



Poetic Reflections

Redeeming Memory, Reclaiming Voice:
*A Theological Reflection on Creative Writing in the Post-
Transatlantic-Slave-Trade Context*

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Introduction

In the long shadow of the Transatlantic slave trade, the Church today stands at a crucial intersection of memory, healing, and hope. For theological students and pastors, particularly those committed to the work of justice and liberation, the practice of writing and creative writing is not simply an aesthetic endeavour but a sacred vocation — one that invites us to engage history not as detached observers but as wounded healers and prophetic witnesses.

Theological Imagination in the Shadow of Empire

The legacy of the Transatlantic trade is not merely historical — it is spiritual. It has shaped theological paradigms, ecclesial structures, and even the way Christian scripture has been interpreted and weaponized. In the light of that, creative writing and reflecting becomes a tool for decolonizing the imagination. It offers a way to re-narrate the gospel through the lens of the oppressed, to interrogate inherited theological frameworks, and to reframe scripture in the language of liberation.

Creative writing offers a unique space for the theological imagination to confront historical trauma with redemptive possibility. The legacy of the slave trade is not only etched in economic and political systems; it lives in the ruptured narratives of identity, land, language, and faith. Yet in the aftermath of such dehumanizing horror, the act of writing becomes an act of resistance —

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an act of remembering rightly, of reclaiming dignity, and of re-articulating God's liberative presence among oppressed peoples.

Memory as a Sacred Mandate

As pastoral leaders and students of theology, we are called to tell the truth. But truth-telling is not merely about factual recounting; it is about *faithful remembering*. It is about lamenting the silences and distortions of history, while also lifting up the voices that were once buried beneath colonial violence and racial oppression. In this sense, creative writing becomes a liturgical act; a way of naming the sacred in the everyday lives of those whose stories were stolen or silenced.

Pastoral ministry in a post-slavery world cannot be disconnected from the work of memory. Creative writing enables us to hold space for lament: not as an end in itself, but as a bridge to justice. Lament, in the biblical tradition, is an act of faith. It acknowledges both the reality of suffering and the hope of divine intervention. When pastors and theologians engage in writing that draws from the deep well of historical pain, they are not re-traumatizing the present; they are redeeming the past.

Creativity as Pastoral Care and Prophetic Witness

To write creatively in a post-slavery context is also to engage in theological reconstruction. We must ask: what does it mean to preach a gospel of liberation in a world still haunted by the chains of the past? How do we reimagine biblical texts through the lens of the enslaved, the exiled, the dispossessed? What new metaphors of hope might arise when we allow the wounded body of Christ to speak through the suffering bodies of history?

Our calling is not simply to preserve memory but to reanimate it with purpose and possibility. We write to remind the Church that the faith of the enslaved was not passive or peripheral. It was a radical defiance of despair and a courageous proclamation of dignity in the face of dehumanization.² For in shaping our creative voice, we sharpen our prophetic edge. We cultivate the capacity to speak truth with beauty, to confront injustice with imagination, and to proclaim the gospel with power rooted in lived experience.

² *Editorial Note:* For a helpful resource engaging the Christian faith and voices of enslaved Africans, see Barbara Omolade with Susan M. Felch, *Faith Confronts Evil: From Birthmothers to Holy Women, African American Christian Women, 1619–1865*, Afterword by William James Jennings (Eugene, Oregon, USA: Cascade Books, 2024).

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Conclusion

In the spirit of those who endured and resisted, we write. In the memory of our ancestors whose stories were drowned in the middle passage or hidden in plantation fields, we reclaim voice. And in the promise of a God who liberates, restores, and resurrects, we press on — crafting words not only to remember the past but to transform the future.