drawn some new connections between her literacy encounter and her learning/life that brought together a new description of Eve as a character who, as "the mother of life," is vital to the story.

In sum, while Rachel's second map helped her take apart some of the words from Genesis 1–3 that have been used to demarcate women's place throughout history, such as "man" and "wife," and spread out these words across the page as if on a workbench, Sofie's second map in contrast seems to have helped her bring together connections to form a new understanding of the character of Eve. Rachel's taking apart led to a "harder" moment, as she put it, of less clarity. Sofie assembled a new description of Eve that foregrounded Eve's "title" as "mother of all living." This seems to have led to new cognitive and affective



**Figure 4.** Sofie's second map.

insight for her into how this powerful story has been used to define women, and how certain interpretive “agendas” can, as she put it, “follow” young girls as they grow up.

## Conclusion: Did the maps work?

What was produced in my students’ literacy encounters during “the Eve project”? I have had space here to explore only three quick readings, but I hope they give a brief glimpse into the many different types of learning that were in play. The students in the class oriented themselves toward a wide range of questions and topics, from motherhood to power, from gender to marriage, from sexuality to the ability to create. Some worked with close readings of the text itself, some with plot and characters. Some worked with questions about how the text has been collated in written form, and the question of authorial intention and its effects in history. Some traced the text’s use by, for, and against women in different periods of history. Looking across these snapshots from the middle of the semester, one thing I noticed as a teacher is that developing advanced reading skills is slow and particular in different ways to different students, the bodyminds, in the classroom. Developing mature understandings of the complexities of texts in the world takes time, including the time of affective and embodied work, and involves many different learning/life circuits.

I will continue to use maps as an interface with my students’ reading. As an assignment, maps have some distinct advantages tied to their material form and format. At a practical level, they are relatively quick to use, and are well suited to an unfinished learning process. At the same time they invite students to communicate with purpose, and they can be brought to class and shared in small groups to continue this process of communication. At a conceptual level, maps foreground relatedness, which means that even as students are considering how to make the map they are already considering how different pieces of their understanding relate to each other. This understanding can then be arranged and re-arranged. In fact, a map can incorporate simultaneous simplification and multiplication, allowing students to select a main focus while at the same time offering opportunities for elaborations in various directions. And they are interesting objects for the instructor to look over.

Based on these affordances of maps, I have argued that the maps in my study, read through a new materialist lens, functioned as working objects in a manner that invited differentiation (multiple possible learning outcomes) rather than differentiation (ranking students according to predefined learning outcomes). This returns me to the question that prompted this study in the first place: Did the maps work? Yes, in my own humanities language, they worked—that is, they *worked on* the students, and on me, in a variety of ways that affected our being/doing/knowing. The students were able to *work with* the maps. The maps became an object that invited students’ minds and bodies to *work together*. The maps allowed students to *work toward* a variety of outcomes that were not predefined. The maps with attached explanations showed me some of the learning/life *work* that students were doing in the circuits that constitute them, while also certainly obscuring other aspects—because, in a new materialist frame, this is how maps work.

I said at the outset that this article could also be read as a story of faculty development, since it describes an instance in which I am re-learning my own language from humanities theory and using it to understand my work as a humanities teacher. To end, I want to

acknowledge that in some SoTL contexts, as well as in some faculty development situations, it will be more effective to translate humanities ways of speaking about the world into other languages, figuratively speaking, such as the language of social science research conclusions or the traditional SoTL distinction between “what works” and “what is.” But at other times there may be an advantage to using our own humanities language—such as, for example, discussing “work” in a new materialist sense—as a way of understanding our own teaching practice. This may resonate more closely with how we approach our work and world. And it may potentially be more legible to other humanities scholars, offering theories that could make it “possible” (Bass and Linkon, 2008: 257) for us, as humanities teachers, to engage with hard-to-define components of our students’ learning, including “reading” and the resulting “understanding,” in ways we had not previously considered.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Nancy Chick for encouraging me to think about concept maps from a humanities perspective and for planting the seed for this project a few years ago. I would also like to thank Lindsey Harding, Sara Steger, and the other members of the 2021-2022 Faculty Learning Community on Writing Studies at the University of Georgia for several helpful conversations about the project as it evolved. And I am grateful to two anonymous peer reviewers and editor Jan McArthur for unusually perceptive and helpful readings.

### Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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### Notes

1. In fact, this can sometimes result in thought-provoking interdisciplinary collaborations on learning, such as that between the historian David Reichard and the biologist Kathy Takayama (2013) who experiment with borrowing from each other’s disciplines, thus creating their own micro-version of a mutually beneficial “educational trading zone” (Mills and Huber, 2005).
2. I sought approval for the project from my university’s ethics review board (the Institutional Review Board, or IRB), and all students whose work is used consented to participate.
3. All student names are pseudonyms.
4. The students submitted pictures or scans of their maps. To reproduce higher-quality images here, I traced the four maps that are included and rescanned them.
5. For other interesting SoTL studies on humanities reading, see e.g. Corrigan (2019), Del Principe and Ihara (2016), Feito and Donahue (2008), Manarin et al. (2015), and Weller (2010).

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Ingie Hovland is a cultural and historical anthropologist of religion. She is especially interested in the many different histories, cultural practices, and social effects of Christianity in the world. Her work uses lenses from women's studies and material studies to trace the interplay of gendered bodies, spaces, and words in particular social situations. She teaches at the University of Georgia in the United States.