

**“Now that’s Preaching!”  
Disruptive and Generative Preaching Practices**

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*Abstract*

Communal expectations of preaching can reinforce narratives that limit preaching to particular tropes of performance, and in so doing, link preaching to certain bodies while excluding others. This essay explores how bodies of difference participate in preaching alongside of these limiting narratives, while listeners receive their messages as effective. The preaching of Black women is examined as a specific instance of this type of preaching. Theories of social practice are offered as interdisciplinary conversation partners for homiletic discourse in order to frame preaching as a practice. The author contends that as bodies of difference appropriate preaching for their own use, preaching becomes the mechanism that expands the community’s marking of valid practice and gives way to the greater purposes of the practice.

***Marking Valid Practice***

**N**ow that’s preaching!” is a declaration. The utterance affirms that the words proclaimed, movements made, and the listening undertaken work together in such a way that they are recognizable and received as something distinct. The witness who makes this declaration

marks the conglomeration of what was experienced as legitimate and valid. The orchestrated performance of the whole, including its content, matches up to something identifiable and accepted by the listener. "Now, that's preaching!"

Preaching is shaped overtime by the gathering of listeners and proclaimers in community. Together, proclaimers and listeners affirm preaching has occurred and mark their experience. For this marking of experience to take place, there must exist a tentatively shared, even if illusive, understanding of preaching and its aims.<sup>1</sup> A community possesses the authority to guard preaching, as it takes form within its midst, and preaching itself is a part of the community's formation. Preaching within a community connects to what has come long before that particular community and extends far past any particular gathering of individuals.<sup>2</sup> In other words, specific people gather and experience preaching, but preaching has a history and continues to be an ongoing interconnected practice.<sup>3</sup> Its history and ongoing practice in turn contribute to marking the validity of any discrete occurrence of preaching.

The recognition of valid preaching simultaneously constructs a boundary that marks invalid practice. Certainly, there is preaching that bares the marks of "excellent" more so than others, and as such there is something hoped for in preaching—a type of quality. However, "excellent" preaching is not unrelated to the body as a medium of preaching. The body is not incidental to preaching but central to it. Any given body that does not fit a community's preaching prototype is at risk of having its preaching rendered invalid because it is not readily associated with the performance. In this regard, certain bodies do not signal for the community that preaching is taking place; therefore, they are not markers of the performance. A body may not be the marker of preaching due to any number of reasons including gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, and/or ability. Historically, particular bodies have been excluded from the practice of preaching; yet these bodies of difference<sup>4</sup> find a way not only to preach but also to gain a listening from those gathered. A preacher gains a listening when those gathered receive her performance and message as effective preaching.

The means by which bodies of difference "find a way" to preach and gain a listening may be interpreted as a creative use of preaching, tactical in its ingenuity while connected to the overall parameters of the practice. I contend that as bodies of difference appropriate preaching for their own use, preaching becomes the mechanism that expands the community's marking of valid practice and gives way to the greater theological and ethical purposes of the practice. "Now that's preaching!" becomes, "Now, that 'too' is preaching!"

This essay offers alternate ways of understanding preaching that takes shape within particular confines and ideologies of what preaching is and should be. The intent is to attend to the wit and know how of preachers, who preach across and within spaces of difference, for the purpose of learning from their practices. Michel de Certeau's tactics and Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* are used to recover the complexity of preaching as inhabited by bodies of difference, vis-à-vis the preaching of Black women, while exploring the possibilities of these interdisciplinary partners for homiletics.

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### ***Interplay: Imposed Expectations & Creative Practice***

Preaching framed within aspects of creativity and ingenuity assumes individuals have the ability to act and make decisions about the practice of preaching, even amidst predetermined assumptions about pulpit space, valid performance, and the content of preaching. This is agentic capacity. A preacher demonstrates agentic capacity as she makes decisions and uses communal expectations for her own preaching purposes. The expectations of preaching may be reframed as the field that structures preaching as a practice. Michel de Certeau's theory of practice in daily life is a useful conversation partner for homiletic theory and practice at this juncture.

Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, describes individuals as being part of and in some form embedded into the structures imposed on them.<sup>5</sup> These structures have a built-in system which distributes power, often disproportionately, to individuals. For Certeau, individuals are tactical or calculative in their everyday practices of life when they manipulate and wittily engage the system and its structures.<sup>6</sup> These calculative moves are specifically the "art" of those afforded less power within their confined structures.<sup>7</sup> Having access to less power, individuals utilize ingenuity in their engagement with the systems in which they exist. In this regard, they riff-off or play-on the very structures of the system imposed upon them as they continue to exist within the structure's confines.<sup>8</sup> The implication is that the ability to completely reshape and redefine the system's mode of operation requires the support and actions of those who wield more power within the system and/or the mobilization of a larger base of those with less power. These actions would be more strategic and intentional than the individual actions of those with less power.<sup>9</sup> However, at minimum, those with less power riff in tactical ways on and around the ascribed confines.

Therefore, tactics, their inherent creativity and agency, become one way of understanding how individuals operate and find ways to navigate specific prescriptions of preaching, namely the prescribed strategies of preaching within their contexts of ministry. In an effort to demonstrate how these constructs create building blocks for homiletic theory, I move from considering bodies of difference generically to considering Black preaching women as particular bodies of difference.

### ***Attending to Particular Structures & Bodies***

Some Black women preach as bodies of difference within their communities. Their preaching practices are often in juxtaposition to the image of the Black preacher, which is overwhelming associated with the Black male and a particular performance of masculinity.<sup>10</sup> The image of the Black preacher is rooted in real bodies, infrastructures that excluded women from traditional pulpit spaces, and the development of homiletic discourse about Black preaching largely based on the preaching of Black men. Also, the image of the Black preacher does not escape racist stereotypes of Black performance.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the image of the preacher and his preaching withstands.

The image of the Black preacher presents a male with rhetorical prowess, a voice of thunder, and the ability to move the community to ecstasy highs while weaving together the life of the text and life in the world.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Black preaching is etched as holding in tension the experience of the community with an all powerful God; it is emotive, keeping with a particular rhythm and cadence, and includes aspects of celebration that intentionally bring the heart, body, and mind together in the preaching moment.<sup>13</sup> Whether individuals actively resist or adopt this practice of preaching, it functions as a normative narrative that links Black preaching to a particular performance of masculinity in pulpit space and rhetoric. Thus, it links the practice of preaching to masculinity.<sup>14</sup>

When expectations centered on performances of masculinity mark the valid practice of preaching, these expectations render Black women as bodies of difference. As these women continue to participate within these communities and these understandings of preaching, they are inextricably a part of a system. However, as they are embedded within the structures of these communities, they also creatively engage the power postulated by the tradition and its guardians. Their preaching is the tactical expression of their own creativity and ingenuity.

This creativity and ingenuity is significant because they are expressions of agency. If we gloss over these practices, we simultaneously miss the opportunity to learn from and more fully understand these preaching practices. Arguably, the presence of normative narratives that create centers and margins are narratives we seek to correct and subvert in homiletic theories and justice-seeking practices. However, hastening to prescriptive measures that locate value solely in one's ability to transform narratives and bring about justice incidentally creates a binary in understanding preaching. This binary, framed within preaching constructs, describes preaching as either "accommodating" or "resisting" the status quo. Such binary responses do not consider the possibility of a body of difference doing both, neither, or some of these in her preaching. Instead, it contends that a woman will seek justice or she will not seek justice. In this, we potentially miss the "more entangled" manner in which religious practices—including preaching—are lived out.

Applying these categories to the preaching of Black women potentially forces an essentialism within the experiences of these women that does not account for complexity in their preaching.<sup>15</sup> Saba Mahmood asserts, "Agentive capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms, but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms."<sup>16</sup> Here, the emphasis is on agency, not necessarily on action being expressed in accommodating or resisting aspects. Engaging the preaching by bodies of difference as agentive expressions of creativity and ingenuity locates value in their productions without designating how their productions "should" function.

Marla Frederick engages similar ideas of creativity and agency as it relates to the spirituality of African American women specifically.<sup>17</sup> Frederick explains that Black women's spirituality is an expression of their *creative agency*, as spirituality allows them to engage both the public and private spheres of their daily lives.<sup>18</sup> She explains that creativity in the midst of struggle is both resistance and Black women's utilization of agency.<sup>19</sup> Frederick states that "given the obstacles that these women must overcome to participate (in the public sphere), their actions, though not always protest-oriented, are nonetheless agentive."<sup>20</sup> In other words, spirituality is both the catalyst

and means of their engagement on the public level.<sup>21</sup> This conceptualization is in direct contrast to Black women's religiosity being labeled as an opiate that continues to produce submissive and disengaged individuals who participate in their own oppression. These women creatively inhabit the norms of Black religious life, expressing agentive capacity as their spirituality influences their engagement in the public and private spheres of everyday life.

Frederick's work establishes a foundation for understanding *creative agency* in the religious lives of African American women while creating room for further complexity in understanding the relationship between power, agency, and creativity in the preaching of African American women. At the center of Frederick's description of *creative agency* is an understanding of power and infrastructure that assumes a degree of power is accessible to all participants of a system.

### ***Attending to Particular Preaching Practices***

To some extent, preaching as a historical practice shapes the structures of its practice and those structures postulate power. However, preaching is both a product of environments and their histories, and a tool by which bodies of difference engage their environments. In this regard, preaching may be understood in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus*.

Bourdieu posits that *habitus* have the characteristics of "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures... 'regulated' and 'regular'... (and are) collectively orchestrated."<sup>22</sup> The body is an important site in understanding preaching in this way because it is the place of memory, preservation, and practice.<sup>23</sup> There are organizing principles that have established what "black preaching" is and, in return, what the "black sermon" looks and sounds like in its embodied delivery. The established image of the Black preacher continues to advance an understanding and practice of preaching in the flesh, and in this regard continues to reinforce these same established images and practices of Black preaching. Depictions of the Black male as preacher and the safeguarding of male privilege within Black churches regulate the framework of preaching. The framework creates a largely unvaried understanding of Black preaching within its various contexts of depiction while it continues alongside the larger ongoing practice of preaching.

There has not been "one conductor" or "wizard" behind the image's perpetuation. On the contrary, the image has been "collectively orchestrated" by various facets of history. Black women also engage and participate in this understanding when they preach. Women, who preach within these traditions, constantly imagine and invent their sermons in conversation with and in juxtaposition to the tradition; this requires both creativity and ingenuity. The result is a spectrum of approaches to preaching by Black women, who are aware of the elusive and overt parameters that mark "valid" preaching.<sup>24</sup>

### *Interpreting Her Black Jeremiad*

I now turn to a description of the Black jeremiad in the preaching of a Black woman for a descriptive understanding of the creativity and ingenuity of a body of difference in practice. Roxanne Mountford describes her experience seeing the Black jeremiad engendered by Reverend Barb, who had been recently elected as the pastor in an African American congregation.<sup>25</sup> The church openly struggled with her position and hiring as pastor; a small contingent of members had even threatened to leave. Below, as Mountford describes this pastor's preaching, we see the preacher's use of narrative, intonation, rhythm, and varied delivery as a stylistic take on Black male preaching without complete conformity to it. In this way, Rev. Barb established her presence as pastor and preacher in a new congregation.

After leading the congregation in song,

The sermon was built on a series of stories designed to illustrate her point. She preached the first part in her quiet, alto voice, talking in a matter-of-fact tone, behind the pulpit.... But as she preached, she became more animated, her voice speeding up and slowing down to emphasize points.... Fifteen minutes into the sermon she abandoned the manuscript and began to walk—first out from behind the pulpit, then in front of the pulpit, then slowly down the center aisle.... She ended the sermon at the high emotional pitch right in the center of the congregation, and then asked ‘The doors of the church are wide open. Who will join the church today? Is there one?....’<sup>26</sup>

The description of Rev. Barb's preaching contains hallmarks of the normative narrative of black preaching practices. She powerfully shifts from a quieter voice to build up to a more direct speech. There is the presence of rhythm, cadence, and intonation for emphasis. Her voice demonstrating a “high emotional pitch” while her body joins the congregation in its center is indication of her using a form of celebration to close and end the sermon. Her celebration culminates as she extends an invitation to discipleship. Rev. Barb demonstrates an awareness and participation in the strategies and structures of valid preaching practice within the community.

In a follow-up interview with Mountford, Rev. Barb expressed an understanding of the expectation and pressure for her to be “the black preacher” while at the same time saying, “Yeah, I listen to them (Black preaching men) on the radio and they just be doing it (hoot/whoop), and *I practice it* because I think it's an art, *but I ain't doing it.*”<sup>27</sup> Here, Rev. Barb acknowledges the tradition and, to some degree, embodies and practices it while also acknowledging her boundaries and the extent to which she will engage it.

Rev. Barb is keenly aware of the tradition of Black preaching, and as we see in the excerpt above, she utilizes aspects of its practice in her own preaching. However, she states that there are limitations on the degree to which she incorporates the traditional practice in her preaching, specifically in terms of the “hoot/whoop.” She is able to “speak the language” and “perform the art” in a way that is understood and accepted by those listening. At the same time, she is styling

the tradition in ways that make use of the power inherent within this tradition of preaching in very different ways (*creative tactics*). Rev. Barb is using the traditional practice and expectation of Black preaching for her own purposes. In other words, Rev. Barb utilizes her creative wit and know-how in and for preaching as she establishes herself as preacher and pastor within a community that is resistant to her presence. Her use of preaching creates room for her body in the practice of preaching.

### ***Practice Collapsing and Expanding***

The preaching of Black women, and other bodies of difference, that builds upon creativity and ingenuity entails these preachers taking the structures of what “should be” preaching and making them their own. They make preaching their own as they retain its identifiable parts while creatively, artistically, strategically or by happenstance showing forth the malleability of these parts. Yet, others are still able to receive these inventions as preaching. Black women, who preach as bodies of difference, simultaneously stand in a place of difference and make anew something old in a way that it can be received across difference.<sup>28</sup> As they are able to gain a listening for their preaching, and it “too” is marked as valid practice, their preaching is the means by which their community’s expectations of preaching begin to both collapse and expand.

In this regard, preaching both disrupts communal expectations and is generative as it makes room for different bodies to mark valid practice. The structures (frameworks of expectation) themselves belie their ability to remain fixed and non-moveable. Their inability to remain fixed and non-movable pushes preaching as a practice, the preacher, and the community onward and into the purpose of preaching itself. Preaching is the means by which preaching fulfills its own virtue.

In writing about why constructs of practice matter for preaching, James Nieman describes a practice as being related to its own aims.<sup>29</sup> Something valuable and purposeful beyond its individual parts is inherent within practice; however, these individual parts inherently express “the ends they seek to obtain.”<sup>30</sup> There is an ethic present which is inextricable from how the practice is carried forth and its achievement. A practice marked as valid, or considered to have met its aims, is connected to the purpose of the practice not separate from its purpose. There is something a “practice seeks to bring into being.”<sup>31</sup>

A specific practice never exists to repeat or perpetuate itself, even if performed with great skill or excellence. Meaningful practices push past any admiration of emulation to implement ends beyond themselves.<sup>32</sup>

Preaching operates within purposeful frameworks that are connected to the habits and character of the preacher, the marks of excellence of its practice, and its implicit aims. At its core, preaching is a theological and ethical practice. As an ongoing practice, it continues to “push past” itself and its fixed mechanisms while still seeking the virtue of its theological purposes.

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### ***Recovering the Pulpit Body to Recover Preaching Practice***

In part, a community's expectation of preaching and the process by which it is accepted as valid practice is associated with the pulpit as a sign.<sup>33</sup> The pulpit is a sign and structure that marks a particular type of rhetorical performance.<sup>34</sup> The pulpit is also a structure and sign that marks the authority of the one who has the ability to carry out the practice.<sup>35</sup> Most notably, the histories associated with pulpit space and performance are significant; the histories of pulpit space and the performance therein have continually wielded power over our processes of marking valid practices of preaching.<sup>36</sup>

Preaching and our expectations thereof are conditioned by rhetorical spaces and performances shrouded in gendered hierarchies.<sup>37</sup> In this regard, preaching has a history of not only being a practice, but also a gendered practice that is often unnamed yet assumed. To be sure these gendered hierarchies do not escape the intersections of heterosexism, racism, ableism, or classism that exist within homiletic discourse.<sup>38</sup> As preaching is carried out by the body and recognized by the gathering of communities over time, which bodies are recognized or written off as legitimate performers of preaching is not a secondary concern but a primary concern to homiletic theory and practice. And this primary concern is one that has theological and ethical implications related to the aims and purposes of preaching as a faith practice.

As it fulfills its own aims, preaching espouses a Sacred in-breaking that reorients a community's ways of thinking, being, and doing. Most explicitly, as a faith practice, preaching pushes the preacher and community into an alternative vision for life "here and now." This vision has the potential to shift centers that necessitate margins, including the centers that shape constricting narratives of the pulpit and preaching. The community more readily envisions alternative realities for life "here and now" as a multiplicity of bodies participate in the practice of preaching.

### ***Making Room for Other Bodies & Practice***

One of the limitations in appropriating the constructs of *habitus* and tactics within homiletic discourse is the constraints they pose on immediate and long-term change. Interpreting preaching as I have done up to this point does not afford us a complete re-writing of normative preaching narratives and expectations. It still renders some bodies different without transforming problematic paradigms. However, framing preaching in conversation with these theories of practice does preclude homiletic theory from discarding the preaching of practitioners who do not fit our normative understandings of preaching. As we better understand preaching practices, we are better able to prescribe homiletic theory and practice—in terms of what preaching must or "should" do.

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**1** Here I am considering preaching as a particular type of genre. Generic criticism as a particular form of rhetorical criticism. In *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, John Creswell describes generic criticism as assuming that “similar situations removed from one another in time and place, seem to generate similar rhetorical responses. Similar rhetorical responses are described as “genre” based on common strategies across time and space with an organizing principle(s). See John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 141- 42; John McClure describes the genre of preaching in his John S. McClure, *The Four Codes of Preaching : Rhetorical Strategies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 5-8.

**2** Recently homiletic discourse has explicitly engaged preaching as a form of practice. Thomas Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale bring together homileticians in one volume to reflect on how preaching framed first as a practice reshapes the aims and approaches of pedagogy. For more on preaching as Christian practice see Thomas G. Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, eds., *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

**3** Ibid., 15.

**4** I use “bodies of difference” to indicate the reality created by normative communal narratives of preaching, which may privilege certain bodies over other bodies in terms of how preaching is carried forth as a practice, including the form, sound, enactment, and content of preaching. These normative narratives render all other bodies as different and/or other. In choosing to use this term, I also recognize that there is a threat of reinforcing a hegemonic narrative in labeling these bodies as “different.” However, I choose the term to name a forced relationship constructed around centers and margins.

**5** Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 36-37.

**6** Ibid., 38.

**7** De Certeau refers to this group as the system’s “weak”; See *ibid.*, 37-38.

**8** Ibid., 38,40.

**9** Ibid., 38.

**10** I use this phrase in recognition that every performance of masculinity does not count and is not recognized within the historical image of the Black preacher. One has to note the intersection of sexuality and the performance of masculinity as it relates to the male bodies that are historically allowed to occupy pulpit space in Black worship spaces and those who are restricted from pulpit space but readily accepted to perform as ministers of worship or music.

**11** H. Beecher Hicks, Jr.’s *Images of the Black Preacher: The Man Nobody Knows* is a dated work, but remains relevant for engaging characteristics of the cultural image of the “Black preacher” and the image’s perpetuation in various forms today. One consistency throughout Hick’s work and analysis is the “maleness” of the preacher as it relates to his reader, the cultural sources that prove his claims, and the preacher he recovers in both his contemporary and historical contexts. H. Beecher Hicks, *Images of the Black Preacher: The Man Nobody Knows* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1977), 105.

**12** The image of the Black preacher originates in the “slave preacher.” Notable characteristics of the slave preacher have continuity with characteristics of prominent Black preachers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century Civil Rights Era. The ability to both control and incite resistance was rooted in the preacher’s rhetorical prowess—often alongside his illiteracy.

The marks of leadership, communication, and rhetorical prowess exhibited by the slave preacher can be identified with prominent public preacher figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, whose ministries sparked larger societal interest in Black preaching and homiletical discourse. As the slave preacher and more prominent public figures influence our conceptualization of the Black preacher, American literature, film and art leads us most keenly into the image of the Black preacher and Black preaching as a cultural product described and signified through cultural productions. For more on the image of the Black preacher see Benjamin Albert Botkin, *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989); Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 14; "A Profile of the Slave Preacher" in Hicks, *Images of the Black Preacher: The Man Nobody Knows*; James Weldon Johnson and Henry Louis Gates, *God's Trombones : Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

**13** For examples of literature that engages practices and descriptive hermeneutics see L. Susan Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching : Diversity in Theory and Style* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003); Katie G. Cannon, *Teaching Preaching : Isaac Rufus Clark and Black Sacred Rhetoric* (New York: Continuum, 2002); Cleophus James LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990); *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, Rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008). For examples of literature that moves towards methodological and theoretical construction see Samuel D. Proctor, *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet : Crafting a Sermon of Authority* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1994) and Frank A. Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God : The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1997).

**14** For more on Black women, preaching, and religious life See Teresa L. Fry Brown, *Weary Throats and New Songs : Black Women Proclaiming God's Word* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003); Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850-1979*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998); Marcia Riggs, *Can I Get a Witness?: Prophetic Religious Voices of African American Women: An Anthology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

**15** See Marla Faye Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 5-7. Frederick explains that the dichotomy of resistance and accommodation is a false one as it relates to African American women's spirituality and participation in Black churches. The reality is more of a continuum of accommodation and resistance, and where individuals fall on this continuum cannot be essentialized. Similarly, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, in *Righteous Discontent*, explores the false binary of accommodation and resistance as it relates to the political and liberative thrust of the Black church, and missing the diversity and sometime contradictory set of beliefs present within these institutions. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent : The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*.

**16** Saba Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject," in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, ed. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, *Gender, Theory, and Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 186.

**17** Frederick, *Between Sundays : Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith*.

**18** Ibid., 8.

**19** Ibid., 9.

**20** Ibid.

**21** Ibid., 10.

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- 22** Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 71.
- 23** The centrality of the body in this description is an extension of Bourdieu's concept of "body hexis" which theorizes the body as the site of memory and practice for *habitus*;" *ibid.*, 94.
- 24** I want to guard against essentialism in the claims upon Black women's preaching. The shared existence of gendered, race, and class hierarchies in Black women's lives does not assume that Black women experience or respond to these realities in the same manner. See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Rev. 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 25.
- 25** Mountford explains that she prefers the term "engendered" because the tradition of the Black jeremiad has been normatively male and thus made gender invisible. Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces*, Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 171.
- 26** *Ibid.*, 103-04.
- 27** Bold and Italic emphases added. *Ibid.*, 108.
- 28** Mae Henderson describes Black women's ability to communicate in spite of difference as "speaking in tongues." She recovers the biblical idea as a way of describing the "simultaneity of discourse" in the writing of Black women when engaging spheres of racial and gendered difference. Henderson's theory is based in part on Gadamer's dialectical model of conversation. See Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics, and the Black Woman's Literary Tradition," in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Wisconsin Studies in American Autobiography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).
- 29** James Nieman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice : A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*, ed. Thomas G. Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).
- 30** *Ibid.*, 28.
- 31** *Ibid.*, 29.
- 32** *Ibid.*, 28.
- 33** Roxanne Mountford describes the pulpit in North American sacred spaces as those spaces that have inscribed and reinscribe the preacher as male and the "manly art" of preaching. This manly art is conditioned by the literal "material space" of the pulpit, whether they are "moveable furniture" of fixed pieces of architecture. Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit : Preaching in American Protestant Spaces*, 16-17.
- 34** This expectation of speech and form is grounded in an understanding of rhetorical criticism as it relates to the rhetorical situation. Karlyn Khors Campbell, in *The Rhetorical Act*, describes a rhetorical act as an "intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end." See Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Rhetorical Act*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1996), 9; As it relates to preaching, the intentionally crafted attempt is the sermon with hopes of overcoming any obstacles to individuals hearing and experiencing the Gospel or good news (the end). The sermon, as the "intentionally crafted attempt" is the focus of this investigation. For more on rhetorical criticism and the rhetorical situation, see Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* Winter, no. 1 (1968); Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 4th ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2009); Edwin Black, "Rhetorical Criticism : A Study in Method," (1978).

**35** Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces*, 17-18.

**36** Ibid.

**37** Ibid., 17,26-27.

**38** Here I am explicitly engaging the assumptions of white male hetero-normative narratives that led the inception of homiletics discourses in North America. The narratives in turn still mitigate the necessity of expanding homiletics as a discourse that includes the presence of broader descriptions of theory, practice, and methodology.